The symposion was a key cultural phenomenon in ancient Greece. This book investigates its place in ancient Greek society and thought by exploring the rhetorical dynamics of its representations in literature and art. Across genres, individual Greeks constructed visions of the party and its performances that offered persuasive understandings of the event and its participants. Sympotic representations thus communicated ideas which, set within broader cultural conversations, could possess a discursive edge. Hence, at the symposion, sympotic styles and identities might be promoted, critiqued and challenged. In the public imagination, the ethics of Greeks and foreigners might be interrogated and political attitudes intimated. Symposia might be suborned into historical narratives about struggles for power. And for philosophers, writing a Symposium was itself a rhetorical act. Investigating the symposion’s discursive potential enhances understanding of how the Greeks experienced and conceptualized the symposion and demonstrates its contribution to the Greek thought world.

Fiona Hobden is a Senior Lecturer in Greek Culture at the University of Liverpool, where she teaches courses on various aspects of ancient Greek cultural history, including politics, gender and religion. Her current research focuses primarily on the symposion, but she is also interested in representations of the past and the present in Classical Athens, in ancient and modern responses to the Athenian cityscape and in history represented on television.
THE SYMPOSION IN ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY AND THOUGHT

FIONA HOBDEN
To family and friends

Here’s tae us!
What’s like us?
Damn few,
And they’re a’ deid.
Mair’s the pity.       A Scots toast
Contents

List of illustrations  ix
Acknowledgements  x
List of abbreviations  xii

Introduction: talking about the symposion
Symposion or mirage?  1
Thinking with the mirage  15

1 Metasympotics
Symptotic representation and gnomic wisdom  22
Spectacles of symposiality  25
Competition, conflict and communality  34

2 Ethnopoieia and ēthopoieia
Foreigners at the symposion?  66
The ethnography and ethics of drinking in Herodotus  70
Beyond Herodotus: the moral dimension  83
Enter Anacharsis  94

3 Politics in performance
Look out for tyrants! Empedocles at the symposion  117
Imperialism at play: 'at home' with Sophocles and Cimon  118
Commensal misconduct on the false embassy  121
From waspish revelry to oligarchic revolutionaries  129
The politics of the symposion (I)  140

4 Politics in action
Drunk and disorderly: cosmological confrontations  157
Symptotic plots against civic threats in Euripides' Ion  159
Tyrrants look out! Or, Why despots should not drink  164
Persian plots and Macedonian murders  171
The politics of the symposion (II)  182

vii
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5  Symposion and Symposium</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Testing the truth and ourselves’ in Plato’s Symposium</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenophon’s sympotic display</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-Sympotics</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: the rhetorics of the symposion</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index locorum</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index vasorum</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General index</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Photograph and line drawings are by the author.

1 Corinthian black-figure krater attributed to the Athana Painter, c. 590, side A. Paris, Musée du Louvre E629 page 4
2 Attic red-figure amphora attributed to Euphronius, c. 520, neck. Paris, Musée du Louvre G30 37
3 Attic red-figure kylix attributed to the Antiphon Painter, c. 500–480, tondo. Erlangen, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität 43
4 Fragments of an Attic red-figure kylix attributed to the Pithos Painter, c. 510–500, tondo. Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco 11B1, DB4 78
5 Attic red-figure kylix attributed to the Colmar Painter, c. 500, sides A and B. New York, Metropolitan Museum 16.174.41 80
6 Fragment of an unattributed attic red-figure kylix, c. 510, tondo. Moscow, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts F1410 82
7 Attic red-figure ram’s head rhyton attributed to the Brygos Painter, c. 480–470, detail from rim and under handle. Cleveland, Museum of Art 88.8 83
Acknowledgements

The impetus to examine the symposion through the constructive and persuasive workings of its representations in ancient Greek society and thought arose from my doctoral work on Plato’s and Xenophon’s *Symposia*, examined in November 2003. I have thus been working on the project for over a decade, and I have accrued many debts of gratitude. A Ronald Morton Smith Scholarship from the University of St Andrews and a Major Scottish Studentship from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (administered in my final year by the Arts and Humanities Research Board) funded that initial doctoral research. My thesis was examined by Paul Cartledge and Stephen Halliwell, and I am indebted to them for comments and encouragement at this early stage, and beyond. The book moved towards its current shape during a Visiting Fellowship at the Institute of Classical Studies in London in Spring 2006. Chapters 3 and 4 were drafted in spring 2009 during my spell as a Visiting Scholar at the University of Sydney, based at the Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia. I am grateful to Mike Edwards and Olga Krzyszowska at the former, and Julia Kindt, Kathryn Welch and Peter Wilson at the latter, for their warm welcomes. My residencies were made possible by awards from the University of Liverpool Research Development Fund, and from the British Council Research Exchange Programme and J. P. Postgate Trust, respectively.

This study has been enriched immeasurably by the generosity of many colleagues. Eran Almagor, Anton Bierl, Alastair Blanshard, Felix Budelmann, Diana Burton, Gabriel Danzig, Matthew Fitzjohn, Jo Heirman, Ippokratis Kantzios, Hyun Jin Kim, André Lardinois, Pauline LeVen, Laura Mawhinney, Elizabeth Moignard, Andrea Nightingale, Zinon Papakonstantinou, Frances Pownall, Joseph Skinner, Deborah Steiner, Harold Tarrant, Christopher Tuplin, José Vela Tejada, Tim Whitmarsh and Alexey Zadorojnyi have provided guidance, conversation, thoughts on draft chapters, or advance copies of forthcoming work. Audiences at the Universities of Liverpool, St Andrews...
Acknowledgements

and Trinity St David (Lampeter), and at the Network for the Study of Archaic and Classical Greek Song also offered useful feedback. Jason König deserves special thanks for bringing his sympotic expertise to bear on the entire manuscript, as do three Cambridge University Press readers. Of these, Oswyn Murray has seen the book through from start to finish; I have benefited greatly from his sharp eye and depth of knowledge. Michael Sharp has been efficient, helpful and encouraging as the book progressed from concept to publication, as have the editorial and production team. As always, errors remain my own.

I have been exceptionally fortunate to spend my academic career at two institutions amongst colleagues who are supportive and inspiring. At the University of St Andrews, Jill Harries nurtured my initial interests; Jon Hesk’s incisive reading of Classical texts and playful dissection of Greek culture continue to stimulate. Both offer models to aspire to in my own teaching and supervision. At the University of Liverpool, Bruce Gibson and Tom Harrison are constant mentors; with typical selflessness Graham Olivershouldered more than his share of teaching in the final stages of my research; Colin Adams and Jo Paul offer firm friendship. That this book reached completion also owes much to the abiding presence and good humour of my family: Elizabeth and Gordon Hobden, Iain Hobden and Marina Rodrigues Faria, and David Montagnes.
Abbreviations for ancient sources follow Liddell, Scott and Jones, *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Journal titles in the bibliography are abbreviated in line with *L’Année philologique*.


**BD** The Beazley Archive Pottery Database (www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/databases/pottery.htm).


**Caizzi** Caizzi, F. (1966) *Antisthenis Fragmenta*, Milan.


## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>