TYRANT KILLING AS THERAPEUTIC STASIS: A POLITICAL DEBATE IN IMAGES AND TEXTS

My starting point is the evolving relationship between Athenian democratic ideology and the arguments developed by politically dissident Athenians, that is, those who were not willing to accept that democracy was the best of all political worlds or even the best that could reasonably be hoped for. I have argued elsewhere that democratic ideology, with its quasi-hegemonic tendencies, was challenged in texts produced by members of an informal yet self-consciously critical "community of interpretation." Here, I hope to show that the contest between democratic ideology and a dissident sensibility that sought political alternatives informs some notable moments in the long and intellectually fertile Greek engagement with the concept of tyranny.

As other essays in this volume have demonstrated, the general issue of the tyrant, his nature, and what to do about him was conceptually very important within Athenian democratic ideology and equally important within what I am calling the "dissident sensibility." But the tyrant issue was also important for debates between democrats and their critics from the early fifth century B.C. through the late fourth. Both democrats and dissidents agreed in general terms on why tyranny is at once morally and politically unacceptable: the tyrant is wicked because he uses illegitimately acquired public power systematically to alienate from "us" that which is most dear to us. Tyranny, by embodying a negative political extreme, the intolerable politeia (or non-politeia), in turn helps to define what "we" require "our own" politeia (present or hoped-for) to secure and ensure for us. It also helped dissident Greek intellectuals to explore the positive political extreme—the ideal or best-possible politeia, and it helped them to think more deeply about "moderate" political alternatives.

In the context of debate, certain questions arise: Who is the (actual or potential) tyrant? Who are "we"? What should we do about tyrants? The an-
swers to these questions will help to establish some conceptual similarities between democrats and their opponents but also to distinguish democratic ideology from critical challenges. In brief summary: For Classical Greek democrats, the tyrant can be defined as anyone who would seek to overthrow “we the demos.” This demotic definition equates oligarchic revolutionaries with tyrants. An obvious example of conflation is Thucydides’ reference to Athenian demotic fears of an “oligarchico-tyrannical conspiracy” (ἐπὶ ξυνασφαλεία ὁλιγαρχία καὶ τυραννία, 6.60.1). The democratic association of oligarchs with tyrants is one reason that tyranny remained such a lively issue for the Athenian for so long after the threat of “actual” tyranny (of the Archaic Greek sort) was past.3

Defense of the democracy tended to be equated with resistance to tyrants. That resistance might culminate in tyrannicide and therefore murderous violence by citizens against fellow citizens. Tyrant slaying thus becomes, in democratic ideology, a rare example of therapeutic civil conflict. Dissidents, in seeking alternatives to democratic ideology, sought to complicate this simple scenario. They argued that the demos was the real tyrant. They posited a spectrum of regimes as an alternative to the binary “democracy/tyranny” political universe. They offered alternative narratives about the actions and motives of tyrannicides and about when stasis in the polis was and was not therapeutic.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY OF TYRANNY IN ICONOGRAPHY AND TEXT

Among the arresting features of the ideological debate over tyranny is that it can be traced in both textual and iconographic registers. Moreover, the texts and iconography of tyrant killing are mutually implicated and in a variety of ways: texts referring to tyrannicide pay explicit and implicit homage to artistic monuments, and the iconography of tyrannicide is often transparently narrative. My discussion of the iconography of “democracy and tyranny” is necessarily selective. I begin with two very familiar monuments (Figs. 8.1, 8.2, 8.4) from early and late in the history of the independent Athenian democracy. They are perhaps, for students of Athenian democracy, even overly familiar in that their repeated photographic reiteration may have evacuated for us some of their evocative power.
CRITIUS AND NESIOTES’ TYRANNICIDE
STATUE GROUP

This group was erected in the Athenian Agora in ca. 477 B.C. (Figs. 8.1, 8.2). The group, which survives in a Roman copy, depicts Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the act of assassinating Hipparchus. This monument replaced an earlier tyrannicide group sculpted by Antenor, erected in the Agora in the very late sixth or very early fifth century and taken as war booty by the Persians in 480/79. The exact date and ideological force (aristocratic? democratic?) of the Antenor group are debatable. By contrast, the Critius and Nesiotes group seems quite transparent. Following a general scholarly consensus, elaborated by Burkhard Fehr, Michael Taylor, and others, I take the Critius and Nesiotes statue group as a self-consciously democratic monu-
ment, put up by the Athenians immediately after the Persian Wars to celebrate democratic Athenian unity and boldness in action.

As Vincent Farenga has astutely noted, the expressed ethos of the composition is not one of conflicted values; it suggests no disjunction between inner qualities of being and the external signs of appearing and doing. The monument exists within what Farenga (drawing from Bakhtin) has called a “citizen chronotope.” Yet the Critius and Nesiotes group, with its dramatic and kinetic composition, is also very much an image of “becoming”: the killers, acting as a cooperative team, boldly advancing upon their foe, are caught by the sculptors at the moment just before the death blow was struck; the viewer
is drawn into the action and invited to complete the narrative for himself. As we know from the critical comments of Thucydides and other writers, the canonical Athenian way of completing the story was with the establishment of the democracy: the kinetic energy of the tyrant slayers carrying through to the creation of a new identity in which Athenian citizens would not be passive subjects but active participants in the history-making business of public life.

One element missing in the preserved Roman copy of the tyrant-slayers monument (Fig. 8.1) is weaponry. Presumably this is a mere accident of preservation, but the broken swords draw our attention to the weapons employed by the tyrant-killer. The swords are clearly illustrated on a depiction of the moment of the assassination on a red-figure stamnos by the Copenhagen Painter, dating to about 470 B.C. (Fig. 8.3). The standard way for a Greek tyrant to "take the point" of his own illegitimacy is literal death by sword (xiphos) or dagger (encheiridion). The implicit argument of the Athenians' act of reerecting the statue group and of the sustained democratic Athenian
reverence for the tyrannicides, is that Harmodius and Aristogeiton killed a tyrant, and after the death of the tyrant came democracy.

As several essays have noted, the tacit popular assumption that "tyrannicide ergo democracy" became a hot topic in Athenian critical-historical literature by the later fifth century. It was explicitly challenged by Thucydides, who goes so far (6.53.3) as to claim that at least by 415 B.C., the Athenian citizenry actually "knew by hearsay" (ἐπιστάμενος γὰρ ὁ δῆμος ἄκοι) that the tyranny was not overthrown "by themselves and Harmodius" (i.e., in 514) but by the Spartans (i.e., in 510). But, whatever the complexities of the Athenians' historical memory of how tyranny was ended in Athens, by the later fifth century, solidarity with the tyrannicides was clearly regarded, by democrats and their critics, as the essence of traditional democratic patriotism.12

The Critius and Nesiotes group thus came to express the "democratically correct" response of Athenian citizens to threats to the democratic order. The Athenian quickness to associate subversion with tyranny and the tyrannicide group with active citizen-centered defense of democracy against subversion are illustrated by a comic passage. In Aristophanes' Lysistrata (631–634), produced in 411, the chorus of old Athenian men staunchly declare, "These women won't set up a tyranny over me, for I'll stand on guard, and I'll carry my sword in a myrtle bough; I'll stand to arms in the Agora beside Aristogeiton: Like this! I'll stand beside him" (ἐν τοῖς ὀπλοῖς ἐξῆς Ἀριστογειτονος, / ὠδέ θ’ κοτήσω παρ’ αὐτόν, trans. Sommerstein 1990). The old men of the chorus, quoting the evidently well known scolion, imagine themselves taking up arms in the public space of the Agora, next to the statue group. In taking their stand "beside Aristogeiton," Aristophanes' old men explicitly take on the role of Harmodius. We must imagine the dancers of the chorus, as they sing "Like this!" mimicking the form of the Harmodius statue, assuming for a moment the "Harmodius stance": right (sword) arm cocked behind the head, preparatory to dealing what B. B. Shefton has called the "Harmodius blow" (Fig. 8.2).13 To be a defender of democracy against subversion, then, is to "become" Harmodius—and explicitly to become Harmodius as he is depicted in the Critius and Nesiotes group.

The Copenhagen Painter, presumably working within a few years of the erection of the Critius and Nesiotes monument, is not captive to the statue-group iconography. He depicts (Fig. 8.3) the tyrannicide figures as draped and thus represents the historical moment rather than, as vase painters around 400 B.C. would (see below), the statue group itself. Moreover, the Copenhagen painter depicts Aristogeiton's position (thrusting home his sword) quite
differently from the way he is depicted in the restored Critius and Nesiotes statue (draped left arm forward, right [sword] arm behind). Harmodius' position, however, is identical in both vase painting and statue. Likewise, on a badly damaged but roughly contemporary skyphos from the Villa Giulia, the one clearly recognizable iconographic element is Harmodius' raised sword-arm.\textsuperscript{14}

Although the iconographic sample is small, it appears that the "Harmodius stance" quickly achieved canonical status as the single most stable visual element in Athenian tyrannicide iconography. The Harmodius stance might, therefore, serve as synecdoche for the monument, the event, and its (imagined) narrative continuation. This supposition is strengthened by the Aristophanes passage, which suggests that by the late fifth century, not only the tyrannicides but the tyrannicide statue group itself, and especially the stance of the Harmodius figure, were closely associated with the defense of the existing democratic regime against "tyranny." The passage strongly implies that to "stand as Harmodius" was to declare oneself an enemy of tyranny and a defender of the existing democratic regime. So we might guess that in the context of a debate between democrats and dissidents, the Harmodius stance would become a contested visual icon, just as the story of the act of tyrannicide and its meaning was contested in historical narrative.

If the democrats modeled themselves on the tyrannicides, dissident intellectuals like Thucydides challenged the tyrannicides' motives and character. In Farenga's terms, they sought to complicate the straightforward ethos expressed by the monument by drawing a distinction between the act (assassination) and the inner motives of the actors. That story is treated in other essays in this volume; there is no need to recapitulate it in detail here.\textsuperscript{15} Sufficient it to say that in the late fourth century, debates centering on the character of the tyrannicides were still being rehearsed. According to the Aristotelian Ath. Pol. (18.5), "democratic writers" (hoi demotikoi) claimed that Aristogeiton, when captured after the assassination, fooled his captors into destroying their own supporters, whereas "others" (i.e., dissidents) say that he betrayed his comrades.\textsuperscript{16}

Some elements of the population were, moreover, suspected by the Athenian democrats of disrespecting the national heroes. As Kurt Raaflaub points out, at some unknown time in the fifth or early fourth century, the democratic state passed legislation forbidding slander of the tyrannicides and prohibiting the use of their names for slaves.\textsuperscript{17} Whatever the truth of Thucydides' claim about what the Athenians "actually knew" of their own history, there
can be no doubt that from the late fifth century at least, and through the late fourth, the relationship between the assassination of Hipparchus, the overthrow of the tyranny, and the origins of democracy were at the center of the debate between democratic ideology and critical discourse on various levels. The dissident side of the debate is preserved in historical narratives that seek to refute the demotic narrative linking tyrannicide with the origins of democracy. Public iconography shows that the democratic ideology of tyrannicide was asserted at the visual level. Moreover, the Lysistrata passage suggests that "official" democratic visual icons were recapitulated at the level of gesture (and thus subject to comic attention). We will return below to the question of whether it is possible to detect a critical response to the democratic iconography of tyrannicide.

**EUCRATES’ NOMOS**

The second well-known image crowns the stele publishing an antityranny law, passed on the proposal of Eucrates in 337/36 B.C. The document relief depicts personified Demos, seated, being crowned by personified Demokratia, standing (Fig. 8.4). As with the Critius and Nesiotes statue group, the document relief consists of two figures. But the composition of the relief offers a marked contrast to the drama and suspense of the tyrannicide group. On the relief, Demokratia is "crowning," but Demos is not "doing" much of anything at all. His right arm rests comfortably on his left leg; his left hand would have rested on a staff. He seems completely at peace on his throne, sure of himself, a quietly self-confident Demos, "being" personified. Yet this peaceful image graces an inscription, a *nomos* enacted by the Athenian state in 337/36 B.C. that concerns the possibility of antidemocratic revolution and encourages the violently patriotic act of tyrant killing. It explicitly exonerates any potential tyrant killer from prosecution (δε... ἀποκτάνη, δος ἔτι: 10-11) and threatens with disenfranchisement (*atimia*) and property confiscation any member of the Council of the Areopagus who fulfills his official function while the *demos* or the *demokratia* is overthrown.18

The implicit argument made by this monument—its text and its iconography—is striking: what is remarkable is not that it implies that to challenge democracy is to embrace tyranny—this was, as Aristophanes' *Wasps* and *Knights* demonstrate, already a familiar enough claim in the late fifth century (see Henderson, this volume). What is striking is that it suggests that the overthrow of the *demokratia* and the *demos* and the establishment of a tyranny would not terminate the legitimate authority of Demos or the instrumental
capacity of the Athenian demos to reward and punish the political behavior of individual Athenians.

In 410/09, in the context of the extended *stasis* of the late fifth century, the Athenians had passed a decree on a motion by Demophantus, mandating the use of a “loyalty oath” to compel a prodemocracy, antityrant response on the part of the citizens, if and when “the demos is overthrown.” The Eucrates *nomos* echoes some of the language of the late fifth-century decree. But by the later fourth century, there is no longer any perceived need for an oath to be sworn by each citizen. Now, in the place of the oath-bound individual, democratic governmental authority and the authority of democratically enacted law are imagined as continuous through a tyrannical interlude. Under late fourth-century conditions, a coup d’état is indeed imaginable, but the democratic restoration that will follow the collapse of the tyranny (presumably via assassination) is simply taken for granted. Democracy has become an “ordinary” condition, a “state of being” that may perhaps be in some sense interrupted by tyrannical interludes but that remains “the once and future” *politeia*, the legitimate form of authority that somehow continues despite any
lapse in the actual power of the actual demos. And so, personified Demos (and the political order he represents) will still sit on his metaphorical throne even if “the demos” is (momentarily) overthrown.

We seem to have come a long way from Thucydides’ paranoid Athenians of 415, who feared the establishment of a tyranny because they “knew from hearsay” that it was “not they themselves and Harmodius” who had overthrown the tyrants, but the Spartans. Thucydides’ imagined Athenians suppose that, since they cannot expect Spartan benevolence to recur, a tyrannical coup d’état would permanently end the democracy. Five years later, and following an oligarchical interlude, the Athenians who voted for the Demophonatos decree hoped that a sacred oath might bind each citizen to a democratic code of behavior in the absence of democratic governmental authority and so allow for the restoration of democracy. After another seventy-five years, and another coup d’état, the Athenians who voted for the Eucrates nomos seem much more sure of themselves, even while the dichotomy of tyranny/democracy remains at the center of their conception of the political universe.

Tyranny and democracy were regarded in “official” Athenian ideology as antithetical from the early fifth through late fourth centuries. The antithesis is underlined by the positive democratic valuation of tyrant slaying. The model tyrant slayers were Harmodius and Aristogeiton: remembered as heroes in the popular folk tradition, challenged as immoral and selfishly motivated in critical political literature, and so familiarly and so powerfully realized in the statue group in the Agora that “standing like Harmodius” could be employed as synecdoche for pro-democratic resistance to tyranny. By the late fourth century, because individual democrats are assumed to be ready to take up the Harmodius stance and strike the Harmodius blow when threatened by a tyrant, “old man Demos” can sit comfortably, unarmed, on his throne, accepting his crown from Demokratia.

We may sum up the Athenian demotic agenda (as consolidated by the restoration of 403 B.C.) as follows: Tyrants are bad, because the tyrant uses illegitimately acquired power to alienate from the politai (citizens) that which is “theirs,” especially citizen dignity, that is, the freedom, equality, and security of the citizen. Those who seek to replace the democracy with any other form of government are tyrannical. Democracy and tyranny thus define a bipolar political universe. There is no legitimate “third way” between the rule of the demos and the rule of the tyrant as there was, for example, in the Per-
sian Constitutional Debate in Herodotus book 3 (on which see Dewald, this volume) or in the multi-politeia schemata of Plato and Aristotle (on which see Osborne, this volume). Oligarchs, as nondemocrats, are by democratic ideological definition, tyrants. Killers of tyrants are defenders of democracy and therefore deserve immunity, honors, and celebration. This ideology was reinforced by the events of 411–403 B.C. Obvious examples include the public decree of honors for the killer of Phrynichus, a leader of the “Four Hundred,” and the heroizing of the “men of Phyle” for having overthrown the “Thirty Tyrants.”

The Eucrates nomos points to the continued salience of the dichotomy through the fourth century.

Why, we may ask, does “tyrant-killing” remain such a vital notion, given that (with the possible and highly contested exception of Hipparchus) no actual tyrant was ever killed by a patriotic assassin in Athens? As I briefly suggested above, a notable feature of the democratic tyrant-killer ideology is that it offers a rare Classical Greek example of therapeutic civil conflict (stasis) in the polis: a moment in which it is (at least in retrospect) regarded as having been healthy and right for one citizen to run at another with sword drawn and to shed blood in a public place. At Athens, in the difficult years after 403 B.C., the familiar tyrant-killing imagery, which (to judge by preserved vases; see below) seems to have enjoyed a floruit around 400 B.C., allowed a highly troublesome period of stasis, which lasted for months and exposed divisions within the citizenry (rural/urban, δῆμος/δυνάτοι, cavalry/foot-soldiers), to be reimaged by (albeit imperfect) analogy with the democratic interpretation of the events of 514 B.C. and their aftermath. That is, the stasis of 404 could be “misremembered” as having been ended by a single moment of legitimate violence. Reenvisioning the stasis of the late fifth century via the satisfying image of the demos’ heroes confronting and dispatching the aberrant, illegitimate power holder was among the mechanisms that encouraged forgetfulness regarding the frightening divisions that had emerged among the citizens.

The late fifth-century stasis situation was formally ended in Athens at the end of the fifth century not by actual tyrant slaying but by the Amnesty Decree and its attendant rituals, including an oath and a parade to the Acropolis. Through those rituals, the stasis became a distinct interlude with a beginning and a formalized ending; the ceremony proclaims that before and after the stasis, δημοκρατία was the norm. This leads organically to the peaceful image of Demos on the Eucrates nomos document relief. In the fourth century, many democrats and some of their critics (e.g., Isocrates) favored an elaborate pseudohistory that imagined the Peisistratid tyranny as
a usurpation, an interruption in a continuous democratic tradition extending from Solon (or even Theseus) onwards. But the tyrant-killer ideology was not forgotten, as shown by the provisions of the Eucrates nomos itself. Indeed, the years around 403 saw a flourishing of public reverence for Harmodius and Aristogeiton. New honors were voted for their descendants. 

Iconographic citations of the Critius and Nesiotes group on red-figured vases, unknown since ca. 460–450, suddenly reappear in ca. 400 B.C., most notably in the shield emblem of the Athena Promachus figure on three Panathenaic amphorae. The appearance of the tyrannicides on the Panathenaic vases is especially significant in that (unlike most vases) Panathenaic amphorae were commissioned by the democratic state.

TYRANNICIDE IDEOLOGY OUTSIDE ATHENS

The persuasive power of the democratic Athenian association of tyrant killers with democrats and tyrants with antidemocrats is elucidated by evidence for tyrant-slayer ideology in democratic poleis outside Athens. Even the briefest glance at the broader Greek geographic and chronological context serves to reinforce Sarah Morris’ and Kathryn Morgan’s point (this volume) that neither the Classical Athenian ideology of tyranny nor the critical intellectual engagement with that ideology existed in an “Athenocentric” cultural vacuum. In the world outside Athens, the Greek experience with full-scale tyranny was not uniquely a phenomenon of the Late Archaic period. In Syracuse, Pontic Heraclea, and Achaea—to cite just the most obvious examples—tyranny was a serious issue in, respectively, the fifth, fourth, and third centuries. A public inscription (OGIS 218) offers detailed information on exactly what tyrant killing was deemed to be worth in Hellenistic Ilion. Both material goods and special honors were offered; the extent of these depended on the status (citizen, metic, or slave) of the killer.

In the case of a citizen tyrant-slayer, the killer was to receive the following (lines 21–28):

- one talent (of silver) immediately upon committing the act
- a bronze statue of himself, to be erected by the demos
- free meals for life in the prytaneion
- a front seat at the public contests, along with public proclamation of his name
- a stipend of two drachmas a day, for life.

The Iliotes’ almost obsessive concern with the danger of tyranny recalls Athenian legislation against tyranny, including the Eucrates nomos. A tyrant-
killing citizen of Ilion could, however, expect to receive much more than Eucrates' bare assurance of freedom from the risk of prosecution for his act. There are no doubt good contextual reasons (largely irrecoverable, given how little we know of the internal history of Hellenistic Ilion) both for the similarity of the concern with tyranny and for the differential reward system. The Athenian situation, while distinctive in many ways, was still part of a broader Greek cultural pattern. Athenian citizens, writers, and artists were well aware of the Hellenic world beyond Attica, a world where political relations were sometimes interestingly similar to those pertaining in Athens, even if at other times they were quite different. By the same token, Athenian history and public iconography might sometimes influence the representation and imagination of tyranny elsewhere in the Greek world.

A public inscription from the polis of Erythrae in Asia Minor, probably roughly contemporary with the Eucrates nomos at Athens, brings us back to the question of how politicized debates over tyrant killing might be carried on at the visual level of public iconography. A decree of “the boule and the demos” of Erythrae mandates repairs to and honors for a statue of a tyrannicide. Evidently the statue took the form of a standing male figure (andrias: line 5) holding a sword (xiphos). Sometime after the statue was put up (presumably by a prior democratic government), Erythrae experienced a period of oligarchy. According to the decree, the Erythraean oligarchs (οἱ ἐν τῇ ὀλιγαρχίᾳ) had removed the sword from the tyrannicide statue (ἐξελοῦν τὸ ἕξος). Moreover, and most interestingly, the democratic government that erected the inscription attributes a motive to the oligarchs: they removed the sword “thinking that the [statue’s] stance was entirely aimed at them” (νομίζοντες καθόλου τὴν στάσιν καθ’ αὐτῶν εἶναι, 5–6). The ideological force of this political ascription of motive is clarified by our prior consideration of the Critius and Nesiotes group in Athens and the line from Aristophanes’ Lysistrata: it seems a fair guess that the Erythraean tyrannicide figure was depicted in the Harmodius stance or some Erythraean gestural analogue thereof.

According to the democrats’ implicit argument, this “stance” was identified by all Erythraeans, oligarchs and democrats alike, with the defense of democracy. The democrats’ claim that the Erythraean oligarchs had believed that the position taken by the statue, and especially its menacing sword, was “entirely aimed at them” as opponents of democracy. And so, according to the democratic narrative, by removing the sword, the oligarchs had compromised: they left the statue standing and thereby acknowledged the impor-
tance of an established public icon. Yet by removing the sword, supposedly aimed at themselves, the oligarchs accepted a bipolar political taxonomy that associated oligarchs, as antidemocrats, with tyrants. The new democratic government of Erythrae, in a series of pointedly ideological moves that underline the power of public images, publicly decreed the restoration of the sword, ordered that the monument be cleaned up, and mandated that the statue be crowned at appropriate times in the ritual calendar. Moreover, the democrats erected the inscription as a record of their own and their opponent's motives and actions. For any viewer potentially confused by iconographic subtleties, the inscription clarified the political point of the statue's stance and suggested that the tyrannicide's sword was indeed forever aimed at oligarchs.

The democrats of Erythrae claimed, in effect, that oligarchs and democrats were in full agreement about the association of tyrant killing with democracy, tyrants with oligarchs. Would the Erythraean oligarchs actually have agreed? Let us assume for the sake of the argument that the oligarchs really did remove the sword from the monument. What might they have meant by doing so? Perhaps, rather than symbolically removing a threat to themselves, the oligarchs were symbolically proclaiming an end to an era of citizen-on-citizen violence, the end of *stasis*. Perhaps they were seeking to make an iconographic statement with a historical point: “Tyrant killing was once a legitimate part of our political life, but it is no longer necessary for any citizen to threaten another with a weapon, because, with the institution of the moderate ('third way') regime of oligarchy, we Erythraeans have put *stasis* behind us. Thus tyranny is no longer a threat.” Of course this is just a guess; we have no way of knowing what the Erythraean oligarchs actually meant by the act of disarming the tyrannicide statue. It is nevertheless possible to suppose that rather than accepting the democrats’ democracy/tyranny antithesis with its associated assertion that tyrannicide was therapeutic *stasis*, the Erythraean oligarchs might have sought to change the discursive playing field.

“Changing the discourse” (in Osborne’s terms, this volume) is, in any event, what dissident Athenian writers sought to do. A self-conscious recognition of the profound symbolic power of the democratic “tyranny ideology” and a consequent recognition of the importance of challenging that ideology are among the factors that led fourth-century Athenian dissidents to depict the demos itself as the “true” tyrant, to refine and develop the idea of a spectrum of regimes, and to rethink the place of *stasis* in political life.
REWRITING THE DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY OF TYRANNY: PLATO

By the last years of the fifth century, Athenian intellectuals critical of democracy were confronted with an increasingly coherent and pervasive democratic account of tyranny. Moreover, Plato, at least, was convinced that Greek intellectuals, along with oligarchic activists, had explicitly or implicitly internalized the bipolar conception that equated democracy's opponents with tyrants. This is the context of Plato's *Gorgias* and *Republic* (especially books 1 and 2). Socrates' interlocutors (Polus, Callicles, Thrasymachus) argue that the tyrant, the individual who enjoys the greatest capacity to do whatever he wishes, without social restraint and without fear of punishment, lives the happiest possible life. Both Callicles and Thrasymachus posit that democratic socio-political conventions were devised by "the many and the weak" to protect themselves against the naturally superior individual who would, if he could, make himself the master of his fellows. For Plato, only philosophers—people like Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus—were capable of resisting the alluring dream of seeking to become a happy tyrant. He saw that for as long as antidemocratic elites remained seduced by the superficial attractions of the life of the happy tyrant, the bipolar democratic account of tyranny would stand uncontested, and celebration of resistance to tyranny would remain a stable mainstay of democratic culture. Thus the democrats would retain their monopoly on an antityrannical strand in Greek thought that stretched back through Herodotus, to the lyric poetry of Solon, and perhaps ultimately to Homer's negative depiction of Agamemnon in the *Iliad*.33

As several other essays in this volume rightly emphasize, Plato was not the first Athenian writer to challenge the political taxonomy that associated opponents of democracy with tyranny. In the fifth century, as Jeffrey Henderson discusses in detail, Aristophanic comedy explicitly linked the demos with tyranny. In a similar vein, Pseudo-Xenophon (*Ath. Pol.*) implicitly resorted to the imagery of tyranny when he suggested that the demos (qua lower classes) was wicked because it alienates from society's true shareholders that which is theirs, especially their private property. Moreover, he claimed, the demos alienates from shareholders their proper social and political positions and their ideological authority. In the current (democratic) politeia, it is the demos that levies taxes, distributes offices (via lottery to the "unworthy"), and sets the ideological agenda. By this definition, the demos itself, rather than the antidemocrat, could be construed as holding tyrannical authority.
and democracy might be reenvisioned as a form of tyranny. According to this line of argument, legitimate (i.e., nontyrannical) government can arise only when the demos has been deposed from its tyrannical position and political authority returned to those few who actually deserve it and are capable of its appropriate exercise.32

The force of pre-Platonic attempts to show that “demos-tyrant” was, however, limited in that the “demos-tyrant,” unlike a single individual, cannot literally be assassinated. The argument of Ps.-Xenophon’s antidemocratic tract collapses into aporia (reaches a dead end) at the point of asking the question, What is to be done?33 Likewise, the regime of the Thirty, whatever initial constitutional plans may have been harbored by its “moderates,” collapsed into an orgy of violence and greed when faced with the task of actually building a legitimate nondemocratic political order.34 In the aftermath of 404, Plato saw clearly that a new (nondemocratic) political order would have to be focused on education rather than assassination. Comprehensive political change would have to involve reeducation of both the intellectual elite and the mass of ordinary citizens. The elite must be taught to understand and resist their own enslavement by the tyrant-demos, and the people must be “tamed”—taught to relinquish their tyrannical authority over property, offices, and ideology.

The argument of Plato’s Gorgias concerns what “we should want for ourselves,” and his point is that most people are incapable of wishing for what is actually good for them. Gorgias’ two students, Polus and Callicles, actively embrace the “happy tyrant” ideal. They are students of Gorgias precisely because they suppose that mastery of rhetoric is the royal road to tyrannical bliss. As we have seen, the standard ideology of tyranny emphasized the tyrant’s propensity to alienate from others their goods. Polus at one point adduces the wicked ruler, Archelaus of Macedon, as witness to the happiness of tyrants, emphasizing that they can take whatever they pleased (470d-471d). But Socrates rejects the argument from witnesses, responding: “You keep trying to refute me rhetorically, as those in lawcourts do,” by providing a great number of highly esteemed witnesses. Although Polus could no doubt get almost all Athenians, and foreigners too, to agree to his position, this will still not budge Socrates from his “own possession” (ousia: i.e., philosophy) or from the truth (471e-472b). The point is that although the tyrant can certainly use his power to seize the material possessions of others, the philosopher remains secure in that no one can deprive him of his “true possession,” even if one were to deprive him of his life. Thus Socrates is able to assert that he cannot
be harmed in any meaningful way by a tyrant. This means that the philos- 
opher can commit his life to a new sort of therapeutic stasis. As we have seen, 
the demos imagined tyrant killing as a uniquely therapeutic form of stasis. 
Plato’s Socrates employs some of the vocabulary of stasis to describe his own 
behavior. Socrates, however, does not seek to kill tyrants but rather to ex-
terminate, through elenctic education, his interlocutor’s unhealthy desire for 
tyrannical authority.

Callicles aspires to become a sort of tyrant in Athens through manipu-
lative leadership of the demos. Socrates proceeds to show him that it is 
the demos that is the real tyrant in Athens, by playing upon the theme of 
Callicles’ role as a “lover of demos.” At Gorgias 491d–492c Callicles predi-
cates the happy-tyrant argument on the natural rightness of maximizing his 
own pleasure, which in turn means maximizing desire so as to maximize 
satisfaction of desire. But Socrates shows him that the impulse to maximize 
desire and pleasure logically results in the lifestyle of the penetration-loving 
orthy (kinaidos) whose “itches” are, in Callicles’ case, “scratched” by the 
demos (494e). Rather than achieving the unrestrained position of the tyrant 
who can do whatever he pleases, the aspiring political leader ends up as the 
willing sexual victim of the tyrant-demos. The kinaidos metaphor graphi-
cally asserts Callicles’ inferior relationship relative to the demos. The position 
Callicles takes up is not that of the bold warrior advancing on his foe but 
rather that of a submissive inferior. With Socrates’ rude image of Callicles, the 
would-be tyrant, being penetrated by his demos-lover, sword becomes phal-
lus. The familiar political image of “demos-as-tyrant-killer” is reconfigured 
in the comic imagery of “demos-as-sexual-aggressor.” As long as Callicles 
remains possessed by the dream of the happy tyrant, he will remain enslaved 
by the dominant democratic ideology.

The point is reinforced later in the dialogue, this time explicitly in the 
language of tyranny: Socrates initially posits, and Callicles avidly agrees, that 
if a man does not wish to suffer injustice he must arm himself with powerful 
resources. The craft (techne) of provisioning oneself with security is to rule 
over the polis by being either an actual tyrant or (Callicles’ approach) a loyal 
comrade (hetairos) of the tyrannical politeia (510a). Yet security, as it turns out, 
comes at a great cost: the only way to be safe under the rule of a tyrant is to 
submit to him, agree with everything he says, be ruled by him, and indeed 
become as much like him as possible (510b–e): that is to say, to give up one’s 
individual identity and sense of self. Given that the discussion has been cen-
tered on politics in democratic Athens, the “tyrant” in question is once again

TYRANNY KILLING AS THERAPEUTIC STASIS: A Political Debate in Images and Texts 231
the Athenian demos, and those who submit to the tyrant-demos by becoming just like it are the public speakers, men like Callicles himself.

The distinction Plato draws between "Socratic politics" and the sort of "tyrannical" leadership in the democratic state sought by Callicles is underlined by Callicles' eventual admission (521a-c) that his own political practice, unlike that of Socrates, does not constitute "going to battle with the Athenians" (διαμαχομένων Ἀθηναίων) to improve them like a medical doctor, but rather it is a form of "menial service" aimed at gaining gratitude (charis) and avoiding punishment. Socrates of the Gorgias establishes a key distinction between democratic politics as a form of flattery aimed at pleasure and Socratic politics as a technique of education, by repeatedly employing the language of battles fought within the polis and/or within an individual soul: Socrates' approach to politics is "not via gratification but by battling it through" (μὴ καταχαριζόμενον ἀλλὰ διαμαχόμενον, 513d). The root contrast drawn here is between charis-seeking and battle, which we soon recognize as an analogy to the contrast between charis-seeking and medical treatment (therapeia: e.g., 513e). Paralleling the democratic ideology of tyrant killing as a moment of "therapeutic stasis," Socrates of the Gorgias correlates therapy and education with "doing battle" with one’s fellow citizens, and so politics becomes a way of “curing” them. Socrates teaches active resistance to ideological mystification, which is therapeutic for the individual citizen and for the polis. But although Socratic politike techne is imagined via the metaphor of stasis, a Socratic "battle within the polis" does not result in the death either of the tyrant-demos or of the tyrant-demos' orator-servants. Rather, the desired outcome is a new disposition, an elimination of the tyrannical impulse. Therapeutic stasis becomes a metaphor for Socrates’ educative mission. We are, in a sense, invited to replace the central democratic image of the tyrant killer’s healing and death-dealing sword with the Apology’s image of the gadfly’s tonic “sting.”

The issue of stasis and tyrannicide recurs in the Republic. At a pivotal moment in the dialogue, Socrates posits that for a truly excellent polis to come into being, either philosophers must be kings or kings and rulers must truly philosophize (473c-e). But this bold vision will not be realized without at least metaphorical violence. Glaucon warns Socrates that his proposal will be attacked by many distinguished people (ἐπὶ σὲ πάντων πολλῶν τε καὶ οὐ φαύλων). They will immediately pull off their cloaks, and, stripped naked, grab up whatever weapons lie to hand, “rushing forward avidly as if undertaking noteworthy deeds.” So Socrates had better be able to “defend himself by logos” (473e-474a).
This vivid passage adopts the familiar imagery of the canonical Athenian iconography of tyrannicide: the many distinguished folk will strip, take up arms, and rush forward avidly, imitating the kinetic energy and the heroic nudity of the sword-bearing tyrannicides of the Critius and Nesiotes group. The armed and naked men, anticipated by Glaucon as opponents of a new and quasi-monarchical element in the polis, are counterparts of democratic "tyrant killers." Their hostile response to Socrates' revolutionary proposal accords with the oath sworn by the Athenians in 410/09 to oppose the overthrow of democracy by whatever means necessary. Notably, however, it is not just ordinary citizens that Glaucon imagines as rushing at Socrates—although many (polloi), they are "not undistinguished" (ou phauloi). The would-be assassins who misrecognize Socrates as a would-be tyrant are members of the elite, but they have internalized the democratic account of "the tyrant and what we should do about him." We might say that in opposing Socrates' proposal for philosopher-rulers, they join Aristophanes' chorus of old Athenians, taking up their stand in the Agora next to Aristogeiton, determined that no one will ever set up a tyranny over them. The Republic passage underlines, through the familiar topoi of the tyrannicide ideology, the extent of reeducation that will be necessary before philosopher-rule could be welcomed, even as an ideal and even among the elite.

Yet later in the dialogue, the optimistic reader is offered reason to hope that something like the ideal of the philosopher-ruled city Plato called Callipolis might be attained. Socrates suggests that while difficult to achieve, the rule of the philosopher-king was not impossible in practice (ou γάρ ἀδύνατος γενέσθαι, ὁδ' ἡμεῖς ἀδύνατα λέγομεν, 499d). The gentlemen who Glaucon had imagined rushing at Socrates with weapons drawn will be forced to admit the logical force of the argument for philosophical rule (501c). Even the masses could come to accept such a regime, if they could just be taught what a philosopher really was (499d–500b). The potential depth of popular trust in true philosopher-leaders is suggested at the end of book 7 (540e–541a), where stasis imagery once again recurs, although in a very different form. For the transition from the old, corrupt regime to a new philosopher-led regime to be accomplished most easily and quickly within an existing polis, the philosopher-rulers will banish all citizens over age 10 to outlying agricultural districts; the banished evidently are expected to concur and head off gracefully, leaving their children behind.

The situation Plato envisions here recalls a common pattern of Greek civil strife, well known from (e.g.) Thucydides' depiction of the stasis at Corecyra.
when a faction takes over the main town of a polis, the opposing faction retreats to strongholds in the countryside. That pattern had recently been played out in Athens, when in 404 the Thirty held the city, and the democrats held the rural stronghold of Phyle. Yet in this part of the Republic the terrors of stasis have been thoroughly domesticated. The demos gives up its urban possessions and progeny without a struggle, evidently seeing that these sacrifices are preconditions to the therapeutic extermination of its own corrupted beliefs and practices. To realize Callipolis, the demos is, in effect, alienated from every attribute that a greedy human tyrant might desire: goods, homes, children, hope for the future. Yet the division of the city into alienated rural population and privileged city dwellers is imagined as voluntary. Moreover, the change, once accomplished, is permanent and irrevocable.

In Plato's text, realizing Callipolis requires first that its founders survive a metaphoric tyrannicide and then that most of the polis' adult population accepts—once and for all—living conditions ordinarily associated with tyranny and stasis. Yet once in place, the society of the Republic's Callipolis, predicated on the strict education of the Guard class and a set of "noble lies," eliminates all possible sources of conflict within the state and within the souls of its individual members. Callipolis' Guardians could not be alienated from that which was "their own," since ownership (of family and goods) was either nonexistent or communal. The education of Guardians ensures that they treat the lower orders strictly in accordance with justice. The censorship of literature in the ideal city ensures that Callipolis' residents never learn about the existence of stasis. Thus, Socrates' attempt to exterminate the tyrannical impulse in the souls of his interlocutors through reasoned argument reaches its end point in Callipolis, with the elimination of any possible motive or means for stasis. By the end of the Republic, Plato has led his reader to a position that is significantly different from that of Socrates as he is presented in the Apology and Gorgias (with his imagery of stings and battle) and, a fortiori, from the citizens of Athens itself, who kept the possibility of "therapeutic stasis" within the polis before themselves through public iconography and patriotic tyrant-killer tales of the sort objected to by Thucydides.

Plato's conception of politics is obviously very different from that of Athenian democrats. Here I underline two differences particularly salient in terms of the ideology of tyranny. First, contrary to the attempt of Athenian democrats to define a bipolar (democratic/tyrannical) political universe, Plato (like Aristotle and other fourth-century political thinkers) describes a
wide spectrum of political options. In the Republic's hierarchical taxonomy of regimes (Callipolis, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny) Callipolis defines the best-possible state, tyranny, the worst. But timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy are distinct (if, after the perfection of Callipolis, unsavory) political alternatives. Second, and equally important, is the imagination of change. In Plato's scheme, Callipolis, once achieved, remains static, existing in a steady state of excellence. The rules are fixed, and change is regarded as not only undesirable but disastrous. As soon as a mistake is made, as soon as change is introduced, the conditions of justice are destroyed, Callipolis is irretrievably lost, and the society is condemned to degenerate through a cycle of ever-worsening political regimes, ending in the horrors of tyranny (Republic books 8-9).

The democratic vision of political change was, as we have seen, quite different from Plato's, at once more pessimistic about the likelihood and frequency of serious political mishap and more optimistic about the capacity of existing political values and practices to survive mishaps. Tyrants are imagined as likely to arise, but they are also capable of being resisted and eventually overcome. For the Athenian, Ilitti, and Erythraean démoi alike, the figure of the tyrant killer was thought to be salutary. Stasis, at least in fourth-century Athenian democratic political thought, is simply an interval, an interruption in a continuous democratic narrative. As the Eucrates law of 337/36 demonstrates, the moral authority of the demos is imagined as extending through periods of oligarchic or tyrannical rule; the demos is regarded as capable of restoring itself in the aftermath of a healthy moment of tyrant-slaying violence. This robust democratic optimism may go a ways toward explaining the resilience of democracy in Hellenistic Athens and in the poleis of Asia Minor, in the face of overwhelming Macedonian royal power.39

REENVISIONING THE DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY OF TYRANNY: DEXILEOS

If the argument I have developed above is along the right lines, we might hope to find iconographic evidence for the debate about the relationship between democracy, stasis, tyrants, and tyrant killers. Linking Classical works of art to specific political positions or even to general political sensibilities is fraught with difficulty, but it is not an inherently absurd undertaking. We have no material traces of the tombstone of Critias, the leader of the Thirty at Athens who died fighting the democrats at the decisive battle of Mounichia. But according to a scholion to Aeschines, Against Timarchus (DK 88A13), his
tombstone featured a relief depicting personified Oligarchia, brandishing a torch and setting fire to Demokratia. The monument also reportedly featured an epigram: "This is the memorial (mnēma) of good men (andres agathoi) who, for a short while, restrained the hubris of the accursed demos." It is tempting to speculate about the artistic sources of this monument's iconography: might it have drawn on the imagery of Dike (Justice) assaulting Adikia (Injustice)? an Amazonomachy? a city siege? It is equally tempting to seek significance in the apparent dissonance between the murderous violence depicted in the relief and the language of restraint employed in the epigram—perhaps a reflection of two phases, quasi-constitutional and openly savage, of Critias' brief career as ruler?

Finally, it is surely significant that on the gravestone of the leader of the gang Athenian democrats called the Thirty Tyrants, it is Oligarchia and not Tyrannia who is igniting Demokratia. Critias' tombstone, as described by the scholiast, rejects the bipolar democratic reading of democracy's enemies as tyrants. Unfortunately, there is no way to establish that the monument described by the scholiast was ever in fact erected. But the (undatable) story of Critias' memorial, whatever its imagined iconography, points to Athenian tombstones as possible iconographic sites of ideological contestation. Moreover, it points to the aftermath of the rule of the Thirty as a particularly "hot" ideological era. As we have seen, this same era saw a recrudescence of tyrannicide iconography in Athenian vase painting. Accepting that we should not expect to discover anything nearly so explicit as an oligarch's tombstone depicting Demokratia in flames, we might, following the scholiast's pointers, find it worthwhile to look for more subtle responses to the democratic ideology of tyranny in the iconography of Attic tombstones of the decades around 404 B.C.

I have suggested that the memory and imagery of Athens' "tyrant slayers" were especially in the forefront at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries. Moreover, on the basis of the passage in Aristophanes' Lysistrata, I posited that the "Harmodius stance"—warrior moving right to left (rather than the usual, heroic, left to right), with right sword-arm cocked behind the head preparatory to delivering the "Harmodius blow"—came to serve as a shorthand visual cue to the democratic tyrant-killer ideology. There is some danger of finding a tyrannicide lurking behind every raised right arm. But the demonstrable Athenian concern with tyranny and tyrannicides in the late fifth and fourth centuries renders it more plausible that visual citations of the
Harmodius stance during that era were read by contemporary viewers as something more than politically innocent artistic conventions.

Athenian artists did in fact quote Critius and Nesiotes' Harmodius in designing late fifth- and fourth-century funerary sculpture. A nice example is the fourth-century funeral relief of Stratocrates son of Procles (Fig. 8.5; Clairmont 1993: 2.217), portraying a hoplite (presumably Stratocrates himself) assuming Harmodius' stance while preparing to strike a fallen foe. As Christoph Clairmont suggests, "The [Harmodios] motif is well known from the group of tyrant-slayers which is no doubt reminisced here."42 In the Stratocrates Relief, a figure (presumably Stratocrates himself) whose face and dress offer some similarities to Demos of Euprates' nomos (mature, bearded, drapery over left shoulder, chest exposed) takes on the active role of Harmodius. It is perhaps not too much to guess that an Athenian looking at this monument was invited to read Stratocrates' military service as having served the same role in preserving democratic Athens as Harmodius' assassination of the tyrant, although how explicit that claim was meant to be, on the part of artist or commissioner of the tombstone, necessarily remains obscure.

Perhaps the most remarkable visual citation of Harmodius in later Athenian art is the Albani Relief (Fig. 8.6; Clairmont 1993: 2.131). Certainly funerary in nature, it remains a matter of debate whether it is a public or a private monument, and it has been variously dated from ca. 430 through the 390s.43 Here, a young (unbearded), lightly draped cavalryman has just dismounted from his horse and prepares to dispatch a fallen, mostly nude youth with the Harmodius blow.44 The metamorphosis of Harmodius into an Athenian cavalryman introduces an interesting wrinkle, in light of the strongly aristocratic associations of the Athenian cavalry. The relationship between cavalry and democracy became that much more fraught after 404, due to the active cooperation by the Athenian cavalrymen with the reign of the Thirty.45 Whatever its exact date, it seems likely that the monument's citation of tyrannicide iconography sought to associate potentially politically suspect elite cavalrymen with the defense of democracy.

In an admittedly speculative reconstruction, Clairmont suggests that the Albani Relief supported a surviving inscribed frieze listing the Athenian cavalry casualties of 394/39 B.C.: ten horsemen and a phylarch lost at the Battles of Corinth and Coroneia (National Museum of Greece inv. 754 = GHI 11.104). Since the inscription was authorized by the Athenian state, Clairmont's reconstruction would make the Albani Relief part of a public monument of
the mid 390s, honoring the horsemen who died in defense of the democratic polity. In conformity to the established practices of democratic Athenian public burial, the deceased cavalrymen of the 390s were listed individually on the monument frieze, but the individuality of the fallen warriors was subsumed to the value of community, as emphasized in their common burial and by their common grave monument.
One of the ten dead horsemen listed on the inscribed frieze of 394/93 is Dexileos son of Lysanias of the deme Thoricus. Dexileos' family evidently decided that the state's communal commemoration was not enough. Shortly after his death and public burial, Dexileos' family erected a large and splendid cenotaph monument in his honor in the Ceramicus cemetery, complete with a sculptural relief and an inscription (Fig. 8.7). The popularity of the tyrant-killer iconography in the 390s is confirmed by an early fourth-century red-figure oinochoe found by excavators in Dexileos' cenotaph precinct (Fig. 8.8). The vase fragment depicts the Critius and Nesiotes monument itself, with Harmodius to the front in his distinctive stance, although, as Emily Vermeule pointed out in her original publication of the fragment, his sword looks more like a limp rag than a real weapon. Aristogeiton's sword is hidden behind his own right hip. This vase, along with four others of the same early fourth-century date but featuring conventional scenes recalling the Anthesteria "coming of age" festival, was apparently deposited by the family of Dexileos in his cenotaph at the time the monument was consecrated.

What, if any, ideological significance ought we to attach to this cluster of...
Fig. 8.7. Dexileos relief (394/93 B.C.). By permission of Deutsches Archaeologische Institut, Athens (Inv. P 1130).
artifacts? A possible pointer is offered by Dexileos' peculiar cenotaph inscription (IG ii² 6217 = GHI II.105), which, surprisingly, lists both his birth and death dates: 414/13 (archon Teisander) and 394/93 (archon Euboulides). It is the only known Attic funerary inscription to do so. Glenn Bugh, following a conjecture originally made by Colin Edmonson, plausibly argues that the birth date was added to exculpate the horseman Dexileos from the possible charge of pro oligarchic activities during the reign of the Thirty. The prominent birthdate proclaims that Dexileos was simply too young to have ridden against the democrats at Phyle.48

Dexileos' relatives might well have been especially concerned to make some sort of ideological disclaimer because they chose to erect a remarkable, highly visible, and iconographically striking monument to decorate the new cenotaph enclosure. This sort of ostentatious private commemoration had been out of fashion in democratic Athens — and elsewhere in Greece — for a century or more. It might well (and might rightly) be seen as offering a pri-

Fig. 8.8. Oinochoe fragment depicting tyrannicide monument, ca. 390 B.C.
Henry Lillie Pierce Fund, courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
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All rights reserved.
vate response, even a covert challenge by a wealthy family to the democratic practices of commemorating fallen warriors as equals, via funeral oration, common burial, laconic casualty lists, and communal sculptural reliefs. 49

The challenge would be especially stark if we follow Clairmont in imagining the Albani Relief as a public monument of 394/93: the iconography of the Albani and Dexileos reliefs is clearly interrelated (whether directly or via a common source). I suggested above that the visual quotation of the Harmodius stance in the Albani Relief should be read as asserting that the cavalry defended democracy. The Dexileos inscription, with its implicit claim that "I was too young to be an oligarch, and I died defending democratic Athens at Corinth," might be seen in a similar light, as an attempt to deflect demotic jealousy and ire at ostentatious private self-advertisement by the family of an aristocrat. This would be an acknowledgment, at the level of the inscribed text, of democratic ideological authority. The oinochoe dedication, with its portrayal of the tyrannicide monument might be (and has been) read in the same general light, as making a philodemocratic statement of some sort. 50

Yet the relief’s iconography adds another level of complexity. As Bru­nilde Ridgway has noted, the Dexileos Relief is distinctive (although not unparalleled; cf. again, the Albani Relief) in depicting the "heroic" horseman (presumably Dexileos himself) who prepares to skewer his fallen foe as draped, and his defeated enemy as nude. Ridgway suggests that this may be an example of a reversal of the ordinary association of nudity: here, rather than heroism, nudity may reflect the helpless position of the defeated warrior. 51 Yet for our purposes, it is even more remarkable that the nude fallen soldier quite faithfully maintains the familiar Harmodius stance of sword-arm overhead, even in collapse, although this time the Harmodius blow is offered by a dying man as a futile response to the mounted enemy who is spearing him. 52 The nude fallen warrior clutches a shield (rather than a scabbard) in his left hand, but his shield arm (like that of Stratocles, Fig. 8.5) is draped with a chlamys and thereby recalls the draped arm of the otherwise nude Aristogeiton figure of the Critius and Nesiotes group. If the Albani Relief (whatever its exact date) presents to its viewer "Harmodius as victorious Athenian cavalryman," thus celebrating the defense of democracy by the Athenian horsemen, then it is tempting to see in the private Dexileos Relief a metaphorical overthrow by the aristocratic cavalryman of the democratic tyrannicide heroes and so, one might suppose, the overthrow of democracy itself.

The Dexileos Relief’s visual quotation of the Critius and Nesiotes group
stretches the canonical representation almost to the breaking point. Indeed, if we did not know about the dedication at the cenotaph of an oinochoe depicting the tyrannicide monument, the association of the Dexileos Relief with the Critius and Nesiotes group would be harder to defend. But the oinochoe was deposited at the cenotaph, strong evidence that the people who commissioned the monument were acutely aware of tyrant-killer iconography. Given the oinochoe dedication, and given the similarity of the iconography of the Dexileos monument to other near-contemporary sculptural citations of the tyrannicide monument, the Dexileos citation may be taken as intentional. If intentional, in the atmosphere of the 390s, it could hardly be innocent of political meaning.

Assuming, as I suppose we must, that those who commissioned the Dexileos cenotaph were sensitive to tyrannicide iconography, we may guess that they anticipated that similarly sensitive viewers would respond, one way or another, to it. So how might an early fourth-century Athenian witness read the Dexileos monument, taken as a whole? Might he or she see a visual narrative of an alternative, counterfactual, "aristocratic-utopian" Athenian history, one in which the stasis of 404 had resulted not in democratic restoration following the humiliating rout of the pro-Thirty cavalry in a snowstorm but rather in the aristocratic cavalry’s therapeutic destruction of the democratic aspirations of the "men of Phyle"?

Yet the Dexileos inscription militates against such a straightforward anti-democratic reading. The juxtaposition of the ostentatious private monument, its subtly subversive iconography, and its subtly defensive inscription, with their potentially clashing ideological messages, suggests that reading the Dexileos monument, even for a contemporary Athenian, was no simple matter. Should we then regard the Dexileos monument as so semiotically overdetermined as to be ideologically illegible—to us or to its contemporaries? Perhaps not, if we regard it in light of Isocrates’ highly self-conscious "double-pointed speeches" (logoi amphiboloi).53 Kathryn Morgan (this volume) emphasizes the multiplicity of Isocrates’ implied audiences. Isocrates’ carefully crafted, deliberately ambiguous texts explicitly offered at least two readings, depending on the reader’s sophistication and political tastes (in the case of the Panathenaeicus, a pro- or an anti-Spartan reading). Unlike an Isocratean didactic text, the sculptural monument does not teach us how to read by offering a convenient meta-rhetoric. But with Isocrates’ “lesson” in mind, we might view the Dexileos monument as “amphibolic.” In common with political texts of the same period, the monument can be read as hovering
in the field of tension created by the powerful democratic ideology and a powerful elite impulse to dissent from that ideology. Like an Isocratean amphibolos logos, the monument seems to be an artifact specifically designed to be read differently by different audiences. Like an Isocratean text (and unlike the Erythrae tyrannicide monument with its clarifying inscription), it resists simple appropriation by any particular political tendency. But that resistance to interpretive appropriation does not render it innocent of political meaning.

**MIXED MEDIA**

The “amphibolic” reading I have suggested for Dexileos’ monument is a far cry from the straightforward, oligarchic reading the scholiast offered of Critias’ tombstone, and deliberately so. Thinking in terms of Isocrates’ craftsmanly and self-conscious ambiguity might provide an entrée into a way of viewing some Greek works of art that would take into account the sort of ideological negotiations that scholars have traced in Greek texts. There are other Attic tombstones in which a defeated soldier struggles to respond to his attacker with the Harmodius blow: for example, the very beautiful although fragmentary Clairmont 1993: 2.230, which is very close iconographically to the Dexileos Relief; the cruder, and perhaps later Clairmont 1993: 2.251; or a recently published relief fragment tentatively identified as a public monument of ca. 338 B.C. A better understanding of these reliefs might help us to read more into other Attic reliefs depicting triumphant draped horsemen and fallen nude infantrymen who do not offer the Harmodius blow: for example, National Museum of Greece inv. 2744, a public monument again commemorating the fallen of 394/3, or a striking square base found near the Academy depicting three perspectives of the same general battle scene (Clairmont 1993: 2.213).

The tyrant-slayer motif encourages us to explore the close interaction of ideology and dissent and of text and image. Tracing the complicated and criss-crossing system of cultural references, a task this paper has only begun, requires moving across a variety of media and between various genres: monumental sculpture and vase painting; comic poetry, history and philosophy; inscribed public decrees; public and private funerary and documentary reliefs; erudite marginalia reporting monuments that may or may not have existed. It leads us to traverse long periods of history and to move outside Athens. The point of seeking to trace the web of references across media, genres, time, and space is the chance to glimpse the growing density of associations
that elite and ordinary Athenians (and other Greeks, as suggested by extra-
Attic epigraphic traces) brought to the problem of "thinking the tyrant." As
the political and cultural resonances grew richer, the skilled interlocutor—
whether artist or writer or (with Aristophanes' chorus) gesturer—could say
more, in different registers and potentially to various audiences, with in-
creasingly subtle allusions. Such circumstances demand both imagination and
interpretive modesty on the part of the modern reader. At best we will catch
only some references, and we should certainly never hope to fix the "full and
final" political meaning of any given citation of the visual or literary canons.

The evolving democratic discourse on tyrannicide depended on both sta-
bility and change, on both "being" and "becoming." It required the continuity
over time of a core ideological association of tyrant killing with salutary de-
defense of the democratic regime. But (absent serious challenges by genuine
tyrants) the democratic discourse on tyranny risked ossification. It gained
the capacity to extend its imaginative scope only when faced by substantial
dissident responses. That dissident response might be at the level of text, of
iconographic representation, or of political action, or, sometimes, all three at
once. If the oligarchs of Erythrae had never sought to change the discourse
by taking away a tyrannicide's sword, then the restored democrats would
have had no chance to counter-claim that those who removed the sword had
revealed that it was pointed at themselves. Although we should never forget
how nasty Greek politics could become in practice, it is in such high-stakes
ideological debates that Greek political life reveals its semiotic versatility and
intellectual vitality.
Notes

1 On Athenian dissidents, cf. Ober 1998. I received helpful responses to earlier versions of this chapter from audiences at UCLA, the University of Toronto, University of Tel Aviv, Johns Hopkins University, and Cornell University. Special thanks are due to W. A. P. Childs and Ralf von den Hoff for help with iconographic questions; to Vincent Farenga for his thoughtful commentary; and to Richard Neer for sharing an advance draft of parts of his dissertation (now Neer 2002) and for his insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.


3 Because proponents of what I call “democratic ideology” and the “dissident sensibility” agreed that tyrants are wicked does not, of course, imply that all Athenians thought so. The Athenian demos (as depicted in, e.g., Aristophanes, Thucydides book 6, and the Eucrates nomos discussed below) and Plato (in Gorgias and Republic) agreed that there were in fact men in Athens who regarded the tyrant’s life as the pinnacle of human happiness, desired tyranny for themselves, and would seek to seize it if given a chance. It is important to avoid supposing that the “democratic/dissident” debate adequately maps the political terrain of classical Athens. It is a debate joined by those who accept that justice is something like “the common good” and so leaves out self-interested and self-aggrandizing types who sincerely regard their individual and personal advantage as the only good worth pursuing. It is worth noting that Socrates of the Gorgias contrasts Callicles’ moral beliefs to certain moral convictions (488e–89b: it is preferable to suffer than to do wrong; 491d–e: enkrateia [self-control] is a virtue) held commonly by Socrates and “the many.”

4 Osborne (this volume) rightly emphasizes that after 412 both oligarchy and “moderate” variants of democracy were granted more serious analytic attention as “third ways” between “radical” democracy and tyranny. But he seems to me to overstate the “sea change” and “transformation” of Athenian political ideology and practice in the era 412–403 and to underestimate the continued salience of tyranny as defining “the worst case” in both the democratic and dissident political imagination in the fourth century. Tyranny continued to hold an undisputed position (e.g., for Plato, Republic, for whom it is the final point in the degeneration of regimes and for Aristotle, Politics, for whom it is the worst of the “incorrect” regimes) as the undoubted bottom of the political barrel. Consequently, the label “tyrant” retained its bite, even as oligarchy and “moderate” democracy gained (among intellectuals) greater conceptual clarity.

5 This peculiarity is addressed by several other essays in this volume: Raaflaub, Kallet, Seaford, Henderson, and Osborne. Henderson notes the tendency to equate tyranny and all forms of antidemocratic activity, citing Andoc. 1:96–98, as well as the evidence of comedy.

246 Josiah Ober
6 The Critius and Nesiotes group: Taylor 1991; Fehr 1984; Brunnäker 1971; Castriota 1997; further bibliography: Neer 2002. I leave aside the unanswerable question of the motives of those who erected the original group sculpted by Antenor, whoever they were, whatever the Antenor group’s pre-450 date, and whatever its precise form. For further discussion and bibliography on the Antenor group, see Raafäub (this volume), who also cites the evidence for the formal honors offered by the state to the tyrannicides and their descendents.

7 Vincent Farenga, formal comments on an earlier draft of this paper, March 25, 1998.

8 Fehr 1984: 35-38, on the active unity of purpose and its democratic associations.


10 The Copenhagen Painter has now been associated with the Syriscus Painter: Neer 2002. The three (or perhaps four) vase paintings depicting the tyrannicide from the years 475-450 and the five from around 400 B.C. were originally studied as a group in Beazley 1948; their connection with democratic and elitist sensibilities is sensitively examined by Neer 2002.

11 Cf. Thuc. 6.58.2: Hippias searches Panathenaic marchers for encheiridia after the assassination of Hipparchus and holds those with daggers guilty, since it was the tradition to march in the procession only with shield and spear. Thucydides’ account was challenged by [Arist.] Ath. Pol. 18.4, as anachronistic.

12 Hdt. 5.55-57.1 (noting that Hippias was the tyrant, that Hipparchus was his brother, and that the tyranny lasted for another four years, and became harsher, after the assassination); Thuc. 1.20.2, 6.53-6.60.1; [Arist.] Ath. Pol. 18. For further discussion of these passages, see Raafäub, this volume.

13 Harmodius blow: Shefton 1960. Cf. the stage directions added to the translation, in Sommerstein 1990: ad loc. “Striking attitude, right leg thrust forward, right arm raised as if swinging back sword.” I am tempted to add “with cloak thrown off” on the strength of Pl. Resp. 473e-474a.; see below. On the importance of tyrant language and examples from history in this play, see Henderson, this volume.

14 Villa Giulia vase: Beazley 1948: 26 with fig. 1.

15 The relevant texts (cited in n. 12, above) are conveniently collected in Stanton 1990.

16 For further discussion of this passage, see Ober 1998: 359-360.

17 Raafäub, this volume.

18 Meritt 1952: 355-359 = SEG 12.87. For a detailed discussion of the relief, its artistic sources, and bibliography, see Lawton 1995: 99-100 (no. 38, with pl. 20).

19 The Demophantus Decree: Andoc. 1.96-98, with Raafäub and Osborne, this volume.

20 And so, with Osborne, this volume, something very substantial has indeed changed within discourse and practice, but I would contend that those changes must be read in the context of some very substantial ideological continuities.

21 On freedom, equality, security as the core triad of Athenian democratic values, see Ober 1996: 86-88.
Honors for the killer of Phrynicus: ML no. 85. The assassin is not actually described as a "tyrant killer" but is rewarded for having "done what was necessary." Krentz 1982: 16, n. 2 on the early association of the terminology of "tyranny" with the Thirty. Osborne, this volume, (1) points to efforts on the part of late fifth- and fourth-century Athenian intellectuals to define a "third way" and (2) suggests that those efforts found expression in constitutional reforms. The first point is certainly true, and the second is, I believe, very likely (see, further, Ober 1998: 369–373). But I do not see that there is any evidence that Athenian "official ideology" ever gave up on the "primacy of tyranny" as democracy's antithesis, or that Athenian intellectuals ever abandoned the "primacy of tyranny" as the worst-case politeia. So, once again, I resist Osborne's argument for a "sea change" comparable to the revolutionary era of the late sixth century.

On the role of forgetting in the Athenian response to stasis, see Loraux 1997. For a detailed discussion of the ideological response to the stasis, see Wolpert 2002.


OGIS no. 218. My thanks to John Ma for bringing inscriptions from Troy and Erythrae to my attention.

Dittenberger in SIG 384 with Gauthier 1982. Date: ca. 334 B.C., according to Dittenberger ad loc., on the grounds that Alexander in that year mandated that all the poleis of Asia Minor would be democracies (Arr. Anab. 1.18.1–2; GHI II no. 192, lines 3–4). One might legitimately say that oligarchy at Erythrae did not fall but was overthrown. But we still need an answer for why Alexander reversed Philip's general policy of promoting oligarchy in allied cities. The easiest answer would seem to be that Alexander put in place the government he supposed would be most stable (ergo, least troublesome to him) because it was most in tune with what the Greeks of Asia Minor wanted. N.B. the similarity of formulaic language between this inscription (ἀγαθή τοὐχή δεδοχθαι τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ [with good fortune, be it resolved by the Council and the demos]) and the Eucrates nomos (ἀγαθή τοὗ τοῦ δήμου τοῦ Αθηναίων δεδοχθαι τοῖς νομοθέταις [with good fortune of the demos of the Athenians, be it resolved by the nomothetai]).

ἐπειδὴ οἱ ἐν τῇ ἀληθειᾷ τῆς εἰκόνος τῆς Φύλλου, τοῦ ἀποκτείναντος τῶν τύραννων, τοῦ ἀνθρώπων ἐξελέιν τὸ έρυγον, νομίζοντες κάθαλον τὴν στάσιν καθ᾽ αὐτῶν εἶναι.

On the Harmodius and Aristogeiton imagery on coins and statuary outside Athens, see Fehr 1984: 7–8 with ills. 2–3.

The pro- and antityrannical strands in earlier Greek thought: see Seaford, this volume. Cf. Raafflaub and Kallet, both this volume and responding to Connor 1977. On Herodotus' very complex depiction of tyranny and tyrants, see Dewald, this volume.

On demos as tyrant in Aristophanes, see Henderson, this volume. As Raafflaub (this volume) points out, "Demos-tyrannos" appears in fifth-century literature explicitly in comedy, implicitly in literature critical of democracy. Kallet (this volume) discusses
some of the implicit fifth-century and explicit (critical) fourth-century associations of demos with tyrant. On Ps.-Xenophon as a critic of democracy, see Ober 1998: 14-23.


34 Possible constitutional-reform plans of the Thirty: Krentz 1982; Osborne, this volume.


37 Cf. Morgan, this volume, pp. 185-186 with n. 17.

38 ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης ἑαυτὸς γιγαντιαῖς ἀνθρώπων ἑκάστῳ παρεῖσχεν ὡς ὁμοίως καὶ ἐγκαθιστῶς.


40 οὗτος ἐπίκτητος τα ἰματα, γυμνοὶς λοφόντας ὁκόν ἐκφέρον, οἱ τῶν καταρατῶν δήμων ἐνιαύτων ὄλοι τῶν ὁμοίων ὀφρῶν έσχον.

41 See Osborne, this volume.


43 Albani Relief: Clairmont 1993: 2.131, with discussion of date and speculative reconstruction as a public monument of 394/3; Holach 1973: 109-110 with n. 529.

44 Cf. Supperich 1994: 93: “The victor in the Albani Relief and the victorious Stratocles . . . who are both shown contrary to the usual direction of the victor as moving from right to left, adopt the stance of Harmodios.”


48 Bugh 1988: 139.

49 I. Morris 1992: 128-144 discusses the evolving size and splendor of Attic funerary monuments.

50 Vermuele 1973: 105-106 suggests democratic associations of the (private) oinochoe dedication.


52 Shefton 1960: 174 cites the Dexileos Relief as a primary example of the “defensive use” of the Harmodius blow. The earlier iconographic depictions of a fallen warrior in the
defensive Harmodius position cited by Shefton, mostly Amazonomachae, are from vase paintings.


54 Neer 2002 attempts a similar task, focusing on Attic vase painting of ca. 510-450 B.C. Texts as negotiating competing social and political ideologies: e.g., Ober 1989; I. Morris 1996; Kurke 1999.

55 Bibliography on these Harmodius-blow reliefs: Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1986.