

## HOMER IN PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*

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We should notice when the subject-matter of an allusion is at one with the impulse that underlies the making of allusions at all, because it is characteristic of art to find energy and delight in an enacting of what it is saying, and to be rendered vigilant by a consciousness of metaphors and analogies which relate its literary practices to the great world.

Christopher Ricks, "Allusion: The Poet as Heir"

IN HIS DIALOGUE the *Protagoras*," says Wilamowitz, "the youthful Plato created a masterpiece. . . . It took him a long time to reach again such a high literary level, and in a sense one can say that he attained something he would never accomplish again."<sup>1</sup> Among the dialogue's most memorable achievements is the opening sequence, where Socrates tells an unnamed friend the story of how he was awakened before dawn by the young Athenian Hippocrates banging on the door of his house to demand an introduction to Protagoras (309a–314c), followed by the scene in the house of Callias when eventually they gain entry to meet Protagoras and other sophists (314e–317e). My purpose here is to discuss the literary allusions which are threaded through these two passages, for they contribute dimensions of meaning which have either not been noted or not fully elucidated.

Socrates' opening words in the dialogue quote Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. Two short quotations from Book 11 follow, transferring the events Socrates will narrate into a Homeric context. Socrates appropriates two connected Homeric stories in order to tell his own. The two stories turn the ensuing philosophical contest between himself and Protagoras, the most famous of the fifth-century Greek sophists, into a Homeric encounter.<sup>2</sup>

1. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Plato: Sein Leben und Werke*<sup>5</sup> (Berlin, 1959), 1:104. All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

2. The role of the first quotation from the *Odyssey* is little explored in the literature. Indeed, it is sometimes taken to be a quotation of an identical line in the *Iliad*; so J. Labarbe, *L'Homère de Platon*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de la Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, Fasc. 117 (Liège, 1949), p. 260 (on the grounds that Plato often cites *Iliad* 20!), and the note ad 309a–b in M. Ostwald's revision of Jowett's translation of the *Protagoras*, ed. G. Vlastos (Indianapolis and New York, 1956). An honorable exception is Andrea Capra (*Ἀγὼν λόγων: Il "Protagora" di Platone tra eristica e commedia* [Milan, 2001], 132), who also has the fullest discussion (pp. 67–71) of the two quotations from the *Nekyia* in Book 11 that follow. The latter are briefly discussed by Seth Benardete (*The Argument of the Action: Essays in Greek Poetry and Philosophy* [Chicago and London, 2000], 186–87). Jacqueline de Romilly notes the same pair of quotations from the *Nekyia*, but remarks that this "may be just a nice game of learned allusion"; she observes, however,

Plato goes beyond mere quotation. He writes in prose that deliberately echoes a poetic original, using Homeric language in Socrates' own narration. He makes the stories from *Odyssey* 10 and 11 run as an undercurrent to the encounter related by Socrates, providing a symbolic matrix for the characters in the events reported by him and for his subsequent philosophical argument with Protagoras.

Although I do not engage in a general discussion of the role poetic quotation and allusion play in Plato, the analysis that follows of the intertextual links in the opening part of the *Protagoras* will lead us far from the view, expressed recently by Stephen Halliwell, that Plato typically displays little interest in the meaning of a poetic quotation in its original context.<sup>3</sup> The quotations from Books 10 and 11 of the *Odyssey* in the *Protagoras* are heavily context-laden.<sup>4</sup> They are by no means isolated incursions into the text of the dialogue, but serve as external markers of a deeper symbolic engagement with the epic text.

The literary and the philosophical cannot be prized apart in Plato. The Homeric interplay in the opening scenes of the *Protagoras* is much more than a diverting prelude to the serious philosophic discussion that follows. Symbolic conjunctions established in this early part of the dialogue introduce the philosophical themes explored in later, more argumentative, parts. The literary crosses over into the philosophical not only within this dialogue, but afterwards as well; for the characterization of the sophist Protagoras as a sorcerer, which in the *Protagoras* appears only as a part of the literary symbolism, will in Plato's later dialogue the *Sophist* enter into a complex philosophical characterization of the figure of the sophist in general (234c5, 235a1, 235a8, 241b7).

### 1. HOMER AND EROS IN THE *PROTAGORAS*

Eros steps into the *Protagoras* at the very outset. Socrates' unnamed interlocutor alludes to Socrates' attraction to Alcibiades. He describes the younger man as "still" (ἔτι) beautiful. A beautiful man he is, however—not a boy—as his beard is "already" (ἤδη) filling out. The interlocutor is dropping a hint

that the atmosphere created is remarkable (*Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* [Cambridge, Mass., 1975], p. 97, n. 16).

3. S. Halliwell, "The Subjection of Muthos to Logos: Plato's Citations of the Poets," *CQ* 50 (2000): 94–112. Although context-free quotations do occur in Plato, when quoting from Homer and other poets he is usually quite engaged with the context of their work. Andrea Nightingale has convincingly shown the extent of this engagement in Plato's use of Euripides' *Antiope* in the *Gorgias* (*Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* [Cambridge, 1995], 67–92). Halliwell mentions Nightingale's analysis (p. 100, n. 22), but does not draw appropriate conclusions from it.

4. Halliwell ("Plato's Citations" [n. 3 above], 96–97) treats the *Od.* 11 citations as "parodic clips" that enrich the irony of Socrates' description of the sophists' gathering and thereby display the speaker's conversational finesse; similarly, W. J. Verdenius ("Bemerkungen zur Einleitung des *Protagoras*," in *Studia Platonica: Festschrift für Hermann Gundert*, ed. K. Döring and W. Kullmann [Amsterdam, 1974], 46): "Platon wollte die Sophisten nicht als Schatten darstellen . . . sondern das Zitat dient nur zur Belebung der Erzählung." By contrast, Ingo Klär ("Die Schatten im Höhlengleichnis und die Sophisten im Homerischen Hades," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 51 [1969]: 225–59, at 254–59), while fully appreciating that the sophists are represented as shades of the dead, treats the scene as an early sketch of the metaphysics implied by the Cave simile of the *Republic*; this makes it as irrelevant to the *Protagoras* as the author claims the Cave is to the *Republic*.

that Alcibiades is beyond his prime (309a1–5). He is thus challenging the young man's beauty—the very thing that is supposed to attract an older lover. Socrates comes to Alcibiades' rescue, as a lover would, reporting in turn how Alcibiades had come to his rescue when he himself was under attack earlier in the day (309b5–7; cf. 336b–d, 347b).

Socrates immediately appeals to the interlocutor's admiration for Homer, and proceeds to quote from the poet a line which says that youth is most charming when the beard is first blooming (309b1).<sup>5</sup> He firmly defends his presumed beloved, leaping to his defense at a mere hint of disparagement. Characteristically indirect, his intervention is nonetheless remarkably effective.

The words are Homer's; Socrates has done no more than point them up. It almost looks as if the job of defending Alcibiades has been done by Homer himself—or by the interlocutor, through the admiration for Homer that Socrates has attributed to him. And if the interlocutor's admiration for Homer were itself an expression of eros, the vindication of Alcibiades would look like Eros' own work.

Later, at 316a4–5, Socrates will reintroduce Alcibiades, and bring him into his own narration, with the words, "Alcibiades the Beautiful, as you [the anonymous interlocutor] say, and I don't argue," aligning himself with Alcibiades in the same relaxed, hands-off way. Presumably, he has reason to acquiesce in the role of lover that the unnamed interlocutor had assigned to him, even as his words indicate a certain distance from the younger man.

"The charm of youth is greatest," Socrates says, quoting Homer, in a young man with "the first down upon his chin" (*Prt.* 309b1). It is the context that makes these Homeric words memorable. In the line of the *Odyssey* from which Socrates is quoting (10.279), the "first down" graces the chin not of a human being, but of an apparition.<sup>6</sup>

Odysseus is on the island of Aeaea, in dire straits. Half of his companions have disappeared in the house, as he is told, of a "woman or goddess" (10.255) who beguiled them with her sweet song. It was, in fact, Circe "of many poisons" (πολυφάρμακος, 10.276) who bewitched them. She turned them into boars by giving them a potion spiked with baneful drugs (φάρμακα λυγρά, 10.236). Odysseus is on his way to Circe's house—alone, deeply troubled, on a quest to save his companions that has little chance of success—when a god appears to him in the shape of a young man, "the first down upon his chin."

The god is Hermes. Plucking an herb (φάρμακον) from the earth, which the gods call μῶλυ, he gives it to Odysseus. This good and potent drug (φάρμακον ἐσθλόν, 287, 292) will counteract the noxious drugs the sorceress has administered. The very look of the herb suggests its power: black at the root, it is topped by milky-white petals (304). With such power to aid him, Odysseus will not fall under Circe's spell. Hermes instructs him how to thwart Circe's

5. *Od.* 10.279. Burnet's OCT follows Hirschig in adding πρῶτον to the Platonic text. In their 1893 edition, Adam and Adam (*Plato: "Protagoras"* [1893; reprint, Bristol, 1984]) leave the reader to supply the word by memory. Labarbe (*L'Homère de Platon* [n. 2 above], 260–61) argues that Plato deliberately omits the word because Alcibiades is too old for it to fit. Verdenius ("Bemerkungen" [n. 4 above], 42) cites Lucian *De Sacrificiis* 11 and Photius (ὀπτηνήτης; ἄρτι γενειῶν) to show that πρῶτον is redundant.

6. See νεηνίη ἀνδρὶ ἐοικώς at *Od.* 10.278 (similarly *Il.* 24.347–48: κούρω αἰσυμνητῆρι ἐοικώς).

further actions: when she waves her magic wand, he will draw his sword, and frighten her. He will then make her swear a great oath, so that she may not harm him, stripping him of his “courage and manhood” (10.301).

Odysseus, reluctant yet determined, reaches Circe’s house and follows Hermes’ instructions. The sorceress’s drug has no effect. Amazed that he has not become bewitched (οὐ . . . ἐθέλχθης, 10.326), Circe says: “the mind in your breast is not one to be put under a spell” (σοὶ δὲ τις ἐν στήθεσσι ἀκίητος νόος ἐστίν, 10.329). She invites him to her bed. Having sworn the great oath, as Odysseus bids her, she no longer plots against him.

When Socrates defends Alcibiades’ beauty with words borrowed from this Homeric episode, he conjures up the image of a god, who, assuming a shape of a young man of enchanting beauty, protects by providing an antidote to magic charm. In a line of the *Iliad* (24.348) identical to the one Plato is quoting, Hermes appears in the same youthful shape kindly to accompany, and help, Priam on his way to the Greek ships in an attempt to recover the body of his dead son. It is Hermes as a helper and guide, then, who, without being mentioned by name, is invoked by Socrates as he speaks his first words in the dialogue.

In presenting Hermes as a youth, Homer strayed from the normal archaic representation of him as bearded.<sup>7</sup> Plato, in turn, provided a living image of the Homeric youthful Hermes in Socrates’ beloved, Alcibiades. The world evoked by Plato’s literary references will have been vividly present to the mind of his original readers, even if they often escape their modern successors. Curiously, Clement of Alexandria reports that statues of Hermes in Athens bore a resemblance to Alcibiades.<sup>8</sup> If what Clement reports is true, the beginning of Plato’s *Protagoras* could be responsible for this.

The Homeric image turns Socrates’ words about Alcibiades’ beauty into a strikingly effective defense of his presumed beloved. But the literary allusion plays a wider role in the dialogue. It places the philosophical debate Socrates and Protagoras will have about virtue into the larger world of Greek myth, religion, and culture. To begin with, a divine world is conjured up by these words, gods that bewitch and harm (Circe), and gods that protect (Hermes). Socrates’ invocation of Hermes foretokens in mythical terms the real situation he found himself in earlier that day, which he will shortly proceed to describe. For he encountered magical powers that lead astray. He was, as his invocation appears to indicate, in need of a powerful and benevolent guide. Socrates will also soon descend, symbolically, into the underworld (see section 3 below), where Hermes is a guide.

Plato makes Socrates designate his interlocutor an admirer of Homer in the very opening of the dialogue, in the same sentence in which he invokes Hermes. By doing so, he appears to signal to the reader that Homer and the world of myth have a role to play in the events and conversations that will unfold.

7. See A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer’s “Odyssey,”* Vol. 2: Books 9–16 (Oxford, 1989), ad 10.274–79.

8. ὥσπερ αὖ καὶ οἱ λιθοξόοι τοὺς Ἑρμᾶς Ἀθήνησι πρὸς Ἀλκιβιάδην ἀπείκαζον (*Protr.* 4.53.6).

Quoting from Homer is in keeping with the role Socrates has quietly assumed. He conveys the impression of being well educated, as the more mature lover is supposed to be. Later in the dialogue he will reinforce this impression with further skillfully chosen quotations from Homer, and with his thorough familiarity with a poem of Simonides which Protagoras will bring up for discussion, apparently out of the blue.

The competitive side of the encounter from which Socrates has just returned is brought out when he describes Alcibiades as having said much on his behalf and having come to his rescue (βοηθῶν ἐμοί, 309b6). Socrates makes out that he was embattled and in need of rescue earlier in the day. He was in fact not so embattled as to need Alcibiades' help, but the situation was highly agonistic, hence of the sort in which a beloved or lover would be inclined, and perhaps expected, to intervene.

## 2. SOCRATES' NARRATION: HIPPOCRATES AND PROTAGORAS

We do not know who the man is that Socrates is speaking with at the beginning of the dialogue. His designation in our editions as ἐταῖρος (a friend) is not part of the text as written by Plato. The rest of the dialogue is a story told by Socrates to this unnamed man. A slave is present (310a3–4). Besides him and the unnamed acquaintance no one else need be listening, although ἡμεῖς at 310a6 allows for other persons to be present too. The effect created is that of Plato's readers, an indeterminate lot, listening in on a conversation.

As Socrates tells them, the events of the day have a glow of remembrance. This is a recent remembrance, told by a narrator keen to tell an audience keen to hear.<sup>9</sup> We hear Socrates' story as told to a person who has vividly in mind the places the narration will take us to, and the characters we shall there encounter. The unnamed interlocutor is well acquainted with Socrates and his companions, and with the locale. We can conclude from the words Socrates initially addresses to him that he understands intimately the cultural life in which the story he will hear is embedded.<sup>10</sup>

A young Athenian, Hippocrates, sets in motion the events of the day. It is with him that Socrates' narration, which takes up the rest of the dialogue, begins.

Hippocrates rushes to Socrates' house before dawn, bangs his stick on the door with great force, and when it is opened to him, makes his way quickly to Socrates' bed, shouting: "Socrates, are you asleep or awake?" As Socrates tells it: "'Protagoras has arrived,' [Hippocrates] said, as he stepped near me [στὰς παρ' ἐμοί]." The words στὰς παρ' ἐμοί echo Homer,<sup>11</sup> especially ἡ δὲ

9. At 310a5 Socrates indicates that it would be a favor to him if his audience would listen, and his interlocutor replies that it would be a favor to those listening if Socrates would speak (ἐὰν λέγῃς, a6). Socrates initiates this ritual of politeness. He disregards such rituals, or engages in them ironically, when that suits his purpose.

10. Since the dialogue has important things to say about human culture, and culture is located in memory, the tone of remembrance struck in the beginning of the dialogue is very apt. Protagoras' "memory" will stretch far back, to Homer and beyond, to the pre-Homeric figure of Orpheus (316d), and, in the myth he tells, to the very beginning of the human race.

11. "Πρωταγόρας," ἔφη, "ἦκει," στὰς παρ' ἐμοί has a striking poetic rhythm of its own, situating Hippocrates between Protagoras and Socrates.

μευ ἄγχι στᾶσα προσηύδα δῖα θεᾶων (“Then the lustrous goddess [Circe] came close to me and said,” *Od.* 10.400 and 455).<sup>12</sup> Bursting into a person’s house before daybreak and coming to sit on his bed, in the dark, close to him, while possessed with the most intense desire to speak to, and become close to, someone else, makes for a peculiar situation, but Hippocrates is too excited to notice the peculiarity. In the predawn darkness, Socrates, intrigued, examines the young man about the reasons for his excitement.

Socrates’ narration takes us from the modest bed in his still-dark room<sup>13</sup> to the splendor of one of the richest houses of Athenian society, from the easy and immediate familiarity of two people accustomed to conversing with each other<sup>14</sup>—one lying in bed, the other sitting at his feet—to the speeches and conversations that take place in a gathering that brought together under one roof some of the best minds of Greece and some of their most ardent admirers. Hippocrates vividly recalls for Socrates how he learned from his brother, the night before, that Protagoras was in town, speaking as one does when one remembers a momentous event. Since it was late at night, he had to force himself not to run to Socrates’ house right away. He rushed over as soon as he woke up, arriving before dawn (310c5–d2).

The style of writing Plato adopts throughout this narration shows him bent on pursuing the Homeric parallel. Hippocrates uses Homeric language to describe his awakening at 310c8–d1: ἐπειδὴ δὲ τάχιστα με . . . ὁ ὕπνος ἀνῆκεν . . . , “but as soon as sleep released me and took away my tiredness, I got up and came here”; compare ὕπνος ἀνῆκεν in *Odyssey* 7.289, 18.199, 19.551, 24.440; and in *Iliad* 2.71.<sup>15</sup>

Socrates, recalling Hippocrates’ words, reports how he recognized the young man’s “manliness [ἀνδρείαν] and excitement [πτοίησιν]” (310d2–3). Ἀνδρεία is a word for courage, but its connotations range wide. Here it appears to relate to Hippocrates’ being so passionately after something, and his readiness to do whatever it will take for him to get what he wants. When later in the dialogue the virtue of ἀνδρεία becomes the topic of discussion, the courageous person will be described as ἵτης—ready to go for something, poised to act.<sup>16</sup> Hippocrates is poised for action. He is all set to pursue the object of his desire. That object is Protagoras.

As Hippocrates declares what has brought him over at such an hour, telling Socrates, while drawing close to him, that Protagoras is in town (310b7–8), he displays strikingly different attitudes toward the two men. He is close to

12. For the formula, see also *Od.* 4.370, 6.56; cf. *Od.* 10.377.

13. The σκίμπος on which Hippocrates finds Socrates is apparently a light bed used by the poor and on military campaigns; see G. Rodenwaldt, “*Skimpous*,” *RE* 3.A.1 (1927): 527–29; cf. *Ar. Nub.* 254, 709.

14. Socrates recognizes Hippocrates’ voice (καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν φωνὴν γνοῦς αὐτοῦ, 310b4) in the dark. Hippocrates relates the incident of his slave running away the day before as one he would already have told Socrates about had something not distracted him (310c3–5).

15. Halliwell (“Plato’s Citations,” p. 95, n. 4) rightly treats Hippocrates’ phrase as a Homeric allusion, but does not note that it reinforces other Homeric elements in the opening of the dialogue.

16. The description is much emphasized: introduced by Protagoras at 349e3, it is recalled by Socrates at 359c1, again mentioned by Socrates at 359c3 and d1, and implicitly connected with the tendency of the brave to “go after” something (ἐρχονται ἐπὶ) at 359c5–6 and d1–2. Aristotle describes the courageous as spirited (θυμοειδής) and observes that θυμός (spirit) is most keen to go for (ἱτηκώτατον) dangers (*Eth. Nic.* 3.8, 1116b25–7).

Socrates and at ease with him. He has never seen Protagoras or heard him lecture (310e4), but having heard everyone praise him as a most clever speaker (σοφώτατον εἶναι λέγειν, 310e6–7), he stands in awe of the man.

His excitement (πτοίησις) is at the same time trepidation. Πτοίησις and the corresponding verb are often used of erotic desire.<sup>17</sup> The object of Hippocrates' fascination is the wisdom Protagoras is reputed to have, which Hippocrates wants for himself. As he puts it a moment later, "he [Protagoras] alone is wise [μόνος ἐστὶ σοφός], and is not making me so" (310d5–6). Hippocrates is anxious to become Protagoras' student. As for Socrates, Hippocrates knows enough to assume that among his acquaintances he is the right person to turn to for the favor of being put in touch with Protagoras. He wants Socrates to be his conduit to Protagoras.

As a reader familiar with Plato's *Apology* will recall, Socrates has some claim to wisdom. It is an unusual claim. Quite early in his speech of defense, Socrates boldly summons no less a witness than "the god at Delphi" (*Ap.* 20e3–8). He recalls how one of his companions, Chaerephon, had the daring (ἐτόλμησε) to go to Delphi and ask the oracle there if anyone was wiser (σοφώτερος) than Socrates. The Pythia replied that no one was. For Socrates, the reply is an enigma. Well aware that he does not possess wisdom about any important matter—either concerning the cosmos, which he does not investigate, or concerning human affairs, which he does—Socrates observes that he differs from those who are reputed to be wise by realizing that he is ignorant (21d2–7). He decides that this is what Apollo must have had in mind in his enigmatic reply to Chaerephon: Socrates is wiser than anyone else because he does not think that he knows what he doesn't know. This is wisdom of a sort. Socrates had previously called it a human kind of wisdom (20d6–e3). It is the only kind he claims for himself. He is wiser than others to that tiny extent (συμικρῶ τι νι αὐτῷ τούτῳ) of not thinking that he knows what he is ignorant of (21d6–7). Beyond the *Apology*, Plato will consistently present Socrates as someone who denies having wisdom about human affairs.

Hippocrates, however, is not linking Socrates to wisdom in any way. He is not taking in Socrates at all, except as a man who will put him in touch with Protagoras. This is so as he steps close to Socrates (310b7–8), as he feels around in the dark for his bed and sits down at his feet (310c1–2), and as he says, a moment later, that Protagoras alone is wise (310d5–6). His words deny wisdom to Socrates.

Hippocrates is a victim of erotic contagion. Since he has never seen Protagoras or heard him speak, he must have picked up the attraction from some of those who have. Socrates himself, as he starts the conversation with the unnamed acquaintance, pretends to be among those smitten by Protagoras. He has just been with Alcibiades, he says, but something strange happened: he paid no attention to him, and often forgot about him altogether, having

17. See Sappho 31.5–6: τό μ' ἦ μὰν καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόασιν ("Truly that sets my heart trembling in my breast" [Campbell's translation]). In *Resp.* 4.439d6–7 Plato uses the verb to describe the appetitive part of the soul: the nonrational and appetitive part of the soul lusts, thirsts, hungers, and "feels the flutter of other desires" (περὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἐπιθυμίας ἐπτόηται).

met someone far more beautiful, “the wisest man alive” (σοφωτάτῳ μὲν οὖν δήπου τῶν γε νῦν, 309d1). Socrates is ironic when he describes Protagoras as the wisest man alive—as the rest of his sentence hints: “if you think [εἴ σοι δοκεῖ] that Protagoras is the wisest” (309d1–2).

The irony is not expressive of cynical detachment. Socrates is genuinely excited by the conversation he reports, as he reveals by his eagerness to tell the story. But this is not because he is himself taken with Protagoras as “the wisest.” He is quoting the reputation Protagoras enjoys, and alluding to Hippocrates’ uncritical acceptance of it. Socrates for his part will proceed in the rest of the dialogue to put this reputation into question.

By the end of the dialogue we find the situation considerably changed. The makings of an erotic reversal are firmly in place, following the outcome of the dialectical contest between Socrates and Protagoras. Protagoras is the one who moves to put an end to the conversation. Tactfully, he does it with a word of praise for Socrates (361d7–361e6):

“Socrates, I commend your eagerness for arguments and the way you go about them [ἐπαινῶ σου τὴν προθυμίαν καὶ τὴν διέξοδον τῶν λόγων].<sup>18</sup> I really don’t think I am a bad man, quite generally, and certainly the last man to harbor envy [φθονερός]. Indeed, I have told many people that I admire [ἄγαμαι] you more than anyone I have met, definitely more than anyone in your generation. And I say that I would not be surprised if you became famous for wisdom [εἰ τῶν ἐλλογίμων γένοιο ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ]. We shall discuss these things later, whenever you wish. Now it is time to turn our attention to something else.”

Protagoras is speaking as someone whose membership in the circle of those renowned for their wisdom is incontestable. If a much younger man, like Socrates, has done so well in a discussion with him, it would not be surprising if he too joined the circle. However we might appraise this exit strategy, Protagoras understands very well that his own wisdom was at stake in the proceedings he has just had with Socrates. He does not depict the situation as one in which he himself has suffered any loss; nonetheless he grants that Socrates has gained something, which puts him on his way toward achieving the sort of fame that Protagoras now enjoys. Protagoras presents himself as not begrudging this.

The erotic field as it appeared at the beginning of Socrates’ narration has been put under considerable pressure by the conversations that have taken place meanwhile. In a brief response to the “encomium” with which Protagoras brings their debate to an end, Socrates brings up Callias as the reason why he had not left the house earlier (362a1–3):

That is what we should do [sc. end the conversation], if it seems right to you [if you please, εἴ σοι δοκεῖ]. It was in fact time a while back for me to go where I said I was going, but I stayed as a favor to Callias the Beautiful [ἀλλὰ Καλλία τῷ καλῷ χαρίζομενος παρέμεινα].

18. Alternatively: “I commend your eagerness and the way you went about the discussion.” Since Protagoras echoes here the form of words Socrates had previously used—τὴν προθυμίαν at 361d8 recalls Socrates’ *πάσαν προθυμίαν ἔχω* (“I am most eager”) at 361c3—he may well be referring to the specific discussion the two have just had. The reference to οἱ λόγοι (arguments or discussion) may thus be understood as referring to that discussion. However, Protagoras’ words have generality: he may be praising not only the way Socrates handled their discussion, but also his habitual passion for argument.



A reference to the host, especially such a generous one, might be appropriate when one is about to leave the house. However, Socrates is doing more with his words here. A remark that Socrates as narrator makes early in the dialogue should be recalled: he suspected that Protagoras was preening himself on the idea that Socrates and Hippocrates had come to Callias' house as his lovers, ἐρασταί (317c6–d3). Now as the conversation ends, Socrates makes it clear that he had not come to Callias' house as Protagoras' lover. He is a rival, and has been all along, whose aim it is to detach his companions, including the host Callias, from Protagoras.<sup>19</sup>

At this point Protagoras has granted to Socrates that he is likely to become famous for wisdom. Wisdom is what attracts young men like those present. When someone's presumed wisdom is challenged, as has just happened to Protagoras, the erotic attraction might easily also find itself in a precarious situation. In calling Callias beautiful in his own presence, while taking his leave of Protagoras, Socrates appears to be suggesting that Protagoras' claim to his host's attention was compromised in the course of the conversation.

Socrates pays a compliment to Callias' beauty using the same form of words he had previously applied to his own presumed beloved, Alcibiades (316a4: "Alcibiades the Beautiful"). In this instance, however, he is not responding to a provocation; he is the one who is acting provocatively. There is irony in his words: he did not have to leave; it was not Callias' beauty that made him stay. The alleged need to go elsewhere was merely a pretext he used to express his dissatisfaction with the terms of the debate, which was on the point of breaking down. As a conventional come-on to Callias, the words are almost certainly ironic. But the provocation to Protagoras contained in his words to Callias, his challenge to Protagoras' mesmerizing appeal, is genuine.

Plato seals the erotic and dramatic reversal in the final words of the dialogue, where Socrates returns to his interlocutor to say, "Having said so much and heard so much, we left" (362a4). Ἀπῆμεν ("we left") must refer to Hippocrates and Socrates. They left together. What Socrates is telling his friend is that Hippocrates did not stay on in Callias' house to become a student of Protagoras.

### 3. THE SOULS OF THE DEAD

Socrates' description of the scene at Callias' house takes the anonymous interlocutor, and Plato's reader, into the next book of the *Odyssey*, Book 11,

19. Callias is the first person mentioned by Socrates as he describes to the unnamed interlocutor those in Protagoras' retinue (314e4–5). Many other highly desirable young men are also in the audience. Charmides, Plato's uncle, is among them (at *Chrm.* 155d3–e2 Socrates reports how he was nearly knocked out by the sudden glimpse of his naked body). Also present is a future tragic poet, Agathon, described in the *Protagoras* as of fine character and very beautiful in appearance (τὴν . . . ἰδέαν . . . πάνυ καλός), who Socrates guesses is Pausanias' young love (παυδικά, 315d7–e3). Agathon and Pausanias also appear as a couple in the *Symposium*; Agathon is the host of the banquet. The overlap between the characters of the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium* is striking. It is as if Plato wants, when he comes to write the *Symposium*, to offer a retrospective commentary on what must be his earlier work. Like the *Symposium*, the *Protagoras* is an erotic dialogue. The philosophical eros Plato has been interested in all along gets an explicit elaboration in the later dialogue. The puzzlingly detached character of Socrates' dealings with Alcibiades in the *Protagoras* receives an elaboration in the *Symposium*, which offers a commentary on the unconventional eroticism of Socrates.

which tells how Odysseus, following Circe's instructions, goes to the outer edge of the underworld to speak with the souls of the dead. The relationship between the two situations is established by two brief quotations from the *Nekyia*, which Socrates uses to introduce the two sophists other than Protagoras who are present at the gathering, Hippias of Elis and Prodicus of Ceos.

Like Protagoras, Hippias and Prodicus are seen lecturing in Callias' house in front of an audience. Like Protagoras, they have attracted Athenians to their audience besides the foreigners who journeyed with them. To be sure, Callias, the rich host himself, and the two sons of Pericles are all in Protagoras' retinue, but there are prominent Athenians around Hippias and Prodicus as well.

At the end of Book 10 of the *Odyssey*, Circe informs Odysseus that he must meet with the souls of the dead, as the two are lying and sitting on her bed, in the predawn darkness. Odysseus is unhappy that he must go to the abode of the dead, so unhappy he would rather be dead. What follows in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* is the memorable scene of his encounter with the souls from Hades.

Socrates' quotations link Hippias with the soul of Heracles (most probably), and Prodicus with that of Tantalus—two mighty chthonian heroes, whose shadows Odysseus encounters among other souls from the underworld.

The phrase with which Socrates introduces Hippias, τὸν δὲ μετ' εἰσενόησα ("and after him I spotted," 315b9) is formulaic. It is used by Odysseus to introduce both Orion (10.572) and Heracles (10.601). The "him" in "after him I spotted" refers to Protagoras, whom Socrates had mentioned first, comparing him with Orpheus (314e–315b). The formula thus retroactively places Protagoras/Orpheus into Hades, where he is of course very much at home.<sup>20</sup> The formulaic phrase thus serves to transpose the whole scene in Callias' house to the realm of the dead.

The phrase when used as part of Socrates' narration is incongruously grand. The Homeric language is his way of mocking the trappings of the celebrity status the sophists have assumed. It makes one think of the vanity of stars and the gullibility of the starstruck audience gasping for another sighting. Celebrity status is of necessity hierarchical; the standing of each of the three lecturers in Callias' house is matched not only by the social position of those in his audience but also by the quality of the space he occupies, the chair or bed on which he sits or reclines. Protagoras is in a grand and spacious colonnade; Prodicus in a converted storeroom.

It is much likelier that the reference of τὸν δὲ μετ' εἰσενόησα is to Heracles than to Orion. Hippias' teaching of the many branches of knowledge nicely corresponds to Heracles' countless heroic labors. Heracles is a superhero, whose boundless, and sometimes outrageous, energy and enterprise seem to mock the ordinary hero. He is an apt ironical stand-in for Hippias' encyclopedic ambitions.<sup>21</sup>

20. Orpheus is himself a chthonic figure; vase painters often depict him in Hades.

21. Contrast Adam and Adam (n. 5 above) ad loc.: "The reference is not to be pressed beyond the words quoted: for there is no special likeness between Homer's Heracles . . . and Plato's Hippias."

The citing of Heracles builds on the symbolism Socrates introduces when he likens Protagoras to Orpheus. Orpheus was reputed to be a founder of mysteries; Heracles for his part was a prototypical mystery initiate. Heracles had additional links with the underworld. Among this hero's exploits was a *κατάβασις*, descent to the underworld.

In entering Callias' house, which Xenophon locates down in the Piraeus (*Symp.* 1.2), Socrates and Hippocrates have entered no ordinary place. It is like that twilight place, the "house of Hades," as the poets are fond of calling the underworld.<sup>22</sup> As with the house of Hades, a fierce presence guards the door: Cerberus, the porter at *Protagoras* 314c–e.<sup>23</sup> Inside one encounters mighty heroes, but they are shadowy and not fully real. In the Homeric underworld, they are flitting about "smokelike" and "dreamlike."

By presenting them as heroes of the nether world, Socrates seems to be making an ironical comment on the image the three sophists have of themselves. They like to think of themselves, and to come across, as extraordinary. Socrates attempts to deflate, with irony, what he regards as the sophists' pomposity.

Placed in the underworld, the three sophists appear as shadowy figures, lacking in full-blooded life. Theirs is a different world—a world of *εἶδωλα*, images, or appearances. One thinks of Protagoras' endorsement of appearances—his claim that things *are* for each person as they *appear* to him—and of Socrates' own conviction that the sophists are lost in the world of appearance, never getting hold of the truth.

Prodicus is the sophist who receives the least sympathetic treatment, both here and in the rest of the dialogue. The portrayal of him later in the dialogue helps throw light on his casting as Tantalus. Prodicus is much concerned with the correct use of language.<sup>24</sup> He is at pains to distinguish between closely related expressions. But, like Tantalus' food and drink, the truth about words always seems to recede. Prodicus' linguistic analyses later on in the dialogue appear laborious, while invariably missing what matters. Socrates cannot hear what Prodicus is lecturing on, since his deep voice has set up reverberation in the room (*Prt.* 316a1–2). The voice of the expert on language, who strives after an account that is exact and clear, appears to produce only something indistinct and blurred (*ἄσαφῆ*). Finally, Prodicus' mild illness, when put side by side with Tantalus' great torments, seems paltry.

Socrates' ironic representation of Hippias and Prodicus as the shadows of heroes is certainly not mere playfulness. Like Tantalus, Prodicus appears as a thwarted character. None the less, by placing them in the Homeric underworld and representing them as the souls of mighty heroes, Socrates draws an intriguing image. The sophists emerge with pretensions to be larger-than-life, provocative figures.

22. E.g., *Od.* 10.491, 564; Sappho frag. 55.3 Campbell.

23. The parallel with Cerberus is owed to Klär, "Die Schatten" (n. 4 above), 256.

24. We have evidence that the historical Protagoras, and other sophists, shared this preoccupation. Prodicus' distinctions were evidently regarded as especially subtle (witness the reaction of his audience to the distinctions he introduces at *Prt.* 337c5–6).

4. THE WORLD OF THE *PROTAGORAS*: ODYSSEUS, CIRCE, AND HERMES

Before Protagoras appears in the flesh in the dialogue, he appears as a force. It is his astonishing power to attract that makes its way to Socrates' house before dawn in the form of a fluttering Hippocrates. When Socrates and Hippocrates reach Callias' house, this power to attract, much amplified, is finally in full evidence.

Protagoras has drawn a large crowd in Callias' house. As he lectures, a number of people are walking with him up and down the portico, flanking him on both sides. The host himself, Callias, is next to him. Protagoras' star student Antimoiros of Mende is on the other side, close by. Many in the group are ξένοι, foreigners, which is to say, non-Athenians. Protagoras, says Socrates, collects them from each city he goes through—enchanting them (κηλῶν) with his voice like Orpheus. Spellbound (κεκηλημένοι), they follow him around (315a7–b1).

However, it is not only foreigners who have followed Protagoras as if he were Orpheus. Some of Socrates' fellow Athenians are in the group flanking him, while others have come to hear Hippias and Prodicus. Some of the Athenians present are, moreover, Socrates' own companions, as we know from other dialogues of Plato. They have now, however, collected in Callias' house in order to hear not Socrates, but Protagoras or one of the other two sophists present.

For his part, Socrates arrives at Callias' house alone, but for Hippocrates, his young charge. In this situation, the charm of Alcibiades, now at its peak, conjured up for us by the combined words of Homer and Socrates, has weight. Alcibiades is not at the gathering when Socrates arrives. He and Critias enter Callias' house shortly after Socrates and Hippocrates, as Socrates puts it, "from behind us" (κατόπιν δὲ ἡμῶν, 316a3). Alcibiades and Critias will both back Socrates. They will come to his defense in his conversation with Protagoras, or rather in its breakdown—Alcibiades as ever flamboyantly, Critias more discreetly, and perhaps cunningly. However, Alcibiades alone is formally cast in the role of Socrates' beloved.

The acclaimed beauty of Alcibiades is a reminder and visible proof of Socrates' own power to attract. As Socrates reports on Alcibiades and Critias entering the house, he—for once—breaks the narration, and addresses the unnamed interlocutor directly:<sup>25</sup> "We had just arrived when from behind us entered Alcibiades the Beautiful—as *you* call him, and I am not arguing—and Critias son of Callaeschrus" (316a3–5). This sudden leap out of the smooth flow of narration into direct address, as Alcibiades' beauty is mentioned, helps to underscore the special place of Alcibiades in the dramatic setup of the dialogue.

Alcibiades' beauty plays a formal, rather than a material, role in the dialogue. It represents Socrates as a locus of a certain kind of power. He, we are meant to understand, is hardly resourceless in the face of the Orpheus-

25. Socrates' narration runs otherwise uninterrupted to the very end of the dialogue. He returns to the unnamed interlocutor very briefly, in the last sentence, cited above.

like power of Protagoras. The younger man's beauty is a presentiment of what Socrates will accomplish by the end of the dialogue.

The Homeric parallel born of the quotation at *Protagoras* 309b1, combined with the pair of quotations that follow, casts Socrates in the role of Odysseus. Like Odysseus, Socrates is ἀκήλητος (*Od.* 10.329)—singularly capable of resisting spell or enchantment. He is being ironical when he claims to have sat spellbound (κεκηλημένος) for a long time at the end of Protagoras' Great Speech, for really he was waiting to see if Protagoras had actually finished (328d4–6). In fact, Socrates seems to be the only person in Callias' house—with the possible but somewhat ambiguous exception of Alcibiades—not under Protagoras' spell.

By the time Socrates meets the unnamed interlocutor, he appears to be animated by the conversations he had just had and eager to relate them. But he seems not to have had any intention to attend the gathering on his own, despite being very well informed about Protagoras' arrival in Athens (310b8), his whereabouts, and other guests present (314b8–c2). (Recall Odysseus, who, unhappy about going to Circe's house, and mindful of danger, says that he is impelled to go by a "powerful necessity," *Od.* 10.273.) Seemingly reluctant, Socrates nonetheless moves to go to Callias' house, having warned Hippocrates of the risk. He has in effect now taken charge of Hippocrates, and undertakes the trip to Callias' house on his behalf.

In connection with the situation Socrates encounters at Callias' house, we must recall that when Odysseus arrives at Circe's, half his companions are there, transformed into pigs. As Circe had intended (*Od.* 10.236), the noxious drugs have made them forget their native land. Their minds (νοῦς, 10.240) are otherwise unchanged. The transformation which the sorceress brings about is like an expression of an ancient dread: forgetting who one is, where one has come from, and how to return to what one is and to where one belongs. The conversation Socrates will have with Protagoras is undertaken by Socrates as a way of coming to the aid of his friends, who have experienced a peculiar transformation at the hands of Protagoras.<sup>26</sup>

In modeling Protagoras after Circe, and later explicitly likening him to Orpheus, Plato represents the sophist in the role of a γόης, a magician or sorcerer.<sup>27</sup> Magicians can communicate with the souls of the dead, and have the power to cast and lift spells. We know from Herodotus that the ability to effect transformations was also associated with γόητες. Herodotus applies this designation to the tribe of Neuri, on account of the reputation they have

26. In Christa Wolf's rewriting of the role of Medea, Medea recalls her aunt Circe telling her: "Yes, it had so happened that she'd chased a gang of men off the island as swine, thinking that perhaps this might help them attain a glimmering of self-knowledge" (*Medea* [London, 1998], 81). The symbolism is exactly the reverse of that implied in Plato's association of Protagoras with Circe. Wolf's positive recasting of Circe gives the sorceress a Socratic role.

27. The Orpheus comparison is made just a few lines before Socrates introduces Hippias by quoting τὸν δὲ μετ' εἰσενόησα. Pace Klär, "Die Schatten," 256; R. B. Rutherford, *The Art of Plato: Ten Essays in Platonic Interpretation* (London, 1995), 126; and Capra, *Ἀγὼν λόγων* (n. 2 above), 67, this should override the inclination we might otherwise have to identify Protagoras with Sisyphus, to whom τὸν refers in the original Homeric context. In effect, Plato has directed us to disregard, for once, the original context. Sisyphus was a villainous trickster, but he did not command the magical powers of Circe and Orpheus.

for becoming wolves for several days every year (4.105). Plato will later, in the *Sophist*, explicitly characterize the sophist's art as γοητεία, magic or sorcery, and the sophist as a γόης.<sup>28</sup>

The etymology of the word γόης (from γόος, lamentation) connects it with funerary rites.<sup>29</sup> A γόης, in Plato and elsewhere, is a practitioner of a certain kind of magic. Plato's conception of γοητεία seems to be broad; divination and purification are among the activities of a γόης. In the *Sophist*, the notion that a γόης makes things *appear*, things which in fact are *not*, seems to have become a salient characteristic of this figure in Plato's mind. Whereas effecting transformations is recorded by Herodotus, the ability to transform one's own appearance was not central to ancient magic. The use of γόης and γοητεία in the *Sophist*, however, shows that Plato strongly associates changing shape and appearance, including one's own, with the activity of a γόης.

In *Republic* 2 Socrates asks Adeimantus whether a god might be a γόης (380d1). It turns out that the gods would be sorcerers if they changed their shape, or presented a φάντασμα (image or apparition) of themselves in a changed shape, or again if they made human beings believe falsehoods (such as that gods change shape). He argues that this is impossible (380d–383a), and concludes that the gods are not γόητες (383a2–5). The passage presupposes that it is characteristic of γοητεία to transform appearances or present images of transformed appearances. The same conception of γοητεία is found in the *Sophist*, where at 241b it is used to motivate the dialogue's great metaphysical discussion of being and nonbeing.

We must note that magic at this time was not regarded as diabolical in the sense this term was later to acquire. Circe is a divine figure. Her drugs are harmful to those against whom she decides to apply them, but she lives by the rules of her own nature—her power inspires admiration as much as fear. She can heal and purify, as well as cast noxious spells. Olympian gods, the established and admired divinities, perform what can be seen as magic tricks in Homer, including transformations of themselves and others.<sup>30</sup> Once won over, Circe will be helpful not only to Odysseus, to whom she swore an oath, but also to his companions, with regard to whom she did not specifically commit herself.

As Homer portrays her, Circe behaves a lot like a very powerful human. It is not her business to think of how the people whom she turns to boars, wolves, or lions feel. A freely roaming power like Circe's needs to be bound if a human dealing with her is not to come to grief. That is why it is crucial

28. *Soph.* 234c5, 235a1, 235a8, 241b7. Γόης is peculiarly mistranslated by N. White as "a cheat" in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis and Cambridge, Mass., 1997), and as "juggler" in N. Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's "Sophist"* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 17, n. 55, pp. 77, 100, n. 12, pp. 128, 145, and 279. They have been misled by LSJ (s.v.).

29. See the excellent account of γοητεία in S. I. Johnston, *Restless Dead* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999), 102–22, and a more general account of Greek magic in F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1997).

30. Athena uses her ῥάβδος (magic wand) to change the appearance of Odysseus: she turns him into a beggar (*Od.* 13.429–38), restores his appearance in front of Telemachus (16.172–76), and turns him into a beggar again (16.454–57).

for Odysseus to make her swear a great oath.<sup>31</sup> An oath binds, and can serve as an antidote to magic powers. Such antidotes are magical as well.<sup>32</sup>

Socrates, however, is undoubtedly focusing on the dangerous and noxious side of Circe. When he warns Hippocrates of the risk he is running if he goes to Protagoras intending to become his student, we are left in no doubt as to what type of magic he is associating with Protagoras' influence on his students.<sup>33</sup>

In comparison with Circe, Odysseus is a thoroughly human character. He does not have, or claim to have, any higher powers. He makes do with what he is endowed with, his eloquence, shrewdness, and persuasiveness, and his otherwise human kind of intelligence. Even when he receives help from Hermes, or more often from Athena, that is not his to command.

Like Odysseus, Socrates has insight into people, and himself. His approach to his interlocutors is highly personal. He has the Odyssean cunning intelligence, *μητις*, which is an ability to devise schemes that get to their goal—often by indirect means. Using masks or screens and pretending is part and parcel of this sort of cunning.

One virtue that Odysseus strikingly possesses is courage. In this he seems to far outstrip Circe. Once the magic devices she attempted to deploy on him fail, she is frightened by the sword he menacingly draws. Since she is divine, Odysseus cannot take her life. Gods can be hurt by weapons, however, and Circe shrinks from pain.

To the extent that the *Protagoras* is about any single virtue, it is about courage. The dialogue starts by depicting what Socrates calls Hippocrates' *ἀνδρεία*—his impulsiveness and readiness to act, which, however, is ultimately only a semblance of the true virtue of courage. Towards the end of the dialogue, Plato will have Socrates give an account of courage as he understands it. Although the issue of Protagoras' courage is not tackled directly, it is very likely that Socrates would see Protagoras' preoccupation with his own safety, and the emphasis he puts on forethought, as evidence of his lack of courage. Protagoras thanks Socrates for having forethought, *προμήθεια*, on his behalf (316c5). A foreigner going about cities and educating young men is liable to incur envy and odium. Protagoras believes that Socrates had something of the sort in mind when he left it to Protagoras to decide whether the conversation between them should be public or not (316b3–6). Socrates, however, has no such thing in mind. He and Hippocrates, he says, are simply indifferent on the issue of privacy (316b5). Protagoras' preoccupation with his own safety stands in stark contrast with Socrates' attitude to such matters, both here and in the *Apology*. Protagoras' inability to give a satisfactory account of courage in the dialectical debate also indicates—for Socrates at any rate—an absence of this virtue.

31. She swears the kind of oath that gods themselves swear; see Heubeck and Hoekstra, "*Odyssey*" 9–16 (n. 7 above), ad 10.299.

32. Circe's potion is a magic agent (*φάρμακον*) and so is *μῶλυ* (according to Heubeck and Hoekstra, "*Odyssey*" 9–16, ad 10.302–6, *μῶλυ* may be an early technical term in the practice of magic).

33. There is a report according to which Protagoras studied with Persian magicians (*μάγου*); see Diels-Kranz 80 A 2: Philostr. *VS* 1.10. This cannot be taken as reliable biography. Yet if Protagoras had such a reputation in Plato's lifetime, Plato could be playing on it.

Hermes, invoked by Socrates at the outset, is the god who counteracts the forces that lead astray, and who points the way. He guides the souls of the dead to their final destination in the underworld, helping them as it were to find their way home. Although Socrates directly associates Alcibiades with Hermes—through his initial Homeric quotation—the spirit of Hermes is more at home with Socrates himself than with Alcibiades.

The power to resist Protagoras is Socrates' own. He will be, moreover, a Hermes to Hippocrates: he serves as the younger man's guide, descending with him to the "underworld" of Callias' house, enabling him in the end to resist Protagoras' misleading charm.

In the world of erotic forces Plato is describing, the power of a lover spreads through his erotic counterpart. They are symbolically a unit. When Hippocrates at dawn indicates to Socrates the need to go to Callias' house, this corresponds to Circe telling Odysseus in predawn darkness of his need to descend to the underworld. But Protagoras is the force that drives Hippocrates, and the active bewitching force. He is the one more properly conjoined with Circe. Similarly, Socrates is the one properly aligned with Hermes. Alcibiades will, in the rest of the dialogue, throw himself into the task of standing by the side of Socrates. Yet he does not provide direction, and does not play the role of a guide.

Plato's employment of the Homeric material does not stop with the symbolic pairings of characters. There is a dynamic element to the material, which is reflected in the dynamic of the Platonic text. Odysseus is on a journey, trying to bring himself and his companions safely home, contending with powerful forces attempting to deflect him. He succeeds in compelling them to serve his purpose. Socrates is on a similar quest, aiming to release his companion from Protagoras' grip. Like Odysseus, he meets with success.

Or rather, from a dramatic point of view he meets with success. He forces Protagoras to acknowledge that he has not fully held his end in the argument. He succeeds in taking Hippocrates away with him. But the substantive outcome of their philosophical debate is more ambiguous, and requires separate analysis. The debate deals with the nature of *παιδεία*—seen by Socrates as a way of improving the soul—and its very possibility. The dramatic reversal which takes place at the end of the *Protagoras* is brought about almost exclusively by means of a philosophical argument; and its effectiveness directly depends on the force of that argument. This reveals that the link between the dramatic and the philosophical in the dialogue does not run in only one direction. The Homeric setup puts onto the map the very issues treated more discursively and argumentatively in the later part of the dialogue. Conversely, the philosophical force of Socrates' argument against Protagoras has a literary function. Only if the argument works, not merely dialectically but as a substantive rebuttal of Protagoras' position and his claim to wisdom, can the picture of Protagoras as Circe come convincingly alive.<sup>34</sup>

34. On Protagoras' position itself, the content of his claim to wisdom, see my "Protagoras' Political Art," *Rhizai* 1 (2004): 9–36.