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The Unity of Characterization and Genre in Plato's Symposium

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The Unity of Characterization and Genre in Plato's *Symposium*

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Classics

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Preliminary Note

Except where noted, all translations of the *Symposium* are from Margaret Howatson's translation for the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy series. The Greek text itself is from Kenneth Dover's commentary for the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics series; the line and section numbers correspond with both Dover's text and the Oxford Classical Texts edition of Plato's *Symposium*.

Abstract

In his *Symposium* Plato appropriates two common literary elements, characterization and genre, for his own philosophical discourse. In this present study I examine the interaction of the two elements in the *Symposium*, and I argue that the two are inextricably linked, i.e. forces of characterization rely on and reinforces forces of genre in each of the speeches spoken by the seven symposiasts. In order to achieve this, I examine both the form and the content of each character's speech and give special attention to matters of genre and argument, logic, and style of the speeches. In conclusion I propose that the *Symposium*, as a dialogue, celebrates particularly the character of Socrates, and, furthermore, the dialogue constitutes a defense of Plato's philosophical styling.

Antitheses are usually resolved, not by picking one side and refuting the other, or by making eclectic choices between them, but by trying to get past the antithetical way of stating the problem.

- Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature"

Introduction: The Drinking Party

Like many other ancient authors Plato wrote dialogues; unlike many authors he wrote Socratic dialogues, although in this aspect he is still not unique. He is, however, unique in the literary finesse that his dialogues evince. In his article on the origin of the Socratic dialogue, Diskin Clay stresses Plato's unique appropriation of genre in his Socratic dialogues: "Plato also parts company with the other literary Socratics in reflecting within his Socratic dialogues on the established literary genres in terms of which his dialogues are to be understood and against which they were to stand in contrast."¹ Andrea Nightingale studied extensively the contrast with genre that Clay notes; this present study, however, examines the specific elements of genre incorporated by Plato, most notably his dramatic elements, the setting of the dialogue and characterization. These two components of drama converge significantly in one dialogue, the *Symposium*. The scene, a symposium, provides a culturally vivid framework for the dialogue; the participants in this dialogue, the vast array of characters, provide ample opportunity to explore not only Plato's techniques of characterization, but also their effect on the dialogue.

In siting the dialogue at a symposium Plato imposes a set of cultural and literary constraints upon the form and content of the dialogue and the behavior of the participants. These cultural implications particularly define the setting of the *Symposium*. In a most general sense the symposium was a ritualized gathering of aristocratic men in Greek society. Beyond this pattern, a symposium

¹ Clay 1994: 46

played out differently depending upon the individuals present or their intended purpose; however, a paradigmatic gathering must have included three essential elements: drinking, entertainment, and conversation. Different emphasis of these elements could have a profound effect on the gathering.

Drinking was an intrinsic feature of a symposium, as one half of the word's etymology, *-posium*, makes obvious, and the other half, the *sym-* prefix, stresses that this is social drinking. James Davidson deems drinking at a symposium to be "an almost perfect example in fact of the anthropologists' commensal model of drinking in which socializing is paramount."² The drink of choice was always wine, which was mixed to varying degrees of alcoholic strength depending on the parts of water and wine. The consumption of wine in this context was very ritualistic and participants were expected to drink the same amount. A symposiarch, who was elected by the participants as the leader of the group, decided upon this amount. In this way drinking is a unifying force among the participants; they pass the night together. The symposiarch must consider the amount of wine consumed in order to balance with the other sympotic elements, most particularly the effects of alcohol on conversation. If socializing is the ultimate goal, loosening of the tongue by wine would help the gathering, but Davidson warns, "...wine and words competed with one other, an unequal contest that wine usually won...."³ Drinking is a dangerous element, and the participants must drink with a degree of care and moderation for a successful symposium.

The evening's entertainment could similarly upset a symposium by allowing the communal experience that characterizes the gathering to be broken. Indeed, Xenophon's *Symposium* provides an excellent example of entertainment scattering the guests; when actors portraying Ariadne and Dionysus slip into a sexual embrace, the men of the gathering rush off to their wives or, in the case of the unmarried men, swear to find wives (Xen. *Sym.* 9.7). Like the consideration of the amount of

² Davidson 1998: 42

³ Davidson 1998: 51

wine there was a continuum of possibilities for entertainment. On the more restrained side a flute-girl could be the entirety of the evening's entertainment. Other musicians could also be present, as in the case of Xenophon's symposium; music was a common aspect of the entertainment. Davidson believes that the symposia described by Plato and Xenophon are both quite restrained, and entertainment would often include *hetairai* for the guests, which, as in the case of very heavy drinking, would surely end the possibility of productive conversation and male commensality.⁴

Struggling against both excessive drinking and potentially sexual entertainment to maintain its position in the symposium, conversation is a counterpoint to the other two; it is prone to become too sober for a symposium. Ideally, balance among the elements would create an atmosphere of relaxation and enjoyment concordant with the gathering's purpose. But what must be characteristic of sympotic conversation so that it remains light-hearted and does not become too solemn? It could be either formally organized, as is the series of rotating speeches composed by the guests we witness at Agathon's symposium, or it could be more relaxed, for example a game of rhetoric or poetic recitation. Even the formal style provides sufficient opportunity for amusement in a carefree subject. Conversely, conversation that is too serious would dampen the spirits of the gathering; Xenophanes in his description of a perfect symposium cautions against "[recounting] the battles of the Titans or Giants or Centaurs, creations of our predecessors, or violent factions – there is nothing useful in them... (οὐ τι μάχας διέπειν Τιτῆνων οὐδὲ Γιγάντων / οὐδὲ < > Κενταύρων, πλάσμα<τα> τῶν προτέρων, / ἢ στάσιος σφεδανάς· τοῖς οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστιν)."⁵ Managing the course of conversation is therefore also a consideration of the participants.

The symposium is a precarious environment, and there is great variety in the way it could transpire, and Plato addresses each of these hazards at Agathon's symposium. Eryximachus is

⁴ Davidson 1998: 95-96

⁵ Xenophanes fr. B1, from West 1972: 164; trans. Hunter 2004: 7

effectively the symposiarch, although self-elected, and he addresses all three elements when he proposes how the guests should spend the evening:

ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν, φάναι τὸν Ἐρυξίμαχον, τοῦτο μὲν δέδοκται, πίνειν ὅσον ἂν ἕκαστος βούληται, ἐπάναγκες δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο εἰσηγοῦμαι τὴν μὲν ἄρτι εἰσελθοῦσαν ἀύλητρίδα χαίρειν ἔαν, ἀυλοῦσαν ἑαυτῇ ἢ ἂν βούληται ταῖς γυναῖξι ταῖς ἔνδον, ἡμᾶς δὲ διὰ λόγων ἀλλήλοις συνεῖναι τὸ τήμερον: καὶ δι' οἶων λόγων, εἰ βούλεσθε, ἐθέλω ὑμῖν εἰσηγήσασθαι. (176e4-10)

‘Well then’, said Eryximachus, ‘since it is settled that each of us should drink just so much as he wants, and there is no compulsion, I have another suggestion to make about the girl who plays the *aulos* who has just come in: let us tell her to go away and play to herself or, if she likes, to the women in their rooms, while for this evening we entertain each other with talk. And if you like I am ready with a proposal about the kind of talk we might have’.

Slightly earlier, when the guests discuss the question of drinking, they agree not to get drunk, but to drink “according to pleasure” (πρὸς ἡδονήν - 176e3). However, all also agree that moderate drinking is the best, for even the heavy drinkers are still recovering from the previous night’s drinking; Socrates alone of the major characters does not explicitly voice his opinion, but since he is not affected by alcohol like normal men, it is unimportant (176c4). Most importantly, it is assured that Agathon’s symposium will not become an incoherent night of binge drinking. Although they had effectively already agreed upon the nature of the drinking, Eryximachus formalizes the agreement and at the same time reinforces that he is the symposiarch. Additionally, he also proposes to send away the already minimal entertainment of the evening – a single flute-girl. Thus Plato removes any tangible sexual association from the gathering, “forcing the erotic atmosphere to be discharged in amorous philosophy,” Davidson remarks.⁶ While it may certainly be advantageous for the men to channel their sexual energy into encomia of Eros, the dismissal of the flute-girl still creates a shift in the balance of the sympotic elements. Without her presence, Eryximachus’ suggestion to spend the evening in conversation is therefore the only course of action left for this symposium. This decision to shun the

⁶ Davidson 1998: 96

norm of drinking and enjoying entertainment together, effectively to deemphasize the communion of the group, emphasizes in turn the individuality of each participant. But Eryximachus also introduces an alternate model for group community – conversation. When he proposes *logoi* as the pastime of the evening, he uses the expression *διὰ λόγων ἀλλήλοις συνεῖναι*, which translates literally as “to be with each other through *logoi*.” Plato is effectively setting a scene in which conversation can supersede both drinking and entertainment at tonight’s symposium, while dually emphasizing the individual, but still creating a model for unity.

After the guests agree to Eryximachus’ proposal, he describes the sort of conversation taking place tonight: the guests will create an encomium of Eros (177c7), each individual will contribute in the form of a speech (*λόγος*), and the speeches will move to the right and be as beautiful as possible (177d3). In addition to these stipulations Eryximachus is careful to display awareness that he is at a symposium. The proposed topic of conversation is fitting; it is not too serious (at least superficially), but he also takes care to mention that it provides sufficient amusement (*ἱκανὴ διατριβή* – 177c). This passage further specifies the role of conversation. I have already shown that, in setting the scene, Plato clearly draws conversation to the forefront; in fact he goes so far as to effectively remove the other two major elements of symposia. But even without these two elements tonight’s symposium is considered to be complete by the participants; the agreement of the other interlocutors demonstrates that appropriate conversation suffices to replace both drinking and entertainment. Therefore, what remains hardly resembles the supposed ideal of a classical symposium – a balance of drinking, entertainment, and conversation, but rather Plato’s own creation which appropriates the sympotic environment in a distinctive manner, in which, most importantly, conversation and individuality are most eminent. In turn the speeches themselves are manifestations of these two emphases, as each is a constituent of the whole of the conversation but also clearly an individualized contribution.

Therefore, the cultural and literary constraints of a sympotic framework intersect at the element of conversation, and Plato uses the pretense of a highly organized conversation as his point of departure for the *Symposium*. This affords him the opportunity of a wide range of characters, all of whom are speaking on a single subject with a similar goal. Among the Platonic corpus the number and diversity of its speakers and the rigid organization of the dialogue especially distinguish the *Symposium*. Seven individuals of varied character speak speeches, and the sympotic framework allows each to stand out in his moment, since each participant has the opportunity for an extensive monologue. Additionally, the encomiastic speeches emphasize a constructive purpose, meaning that each speaker in turn seeks to accomplish two goals: to form a theory about what is praiseworthy about Eros, and to improve the previous speaker's. In theory the end result should be a reasonably complete and productive understanding of the subject. This format allows a number of subtleties concerning the subject to be pulled out, since fairly drastic shifts of interpretation are liable to occur between speakers, and these shifts provide one outlet for interpretation of the speaker's character.

Who, then, are the participants in this night's discussion? Obviously Socrates, pervasive in Plato's corpus, plays an important role in the gathering, but his influence is most notable in the second half. The first five speakers are a diverse selection of Athenian gentlemen, and although little actual biographical information is known about most of them, the barest details can be pulled reliably from this and other texts. The first three are almost totally confined to Plato's texts. Phaedrus also appears in his eponymous Platonic dialogue, but Pausanias is virtually unknown outside of the *Symposium*. Eryximachus is a physician, but information about him outside Plato's corpus is scarce. Agathon and Aristophanes are playwrights, a tragedian and a comedian respectively, although there is no extant work by Agathon. Lastly, gate-crashing the symposium late in the evening, Alcibiades is an Athenian politician, infamous for his political maneuvering during the Peloponnesian War. Although the participants in the dialogue are ultimately literary creations of Plato for this dialogue, some reference

to their actual biographies is useful, especially in the case of better-known characters such as Aristophanes and Alcibiades.

In examining how and for what purpose these individuals are characterized, there are two aspects of their speeches I intend to consider: form and content. Ruby Blondell adroitly summarizes the relationship between characterization and form and content: “As the site of an intrinsic and indissoluble connection between aspects of Plato that are still often viewed as distinct, characterization provides a unique point of purchase for approaching the interdependence of the ‘literary’ [i.e. form] and the ‘philosophical’ [i.e. content].”⁷ In the *Symposium* these are especially inseparable, because Plato very obviously and carefully constructs each speech with a specific stylistic motif. The speaker’s form reinforces the content, and vice versa; for example, Agathon’s flowery manner of speaking underscores his ideas about the importance of beauty and youth in relation to Eros. I do, however, suggest three major divisions of the speeches. First Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus all speak more or less traditional encomia, each of which builds on the previous while adding a distinctive flavor depending on the speaker. Next Aristophanes and Agathon deliver highly creative speeches that especially highlight the importance of originality of form and content. Finally Socrates and Alcibiades are both mavericks, who redefine the terms of the symposium for their own purposes, with important consequences.

Through an analysis of the rhetoric of the first three speakers, the first section of my study introduces the interaction of genre and characterization that takes place in the *Symposium*. On the one hand, Phaedrus evinces the shortcomings of traditional rhetoric, while the speeches of Pausanias and Eryximachus form an interwoven two-part warning and denunciation of rhetoric by Plato. Pausanias presents an example of sophistic rhetoric, frightful in its implications, and Eryximachus counters the fallacies of the previous speech and at the same time sets the stage for the next two speakers, the

⁷ Blondell 2002: 2

comic and tragic poets. My first section demonstrates the problems of rhetoric and logographic genres that Plato presents in the *Symposium*. An analysis of Aristophanes and Agathon comprises my second section. As I indicate, both are true to their profession and use poetry extensively, but differently. Aristophanes appropriates poetic content for his encomium of Eros, while Agathon puts poetic form on display for the purpose of wonderment and admiration. Socrates' ironic reaction to Agathon's speech, however, indicates his extreme disapproval of Agathon's method of speech, and he uses his customary elenctic method on Agathon to refute the most fundamental proposition of his speech. In the second section I consider Plato's attitude towards various genres of poetry, and I argue that Plato found poetry to be most problematic because of form, rather than content. My final section considers two speeches, those of Socrates and Alcibiades, and three characters: Socrates, Diotima, and Alcibiades. I argue that Plato characterizes Socrates uniquely, with the result that he is inimitable. Therefore, the purpose of philosophy cannot be to imitate Socrates. Rather, the focus of the *Symposium* is to throw into sharp relief Socratic speech against the speeches of the others, particularly the manner of Socratic speech. Alcibiades and Diotima both highlight particular aspects of Socrates' manner of speaking that help in my formation of an underlying theory of Socratic speech that Plato wishes to express in this dialogue.

While the speeches themselves provide the majority of examples for the analysis of the speakers' characterization, the brief text or dialogue interposed between each speech can reveal important developments at times. For example, Apollodorus casually mentions that there were other speakers between Phaedrus and Pausanias whose speeches he does not remember (180c1-2). A bout of hiccoughs causes Eryximachus and Aristophanes to switch their turns. Socrates and Agathon twice interrupt the rotation of the speeches with discussion. Finally, Alcibiades crashes the party. In general I believe that these changes reinforce that the symposium is a dynamic environment, and ideas should

not be treated as static; however, specific examples are also relevant to the themes of characterization, form, and content.

I: Voices of Rhetoric

When the reader begins to hear Phaedrus in direct speech, Apollodorus has already begun narrating his speech in indirect speech. This noticeable shift to direct discourse draws the reader away from the narrative framework and into the symposium and, in particular, into the speeches themselves. However, when Phaedrus finishes speaking, the narrator again asserts his presence, and says: "...and after him [Phaedrus] there were some other speeches which Aristodemus did not altogether remember. Passing over these he related next the speech of Pausanias (μετὰ δὲ Φαῖδρον ἄλλους τινὰς εἶναι ὧν οὐ πάνυ διεμνημόνευε: οὓς παρὲς τὸν Παισανίου λόγον διηγείτο)" (180c1-2). Pausanias, when he begins speaking, acts as if there were no intervening speeches and directly addresses Phaedrus. Similarly, Eryximachus follows Pausanias and also begins with a reference to the preceding speech, but the distraction of Aristophanes' hiccoughs once again creates a narrative division before the speech. This paradox of fluidity and disconnection between the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus provides a point of departure for understanding the unity of characterization and genre in the *Symposium*.

Before directly analyzing the speeches, an understanding of the *topoi* of the encomiastic genre and its standardized set of tools for praise is particularly necessary for the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Eryximachus. Although the rhetoric of praise holds its origins in poetry, by the time of Plato the delivery in oratory of an encomium in prose was standard.⁸ Therefore the standard tools of rhetoric in general also apply to encomium, in addition to a few peculiarities specific to the genre.

⁸ Nightingale 1995: 94

Namely, the techniques of amplification and comparison are especially useful for the encomiast. Amplification is the assignment of as many good qualities as possible to the subject of praise, and comparison “elevates and exalts the subject by juxtaposing it to a comparandum that is inferior if not base.”⁹ For Plato, the union of these two elements, the tools of rhetoric and the tools of praise, is a sinister creation, which is especially manifest in the “paradoxical encomium,” to use Nightingale’s term, i.e. an encomium for someone or something base. The resulting philosophical implication is disastrous, as Nightingale phrases it: “For to suggest that any object, no matter how base, can be exalted by an artful manipulation of rhetoric is to suggest that there is no absolute standard for the proper conferral of praise.”¹⁰ In the *Symposium* the goal is to praise Eros as beautifully (κάλλιστος) as possible; however, this adjective is not clear in its implication. Is this rhetorical beauty of the kind of Gorgias’ *Encomium of Helen*, moral (i.e. philosophical) beauty of the kind that Socrates later describes, or a combination of the two? The speakers at tonight’s symposium, as educated Athenians, would have been aware of, and able to exploit, this ambiguity in the meaning of *kallistos* using the encomiastic techniques described by Nightingale. In this way Plato may deploy the encomiastic genre as the central focus of characterization, especially in the first three speeches, since our consideration of the speaker’s adherence to the norms of the genre and his willingness to exploit the ambiguity of *kallistos* reveals his value judgments about generic discourse and, more generally, the methods of discourse.

Nightingale offers the most recent and complete consideration of the speeches of the *Symposium* in their generic context, and she focuses on Plato’s attack on the mode of discourse.¹¹ Plato through Socrates, she argues, criticizes the agonistic nature of the speeches. His first criticism is the dependence of each participant on the stock techniques of praise, which necessarily allows form to supplant content as the focus of each speech; his second criticism is the agonistic nature itself, in

⁹ Nightingale 1995: 103

¹⁰ Nightingale 1995: 102; Cf. Socrates’ reaction to Agathon’s speech, discussed in section II.

¹¹ For this paragraph cf. Nightingale 1995: 110-113

which “the language of commendation is a vehicle for the author’s pursuit of glory.”¹² Although this is not as insidious as the paradoxical encomium, since Eros does legitimately deserve praise, the pursuit of glory is not a proper, philosophical reason for speaking on such an important topic. Furthermore, the result is antithetical to philosophy, since speeches such as Agathon’s “preempt all discourse by striking people dumb.”¹³ Style, as Nightingale indicates, affects content, and she highlights the disappointment of Socrates when no speaker is shown to have knowledge of Eros, but rather they “evinced a rhetorical technique.”¹⁴ Her final point draws attention to Plato’s subtle indications of the “ideological stakes” of such discourse. When the speakers envelop bad moral recommendations in rhetoric, they risk indoctrinating the ignorant with these recommendations. Therefore, the encomium, even when the subject is deserving of praise, demonstrates an insidious capability to mislead. My study of the first three speakers builds on Nightingale’s understanding of Plato’s criticism of encomia. Through a complete examination of each speech, focused on their use or abuse of these problematic areas of discourse and the ideological vision that each presents, I present a more complete vision of Plato’s criticism and how the individual variations of each speaker reveal a more nuanced picture of the problems of encomiastic discourse.

Phaedrus is the first to speak, and he works comfortably within the most commonplace bounds of the encomiastic genre. He begins by asserting that Eros is among the eldest deities, and therefore “he is also the source of our greatest blessings (πρεσβύτατος δὲ ὢν μεγίστων ἀγαθῶν ἡμῖν αἰτίος ἔσται)” (178c2-3). As proof, he offers citations from Hesiod and Parmenides about mythology, and he is particularly interested in the theogony of Eros. Phaedrus, however, quickly resorts to hyperbole: “For I certainly cannot say what greater blessing there can be for any man to have right from youth than a virtuous lover, or what can be better for a lover than a beloved boy who is himself

¹² Nightingale 1995: 112

¹³ Nightingale 1995: 112

¹⁴ Nightingale 1995: 113

virtuous (οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔχω εἰπεῖν ὅτι μείζον ἔστιν ἀγαθὸν εὐθὺς νέω ὄντι ἢ ἐραστῆς χρηστὸς καὶ ἐραστῆ παιδικά)” (178c2-3). Nevertheless, he defends this assertion for the effects of Eros by envisioning a city or army composed entirely of *erastai* and *eromenoi*. Phaedrus assumes that a man seeks to avoid shame in the eyes of others, and his lover especially. Eros thereby ensures proper behavior in men. He ends the first section of his speech with an artificial reference to Homer, with a comparison of the manner in which “the god” inspires might in some of Homer’s heroes to Eros’ own inspiration in lovers.

The second half of Phaedrus’ speech does not follow the first logically. Continuing the shift to myth that began with his Homeric reference, he changes his focus from Eros in contemporary society and describes some instances of Eros in myth. According to Phaedrus, the story of Alcestis dying on behalf of her lover inspires the gods to honor her, on account of her devotion to Eros. Orpheus contrives to resurrect Eurydice, but since he is unwilling to die on her behalf, unlike Alcestis, the gods dishonor him by allowing his death to be at the hands of women. The third myth contains another reference to Homer; it is the story of Achilles and Patroclus. In accordance with the paradigm that Phaedrus is developing, Achilles was honored and sent to the Isles of the Blessed, because he was willing to accept death in order to avenge his *erastes*. Phaedrus concludes by reiterating his previous points that Eros is the oldest and most valued of the gods.

Phaedrus’ speech focuses more on content than overt rhetoric, but his content is a rhetorical strategy in itself. He notably references the poets Homer and Hesiod at the beginning, middle, and end of his speech. His quotation of Hesiod, although it supports his claim that Eros is very ancient, does not acknowledge that Eros hardly appears in the rest of the *Theogony*, and the god, as presented by Hesiod, is very minor. Phaedrus’ interpretation of Homer is similarly tenuous. In his analysis of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, Phaedrus encounters the lack of canonical myth and must decide which poet to trust. As he indicates, Homer establishes Achilles to be the younger man, yet

other poets interpret the relationship otherwise. Phaedrus denies the very poetic authority that he advocates in Homer's case, in saying that Aeschylus was "talking nonsense" when he made Achilles the older man (180a4-5). He offers no compelling reason for this conclusion, only that Homer, a greater authority than Aeschylus in Phaedrus' opinion, says otherwise. Nevertheless, the intrusion of this sentence draws attention to the lack of any standardized version of these myths. Finally, the notion that the gods sent Achilles to the Isles of the Blessed for his actions is a "simple rhetorical fiction," according to Richard Hunter.¹⁵ In fact, the encounter between Odysseus and Achilles after his death in the *Odyssey* offers a significantly different vision: "I'd rather slave on earth for another man ... than rule down here over all the breathless dead (βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω / ... / ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν)."¹⁶ Phaedrus' use of Hesiod and Homer does more to draw the reader's attention to the faults of his speech, and such authorities, than to further his argument. It is important to note, however, that his use is not so much intentional abuse as much as ignorant appeals to false authorities, and Phaedrus does not fully understand the philosophical implications of his rhetoric.

Similarly, the other myths he references introduce logical problems in his argument. The incorporation of the story of Alcestis and Admetus requires that Phaedrus immediately expand the scope of his material beyond the strict *erastes* and *eromenos* paradigm that he had previously described. His inability to provide in the moment a suitable example from myth of the ideal *erastes-eromenos* relationship further undermines myth as a source of argument, and subtly underscores the incomplete nature of Phaedrus' knowledge of the subject. This myth, nevertheless, is the most relevant of the three, for it describes the gods rewarding someone who died in the place of her lover. The gods' honoring of Alcestis vaguely supports his earlier notion that dying on behalf of a lover is a noble

¹⁵ Hunter 2004: 40

¹⁶ Hom. Od. 11.489-91; trans. Fagles 1996: 265

action. However, the equation of the story with his previous argument is only implicit and relies on the assumption of the listener that the situation of Alcestis is equivalent to that of soldiers on the battlefield. The story of Orpheus is meant to provide a counterpoint to the already slightly misplaced story of Alcestis; unfortunately it continues the assumption of Phaedrus that his audience clearly understands the muddled connections he is creating. Orpheus, according to Phaedrus, is not honored “because they [the gods] thought he lacked spirit; he was only a lyre-player and did not dare actually to die, as Alcestis did, for the sake of love (ὅτι μαλθακίζεσθαι ἐδόκει, ἄτε ὦν κιθαρῳδός, καὶ οὐ τολμᾶν ἔνεκα τοῦ ἔρωτος ἀποθνήσκειν ὥσπερ Ἄλκηστις)” (179d4-6). For Phaedrus, the crux of the moral is Orpheus’ unwillingness to die, and therefore Orpheus shows his unworthiness to have Eurydice as his wife – and to possess Eros. The progression of logic that leads to Orpheus as an example, however, is quite tenuous, and his appearance in the speech seems to be irrelevant.

The awkward form of his speech parallels Phaedrus’ clumsy deployment of rhetorical strategy in content, with the most noticeable aspect of his form being the enjambment of ideas and sentences. The short length of the speech, juxtaposed with its occasional long, periodic sentences, conveys the impression of a breathless, overly eager speaker. Phaedrus moves swiftly from one topic to another without clearly establishing logical connections between his points, which results in the quick complication and expansion of the scope of his argument. Additionally, both his words and ideas tend to be inelegantly repetitive. When discussing Alcestis, he uses various forms of the verb *ἐργάζομαι* three times in one short section (καὶ τοῦτ’ *ἐργασαμένη* τὸ ἔργον οὕτω καλὸν ἔδοξεν *ἐργάσασθαι* οὐ μόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοῖς, ὥστε πολλῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ *ἐργασαμένων* – 179c2-4). Likewise, Phaedrus’ description of Achilles and Patroclus begins and ends with very similar phrasing: οὐχ ὥσπερ Ἀχιλλεῖα τὸν τῆς Θέτιδος ὑὸν ἐτίμησαν καὶ εἰς μακάρων νήσους ἀπέπεμψαν (179e1-2) and διὰ ταῦτα καὶ τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα τῆς Ἀλκῆστιδος μᾶλλον ἐτίμησαν, εἰς μακάρων νήσους ἀποπέμψαντες (180b4-5), which demonstrates a tendency for circular reasoning. Occasionally, his syntax is periodic, especially when

he is describing the myths. The combination of these errors gives his speech the impression of an extemporaneous presentation, and Phaedrus shows that he is no master of rhetoric in content or form.

The most egregious of Phaedrus' stylistic errors, however, are notably concentrated in the second half of his speech. Earlier in his speech, when he discusses the virtues of an *erastes-eromenos* relationship, his sentences are clear and precise. He highlights key words and ideas, ἀγαθός and αἰσχρός, without awkward repetition. Eros, who becomes inexplicably absent from the second half of the speech, plays an important role. Phaedrus deftly quotes poetry, and, when we consider that he is the originator of the idea for the subject of the speeches, which he has clearly thought about previously, this portion of his speech seems rehearsed. Hunter proposes that his entire speech is rehearsed: "Phaedrus likes performing (*epideiknusthai*) and does not like to leave anything to chance."¹⁷ However, based upon the stylistic faults of the second half, I maintain that it is markedly different from the first half and is purposely intended to contrast with the first and to seem extemporaneous. In order to incorporate his most relevant myth, Alcestis, Phaedrus temporarily abandons the *erastes-eromenos* paradigm, which he clumsily forces back into the speech with the Achilles-Patroclus example, after he has gathered his wits. Achilles, the most well-known of Greek heroes, is also a remarkably unimaginative example. It is understandable why Phaedrus "does not like to leave anything to chance," when we consider this portion of his speech.

Phaedrus, above all, believes in the authority of poets and myths, but simultaneously reveals the limitations of such authorities. The division in form that becomes apparent in the latter half of his speech emphasizes this problem. When Phaedrus exhausts his prepared material and must lengthen his speech, he quickly finds himself in a muddle of contradiction, poor reasoning, and an inability to adequately express his argument with his chosen material. Furthermore, Phaedrus legitimately believes in the validity of his methods and continues to enforce the structure of the symposium later in the

¹⁷ Hunter 2004: 39

dialogue, when he intervenes before Agathon's speech, which may have led to a fruitful discussion between Socrates and Agathon. Because of his ignorance, as evinced by his speech, and inability to understand the value of Socrates, Phaedrus silences the philosopher and halts his methods of inquiry, and reinforces his own inadequate methods. As Pausanias' speech soon demonstrates, however, rhetorical methods do not always result in the inadequacy of Phaedrus' speech – Phaedrus just uses rhetoric badly. In the *Symposium* Phaedrus is most representative of the dangers of a traditional, Athenian education that focused on myth and rhetoric, but Plato shows the two elements to be incompatible. Phaedrus may be ignorant, and guilty of no greater crime than following the instructions of his teacher, but he is still dangerous to philosophy. Thereby, Plato demonstrates both the inadequacies of Athenian education and its insidious result – Phaedrus.

Pausanias' speech, on the other hand, shows none of the rhetorical shortcomings of Phaedrus', but it presents another sinister vision of the deployment of rhetoric. Pausanias recognizes, at least in part, the deficiencies of content of Phaedrus' speech, e.g. the simplistic nature of Eros that Phaedrus describes is replaced by the conception of two *Erotes*, but Pausanias exerts only a minimal effort to correct Phaedrus. He orients his speech as the successor to Phaedrus' by directly addressing him, in spite of the fact that there were intervening speeches that are now forgotten. Pausanias quickly digresses from Eros, however, and instead turns to a discussion of custom. Moreover, his speech is only loosely an encomium of Eros, and he rhetorically sidesteps a proper encomium. As a point of departure for analysis of Pausanias' deviant speech, which is still strongly intertwined with the emerging themes of the dialogue, Kevin Corrigan and Elena Glazov-Corrigan's conclusion is helpful: "Pausanias's speech, then, is surely one of the most powerful yet most chilling examples of deconstructive drama ever presented, insofar as Plato ... paints a picture of the sincerest sophistic rhetoric."¹⁸ Pausanias' emphasis on subjectivity and his much more subtle use of mythology reveal the

¹⁸ Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004: 60

different, “chilling,” nature of his speech, especially when it is compared to Phaedrus’. Despite its bumbling nature, Phaedrus’ speech was, at the very least, honest. Pausanias, on the other hand, couches his argument in ostensibly sincere rhetoric; however, he carefully avoids any sort of value judgments, even of the insincere, “amplifying” sort that are customary in an encomium. By removing these judgments, Plato produces a warning against this kind of rhetoric, and its ideological implications, that may be produced by such a man.

Pausanias begins by declaring that there are two *Erotes*; one is worthy of praise, and the other is not. Understandably, he is unable to deliver an encomium until he establishes which is worthy of praise. These two *Erotes* have the same characteristics as the two *Aphroditai* that are distinguished in mythology. Perhaps Pausanias, like Phaedrus, is founding his knowledge on Hesiod’s *Theogony*: “Eros accompanied her [Aphrodite] (τῆ δ’ Ἔρος ὠμάρτησε).”¹⁹ He is much less explicit, however, about the source of his knowledge – he does not flaunt the names of the poets or quote the verses. Pausanias, unlike Phaedrus, prefers that these issues be left vague. Furthermore, according to Pausanias, actions are not inherently good or bad, but rather the manner in which they are done determines their moral value.²⁰ Humanity illustrates this distinction in its behavior towards Eros; good erotic behavior corresponds with *Aphrodite Ourania*, whereas shameful behavior corresponds with *Aphrodite Pandemos*. The key difference between these two *Aphroditai*, according to Pausanias, is their lineage. *Ourania* is older and born only from a male; *Pandemos* is younger and born from a male and a female. Because of her lineage, *Ourania* is the Eros/Aphrodite that inspires noble behavior, but this behavior is only exhibited towards boys, and even then with discretion. *Pandemos*, on the other hand, causes a man to wildly seek solely sexual satisfaction with whomever he encounters, boys or women. The problem,

¹⁹ Hes. Th. 201; trans. Hine 2005: 60

²⁰ Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004: 57) point out how this attitude sounds suspiciously similar to Socrates in the *Gorgias* 88c-d. Accordingly, “Pausanias poses a special sort of problem: how do we tell the difference between two conditions or forms of thought that seem to resemble each other – Platonic and sophistic?” This question is useful to bear in mind when considering Plato’s scornful treatment of Pausanias, which I describe.

therefore, in pederastic relationships becomes distinguishing between the two *Erotes*, so that only the noble path may be followed.

In order to solve this problem, different cities have established various customs (νόμοι). Pausanias criticizes those localities where pederasty is freely permitted, because this situation causes a tendency to pursue the ignoble *Aphrodite Pandemos*. Conversely, in societies where pederasty is banned, there is no opportunity to attain a love founded upon *Aphrodite Ourania*. In fact, these tyrannical societies fear the virtuous effects of such relationships, and Pausanias offers the Athenian Tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton as an example of the positive effects of *Ourania*. Athens, according to Pausanias, is the only place where custom encourages the attainment of *Ourania*, because the custom is complex. *Erastai* are encouraged in their pursuits of boys; *eromenoi*, however, are never to yield to these men. Only after the *erastes* has been tested, and he is proven to have interest in a lasting relationship that desires to instill virtue (ἀρετή) in the *eromenos*, is the relationship permitted. Therefore, having finally established how the customs of Athens are responsible for the best of these relationships, Pausanias ends by reiterating that *Aphrodite Ourania* is associated with these relationships and is consequently worthy of praise.

The form of Pausanias' speech highlights the prominence of his rhetorical contrivances. He artfully obfuscates and clarifies so as to direct the mind of the listener as he sees fit. The careful repetition of words like ἀπλῶς and ῥᾶδιος (182a8; 182b2; 182d5; 183d4) invites the listener to infer the conclusions Pausanias intends, but also subtly undermines the intellectual independence of the audience. Surely, if an idea is simple or easy to understand, it does not need to be questioned. Conversely, if a concept is difficult to understand, Pausanias is ready to clarify for the audience, with his own interpretative voice overlaid. His sentences are at times short and precise (180d3-4; 180d4-6; 184b5-6) and at other times long and disconnected (182d5-183b2; 184a5-b5) – another stylistic motif with an insidious purpose. The extremely long sentence beginning at 182d5 provides an example of

Pausanias manipulating his style to reflect his content and to direct the thoughts of his audience. Immediately before, he says that Athenian custom “is not easy to understand (οὐ ῥάδιον κατανοῆσαι)” (182d5), and then he embarks on a complicated series of clauses that never actually reconcile themselves with the first word of the sentence, a dative participle, ἐνθυμηθέντι. By intentionally convoluting the structure of his description, Pausanias is supplementing with rhetoric rather than solid argument his previous assertion that Athenian custom is confusing. This technique then invites greater exposition and explanation of *erastes-eromenos* custom in Athens, which is inevitably laced with Pausanias’ biases.

Therefore, the content of Pausanias’ speech evinces the same rhetorical machinations as its form, and is notable for its propensity for vagueness. Aphrodite supersedes and encompasses Eros; Pausanias thereby evades an encomium of Eros. His use of specific examples is also sparse – Harmodius and Aristogeiton are the only exception. Otherwise, he refers only to groups of people or cities. References to poetry and myth are conspicuously absent, although sometimes present as a subtext, e.g. Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Vagueness also characterizes his argument, and his exaltation of the dual nature of Athenian custom corresponds neatly with this aspect of his speech. His treatment of goodness in an *erastes-eromenos* relationship suggests a similar situation:

δοκεῖ γὰρ αὖ καὶ οὗτος τὸ καθ’ αὐτὸν δεδηλωκέναί, ὅτι ἀρετῆς γ’ ἔνεκα καὶ τοῦ βελτίων γενέσθαι πᾶν ἂν παντὶ προθυμηθείη, τοῦτο δὲ αὖ πάντων κάλλιστον: οὕτω πᾶν πάντως γε καλὸν ἀρετῆς γ’ ἔνεκα χαρίζεσθαι. (185b1-5)

This beloved too seems to have made clear his own character, but he shows that he is keen to do anything for anybody for the sake of excellence and becoming a better person, and this is the noblest thing of all. Thus it is entirely right to gratify a lover when it is for the sake of excellence.

According to Pausanias, it is the duty of the *eromenos* to become morally better (βελτίων) in an *erastes-eromenos* relationship, and he offers no such moral prescriptions for the *erastes*, but rather he assumes that the lover is already good. Furthermore, the *erastes* should be eager to do anything and everything to gratify his lover, if that man is virtuous. Again, Pausanias asserts vagueness in moral issues and

assumes the outcome to be virtuous, if the actions of the *eromenos* are done on account of virtue. His desire to prescribe such moral subjectivity may be read as selfishly self-referential, since he is the *erastes* of Agathon. His interpretation of Athenian custom absolves him from any responsibility in pursuing *Aphrodite Ourania*, since it is entirely the duty of the *eromenos* to decide if a lover is worthy. There is a marked subjectivity in Pausanias' speech, and it takes on the appearance of a highly rhetorical and clever, yet ultimately self-serving, defense of his lifestyle.

Although Pausanias abuses for his own purposes the ambiguous relationships that are inherent in the dichotomies he creates, he does introduce the distinction of desire for one's body and desire for one's soul. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of the Athenian custom remains the acquiescence of an *eromenos* to gratify (χαρίζεσθαι) his *erastes* physically. Moreover, the paradigm he describes could easily be exploited, especially by someone exactly like himself. An *erastes* like Pausanias, who is a gifted, yet sophistic, rhetorician, would surely be able to persuade an *eromenos* that he is learning from him.²¹ The *eromenos*, however, is not learning true virtue, but rather the sophistic facsimile that manifests itself so clearly in this speech. Therefore, it is too simple to characterize Pausanias' speech as a criticism of sophism by Plato, but it is also essential to consider that his speech is a warning against the potential dangers of sophistic rhetoric. Pausanias not only essentially removes all moral boundaries, so long as the ultimate goal is virtue (as judged by the young *eromenos*), but he also revels in ambiguity, which permits his self-serving interpretations of customs and institutions. Plato, however, is careful to avoid

²¹ Neumann (1964: 263-264) offers another point of view for Pausanias' rejection of customs outside of Athens, which also depends on Pausanias' sophistic skill with rhetoric: "On his own terms, he would be at a distinct disadvantage under a system of free and open competition. In this sense, he perhaps resembles the barbarian tyrants who suppress the free competition characteristic of the less civilized Greeks (182b, 7-d, 2). He has no desire to live where his lack of natural gifts would make itself felt. On the other hand, he has no prospect of achieving the tyrannical power which would leave him free openly to indulge his vice. This is the real reason for his rejection of the two non-Athenian possibilities. Under the circumstances, Athenian morals are most congenial to him, since they allow him to compensate for his lack of what he regards as natural gifts. One should not forget that he is a pupil of the sophists and very much in need of the rhetorical skills taught by them."

emphasis of this interpretation of Pausanias' speech, and this attitude essentially creates a distinction between rhetorical logic and philosophical logic. The rhetorical logic of Pausanias is flawless, but his philosophy is seriously flawed. As Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan point out, the amorality/immorality that *may* result from Pausanias' interpretations is our extrapolation of his ideas, but not actually acknowledged or indicated in the speech.²² In other words Plato presents the philosophical shortcomings more or less openly, but he does not explicitly draw attention to the ideological stakes of Pausanias' speech, nor he does directly invite the reader to criticize on these grounds; he effectively moderates his censure of Pausanias in this way and restricts his speech to the exposition of his rhetorical logic. His deflection of the topic from Eros to Aphrodite and local customs supports my reading of this separation. By excluding himself from the philosophical aspect of the topic of discussion, Pausanias excludes his voice from the philosophical interaction in the rest of the dialogue. Moreover, by bringing the *abuse* of rhetoric explicitly into focus, Pausanias serves his purpose and Plato only has to silence him permanently, and then move forward.

My portrait of Pausanias' character is incomplete without the consideration of one final aspect, his conspicuous silence throughout the dialogue. Compared to the other speakers in the *Symposium*, Pausanias' silence contrasts him subtly but profoundly with both his predecessor and his successors. Outside of his speech, Pausanias speaks only once, when he proposes that they take the drinking easy at tonight's symposium:

εἶεν, ἄνδρες, φάναι, τίνα τρόπον ῥᾶστα πίομεθα; ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι τῷ ὄντι πάνυ χαλεπῶς ἔχω ὑπὸ τοῦ χθῆς πότου καὶ δέομαι ἀναψυχῆς τινος—οἶμαι δὲ καὶ ὑμῶν τοὺς πολλούς: παρῆστε γὰρ χθῆς—σκοπεῖσθε οὖν τίνι τρόπῳ ἂν ὡς ῥᾶστα πίνοιμεν. (176a5-b1)

²² Cf. Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004: 61: "So Pausanias's speech, in its powerful appearance of sophisticated self-awareness but innocent lack of self-conscious examination, is a chilling example of what *could be* absolute immorality disguised as the highest virtue, or again, of the apparently sincere innocence of the sexual predator who is always acting only for the good of the other, but who unfortunately cannot even be taken to task for any of his actions, because he is blithely unaware of the abysses hidden in them. But this is to imply a moral judgment that Plato never introduces..."

‘Well now, gentlemen’, he said, ‘how shall we make our drinking easy for ourselves? I must say to you that after yesterday’s bout I am really in very poor shape and I could do with a breathing space. I imagine that is the case with most of you who were at yesterday’s celebrations, so think about how we might make our drinking as easy as possible’.

His proposal to moderate the drinking results in the contest of the *encomia* to Eros, but he is curiously not at all involved in its design nor does he philosophically engage in the contest when it is underway, as the others attempt to do. In general the information available about Pausanias in the context of the *Symposium* is almost nonexistent; we know that he is the *erastes* of Agathon and he has a hangover. Conversely, the *reception* of his ideas within the text is prominent, as I will discuss further in my consideration of the speech of Eryximachus.

Plato is unable to resist one last jibe before entirely removing Pausanias from the dialogue, but this insult has the potential to call into question much that I have argued about Pausanias. This is an egregious pun spoken by Apollodorus after Pausanias’ speech: “Pausanias came to a pause (those experts in rhetoric teach me to speak in this balanced way)... (Παυσανίου δὲ παυσαμένου (διδάσκουσι γάρ με ἴσα λέγειν οὕτως ὅτι σοφοί)...)” (185c4-5). Directly after Pausanias has exalted the educational value of these wise men, implicitly including himself among these men, Plato attributes a terrible and useless pun to their teachings. Moreover, Plato uses the occurrence of Aristophanes’ hiccoughs to repeat forms of the verb *παύω* five more times in this brief interlude (185d2; 185d3; 185d5; 185d7; 185e3), which I propose serves the dual purpose of emphatically and permanently quieting Pausanias, and of allowing Eryximachus to eagerly rejoin the conversation and take Aristophanes’ position.²³ This treatment of Pausanias, however, raises the question of why Plato silences the character in this manner. Why does Plato not consider Pausanias’ philosophical logic, if it really may be so insidious, worthy of a more forceful and direct retort? My reading of the speech as Plato’s warning rather than a criticism

²³ A rearrangement in the order of speakers that I consider further in section II

provides one possible answer, for I also contend that this warning is only the incomplete first half of a whole idea, which Eryximachus completes and corrects in his speech.

About Eryximachus the scholarly interpretation is typically divided into two factions: there are those who believe he is an unimportant, illogical pedant,²⁴ and those who assert his importance to the structure of the dialogue and consequently desire to consider his speech as indispensable. Among those who argue for his importance, there is some variation in interpretation. The earliest of these arguments is Ludwig Edelstein's, whose argument for the rehabilitation of the importance of Eryximachus elevates him above Socrates, when the structure of the dialogue is considered: "Within the framework of the dialogue, he is indeed more important than anybody else. Pausanias and Aristophanes and Socrates and even Agathon, the host, are but speakers; occasionally they participate in the interludes."²⁵ While Eryximachus' position in introducing the theme of the encomia and participation throughout the dialogue is undeniable, Edelstein's saying that the others are necessarily less important ignores the fact that most of Eryximachus' intrusions in the interludes do little to further the discussion; the notable exception is his convincing Alcibiades to speak a speech.²⁶ More recent arguments acknowledge Eryximachus' contributions to the framework with restraint, and, more importantly, they seek to reconcile the logic of his speech with his role in the rest of the dialogue. David Konstan and Elisabeth Young-Bruhl contend that the noble Eros, as presented by Eryximachus, can be understood as containing two separate components, *ἐπιθυμία* and *φιλία*.²⁷ Although this distinction is useful for better understanding Eryximachus' logic, which their article

²⁴ Dover (1980: 105) exemplifies this opinion. He says: "Eryximachus ... runs together (1) the contrast between good desires or tendencies and bad desires or tendencies, and (2) the contrast between the good consequences of reconciling opposites and the bad consequences of failure to reconcile them. In (1) he stretches the denotation of the word 'eros' wide enough to diminish its utility very greatly, and in (2) he stretches it even further by treating an adjustment between two extremes as creating an eros of the extremes for each other."

²⁵ Edelstein 1945: 96

²⁶ Unfortunately, Alcibiades refuses to speak about Eros, so the question remains: was Eryximachus' intervention in this case successful?

²⁷ Konstan and Young-Bruhl 1982

explicates nicely, it is acknowledged in no other location in the dialogue, and, therefore, I believe that they, like Edelstein, overemphasize the importance of Eryximachus' speech in an attempt to justify its existence. Christopher Rowe's more recent attempt provides, I believe, the most accurate representation and rehabilitation of Eryximachus in the *Symposium*. He acknowledges the shortcomings of both his predecessors (both Edelstein and Konstan and Young-Bruehl), and seeks to establish with restraint and relevance Eryximachus' role in the dialogue. For my purposes, Rowe's most important insight identifies Eryximachus' consideration of music as a foreshadowing of the poets, each of whom then identifies with one of the two Muses which his argument introduces, who in turn are identified with the two *Aphroditai* of Pausanias' speech. Aristophanes identifies with *Polymnia*, i.e. *Aphrodite Pandemos*, and Agathon with *Ourania*, i.e. *Aphrodite Ourania*.²⁸ About this distinction, he states:

*This proposal I put forward as something rather stronger than a mere hypothesis, since otherwise the peculiarities of Eryximachus' treatment of music, i.e. its length [that is the considerable amount of Eryximachus' speech dedicated to the discussion of music], and especially the way it introduces the two Muses and their respective 'loves', seem to be left unexplained. The only alternative is probably to see them just as further examples of Eryximachus' incompetence as a speaker.*²⁹

Similarly, I propose that the earlier sections of his speech consider Pausanias' speech, particularly the second aspect left unexplored by Plato – his philosophical logic. Furthermore, Eryximachus is an integral character in the movement of the dialogue from the first act to the second.

Like the other speakers, Eryximachus begins by acknowledging his predecessor, but with a significant modification:

εἰπεῖν δὴ τὸν Ἐρυξίμαχον, δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι, ἐπειδὴ Πausανίας ὀρμήσας ἐπὶ τὸν λόγον καλῶς οὐχ ἰκανῶς ἀπετέλεσε, δεῖν ἐμὲ πειρᾶσθαι τέλος ἐπιθεῖναι τῷ λόγῳ.
(185e6-186a2)

Well now, Pausanias made a good start to his speech but failed to end it adequately, so I think that I have to try to give it a proper conclusion.

²⁸ Rowe 1999: 62-63

²⁹ Rowe 1999: 64; emphasis his

Eryximachus' and Pausanias' speeches have a more forceful connection than simply being in succession; we are *meant* to read Eryximachus' as a second half of Pausanias'. In order to provide a proper ending to Pausanias' speech, he asserts that the dominion of Eros is not restricted to the relationships of mankind, but rather it is cosmic, and Eros' double nature is intimately connected with his universal role. As an example of the workings of this cosmic Eros, Eryximachus describes his medical profession. The double nature of the god, according to him, is manifest in the nature of bodies; one Eros belongs to health, and the other to sickness. A doctor, like Eryximachus, must know how to manipulate both *Erotes* of the body if he is to gratify (χαρίζεσθαι) the good nature of a healthy body and discourage (ἀχαριστεῖν) the shameful nature of a sick body. Medical practice, therefore, is “knowledge of the influence of love on the body in respect of repletion and depletion (ἐπιστήμη τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἐρωτικῶν πρὸς πλησμονὴν καὶ κένωσιν)” (186c6-7). Opposites must be made to love one another; however, this is more difficult in some cases: “The most hostile are the extreme opposites, hot and cold, bitter and sweet, dry and moist, and so on. (ἔστι δὲ ἔχθιστα τὰ ἐναντιώτατα, ψυχρὸν θερμῷ, πικρὸν γλυκεῖ, ξηρὸν ὑγρῷ, πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα)” (186d6-8). Finally, Eryximachus ends his description of medicine by saying that Asclepius founded the medical profession because he knew how to manipulate these two *Erotes* in the body.

If we accept this first section to be the conclusion of Pausanias' speech, for the description of music that follows looks forward to the poets, then it is now necessary to consider how Pausanias' ideas resonate within this conclusion. The key insight of Eryximachus is his systematic exploration of the nature of opposites. Instead of obfuscating and exploiting the relationship between opposites, he neatly delineates and seeks to reconcile the two. For example, consider again Pausanias' treatment of pederasty within different societies. In Eryximachus' paradigm Athens, as described by Pausanias, can be likened to the happy medium between two opposites; however, who is the “doctor,” trained to maintain the balance, in this situation? The people of Athens provide one solution, but why are they

necessarily fit to manage such a potentially shame-incurring social institution? Eryximachus prominently emphasizes the necessity of skilled practitioners in the management of *Eros Ouranios* and *Eros Pandemos*. Pausanias assumes that this group has the technical knowledge to regulate pederasty in Athens, but Eryximachus, by drawing attention to the absence of any objectivity in this system, highlights the problem of immorality/amorality that was described earlier. Furthermore, the identification of each speaker within his speech confirms this emphasis. Pausanias, as the *erastes* in his paradigm, relegates himself to a position without responsibility, as we have seen. About Pausanias' position within his own speech, Neumann points out: "Contrary to his explicit defense of self-determination and the intellectual virtues, he actually yearns for enslavement to corporeal attractions."³⁰ Eryximachus, on the other hand, is the regulator of Eros, the very one responsible for the proper application of the god. This shift in responsibility is drastic and noticeable, especially when the intimate connection between the two speeches is considered. Eryximachus also points out that one must be able to recognize when it is necessary to "show ingratitude" (ἀχαριστεῖν),³¹ unlike Pausanias, who presents only gratification. Although Eryximachus' description does not contain a substantial reinterpretation of Pausanias' ideas, it emphasizes the missing elements, which in turn provides the criticism of Pausanias' philosophical logic that was previously left out.

In the second section of his speech, Eryximachus continues and refines his theory of the reconciliation of opposites. He describes how the skill of music reflects the same tendencies as medicine. Harmony and rhythm are formed out of opposite elements, namely the high and the low, and the fast and the slow. Eryximachus emphasizes the necessity of agreement between these opposite elements, a concept that was not present in his description of the medical skill. He says: "It is

³⁰ Neumann 1964: 265; Sheffield (2006: 25) also identifies slavishness on the part of the beloved in Pausanias' speech.

³¹ This verb is significantly the lexical opposite of χαρίζεσθαι, and a more exact meaning than "discourage" is "show ingratitude."

impossible to create harmony where instead of agreement there is disagreement (διαφερόμενον δὲ αὖ καὶ μὴ ὁμολογοῦν ἀδύνατον ἀρμόσαι)” (187b6-7). As in medicine, a skilled practitioner regulates these opposites and brings them into agreement. However, in this case there is not necessarily a clear association of each Eros with each element, i.e. low notes don’t correspond to *Eros Pandemos*, which Eryximachus dubs *Polymnios* in the musical context, and high notes to *Eros Ouranios*. But rather, the final product exhibits both *Erotes*, and it is the duty of the musician to ensure that the song contains *Eros Polymnios* only minimally. Disagreement may thus be brought into agreement under the auspices of either Eros, but only one result is noble.

How, therefore, will Eryximachus’ ideas about the role of Eros in music affect our interpretation of Aristophanes’ and Agathon’s speeches? At this point, it is helpful to only consider the expectations Eryximachus creates for these speeches. Rowe justifies his selection of Aristophanes as the candidate most likely to speak something inspired by *Eros Polymnios*:

He [Eryximachus] makes that distinction with an eye on Aristophanes, and perhaps on Agathon too: Aristophanes as representing Polymnia, Agathon the tragic poet as putative representative of Ourania, Polymnia's ethereal counterpart. It is after all Aristophanes whose whole business, Socrates said (177e1-2), is with Dionysus and Aphrodite, i.e., as I take it, with drink and sex. In other words, Eryximachus is making a sly, and no doubt partly jesting (though he is generally presented as a sober sort of person), attack on Aristophanes on his own account: ‘we doctors are upright people, of course, but you need to watch out for poets, some of whose products need to be approached with caution...’³²

Soon after his speech, by suggesting that Aristophanes moderate his inclusion of ridiculous elements in his own speech (i.e. maintain the erotic balance), Eryximachus also implies that Aristophanes is the poet most likely to give a speech too much inspired by *Eros Polymnios*. Additionally, Eryximachus’ suggestion at the end of his speech that Aristophanes fill the gaps suggests that an exposition of the deployment of the Erotic Muse may be fitting and intentional.³³

³² Rowe 1999: 63-64

³³ The results and implications of the notion that Aristophanes and Agathon present the two different sides of Eros as described by Pausanias and Eryximachus will be considered in section II.

After the first two sections have established his most significant insights about Eros, in the third section Eryximachus amplifies the role of the god, which recalls the rhetorical aspect of these speeches. Eros is present in nearly every opposite in nature and civilization, and a lack of balance produces disastrous results. The seasons of the year and the weather – hot and cold, wet and dry – all elements are essential for a good harvest, but too much of any and pestilence and every sort of disaster ensues. Once again, there is a skill and skilled practitioner associated with the management of the *Erotes* of the atmosphere – astronomy and astronomers. Prophecy and prophets likewise exist to regulate the *Erotes* associated with the relationship of gods and mankind, living and dead. Because of his role in the management of these various forces, Eryximachus concludes that Eros holds the greatest power and deserves praise, and surely he omitted many things, but it is the task of Aristophanes to correct this.

The final section of Eryximachus' speech creates two important changes, one practical and one conceptual, but both contribute to the sense of finality present in his speech. First, in his finale the reassertion of rhetoric is prominent. His use of amplification, one of the most basic techniques of encomia, is unparalleled in any of these first three speeches. Relying upon his earlier arguments, he attributes to Eros power over the heavens and the dead, and then declares that there are many omissions. His empty hyperbole reinforces the vapidness of rhetoric that Plato has already shown to be obvious, especially in Phaedrus' speech. Second, by the end of his speech, Eros again resembles a unified being. The unification of Eros is present even early in Eryximachus' speech, as McPherran notes: "[Eryximachus' medical] theory arguably employs a single and coherent sense of *one Erōs* (188d5) differentiated into two modes: moderating, harmonizing, Heavenly *Erōs*; and pleonexic, disharmonizing Common *Erōs*."³⁴ As Eryximachus' descriptions of all the skills associated with the management of Eros demonstrated, both *Erotes* have extraordinary power, and Aristophanes and

³⁴ McPherran 2006: 75; emphasis his

Agathon do not mention the idea of separation at all. Conceptually, Eros is whole once again. Eryximachus' exploration of the dual *Erotes* was necessary to reveal the philosophical shortcomings of Pausanias, but the distinction is now no longer necessary. The speech of Eryximachus provides an essential transition between the rhetoric of the earlier speech and the poetry of Aristophanes and Agathon.

Of the first three speakers Plato presents his most direct criticism of rhetoric through Phaedrus, whose logical shortcomings demonstrate how rhetoric fails to provide a solution to the greater problems of argument and education. Additionally, Phaedrus' separation from the other speakers sets him apart from the interlaced presentation of Pausanias and Eryximachus. As for these two speeches, on the one hand, Plato emphasizes Pausanias' insidious abuse of sophistic rhetoric by deemphasizing its philosophical aspect; on the other hand, Eryximachus provides the necessary criticism of Pausanias' philosophical rhetoric. This technique affords Plato the opportunity of avoiding positive philosophical declarations in the early section of the dialogue, because the explication of the nature of Eros still has to pass through many stages before the theory is ready for Socrates. The next step is the interpretations of the dramatic poets, whose stage Eryximachus has prepared.

II: The Separation of Form and Content

The relationship of the Platonic dialogues with poetry is typically interpreted as complex and, in some cases, frightfully ambiguous. The *Symposium* is one of Plato's best examples of an extensive interaction with poetry in his dialogues. In the *Symposium* Plato places agonistic speeches into the voices of representatives of the two most prominent forms of poetic performance in Classical Athens. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the speeches by the comic poet, Aristophanes, and the tragic poet, Agathon, is no accident. In the arrangement of the seating, two characters, both Eryximachus and Aristodemus, are

seated between the two poets. The occurrence of Aristophanes' hiccoughs allows Eryximachus and Aristophanes to switch places, and Aristodemus is skipped without even offering a passing comment. In this way, Plato arranges the dialogue so as to invite the reader to compare his treatment of the two types of drama. Furthermore, at the end of the dialogue, Socrates famously asserts that the same poet is able to compose comedy and tragedy, as Aristophanes and Agathon fall asleep. The scene emphasizes the ability of the author to transcend generic boundaries, at least in Plato's opinion. The agonistic speeches that follow are intimately associated with the transgression and representation of genre. How each speech resonates within the genre its author represents, therefore, will be the focus of this discussion. An analysis of the form and content of each speech reveals that Plato, through these two speeches, complicates and criticizes the conception and reception of poetry by starkly distinguishing the two speakers' presentation of content and form.

Subtle shifts in a number of elements of the dialogue introduce Aristophanes and Agathon. After three speeches, some tropes have begun to emerge. Until this point, each speaker has continued the general approach of the previous speaker and has introduced a single change to the developing model. This system is a convenient model for agonistic speeches; by improving just one aspect of a previous speech, the speaker demonstrates that his speech is inarguably better. Eryximachus, aware of this standard, attempts to future-proof his speech with his claim at the end that the major ideas are his, and all that remains for Aristophanes to do is fill in the gaps, but the model remains his own. His attempt to reassert his influence, first by prompting Aristophanes to fill in the gaps of his model, as each previous speaker had more or less done, then by attempting to control the tone of Aristophanes' speech, presumably on the grounds that he is the *symposiarch*, is not well received by Aristophanes. Eryximachus remarks that he must be on guard during Aristophanes' speech, lest he say anything "funny" (γελοῖον). Aristophanes flippantly replies that he does not fear so much that he say something

funny, but rather “ridiculous” (καταγέλαστον);³⁵ therefore, he foreshadows the grotesque, comic content of his speech. Aristophanes’ denial of the established patterns distinguishes his speech before he even begins to speak.

Eryximachus’ concerns, for the first time, raise the question of expectation of the characters in the dialogue regarding other speakers, which is manifest in two ways. To begin, Aristophanes is a renowned comic poet, and Eryximachus must be aware that Aristophanes is more eloquent than he is. Perhaps he even regrets taking his place earlier in the dialogue. Certainly, an earlier position allows for a less nuanced speech, but, as Eryximachus now realizes, such speech is easier to outdo. Eryximachus also shows concern about the content of Aristophanes’ speech, based upon his profession as a comedian. Therefore, the question of dramatic genre arises. Is it valid to read the following two speeches as representative of each genre? Eryximachus expects that it is possible, although his concern regarding the intrusion of comedy results from his high-minded pedantry (and perhaps he does not want Aristophanes to outdo him by working within a framework in which he is a professional). Regardless of the nature of Eryximachus’ misgivings, Aristophanes’ final assurance before his speech, that he fears that he will speak something too ridiculous, firmly implants the expectation of Old Comedy, both for Plato and the modern reader.³⁶

What should we expect, therefore, from this intrusion of comedy? Nightingale significantly demonstrates that comedy, contrary to Eryximachus’ expectations, which Aristophanes himself encourages with his vocabulary, contains elements of both “the ridiculous” (γελοῖον) and “the serious” (σπουδαῖον).³⁷ In her work she considers in greatest detail Plato’s treatment of comedy in both the

³⁵ Dover (1980: 112) offers “contemptible” as a translation; however, I do not see why the usage should be considered so strongly derogatory in this context. Aristophanes expresses Eryximachus’ “fears” more than his own and is clearly joking at the expense of Eryximachus. Furthermore, Socrates’ use of the word (cf. below) also suggests that it is simply meant to be an intensified form of γελοῖος. The translations “funny” and “ridiculous” parallel Howatson’s translation.

³⁶ Cf. Nightingale 1995: 174: “This kind of comedy, of course, is a purveyor of “the ridiculous.”

³⁷ Nightingale 1995: 174

Republic and the *Laws*, especially the position Plato allots to comedy in the perfect polis. However, her conclusion about comedy itself, rather than Plato's opinion of it, is most important in my interpretation of Aristophanes: "Consider one final – and, I believe, crucial – point of convergence between Old Comedy and the Platonic dialogue: the "mixed" or multi-generic form. To put it more precisely, *both the comedians and Plato regularly incorporate "alien" genres of discourse into their dramas.*"³⁸ As for the discussion of the Platonic attitude towards comedy presented in the *Symposium*, Nightingale considers the previous scholarly discussion to be already sufficient for her purpose; however, I wish to continue the discussion she begins regarding the multi-generic aspects of comedy in my examination of the characterization of Aristophanes. Earlier discussions typically view the speech holistically; for example, Patterson's discussion, which contrasts the *spoudaios* tragedian Agathon not with Aristophanes, but with the *geloios* portrayal of Socrates, merely says: "Some will consider Aristophanes a more serious rival to Socrates than Agathon, though that is less important than the fact that both rivals are ignorant of the true nature of the love they praise."³⁹ On the basis of its popular appeal Dover argues: "Plato means us to regard the theme and the framework of Aristophanes' story as characteristic not of comedy, but of unsophisticated, subliterate folklore."⁴⁰ He later admits, however, that comedy "uses, adapts and parodies every genre of composition," so the two genres are not mutually exclusive.⁴¹ In fact, Aristophanes' speech exemplifies the multi-generic tendencies that Nightingale identifies in Plato's dialogues, and, therefore, forms an integral part of his discourse concerning the idea of the content of poetry in the *Symposium*.

As Aristophanes begins to speak, because of Eryximachus' intrusion, we are explicitly made to notice his generic styling. In content Aristophanes' speech is a sort of fable; it contains an

³⁸ Nightingale 1995: 191-2; emphasis hers

³⁹ Patterson 1982: 86

⁴⁰ Dover 1966: 45

⁴¹ Dover 1966: 47

identifiable moral lesson about the nature and effects of Eros. Humans, he says, used to be composed of two human beings fused together at the back, each with two faces, four arms, and four legs. These humans, hubristic due to their heightened power, sought to overthrow the gods on Mount Olympus. Zeus, therefore, split them into two halves. The new humans, unfortunately, were unable to live separated from their other half, and they wasted away. Zeus then took pity on them and allowed them to be briefly united through sex. Each human labors to find his or her other half, from whom he/she was separated. According to Aristophanes, “the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love (τοῦ ὅλου οὖν τῆ ἐπιθυμία καὶ διώξει ἔρως ὄνομα)” (192a10-193a1). The incorporation of a number of etiologies into the speech provides a level of explanatory detail that was not present in the earlier speeches. In addition to describing Eros, he provides an explanation for everything from the existence of the navel (a scar which reminds us of the previous union of our two halves) to sexual orientation (each person seeks the gender of the half to which he/she was originally bound).

Conceptually, the most important idea that Aristophanes introduces is that Eros is a pursuit or desire, which Socrates will revisit later in the dialogue. Previously, the speakers had simply focused on the effects of Eros on humanity, but had neglected to consider what Eros actually is. Like Phaedrus and Pausanias, he also considers the origin of the god, but places it at the moment of the separation of mankind:

ἔστι δὴ οὖν ἐκ τόσου ὃ ἔρως ἔμφυτος ἀλλήλων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ τῆς ἀρχαίας φύσεως συναγωγεὺς καὶ ἐπιχειρῶν ποιῆσαι ἐν ἑκ δυοῖν καὶ ἰάσασθαι τὴν φύσιν τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην. (191c8-d3)

So it is that ever since that far-off time, love of one person for another has been inborn in human beings, and its role is to restore us to our ancient state by trying to make unity out of duality and to heal our human condition.

Aristophanes even appropriates Eryximachus' medical vocabulary (ιάσασθαι) to describe the effects of Eros, a reminder of his rejection of Eryximachus' ideas.⁴² Furthermore, Aristophanes strongly connects Eros and *physis*; he suggests that the return to a wholeness of “nature” is the ultimate goal of Eros. His last phrase makes this statement explicit:

καταστήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν καὶ ἰασάμενος μακαρίους καὶ εὐδαίμονας
ποιῆσαι. (193d4-5)

... [H]e will restore us to our original state, and heal us and make us blessed and happy.

In this way Aristophanes manages to derive a reason for praising Eros from his story – he is the healer of mankind's nature. On this note he ends his speech.

The simplicity of the union of form and content in Aristophanes' speech deserves to be mentioned. The myth that Aristophanes presents is really quite simple, and he does not embellish it at all with his style. The storytelling style allows the listener to easily grasp the basics of Aristophanes' reasoning, which in turn invites the examination of his philosophy.⁴³ The duality of simplicity and complexity of his ideas about Eros attests to the strength of his compositional ability. Indeed, Eryximachus was right to be worried about Aristophanes outdoing his own speech.

Aristophanes' awareness of how his speech differs from his predecessors also forms an important element in its composition. He directly acknowledges and emphasizes its otherness both at the beginning of this speech and immediately afterwards: “... [I]t is my intention to take a different line from you and Pausanias. (ἄλλη γέ πη ἐν νῶ ἔχω λέγειν ἢ ἢ σὺ τε καὶ Παισανίας εἰπέτην)” (189c2-3), and, ““This is my speech about Love, Eryximachus ... and very different from yours’ (οὔτος, ἔφη, ὧ Ἐρυξίμαχε, ὁ ἐμὸς λόγος ἐστὶ περὶ Ἔρωτος, ἀλλοῖος ἢ ὁ σός)” (193d6-7). Like his use of Eryximachus' medical vocabulary, which primarily serves to distinguish his speech, Aristophanes references other

⁴² For further discussion of the medical vocabulary and concepts used by Aristophanes, cf. Craik 2001: 111-114.

⁴³ Cf. Rowe 1998: 153: “Since [Aristophanes' speech] mostly consists of a fairly straightforward, linear narrative, there is little point in attempting to summarize it.”

common elements which were emerging in the earlier speeches, and he deploys them in a manner which, in turn, stresses that his speech is different. He does this through a combination of thematic and lexical approaches. First, he puts forth as the purpose of his speech: “I am going to try to explain [Eros’] power to you all (ἐγὼ οὖν πειράσομαι ὑμῖν εἰσηγήσασθαι τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ)” (189d3-4). *Dynamis* was an integral concept for Eryximachus, but all he could manage in this respect was to ascribe “complete (πᾶσαν)” and “great (μεγάλην)” power to Eros (188d3; 7), whereas Aristophanes, with specifics, seeks to outdo his speech by describing his power. In order to do this, like the others before him, especially Phaedrus, he uses myth. However, Aristophanes’ use of myth is not a simple interpretation of Homer or Hesiod, but rather a full-blown, presumably original tale, which evokes, but only subtly, other Greek myths (e.g. the Gigantomachy). His reference to Homer illustrates the struggle of the humans against the gods: “and what Homer says about Ephialtes and Otus is said about these too (καὶ ὃ λέγει Ὅμηρος περὶ Ἐφιάλτου τε καὶ Ὠτοῦ, περὶ ἐκείνων λέγεται)” (190b7-8). Therefore, unlike his predecessors, he rejects any interpretations that prescribe the inherent moral value of Homer and subordinates Homer’s telling of mythology to his own. Finally, his description of Eros as *hegemon* and *strategos* of humanity (ὥς ὁ Ἔρως ἡμῶν ἡγεμῶν καὶ στρατηγός – 193b) evokes Phaedrus’ militaristic analogy of the effects of Eros, but Aristophanes applies these titles to Eros himself, thereby increasing the glory of the god. The references that Aristophanes incorporates into his speech demonstrate that his encomium is comprehensively superior to all. He eschews the development of one, single aspect, which both Pausanias and Eryximachus embrace.

While Aristophanes’ speech succeeds as a superior encomium due to its distinctive form and content, how are we to judge its philosophical value? I propose that its generic form provides the best manner for understanding what Plato attempted to achieve with the character of Aristophanes. In form, Aristophanes’ speech resembles the Old Comedy that Nightingale describes, since it incorporates elements of both the ridiculous and the serious, yet he also appropriates “alien” genres

of discourse for his purpose. Elements of the ridiculous are scattered throughout. The description of the form of the ancient humans, especially their mode of movement, is certainly intended to inspire laughter. The story, however, quickly changes when these ancient and powerful beings decide to attack the gods, and the serious rapidly displaces the ridiculous. Apollo's smoothing of the wrinkles and the etiology of the navel is also humorous and light-hearted; however, a description of the mortal longing for each other that these beings experience after their separation immediately follows the less serious physical description. The creation of the genitals resonates with comic crassness, but dramatically it provides a means to reestablish the wholeness of the nature of humans, and Aristophanes then describes the different sexualities and the search for one's other half. Soon after these serious elements, the idea that Hephaestus might fuse together two humans with his tools reintroduces the comic element. The speech ends with a serious description of the benefits of Eros. Aristophanes' continuous reversal of the ridiculous and the serious evokes the same duality expressed in the simplicity and complexity of his ideas; however, it also aligns with Nightingale's description of Old Comedy, so perhaps it should not be considered too significant.

On the other hand, Aristophanes explicitly requests that Eryximachus "not treat it [his speech] as funny (μη κωμωδήσης αὐτόν)" (193d). Therefore, Plato asks us not to simply understand Aristophanes' speech for its comic elements, but to consider its use of "alien" discourse. His speech particularly engages with two other poetic genres: tragedy and lyric love poetry. Resonances of tragedy are ubiquitous, especially in the contextualization and denouement of the plot. As in Aristophanes' story, it is very common for tragedy to take place in the mythic past, whereas comedy often portrayed contemporary situations and characters.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the plot contains what is best described in terms of a tragic downfall, although the *deus ex machina* that is the appearance and intervention of Eros alleviates the tragic ending. On the other hand, his description of the longing of humans immediately

⁴⁴ Cf. Charalabopoulos 2012: 69

after being separated suggests the descriptions of Eros himself in lyric love poetry. Anne Carson describes the role of the god in this genre: “Consistently throughout the Greek lyric corpus, as well as in the poetry of tragedy and comedy, eros is an experience that assaults the lover from without and proceeds to take control of his body, his mind and the quality of his life.”⁴⁵ Aristophanes both appropriates and inverts this understanding. His humans are longing because of Eros, but because of the absence of Eros rather than his presence; in his myth humans without Eros behave like those with Eros in love poetry. They waste away and are incapable of useful action; they throw their hands around each other and lie intertwined together (191a5-b1). The arrival of Eros, in fact, provides a solution to their troubles. Aristophanes, therefore, uses this “alien” discourse to construct his speech so as to cast Eros as a positive force, even in contexts where the god is typically portrayed negatively.

Plato’s purpose with his construction of Aristophanes as a character indicates a discussion of methods of exposition and genre; both of these themes are becoming more prominent as the dialogue moves toward its climax, the speech of Socrates. Even though Socrates later strikes down the ideas presented by Aristophanes, this speech demonstrates the complexity of thought that is possible to present in simple language, especially through the appropriation of other genres of discourse. Aristophanes even goes so far as to suggest to those hearing him at tonight’s symposium that “you in your turn can teach everyone else. (ὕμεῖς δὲ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι ἔσεσθε)” (189d4).⁴⁶ Furthermore, besides the rejection of his ideas, Plato does nothing to criticize Aristophanes, as Nightingale says: “Strangely, however, he [Plato] treats Aristophanes far better than Agathon in the *Symposium*: it is the comic poet who, despite his humorous style, enunciates the more compelling discourse on *erōs*.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Carson 1986: 148

⁴⁶ Due to its collapse of the difference between the persuasive rhetoric of teachers and the production of drama, the signifier διδάσκαλοι, “dramatists” or “teachers,” may also indicate intergeneric overtones.

⁴⁷ Nightingale 1995: 173

Agathon, the tragic poet, is unique in his characterization in the *Symposium*, insofar as he is the only character to experience Socrates' characteristic method of interrogation, the elenchus. However, since his speech precedes Socrates' questioning, I will consider it first. Although he is the successor of Aristophanes, Agathon hardly follows the innovations introduced by his dramatic myth, but rather reverts to a form that is much more suggestive of the earlier speeches. Furthermore, in its content his speech does not at all engage with tragedy as a genre, as one might expect, but his carefully balanced clauses and phrasing are reminiscent of the rhetorician Gorgias, infamous for his prose encomium of Helen of Troy. Poetry, at least in its formal form, is conspicuously scattered throughout; the listener is meant to notice it. Agathon quotes Homer, the peroration of his speech is composed almost entirely in various poetic rhythms, and he even includes some original hexameters in his speech. In content, like Aristophanes, he evokes all of the earliest speakers, but his attempts to outdo them rhetorically result in a speech that is philosophically vapid. In Agathon's speech Plato presents and confronts a degree of poetic form hitherto unseen in the *Symposium*.

Agathon begins with a criticism of all the earlier speeches; he says that everyone had only "called mankind happy for the benefits for which Eros is responsible (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εὐδαιμονίζειν τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὧν ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς αἴτιος)" (194e6-7). They had not actually, however, "encomiated" Eros. Curiously, he seems to ignore that Aristophanes stated and avoided almost the same criticism. In order to praise Eros, Agathon asserts that he is the "happiest of all [the gods] (εὐδαιμονέστατον εἶναι αὐτῶν)" (195a6-7). He offers two reasons, that Eros is "supreme in beauty and goodness (κάλλιστον ὄντα καὶ ἄριστον)" (195a7). Agathon supports these statements by telling how Eros flees old age and is, in fact, the youngest of the gods. He then uses Homer to establish that Eros is "tender" (ἀπαλός) by extrapolating Homer's description of Ate as tender in order to encompass Eros. In this example Eros again flees that which does not receive him, in this case a "hard" individual (σκληρός). Agathon says that much remains to be described about Eros' beauty, but he wishes to say something about

Eros' virtue (ἀρετή). Eros does no injustice nor suffers any injustice, he possesses self-control (σωφροσύνη), and he is the strongest, for he captures even Ares (196d1-3). In addition to these accolades, Eros is also a skilled poet, and he inspires every sort of poetry. Therefore, Eros must be skilled in all these arts, so as to teach others these skills. The climax of Agathon's speech is his conclusion, which summarizes and extrapolates all his previous arguments and ascribes to Eros a preponderance of laudable qualities. In his short speech, Agathon, at least in his opinion, manages to extol the virtues and qualities of Eros much more comprehensively than any previous speaker.

As Socrates himself will soon reveal, the problems of Agathon's speech are numerous. To begin, Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan point out that Agathon's description of Eros is remarkably like himself, which introduces certain logical problems: "Eros could not possibly dwell indiscriminately in every soul. Why not? Because he is rather like Agathon and Agathon would not like it."⁴⁸ Agathon is creating a portrait of himself in Eros, an accusation that may be leveled against any speaker so far, but, unlike the others, he shows no attempt to universalize his Eros. Phaedrus sees Eros in everyone, but sometimes that Eros is good, and sometimes bad. Pausanias and Eryximachus effectively divide Eros into two gods, one who inspires noble actions and the other who inspires base actions, and the good is obviously intimately involved with whatever they themselves hold to be important. Aristophanes' speech is definitely the most egalitarian in its universalization of Eros, for Eros is one force that equally heals all humans. Agathon continues with the idea that Eros is one force; however, Eros only inhabits what welcomes him, and that which welcomes him above all is Agathon. Therefore, Agathon characterizes himself excellently in his speech, and it is possible to read almost any reference to Eros as a reference to Agathon himself.

Moreover, by rejecting the praise of the benefits Eros bestows upon mankind, Agathon symbolically rejects philosophy. He demonstrates that he has no interest in considering what is good

⁴⁸ Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004: 88

for mankind universally, as others have done. Each previous speaker, regardless of his logical problems, had at least attempted to prescribe an appropriate course of action regarding Eros, but Agathon is determined to speak about what the god is. His consideration of the gifts of Eros, as a result of this, is banal and rhetorical, and he does not seek to explain why these gifts, such as poetry, may be good. Agathon's purpose is only to involve Eros in their giving. Consequently, his failure to universalize his praise and his rejection of philosophy undermine any philosophical value that his speech may contain.

In conventional Greek terms of form, Agathon's speech is a rhetorical masterpiece. He displays an inclination for rhetorically elevated hypotactic syntax, for example: φημι οὖν ἐγὼ πάντων θεῶν εὐδαιμόνων ὄντων Ἔρωτα, εἰ θέμις καὶ ἀνεμέσητον εἰπεῖν, εὐδαιμονέστατον εἶναι αὐτῶν, κάλλιστον ὄντα καὶ ἄριστον (195a5-7). This sentence carefully uses the subordination of ideas in order to delay the most important words and place them for the greatest effect. Eros is not mentioned until the end of the first clause, but the interposed conditional statement delays the revelation of his trait εὐδαιμονέστατον. Furthermore, Agathon's reasoning is not stated until the very end, so that the sentence climaxes with its final and most significant word, ἄριστον. In addition to his hypotactic syntax, he also has a tendency for clever rhetorical devices, pleonasm for example, e.g. φεύγων φυγῆ (195b1), ποιῶν ποιεῖ (196c1). He carefully balances clauses, e.g. ἐκὼν ἐκόντι (196c2), and Μοῦσαι μουσικῆς (197b1-2), and at times to the point that it may seem to be parody: Ἔρωσ οὗτ' ἀδικεῖ οὗτ' ἀδικεῖται οὕτε ὑπὸ θεοῦ οὕτε θεόν, οὕτε ὑπ' ἀνθρώπου οὕτε ἄνθρωπον (196b6-7). His attention to this sort of detail in his speech is unparalleled in the *Symposium*.

The rhetorical climax of his speech, however, is its peroration. Agathon cannot resist showing off a pair of hexameters that he has composed, but these verses are just the beginning of an extensive exposition of poetic skill. Dover enumerates the poetic virtues of this passage as follows:

In the peroration (197d1-e5) nearly all the thirty-one members (or 'cola') into which the passage can be articulated by attention to the phrasing indicated by the sense are

recongruous, once normal rules of Attic prosody, elision, crasis, etc., have been applied, as metrical units familiar in Greek lyric poetry.⁴⁹

We may consider Agathon's speech as complementary to Aristophanes'; in Aristophanes' speech Plato presents poetry in regard to its thematic elements, but in Agathon's speech Plato presents its formal elements. Agathon obviously believes that his superior command of poetic form can function as a supplement to his philosophical banality. Socrates' treatment of Agathon's speech demonstrates otherwise. Furthermore, in this division of content and form, Rowe's assertion about the anticipated character of the speeches of Aristophanes and Agathon is again relevant. On the one hand, Eryximachus' division of the Muses adumbrates the evident division in these speeches; on the other hand, Plato rejects any greater implication that Eryximachus may have had. Despite the inclusion of comic elements, Aristophanes' speech clearly showed a great number of serious elements, whereas Agathon's speech was simply meaningless. In this way Plato tacitly rejects the division of Eros that Pausanias and Eryximachus supported, and he also casually foreshadows Diotima's belief that Eros is a mediator.

Therefore, we must consider for what reason Plato would so harshly reject poetic form, while maintaining poetry's ability to craft a story. The answer lies within the interaction between Socrates and Agathon after his speech; however, before beginning his elenchus of Agathon, Socrates offers a reaction and evaluation of his speech. Obviously, he does not find anything praiseworthy in its content; instead, he draws attention to his form: "The earlier parts were wonderful of course, but it was the final passage which must have stunned every listener with the beauty of its language. (καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα οὐχ ὁμοίως μὲν θαυμαστά· τὸ δὲ ἐπὶ τελευτῆς τοῦ κάλλους τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ῥημάτων τίς οὐκ ἂν ἐξεπλάγη ἀκούων;)" (198b4-5). This statement and Socrates' subsequent comparison with the

⁴⁹ Dover 1980: 124; he also notes: "The total number of colon-types occurring in Greek lyric poetry is so large that some of them are bound to occur in any prose passage which is constituted by a chain of phrases, but if we attempt to set out Gorgias B6 as a lyric poem we see the difference at once; Plato has taken considerable trouble to give Agathon's peroration a poetic character in addition to caricaturing its 'Gorgianic' structure."

stunning effects of the Gorgon reflect the lack of philosophy in Agathon’s speech. His speech did not inspire thought or reflection, i.e. progress in the discussion, but rather stupefaction, a halt to progress. Agathon’s charming rhetoric is antithetical to the purpose of philosophical discourse, and this is not the only occasion during which Agathon has inspired such a reaction. As Socrates notes early in the dialogue, Agathon’s tragedies have the same effect upon a crowd of thirty thousand people – vapid, stupefied applause. About this paradox Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan indicate:

So Agathon’s hyperbolic, sophistic theology, it would seem, has capacity for effects that are utterly at odds with its own apparent self-presentation: it will either incite excessive emotion or make any motion impossible, which at least on the surface of things would seem to imply that it is all emotional appeal, but an appeal that freezes the life out of Love itself.⁵⁰

Socrates, of course, recognizes this paradox and exploits it for his description of the encomiastic genre, the features of which now receive his consideration. He says, “It was then I realised what a fool I had been in agreeing with you to take my turn and deliver a eulogy of Love (ἐνενόησα τότε ἄρα καταγέλαστος ὢν, ἠνίκα ὑμῖν ὠμολόγουν ἐν τῷ μέρει μεθ’ ὑμῶν ἐγκωμιάσσεσθαι τὸν ἔρωτα)” (198c5-d1). His description of himself as *katagelastos* recalls Aristophanes’ description of his speech, and Socrates symbolically denies the superiority of Agathon’s speech over its predecessor by aligning himself with the earlier speech. Despite this, Socrates admits that he is unable to speak an encomium as the others had done, because they did not say the truth. So Socrates will speak “in [his] own fashion (κατ’ ἐμαυτόν)” (199b1), and in true Socratic fashion, he begins with an elenchus.

What purpose, however, does an elenchus serve? Why must Socrates deploy an effectively ad hominem technique, when he could simply speak the truth? Rosemary Desjardins describes why the Socratic elenchus is necessary:

Given the problem of ambiguity in language, and the need to move from surface to deep-level meaning, it is hardly surprising that the first step in a dialogue’s development usually requires that one be shaken from a complacent kind of satisfaction with the surface of language and forced to recognize that language does

⁵⁰ Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004: 93

not transparently and unequivocally *mean*, just like that. This process – in which one is made to realize that to come up with even the right words is not enough, that one’s unquestioned assumptions are often really obstacles to true understanding – constitutes the familiar pattern that we know as *elenchus*.⁵¹

Socrates’ criticism of the encomiastic genre highlights the very ambiguity of language that Desjardins identifies as the cause of the *elenchus*. He claims that he does not know what an encomium truly *is*, just what he *thought* an encomium to be:

ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ὑπ’ ἀβελτερίας ὥμην δεῖν τάληθῆ λέγειν περὶ ἐκάστου τοῦ ἐγκωμιαζομένου, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ὑπάρχειν, ἐξ αὐτῶν δὲ τούτων τὰ κάλλιστα ἐκλεγόμενους ὡς εὐπρεπέστατα τιθέναι: καὶ πάνυ δὴ μέγα ἐφρόνουν ὡς εὖ ἐρῶν, ὡς εἰδῶς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ ἐπαινεῖν ὀτιοῦν. τὸ δὲ ἄρα, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὐ τοῦτο ἦν τὸ καλῶς ἐπαινεῖν ὀτιοῦν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὡς μέγιστα ἀνατιθέναι τῶ πράγματι καὶ ὡς κάλλιστα, ἐάν τε ἦ οὕτως ἔχοντα ἐάν τε μὴ (198d3-e2)

For in my naivety I thought I had only to speak the truth about the subject of the eulogy. This should be the foundation, I thought, and on the basis of the facts one selected the finest examples and arranged them to best effect. Assuming, then, that I knew the true way to eulogize, I even felt confident that I was going to speak well. But actually, as it now appears, this is not the way to deliver a eulogy at all. Instead one should attribute to the subject the greatest and finest qualities possible whether they are truly there or not...

Therefore, since language introduces these irreconcilable problems in interpretation, Socrates must deeply disturb his interlocutor and convince him to question the most basic of all things, the very meanings of words. Socrates, at the very least, seems to indicate that it is possible to speak true words:

ὄρα οὖν, ὦ Φαῖδρε, εἴ τι καὶ τοιούτου λόγου δέη, περὶ Ἔρωτος τάληθῆ λεγόμενα ἀκούειν, ὀνόμασι δὲ καὶ θέσει ῥημάτων τοιαύτη ὀποία ἂν τις τύχη ἐπελθοῦσα (199b2-5)

Phaedrus, you might find out whether there is any call for a speech that entails listening to the truth about Love, spoken in whatever words and phrases happen to come into my head at the time.

Socrates emphasizes spontaneity in the speaking of true words. Highly rhetorical speech, such as Agathon’s, obfuscates the words themselves and the meanings of the words. Simplicity of speech,

⁵¹ Desjardins 1988: 116; emphasis hers

even to the point of speaking with complete spontaneity, is essential. For this reason Aristophanes' speech is innocuous; its ideas, though incorrect, are displayed with an admirable simplicity.

The reactions to the elenctic process are varied, and Blondell asserts that the reaction of a character to a Socratic elenchus is extremely important in the analysis of his character, and, in addition, she says:

Accordingly, if the force of his method is to be fully appreciated, the interlocutor's particular character – those aspects of his life and personality that make him respond as he does – must be made present to the reader.⁵²

As we have seen from the specificity and exclusivity of Agathon's speech, he does far better in his portrayal of himself rather than Eros. In addition to this, the rest of the *Symposium* provides far more specific detail about Agathon than any other character. He is a victorious tragedian, and his speech attests to his eloquence in both poetry and prose. His knowledge of the poets and rhetorical techniques indicates both his own intelligence and his traditional education.⁵³ From his speech, we learn that he is soft and beautiful, and does not wish to involve himself with anything that shows neither of these traits. We can appreciate, therefore, his reaction to Socrates' elenchus.

During the elenchus, Agathon recognizes the logic of Socrates, and readily expresses agreement with his questions. Ultimately, when Socrates has shown Agathon that the most basic tenet of his belief about Eros, that the god is beautiful and good, is incorrect, Agathon admits: “Socrates, it rather looks as though I understood nothing of what I was saying at the time’. κινδυνεύω, ὃ Σώκρατες, οὐδὲν εἰδέναι ὧν τότε εἶπον)” (201b11-12). His readiness to admit his fault shows not only that he is willing to learn, but also, a more sinister idea, that he may be *too* complacent. He simply accepts as truth what he hears, and he shows no understanding of the problem of the ambiguity of

⁵² Blondell 2002: 113-114

⁵³ For further discussion of these aspects of Agathon's character, cf. Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004: 89-91.

language that Socrates is trying to demonstrate with the lesson. Agathon's mistake in this instance may have been corrected, but there is no indication that he will change in the future.

Regardless of the reception of the elenchus, it is the first step in a paradigmatic Socratic dialogue, which will now begin with Socrates' retelling of his encounter with Diotima. Nevertheless, the speeches of Aristophanes and Agathon remain important for their consideration of poetry. Through these two individuals, representatives of poetry in its most public aspect, Plato presents poetry as the union of content and form. Like the humans in the myth of Aristophanes, he decisively separates the two halves and considers the value of each. Aristophanes' presentation on behalf of content is shown to be harmless; content holds no importance in the truthfulness of words. Plato, however, presents form as an insidious opponent. The form of a speech captures the listener; it is an emotional appeal that can inspire applause or stupefaction. Like words and their meanings, poetry is ambiguous, and, therefore, must be considered in its most basic elements.

III: The Socratic Gestalt

Until this point in the dialogue, each speaker has presented a speech that more or less conforms to the purpose of the project as Eryximachus designed it. Neither Socrates nor Alcibiades follows their example; both present speeches that differ drastically, and interact extensively with each other and the dialogue as a whole. Socrates' presentation of the truth about Eros through his interaction with the non-Athenian priestess Diotima and Alcibiades' drunken praise of Socrates himself draw focused attention to the character of Socrates, especially the manner in which he interacts with other individuals. Plato throws not only Socrates into relief against the other characters, but also one particular aspect of Socrates – his method of discourse. Beginning with Socrates' elenchus of Agathon, the *Symposium* becomes the presentation of a series of dialogues: Socrates and Diotima, Socrates and Alcibiades, Socrates and the other symposiasts, and finally, I believe, one of the symposiasts,

Aristodemus, and the chain of dialogue that eventually leads to the dramatic framework of the *Symposium*. Additionally, since Socrates' description of Eros is correct, insofar as the dialogue is concerned, we do not need to rely upon shortcomings in philosophy to characterize Socrates. Rather, the mysteries of Eros provide a method of understanding the narrative of the dialogue. Alcibiades, for his part, presents an extremely important portrayal of his interactions with Socrates. From this presentation of dialogue, which is dependent upon, but separate from, the earlier speeches, we can derive a defense of the "genre" of dialogue as developed by Plato. Furthermore, this genre, as presented by Plato, is characterized by the fact that it is something greater than the sum of its parts, a situation that signifies important implications for Plato's project of philosophy.

The relationship of this section with the rest of the dialogue must first be established. In the framework of the *Symposium*, the relation of the earlier speeches to Socrates' presentation of his interactions with Diotima is generally viewed as, at least in part, intertwined. Many scholars point out how earlier speeches resonate within Diotima's idea of Eros. Frisbee Sheffield offers a convincing, but ultimately unsatisfying, account of Plato's use of an endoxic method in order to foreshadow ideas from early speeches, which then appear in the discourse of Diotima. After convincingly identifying which of the ideas of the earlier speakers resonate within Socrates' speech, she summarizes:

For example, Phaedrus was right that *erōs* aims at virtue, though wrong that the pursuit of honor is the only, or best, way to achieve it. Pausanias was right that there is an intimate relationship between wisdom and virtue, though wrong about the slavish transmission of wisdom and virtue. Eryximachus, though right that expertise is essential to the proper activity of *erōs*, mistakenly identified this with the medical art, and music, prophecy and astronomy. Aristophanes was right that *erōs* pursues what it lacks, but wrong that this is the *oikeion*. And Agathon was right that *erōs* has an intimate relationship to beauty, though wrong about the details of this relationship.⁵⁴

These aspects are undeniably the fabric of Socrates'/Diotima's description of Eros, but the primary shortcoming of Sheffield's study is her failure to consider the underlying structural subtexts that defy

⁵⁴ Sheffield 2006: 37-38

the endoxic association between Socrates and the other speakers that she proposes. As a character, Socrates is greater than a simple amalgamation of the previous speakers. In approaching the *Symposium* so as to analyze only the structure of its philosophical argument, Sheffield relegates the literary components (which are, arguably, more prominent in the *Symposium* than any other Platonic dialogue) to a secondary position, which in turn results in her neglect of subtext. This is not to say that her insights are not valuable, but rather that they must be considered in light of the literary elements of the dialogue. Characterization is, I propose, the most forceful of the subtexts present in the *Symposium*, and it becomes especially prominent in Plato's depiction of Socrates.

Sheffield's intimate connection of the speech of Socrates with the earlier speeches is by no means universally accepted. Like Sheffield, Rowe also argues from a philosophical standpoint, but rather than considering the *Symposium* as a separate entity, he focuses on the position of its philosophy within the greater Platonic corpus.⁵⁵ Rowe proposes, on the basis that it is best to interpret the *Symposium* as an early, Socratic dialogue rather than a middle, Platonic dialogue, that it is crucial to understand the Socrates and the others as fundamentally separate. He says:

But if it is the case, as I have urged, that Plato wishes to recommend not merely Socrates' treatment of *erōs*, but *the theory that it is built on* – if it is the case, as indeed I propose, that it is the *theory* that Plato cares most about, along with its particular application to the analysis of *erōs*, then that reading of the earlier speeches in the dialogue, as somehow cumulatively building, or building towards, the Socratic perspective, must be wrong.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the conclusion of his paper anticipates the focus of my interpretation of Socrates' character in this section:

What Plato is doing is to *contrast* the peculiar Socratic view with more ordinary views, not derive it from them – for the fact is that it cannot be derived from them. In order to appreciate fully what Socrates is saying, one has to throw away what one thought one knew, and start again. That itself, it seems to me, is the chief point of the whole

⁵⁵ Rowe 2006: 9-10

⁵⁶ Rowe 2006: 21; emphasis his

dialogue: to celebrate the distance that separates Socrates from his audience, and from the rest of us.⁵⁷

Rowe identifies three aspects of the *Symposium* that I intend to emphasize in my analysis of Socrates: first, if it is accepted, as Sheffield demonstrates, that the majority of the Socratic viewpoint is composed of elements from the previous speeches, yet, as Rowe asserts, the archetype ‘Socrates’ may not be derived from them, Plato presents the idea that Socrates, and therefore, Socratic dialogue, is intrinsically a whole greater than the sum of its parts; second, the philosopher, as presented in the *Symposium*, must discard what he holds to be true and start again, which is intrinsic to Alcibiades’ failure to engage in true dialectic with Socrates; third, through a development of Rowe’s idea that the *Symposium* “celebrate[s]” the distance between Socrates and his audience, Plato considers a similar distance to exist between the dialogue as a written form and the reader, as Aristodemus, Apollodorus, and the written dialogue demonstrate.

As I noted in the previous section, a model Socratic dialogue does not begin in the *Symposium* until Agathon experiences the Socratic elenchus, which itself introduces Socrates’ speech, related in the form of a dialogue between a younger Socrates and a priestess, Diotima of Mantinea. The beginning of the speech, however, does not signal the end of the elenchus, but rather the point at which Agathon ceases to argue against Socrates: “‘Socrates, I cannot argue against you, so let it be as you say’. (ἐγώ, φάναί, ὦ Σώκρατες, σοὶ οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην ἀντιλέγειν, ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἐχέτω ὡς σὺ λέγεις.)” (201c6-7). Agathon demonstrates that he is an unsuitable candidate for the elenchus, which again makes clear his lack of engagement with Socrates’ philosophical enterprise. Nevertheless, for the purposes of his argument, Socrates needs to continue the elenchus; therefore, he places himself in the position of Agathon and Diotima takes his place. The elenchus then resumes:

ἤλεγχε δὴ με τούτοις τοῖς λόγοις οἷσπερ ἐγὼ τοῦτον, ὡς οὔτε καλὸς εἶη κατὰ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον οὔτε ἀγαθός. (201d6-7)

⁵⁷ Rowe 2006: 21

She set about refuting me with those arguments that I have just used against Agathon, demonstrating that according to my own account Love was neither beautiful nor good.

Despite the large number of characters present at Agathon's symposium, Socrates is forced to create his own, possibly fictional, philosophical dialogue due to a dearth of suitable interlocutors. Diotima, Socrates' new interlocutor, raises a set of questions. Most obviously, to what extent should we conflate the two characters? If we acknowledge that Socrates' conversation with Diotima is fictional *in the view of Socrates*, do we also accept that she is somehow an alternative representation of Socratic character? Or is it possible to treat Diotima as something greater than a Socratic appendage, as an independent character in the *Symposium*?

The answer to these questions determines the direction of the interpretation of Socrates' character in the dialogue. In this case, it is important to distinguish in what respect Diotima is fictional. For Plato, i.e. the dialogue as a whole, Diotima is most likely either entirely fictional or a fictionalized representation of a real woman, as are the other characters in the *Symposium*.⁵⁸ In the end either interpretation has the same result.⁵⁹ In the view of Socrates, as Plato depicts him in the dialogue, the distinction is extremely important. If Plato intends for Socrates' conversation with Diotima to be perceived as authentic, then Diotima must be treated as a separate character. If the conversation is a fictional creation of Socrates, then we may consider Diotima a unique insight into Socratic psychology. Basing my interpretation on Socratic character as a whole and the importance of dialogue as a genre

⁵⁸ Halperin 1990: 119

⁵⁹ Cf. Halperin 1990: 120, "Moreover, the pertinent issue for the interpreter is not whether Diotima actually existed but what it is that Plato accomplishes by introducing her into the *Symposium*, and that is not an issue whose resolution depends on Diotima's historical authenticity." Curiously, Halperin does not consider my question, which I believe is quite pertinent: is Diotima fictional or real *in the view of Socrates*? Bury (1909: xxxix), on the other hand, agrees with my position: "Diotima is a fictitious personage. Plato, no doubt purposely, avoids putting his exposition of Eros into the mouth of any historical person: to do so would be to imply that the theory conveyed is not original but derived. It is only for purposes of literary art that Diotima here supplants the Platonic Socrates: she is presented, by a fiction, as his instructor, whereas in facts he merely gives utterance to his own thoughts." Although I agree with his position, I think his argument assumes much about Plato's attitude towards his character 'Socrates'.

in the *Symposium* (i.e. Rowe's emphasis on Socratic *theory*), I defend the latter interpretation. The difficulty of this position arises in Socrates' presentation of Diotima, which is suspiciously similar to Plato's own presentation of character in his dialogues.⁶⁰ Socrates, like Plato, gives no outright indication as to whether his conversation is fact or fiction.⁶¹ For this argument, we must again rely on the forces of characterization in the *Symposium*.

As I have already noted, the discourse of Socrates and Diotima is evocative in form of a paradigmatic early, Socratic dialogue of Plato, although the philosophy on display is his later theory of Forms.⁶² Their dialogue begins with an elenchus in which Diotima disabuses Socrates of his incorrect notions about the nature of Eros. Then, still using a dialectical method, she reveals the truth about Eros to Socrates. According to Diotima, Eros is a *daimon*, who acts as a mediator between wisdom and ignorance. In humanity, Eros is manifest in the desire to possess always what is good (206a11-12). This conclusion is the result of the first of Diotima's and Socrates' interactions about Eros. Socrates, however, states that they spoke on many occasions (207a5-6). During one conversation, the two discussed how Eros helps humanity (and all of nature) achieve immortality; this conversation results in an explication of the mysteries of Eros – Diotima's graduated process of attaining knowledge

⁶⁰ That is Socrates, just as Plato, appropriates the voices of others for his own dialectical purposes. It is interesting to note that Socrates appears as an interlocutor in his dialogue, in contrast to Plato, who never appears in his own dialogues. Presumably, this is done for the purpose of his characterization, which I further explain below.

⁶¹ Although he does not address the specific question I am asking, Rowe (1998: 173) offers possibly the most direct argument possible: "However the very manner of her introduction ... seem[s] to demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt ... that she is meant to be a fiction (as Aristophanes tacitly assumes her to be at 212c5-6)." This reference to Aristophanes reads: "Aristophanes was trying to say something about the reference Socrates had made to his own speech (τὸν δὲ Ἀριστοφάνη λέγειν τι ἐπιχειρεῖν, ὅτι ἐμνήσθη αὐτοῦ λέγων ὁ Σωκράτης περὶ τοῦ λόγου)." Rowe understands Aristophanes' attribution of the speech to Socrates, rather than Diotima, as an assumption that she is fiction. Like Bury's assumption (cf. note 59), although plausible, I do not find it sufficiently convincing for my position.

⁶² Cf. Bury 1909: xxxviii-xxxix: "In much, too, of the exposition of Diotima the semblance, at least, of intellectual *κοινωνία* is retained, illustrating the speaker's principle of philosophic co-operation. Thus the speech as a whole may be regarded simply as a Platonic dialogue in miniature..." Bury attributes the existence of Diotima to "social tact" on the part of Socrates, so he also implies here, and argues later (cf. note 59) that Diotima is totally fictional.

of the Form of Beauty through Eros' mediation. After revealing the mysteries of Eros, Socrates states that Diotima persuaded him and, consequently, he honors Eros greatly (212b1-6). This second section of Socrates' speech, however, has none of the previous dialectic, but rather it is entirely a monologue of Diotima. This final exposition on the mysteries of Eros begins: "Like the accomplished sophists she said (καὶ ἢ, ὡσπερ οἱ τέλει σοφισταί ... ἔφη) (208c1).⁶³ Socrates' phrasing, namely the plural noun and the adjective τέλει, has received much attention from commentators. Bury summarizes the attitudes of his contemporaries: some believe that it contrasts the sophistic method, "didactic monologue," with the Socratic method, conversation; others understand it as ridicule of the earlier, imperfect sophists or that Diotima intends to parody the others in her speech.⁶⁴ Dover suggests both "real sophists" and "professional sophists" as a translation.⁶⁵ In his commentary Rowe suggests that Plato plays on two meanings of σοφιστής, 'expert' and 'sophist' with a negative connotation. Judging by what follows, he sees elements of both in the speech of Diotima.⁶⁶ I consider Rowe's implication that sophistic rhetoric is present in Socrates' speech further below.

Understanding Socrates' speech as a dialogue in itself has important implications for our interpretation of the rest of the *Symposium*, but most of all for our perception of Socrates as a character. Unlike the others, he does not speak the bulk of his speech in his own voice. They appropriate other voices to a minimal extent (e.g. quotations of the poets), but Socrates only presents the occasional question or reply in his own voice, which is still presented as a quotation from his conversations with Diotima. On the other hand, if we accept that Diotima's voice also belongs to Socrates, on the basis that their conversation is entirely fictitious, then we gain a powerful tool for insight into Socratic character and Plato's philosophical mission in his dialogues. Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan ignore this

⁶³ Translation is my own.

⁶⁴ Bury 1909: 118

⁶⁵ Dover 1980: 152

⁶⁶ Rowe 1998: 187-188

potential when they understand Diotima as “an image with just the right mixture of reality and mystery to make us realize that not her personality, but her teaching, is of ultimate importance.”⁶⁷ In order to unravel the mystery of Diotima, let us consider the forces of characterization up to this point in the *Symposium*. As we have seen, Plato uses characterization extensively to interact with genre. For example, different applications of rhetoric rely upon different characters in order to achieve their desired effect within the dialogue. Similarly, in the cases of Aristophanes and Agathon, the characters’ use of poetry is not nearly as important as *how* they use poetry, which is necessarily dependent upon their characterization. Regardless of their individual ideas, Plato’s characterization paradoxically differentiates and conflates the symposiasts. They speak as individuals; however, their speeches resonate within the greater schemata of genre, which unites their ideas. The same occurs between Socrates and Diotima, and Alcibiades’ speech bolsters this recognition of the Socrates-Diotima division/conflation. Furthermore, the paradox in itself acts as a characterizing force for Socrates and his, and Plato’s, “genre” of discourse. Therefore, let us begin with an analysis of the tripartite character of Socrates in the *Symposium*: first as he appears in his speech, then in the *Symposium* itself, and finally in Alcibiades’ speech.

In his speech Socrates portrays himself as a willing student, but he sometimes fails to comprehend Diotima’s instruction. In response to one of Socrates’ questions, she states that even a child would be able to answer it (204b1). She also chastises him for failing to reflect on the implications of Eros’ involvement with animals and all living creatures:

καὶ ἐγὼ αὖ ἔλεγον ὅτι οὐκ εἰδείην· ἢ δ’ εἶπεν, Διανοῆ οὖν δεινός ποτε γενήσεσθαι τὰ ἐρωτικά, ἐὰν ταῦτα μὴ ἐννοῆς; (207c2-4)

Again I replied that I did not know. She retorted, “And do you suppose you will ever become expert on the subject of love if you are not going to think about this matter?”

⁶⁷ Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004: 113

The younger Socrates demonstrates that he is taking part in philosophy, but not completely. Seeking knowledge, he repeatedly goes to Diotima for the purpose of conversation, yet he fails to reflect adequately upon these conversations. Diotima's censure sets him straight, and Socrates ultimately learns the mysteries of Eros and how to attain the Form of Beauty. Socrates, however, makes the same errors of judgment as Agathon about Eros, and he must be explicitly told the mysteries in a monologue. In Socrates' speech we receive a vision of the youngest Socrates in the *Symposium* and it is, by its nature, intended to be immature.

Outside of his speech Socrates as a character presents a number of peculiarities that parallel the description of himself in Alcibiades' speech and in his own speech. Two aspects become evident throughout the dialogue: he stands out above all others, and, most importantly, even imitation of him is futile. He shows up halfway through dinner, after having stood still in a neighbor's doorway for a time (174d4ff.). He is presumably lost in thought during this time, which foreshadows Alcibiades' description of him at Potidaea (220c1-d5). His arrival, like that of Alcibiades, is dramatic but not so disruptive. Likewise, Aristodemus' hollow imitation of Socrates foreshadows Alcibiades' appropriation of characteristically Socratic, ironic praise.⁶⁸ As Apollodorus indicates, Aristodemus always attempted to behave like Socrates; however, his behavior fails to capture the essence of Socrates. For example, in imitation of Socrates, Aristodemus often does not wear sandals (173b2), but, as judged by his silence in Agathon's symposium, he is not shown to be able to understand and contribute in any way to philosophy at this point. Similarly, Socrates extensively demonstrates his ability to praise ironically after Agathon's speech, but Alcibiades fails to do the same in his ironic praise of Socrates. In the case of Agathon's speech, it is impossible to misunderstand Socrates' veiled, sarcastic disapproval, but Alcibiades, *if* he does intend to emulate Socratic speech and offer a

⁶⁸ A more extensive explication of the tone of Alcibiades' speech is given below.

paradoxical encomium, fails to express adequately if he is censuring or praising Socrates.⁶⁹ Furthermore, his imitation of Socratic speech may be greater flattery than possible with speech alone. In either aspect he fails due to the ambiguity of his position. Finally, Socrates' claims to knowledge of τὰ ἐρωτικά (177d8) align with his learning such knowledge from Diotima in the past. Socrates as he is present at the symposium corresponds neatly with both other representations of him in the *Symposium*.

Alcibiades' extensive encomium of Socrates presents an older, more mature version than in Socrates' own speech, but he emphasizes one aspect in particular – Socrates' uniqueness. Alcibiades admits that he experiences shame only in the presence of Socrates (216a8-b2), that only Socrates is worthy to be his *erastes* (218c7-8), and that no man has ever seen Socrates drunk (220a4-5). In these respects he is completely unique among men. As Alcibiades says, there are aspects of his behavior that are like those of other men, but he is entirely unlike every man, living or dead (221c3-6). It is therefore ironic that he chooses to praise Socrates, and in particular his speech, through likeness (εἰκῶν – 215a6). Alcibiades describes first the allure of Socrates' words; they are like the strains of the *aulos* of Marsyas the satyr, who challenged Apollo himself. Furthermore, his arrangements of words have a power unlike any other:

ἐπειδὴν δὲ σοῦ τις ἀκούη ἢ τῶν σῶν λόγων ἄλλου λέγοντος, κἂν πάνυ φαῦλος ᾗ ὁ λέγων, ἕαντε γυνή ἀκούη ἕαντε ἀνὴρ ἕαντε μειράκιον, ἐκπεπληγμένοι ἐσμὲν καὶ κατεχόμεθα. (215d3-6)

But whenever we hear you [Socrates] speaking or hear your words repeated by someone else, however mediocre the speaker may be, still we are all – woman, man or child alike – spellbound and entranced.

Alcibiades' effusive praise of Socratic idiom raises (and concludes) the problem of truth versus irony in his encomium of Socrates. It is impossible to misunderstand the intended meaning of Alcibiades,

⁶⁹ As Nightingale pointed out earlier, paradoxical encomia were common rhetorical practices in Athens, and it is possible that Alcibiades is attempting to praise Socrates paradoxically. The fact that this question exists may also testify to Alcibiades' "success" in irony and paradox, for the reader is left unable to discern his intention. This causes much grief for scholars who wish to use Alcibiades' speech as a means to understand the rest of the dialogue; cf. below.

but the essential question remains. Indeed, the implications of the truth belie the truthfulness of Alcibiades; consider Halperin's explication:

It [the passage 215d3-6] would indicate that Socrates' discourses are so excellent that they transcend their specific verbal medium: they effectively trump any rhetorical strategy used to convey them and overcome any rhetorical ineptitude on the part of the speaker, acting as a kind of universal solvent on the words in which they are transmitted. A report of Socrates' *logoi* is therefore bound to be a sure-fire, fail-safe hit, because its value is supposedly independent of the form of its utterance.⁷⁰

If this were true, it would be easy to accept that Socratic discourse resolves all the earlier problems presented by rhetoric; however, Socrates himself contradicts the ascription of this extraordinary power of *logoi*, when he shows awareness of the inability of words to express meaning unequivocally after Agathon's speech.⁷¹ This interpretation is strengthened by Alcibiades' description of Socratic speech, which explicitly recalls Socrates' reaction to Agathon; both describe the effects of the speech with the verb ἐκπλήσσω (ἐξεπλάγη – 198b5; ἐκπεπληγμένοι – 215d5). As we have seen, Socrates uses the word pejoratively to describe the actual inefficacy of Agathon's speech, and in this respect Alcibiades' characterization of Socrates could not be more inaccurate. Plato effectively reiterates: *logoi* do *not* have intrinsic meaning.

At the end of his speech, Alcibiades again describes Socrates' peculiar manner of speaking.

His talk is simple and seems prosaic, but if opened up:

...πρῶτον μὲν νοῦν ἔχοντας ἔνδον μόνους εὐρήσει τῶν λόγων, ἔπειτα θειοτάτους καὶ πλεῖστα ἀγάλματ' ἀρετῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔχοντας... (222a2-4)

...[F]irst you will find that his is the only discourse which has any meaning in it, and then that it is also most divine and contains the greatest number of images of virtue.

Blondell counters these fallacies of Alcibiades: "If Socrates had indeed been gazing on the Form of Beauty, the offspring he produces will be not *logoi*, but interior virtues."⁷² Alcibiades has missed the

⁷⁰ Halperin 1992: 115

⁷¹ Cf. section II

⁷² Blondell 2006: 159

mark about Socratic speech a second time. In this instance his mistake has other philosophical implications. By conflating Socratic speech with virtue, Alcibiades offers a means to virtue that Socrates also does not allow, in his refusal of Alcibiades as his *eromenos* (217b2-7). The existence of Diotima also denies the truthfulness of this statement, for she taught Socrates what he knows about Eros. Alcibiades' description of Socrates' manner of speaking indicates, rather than what Socratic discourse is, but what it is *not*.

Other scholars have put forth further reasons to distrust Alcibiades' speech, which strengthen my negative interpretation of his descriptions of Socratic speech.⁷³ Nightingale offers another ironic reading on the basis of Alcibiades' misunderstanding of Socrates. In her opinion it is impossible to deny the facts of Alcibiades' speech, most of which the rest of *Symposium* somehow corroborates, but the subjective opinions are debatable.⁷⁴ Therein lie Alcibiades' errors. She concludes: "Alcibiades' eulogy for Socrates, in sum, beautifully evinces the folly of praise. On the one hand, the speaker is ignorant of his subject and can only tell the 'truth' as he sees it. On the other hand, the subject of praise manifestly evades the encomiast."⁷⁵ Alcibiades' actions prove that he has failed to understand Eros and Socrates, and consequently to engage in philosophy. Like Agathon, he acknowledges no mediator, i.e. Eros; in the view of Alcibiades, Socrates himself is the Form of Beauty.⁷⁶ In this assumption resides Alcibiades' greatest mistake. He erroneously believes that he is able to capture the Form of Beauty on the terms of the society he represents, through the acquisition of Socrates as an

⁷³ Cf. Blondell 2006: 158; Nightingale 1993: 119-127; Halperin 1992: 115; Hunter 2004: 100

⁷⁴ Apropos Alcibiades' praise of Socrates' manner of speaking, Nightingale correctly regards it as subjective opinion, and states that it is proven to be false in the beginning of the *Symposium*, when Glaucon states that he had heard an unsatisfying account of Agathon's party (172b4-5); apropos the corroboration of details of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*, cf. Socrates' never being drunk (176c3-4; 220a4-5) and his incidents of meditative transcendence (174d4ff.; 220c1-d5)

⁷⁵ Nightingale 1993: 127

⁷⁶ Blondell (2006: 157) compiles a survey of how Socrates resembles the Form of Beauty; to be sure, she also recognizes the shortcomings of Alcibiades in regarding Socrates as the Form of Beauty itself. Nightingale (1993: 127) succinctly summarizes why Socrates himself cannot be the Form of Beauty, when analyzing Alcibiades' logic. Like Agathon he only sees diametrical opposites, to which Nightingale replies: "Why must Socrates be either ignorant or wise? Isn't there some third path?" Socrates, like Eros, is the mediator rather than the goal.

erastes. When Socrates does not acquiesce, Alcibiades flees from Socrates' 'Siren-song' towards his other life, public honor (216b4-5). As Rowe indicates, in order to appreciate Socrates, it is necessary to discard previous beliefs and notions.⁷⁷ In attempting to reconcile philosophy and Athenian society, Alcibiades fails totally, and, therefore, frustrates his own attainment of the Form of Beauty.

Therefore, the failure of Alcibiades is dependent upon his inability to understand Socrates truly, which, as Nightingale indicates, results in his problematic encomium. Once again, Plato uses characterization to guide his reader away from the folly of Alcibiades and back to a reconsideration of Socrates and his manner of speaking. If Socrates' *logoi* do not have the inherent meaning that all words lack, as is Alcibiades' solution, then how does one resolve the paradox that Socrates' words present? His speech is undeniably *meaningful*, and this must result from his use of words, not the words themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to discover how Socrates distinguishes his use of words. The answer, of course, is present in the *Symposium* dialogue. In this respect Socrates' speech differs markedly from all others. In his conversations with Alcibiades, the younger man expected some piece of wisdom to come from Socrates, yet all Socrates did was continue to converse with him. Alcibiades does not recognize the form of instruction Socrates was offering. In the *Symposium* Plato emphasizes the relief of genre that separates Socrates from the other men. The distance that Rowe identifies is critical, for the distinction must be sharp enough so that the form of speaking rather than the words stand out, and future philosophers do not commit Alcibiades' mistake. To achieve such relief Plato unites characterization and genre in the *Symposium*.

At this point it is at last possible to assess properly the role of Diotima. Although it is not necessary that she be real or unreal for my argument, since I rely only on evidence that is directly ascribed to Socrates for his characterization, her being unreal in the view of Socrates suits the emphasis on his character in the latter half of the dialogue. As a character, Diotima is a mirror of Socrates.

⁷⁷ Rowe 2006: 21, quoted above

Indeed, her defining character trait is her assumption of the role of Socrates in a miniature Socratic dialogue. She presents no aspects of character that are uniquely her own, with the exception of her gender.⁷⁸ The lack of characterization explains why some scholars, such as Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan, present Diotima as a shadowy image. I believe, however, that interpreting her as a didactic creation of Socrates is best. Socrates, for his purposes, desires to attribute his knowledge to someone else so that he himself may serve as an example of an individual who has climbed Diotima's ladder of mysteries through philosophy.⁷⁹ In its essence Socrates' speech is didactic; to consider it otherwise is to misinterpret it. He desires to show the others the mysteries of Eros and, what is more, to persuade them to live as he does. The closing segment of his speech begins:

ταῦτα δὴ, ὦ Φαῖδρέ τε καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι, ἔφη μὲν Διοτίμα, πέπεισμαι δ' ἐγώ: πεπεισμένος δὲ πειρώμαι καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πείθειν ὅτι τούτου τοῦ κτήματος τῆ ἀνθρωπεΐα φύσει συνεργὸν ἀμείνω Ἔρωτος οὐκ ἂν τις ῥαδίως λάβοι. (212b1-4)

Well, Phaedrus and all of you, these are the things that Diotima said to me, and I believe her. And since I believe, I am trying to persuade everyone else that in the attainment of this goal human nature could not easily find a better helper than Love.

Socrates' repetition of forms of *πείθω* forcibly signifies the intention of his speech, which connects his combination of dialectic and rhetoric (*ὥσπερ οἱ τέλει σοφισταί*, cf. above) to the persuasive rhetoric of the earlier speeches. Rowe's conflation of *σοφισταί* as 'experts' and 'sophists' recognizes this combination. This amalgamation is, I propose, the underlying theory on display in the *Symposium*. The dialogue as a whole amplifies this combination in its juxtaposition of the earlier speeches with those surrounding Socrates (i.e. Socrates' and Alcibiades' speeches). Plato recognizes that all words

⁷⁸ This detail, however, does not yield significant conclusions for my study. For example, Halperin (1990) recently explored the effect of Diotima's gender on her character. He argues that Plato has "reinscribed male identity in his representation of female difference." Additionally, he says: "Gender enters the text of Plato's *Symposium*... as part of a larger figurative project whose aim is to represent the institutional and psychological conditions for the proper practice of (male) philosophy" (150-151).

⁷⁹ Cf. Blondell 2006: 147-178, in which she identifies that it is possible to associate Socrates in the *Symposium* with every stage of Diotima's mysteries: "One effect of this kaleidoscopic presentation ... is that Socrates can be viewed as occupying all of the steps on the 'ladder of love'" (174). Blondell also points out that it is important to remember that once one attains the Form of Beauty, he/she is not always in this state. The individual descends and ascends the ladder throughout life.

evinced rhetoric; this is simply unavoidable in *logoi*. By prefacing his exposition of Eros with dialectic, Socrates evades the inevitable ambiguities of speech in monologue. The structure of characterization in the dialogue must emphasize certain aspects of Socrates in order to reveal his theory. It is necessary that Socrates be inimitable, so that future readers, who might otherwise assume that by imitating Socrates they are partaking in philosophy, avoid the mistakes of Aristodemus. Thus, certain details of Alcibiades' characterization are corroborated in the *Symposium*. Socrates' speech must not display the vapid rhetoric of Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, who are all, in some way, shown to not be τέλει, but rather unaccomplished, in the subject of Eros. So, by seeing him at three different stages in life, we gain a vision of the successful application of the Socratic mysteries of Eros.

I chose to title this section using the psychological term “gestalt” because Socrates in the *Symposium*, as a character fashioned by Plato, is intended to represent a whole, and the dialogue, as Rowe argues, truly is an exposition of Socratic psychology. Unlike the other characters, of whom we sometimes receive only the most minimal details, Socrates is a complete, yet elusive form. Plato hides nothing, yet at the same time Socrates exhibits an opacity that allows his intrinsic nature to escape us, for example, when Socrates stands still and contemplates, about what we do not know. In Blondell's opinion “[t]his opacity bespeaks a Platonic attempt to represent the unrepresentable by dramatic means.”⁸⁰ In this manner, when Socrates begins to speak, the other characters fade away. Alcibiades and Diotima become reflections that only bring our attention to Socrates, and the earlier speakers are but shades. With the arrival of Alcibiades, they disappear into a drunken miasma, while Socrates maintains his sobriety and continues to speak until all others either leave or fall asleep. The dialogue ends with the narrative frame maintained; the final image is Socrates leaving at daybreak.

⁸⁰ Blondell 2006: 159

Conclusion: The Immortality of Dialogue

About Plato's use of dialogue form, Michael Frede concludes: "A good part of [the dialogues'] lesson does not consist in what gets said or argued, but in what they show, and the best part perhaps consists in the fact that they make us think about the arguments they present."⁸¹ We have already seen how Socrates' own presentation of dialogue achieves this goal in respect to his character, but what about the *Symposium* as a whole? The narrative frame of the *Symposium* in particular presents one more consideration about dialogue form.⁸² Apollodorus narrates the *Symposium*, but the manner in which the dialogue is spread from Socrates to others is complex, and full of seemingly superfluous details. Apollodorus, for his part, hears the dialogue from Aristodemus and confirms details about the gathering from Socrates himself. It is worth noting that he does not receive a full account from Socrates, but rather he just confirms details about Aristodemus' account, which Socrates says are true (173b4-6). Although he does not attribute any specific details in his telling to Socrates, we can presume that Aristodemus preserved it accurately based upon Apollodorus' confirmation. In the prologue we also learn that Aristodemus also told the speeches to Phoenix, who in turn described them to another unnamed person, who then described them to Glaucon. Disappointed with the account of Phoenix, Glaucon also recently sought Apollodorus' account of the symposium, and for this reason he is "not unprepared (οὐκ ἀμελέτητος)" to describe the speeches (172a1-2). Apollodorus' phrasing significantly recalls Diotima's/Socrates' μελέτη (208a5), which is the crucial term in her conception of Eros' role in the immortality of knowledge:

λήθη γὰρ ἐπιστήμης ἔξοδος, μελέτη δὲ πάλιν καινὴν ἐμποιοῦσα ἀντὶ τῆς ἀπιούσης μνήμην
σώζει τὴν ἐπιστήμην, ὥστε τὴν αὐτὴν δοκεῖν εἶναι. (208a4-7)

⁸¹ Frede 1992: 219

⁸² Halperin (1992: 100) also considers, in his phrasing, the "bizarrely complex compositional form" of the *Symposium*. He concludes, rather wistfully: "By glancing back to a moment in time when the consequences of these men's convictions and choices had not yet unfolded, by retracing the stages of their precipitous decline to its imagined inception, Plato seems to locate a cause for the fall of Athens and for the ruin of its leading citizens in a failure of love, in the vicissitudes of a misguided *eros*."

Forgetting is the loss of knowledge, and revising, by implanting a fresh memory in place of the one that is departing, preserves our knowledge so that it seems to be the same.

Apollodorus and Aristodemus, our two sources for the story of the gathering, show that they have both been reviewing the dialogue by regularly repeating it to others; thereby they preserve, renew, and effectively make immortal Agathon's symposium and the knowledge therein. Obviously, there are problems; some individuals, like Phoenix or the unnamed person to whom he narrated the dialogue, do not properly participate in this regeneration. The ultimate conclusion, however, remains: the philosophy of knowledge that Plato presents is strongly connected with the presentation of that knowledge, i.e. his content is inseparable from its form.

Undoubtedly, writing participates in this process. Halperin goes so far as to equate Plato's written dialogues with the immutable *logoi* of Alcibiades' description of Socrates' speech.⁸³ Although I do not believe Plato intends this conclusion, for immutability does not solve any of the problems associated with *logoi*, the (dis)connection between the imagined speech of dialogue and the written word is relevant. Speech and dialogue are outlets for Plato's intergeneric tendencies. The form presents a limitless range of expression without ascription; in essence no viewpoint of a specific character has to be associated with the voice of the author. Necessarily, any interpretation of Plato's philosophy must give attention to the literary devices at play in his work; for it is possible to locate the author in his/her literary technique. Plato obfuscates himself in the *Symposium* because, as Frede says, it causes his readers to think about the knowledge on display. As such, in the *Symposium* characterization is preeminent. The scene is a party and the guests are mingling, and Plato invites the reader into this past as an outside observer and, through Aristodemus' focalization, as a silent and unanticipated guest. Plato makes the reader, who is evaluating and judging just as any other guest at a party, consider each

⁸³ Halperin 1992: 115-116: "In short, Alcibiades' praise ultimately redounds less to the virtue of Socratic speech than to the power of Platonic writing."

character in turn. The unique style of each speaker captures his/her attention for the moment, and it is necessary to consider why each character has a unique style. In turn this question calls attention to their characterization; consequently, the implied social forces that define the character resonate within the generic styling of his speech. From this it is possible to derive a schematic understanding of characterization that helps resolve the antithetical paradoxes present in Socrates. By bringing particular attention to his manner of speaking, Plato continues the theme of genre in his characterization of Socrates, which itself ultimately justifies Plato's philosophical styling.

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