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ENACTING THE OTHER, BEING ONESELF:  
THE DRAMA OF RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY  
IN PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

ZINA GIANNOPOULOU

IN THE LAST TWO DECADES in particular, Plato's *Phaedrus* has received a variety of comprehensive interpretations, many of which have attempted to assess the contribution of the dialogue's dramatic or literary elements to a proper understanding of its philosophical value. In some of them, the exploration of the broader and much debated issue of dialogic unity has taken precedence over a painstaking study of the drama, while in others, the emphasis on *Phaedrus*' integration of drama and philosophy has to some extent displaced the problem of the dialogue's unity. The overall aim of this article is to join the relatively few studies that have married these two approaches. For it is, I believe, both possible and fruitful to demonstrate that the dialogue's drama, as observed in its first half, far from being ornamental or merely a convenient device of transition from one speech to the next, is philosophically potent and, if carefully studied, a still largely untapped repository of subtle thematic allusions to the second half.

The material for my investigation will be gleaned from the brief conversational interludes surrounding each one of the three speeches in the first half of the dialogue (227a1–230e5, 234c6–237b6, 241d2–244a4) and will be dealt with in the three parts of the article. In each part, I shall point up the reflexive interplay between dramatic character and philosophical ideas by showing how the dramatic treatment of the participants' identity in these brief dialogic encounters anticipates important philosophical preoccupations of the second half.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I shall show that the inherent mutability of the characters' erotic identities in the first half is philosophically charged and prefigures ideas discursively explored in the dialectical investigation of the second half, such as the defects of writing and the psychic makeup of those exposed to rhetorical and dialectical discourse.<sup>2</sup> If my con-

*In memoriam* Gerald M. Browne

1. I shall thus leave unexamined other important literary elements of the first half, such as the scenic background and the characters' response to it. For discussions of this topic, see Ferrari 1987, 1–36; Asmis 1986, 158–59. Unless otherwise noted, translations are derived from Nehamas and Woodruff 1995.

2. I should add a caveat: I do not offer here a full-fledged exploration of the thorny issue of the dialogue's unity. Throughout the article I draw numerous thematic connections between the two halves of *Phaedrus*, but do not systematically endeavor to prove its unity. It should, however, become clear that my interpretation supports the unitarian position.

strual of the integration of the dialogue's drama and philosophy is tenable, it will lend independent support to C. J. Rowe's claim that in *Phaedrus* Socrates is a practitioner of scientific oratory, not of philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

Before I embark on the exposition proper, let me clarify my approach a little more. I shall be primarily concerned with the tension obtaining between the stable erotic identities assumed by Socrates and Phaedrus in the dialogue's dramatic action and the mutable ones adopted by them as speaker and addressee of the three speeches they deliver prior to the dialectical examination of rhetoric and writing in the dialogue's second half (henceforth L, S<sub>1</sub>, and S<sub>2</sub>). As characters populating this particular dialogue, Socrates and Phaedrus are given specific erotic roles, which I shall call "dramatic": the former is portrayed as Isocrates' lover (278e5–279a1), while the latter is cast as Lysias' lover (236b5, 257b4, 279b3). Although these dramatic roles are nowhere explored for their own sake and may be deemed metaphorical and symbolic, they establish emotional (and intellectual) ties between the dialogue's participants and well-known representatives of oratory external to the dialogic action.<sup>4</sup> The delivery of the speeches, however, requires that both speaker and addressee take on temporarily new erotic roles, which I shall term "mimetic," that bind them to each other. I shall contend that the mimetic roles created by the erotic scenarios of the prepalinodic speeches (L and S<sub>1</sub>) falsify the characters' dramatic erotic identity. In S<sub>2</sub>, however, Socrates emerges as himself, namely, as the philosophic lover par excellence, whereas Phaedrus is perceived and addressed both as himself (physically) and as Lysias' fictional beloved (mentally).

The elaborate role-playing of the first half anticipates some of the characters' theoretical preoccupations in the second half and offers a new way of conceptualizing the dialogue's unity. The discrepancy between the speakers' dramatic and mimetic erotic identity invites us to consider whether (and how) rhetorical dissimulation or the masking of one's identity affects the transmission of truth. While this discrepancy is resolved in the palinode, the ambiguity concerning the addressees' erotic identity is sustained throughout and becomes especially poignant in the palinode. For there Socrates addresses an interlocutor who, while physically present, possesses a psychic makeup indistinguishable from that of a fictional character, viz. Lysias' beloved or any youthful pursuer of philosophy. Addressing an interlocutor deprived of a distinct and clearly delineated soul is, according to the discussion in the second half, endemic to the practice of conventional oratory and a feature that effectively distinguishes it from philosophical discourse: the former thrives on the existence of an impersonal audience, while the latter presupposes the active participation of an addressee whose psychic needs crucially affect the discussion.

3. For a detailed presentation of his criteria for viewing Socrates as scientific orator, see Rowe 1989, 175–88.

4. Rutherford 1995.

1. THE LYSIANIC MODEL OF *EROS*

In Lysias' speech (L), a non-lover attempts to seduce a 'beloved' by arguing for the advantages of non-*eros* over those of *eros*.<sup>5</sup> L's central idea is that *eros* makes lovers passionate while it lasts but, once it is gone, renders them at best indifferent to, and at worst enemies of, their earlier objects of affection. Non-lovers, on the other hand, are better able to care for the intellectual and moral welfare of their 'beloved,' because they are "masters of [themselves] and [have] not been overwhelmed by love" (233b–c). As a written *logos* presented orally to an audience (Socrates) different from its intended one (the beautiful beloved) and by an individual (Phaedrus) other than its author (Lysias), L complicates issues of authorship and reception, thereby inviting an investigation of the characters' identity. In order to avoid conflating distinct conceptual categories, the speech's written and oral aspects should be examined separately. I shall consequently deal with problems of dramatic identity as they appear first in L's written version and then in its oral version.<sup>6</sup>

The written speech is a specimen of epideictic rhetoric and, albeit of uncertain authorship, is presented as Lysias' genuine product. It is addressed to an absent beloved, a "beautiful boy" (227c6: *τινα τῶν καλῶν*), with whom the writer of the speech seems already to be acquainted.<sup>7</sup> In the context of L as written discourse, the speaker's identity is tightly interwoven with the author's unconventional thematic approach. Lysias advances the admittedly odd case of a non-lover who seeks to convince his 'beloved' to grant him sexual favors on account of the former's unerotic interest in the latter.<sup>8</sup> While one could reasonably claim that the oddness of this case is essential for the epideictic force of the speech, as it demonstrates its author's (supposed) cleverness, an exclusive emphasis on genre conventions forecloses the possibility of detecting in the speech the speaker's epistemological and moral commitments. Might not a careful study of his words reveal a tension between his proposition and the motivation underlying it, a tension that can be seen to inform the critique mounted against the speech by Socrates and Phaedrus later in the dialogue? My attempt to explore the interpretative possibilities afforded by this approach does not discount the validity of the traditional reading, but seeks to expand the range of interpretations permissible by the text.

One of the questions that readily presents itself to any reader of L is this: if the speaker is not in love with his addressee but nevertheless aspires to

5. Since a non-lover cannot properly have a beloved, I shall use single quotation marks in my references to the non-lover's object of affection. Once the non-lover has been shown to be a lover in S<sub>1</sub>, I shall dispense with the quotation marks.

6. Perhaps I need to stress here that the distinction between written and oral *logos* is simply heuristic and presupposes no difference in content between the two versions of Lysias' speech.

7. Lysias' prior acquaintance with the boy is most strongly suggested by the opening lines of his speech: "you understand my situation: I've told you how good it would be for us, in my opinion, if this worked out" (230e6–7). The remainder of the speech, however, contains no compelling evidence in support of their preexisting familiarity with each other.

8. Ferrari (1987, 251 n. 4) says: "the originality of the non-lover's proposal lies precisely in the fact that it pushes a seductive purpose without conventional eroticism, either overt or concealed."

engage in an emotionally detached sexual liaison with him, what is the nature of the existing relation between the two men that renders the rather audacious proposition plausible? Lysias describes his non-erotic attitude toward the youth as friendship (*philia*), a notion that figures prominently throughout the speech. His references to *philia* are of two kinds: (a) as an emotional state, friendship is the opposite of enmity (232e1), is not essentially affected either by hostility (233c2: ἔχθραν) or by anger (233c3: ὀργήν), and is antithetical to short-lived devotion (234a5–6: οὐδὲ τοῖς ὀλίγον χρόνον σπουδάζουσιν);<sup>9</sup> (b) as a state of affairs, *philia* may obtain independently of sex (232e5–233a3, 233c6–d4) and, in one case, is clearly countenanced as the socially acceptable incentive for interpersonal relations, preferable to sexual friendship with its attending social stigma (232a6–b5).<sup>10</sup> *Philia*, then, according to Lysias, is a feeling of favorable disposition toward another person, and, in its best form, is untainted by the madness of sexual desire. Indeed, perhaps the non-lover's most potent argument against his opponent is that the latter's purportedly admirable (and necessarily sexual) friendship is more capricious and unstable than the former's (asexual) *philia* (231b7–c7).<sup>11</sup>

It is this friendly feeling for his 'beloved' that Lysias wishes to transform into sexual friendship, and his speech aims to secure the youth's acquiescence. But when one considers that sexual gratification is the true aim of the non-lover's proposition, one is baffled by the relative lack of attention *eros* receives in the speech. Although the notion of desire (*epithumia*), which fuels sexual interest, occurs five times in L's context, it never as such describes the non-lover's clear-headed, pragmatic approach to the 'beloved,' but is associated only with the ethically dubious erotic agenda of the lover (231a3, 232b2, e6, 233b1, and 234a7). The non-lover's explicit references to his opponent's intense but ephemeral lust contrast sharply with his own cautious sexual insinuations, whose meaning can be deciphered only contextually and by contrast with the straightforward descriptions of the lover's mad desire.<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that the non-lover's ethics of eroticism is shaped by the notion of exchange, the consistent suppression of the sexual dimension of his relation with the 'beloved' makes his speech sound more like a high-minded and altruistic manifesto of selfless concern for the benefit of another than a self-interested affair.<sup>13</sup>

9. At 231c1–2, *philein* denotes the emotional state that supports an erotic relationship: "... because, as they say, he is the best friend his loved one will ever have" (ὅτι τούτους μάλιστα φασιν φιλεῖν ὃν ἂν ἐρῶσιν). This is, however, the conventional approach to *philia/eros*, which the non-lover contests and, as such, is left out of my consideration of his perception of *philia*.

10. See Waterfield 2002, xiv–xvi.

11. Of course, if the non-lover attains his goal, his *philia* for the 'beloved' loses its asexual character. But still his friendship, informed as it is by a dispassionate appreciation of the nature of the 'beloved,' is preferable to the lover's irrational *philia*. Note that Lysias attempts to enhance the honor and value of the association between the non-lover and 'beloved' by identifying it with the firm, asexual bond of friendship and family ties (233d1–4).

12. See, for example, in 231a1 (ὃν δέομαι: "the things I am asking for"), 231c7 (τοιούτον πρᾶγμα: "such a thing"), and 234a1 (τοῦ πράγματος: "the thing"). At 233a1–3, the non-lover subtly refers to an asexual, friendly state of affairs prior (πρότερον) to the sexual phase of the proposed relation with the 'beloved' and tactfully describes the latter's agreement to have sex with him as "a benefit" (εὖ πάθωσι).

13. For a similar view, see Ferrari 1987, 93.

In light of this ambiguity between the non-lover's apparent innocuousness and his rather more sinister erotic intent, it is not surprising that Rowe, for example, has questioned the non-lover's sexual interest in the 'beloved' on the grounds that "the speaker implicitly claims not only that he is not in love with the boy, but that he does not desire him physically either; it is to be a purely business-like transaction."<sup>14</sup> If Rowe is right and the *eromenos*' physical and/or psychic desirability plays no important role in the nature of the liaison, the non-lover's pursuit of the boy's sexual favors emerges as a nonsensical enterprise: for why would he be interested in this youth, a boy whom he seems to know and whose sexual favors he is actively soliciting, as opposed to that one?<sup>15</sup> The answer to this question cannot be that the founding of interpersonal relations on the principle of exchange renders the distinct individuality of the 'beloved' superfluous, because the non-lover's reference to his preexisting *philia* as a relation with an 'eromenos' of a certain praiseworthy disposition clearly suggests that the youth's psychic makeup affects the selection-process.<sup>16</sup> It is more likely that the boy's physical beauty, to which Phaedrus rather casually refers at 227c6, must somehow motivate the non-lover's display of sexual interest. These considerations certainly call into question the ethical component of the non-lover's apparently unerotic motivation: they point to an irresolvable tension between his highly advertised, unselfish preoccupation with the welfare of the 'beloved'—a natural concomitant of his lofty friendship with an *eromenos* of noble character—and his secret, self-serving interest in obtaining sexual favors from the youth.

While the muddled motivations of L's speaker make it hard to pin down his erotic identity, the speech's addressee appears to be equally obscure: just what sort of person is the 'beloved' for the securing of whose erotic favors Lysias concocts a speech that, upon scrutiny, exhibits an uneasy tension between external/verbal expression and internal motivation? Surprisingly enough, the speech contains no references to the boy's character or personality. The only relevant description of the youth, as "a beautiful one" (227c6: *τινα τῶν καλῶν*), is contained in Phaedrus' earlier introduction of the speech to Socrates, but is too succinct and uninformative to be of any real interpretative value. Furthermore, the speech's various modes of address sustain the impression that Lysias' 'beloved' is a shadowy, almost immaterial, youth. Although the frequent deployment of verbal forms in the second person singular suggests that the speech is after all addressed to a particular individual, the sense of familiarity thus conveyed is illusory. Apart from the fact that L contains no apostrophes in the vocative, its use of interpersonal forms of address only succeeds in evoking the presence of an impersonal addressee

14. Rowe 1986, 145.

15. Nussbaum (1995, 157) terms this mode of objectification "fungibility," according to which "the objectifier treats the object as interchangeable with other objects of the same type, and/or with objects of other types."

16. At 232e3–233a4, the non-lover's stable friendship is predicated on the boy's presumably good "character" (*τὸν τρόπον*) and the other aspects of his personality (*καὶ τῶν ἄλλων οἰκείων*), with which the lover becomes acquainted only after he has enjoyed the youth sexually and which he values only for a short time.

in need of the type of advice contained in the speech but otherwise completely unacquainted with the speaker. This artificial sense of familiarity is underscored by Lysias' occasional slipping into general modes of verbal expression, as the use of the third-person singular denotes.<sup>17</sup> Such impersonal locutions emerge naturally from the interpersonal ones and reinforce their general applicability. The speech's complete lack of specific references to the physical or intellectual distinctness of the 'beloved' casts further doubt on the non-lover's effusively proclaimed friendship and on the heavily advertized rationality of his proposition. For why would one insist so much on his friendly feelings toward—or, even less credibly, be so interested in attaining the sexual favors of—an almost immaterial 'beloved' as to couch one's erotic proposition in the oddest and most circumlocutory manner?

The impersonal nature of Lysias' speech qua written *logos* reveals problematic aspects of the speech's characters and foreshadows important issues of Socrates' subsequent critique of writing and conventional rhetoric. The written medium's concealment of the authorial figure is dramatically conveyed by the lack of moral transparency of the non-lover's erotic motivation. In addition, the written word's lack of a specific addressee is here reflected in the non-lover's shadowy 'beloved' with whose mental disposition the speaker is unfamiliar; this becomes the focus of Socrates' critique of written *logos* at 275d4–e5. It is also intimately connected with the legal practices of the time, according to which defendants would utilize speeches written by professional orators in order to enlist to their cause the minds and hearts of unknown judges. Finally, the conceptual conundrum besetting the non-lover's notion of erotic friendship shows that the Lysianic speaker is at best ignorant of the truth and at worst a despicable liar. In either case, his speech is a specimen of bad oratory aiming to deceive through ignorance or masking of the truth.

Qua oral discourse, L is recited by Phaedrus, Lysias' lover, to Socrates. The dramatic elements of Phaedrus' oral delivery compound the impression of simulation already created by the written version of the speech. As far as the speaker is concerned, by reading Lysias' speech, Phaedrus-qua-lover (of Lysias) mimetically performs the role of the non-lover for whom Lysias, Phaedrus' beloved, wrote the speech. Consequently, Phaedrus' performance constitutes an imitation (a lover, Phaedrus, posing as a non-lover) of an imitation (a beloved, Lysias, addressing the situation of a non-lover), a complex process whose every step requires the falsification of the erotic identity of the individuals involved. On the level of the addressee, the fictionality of the absent beloved, underscored by the written medium, is now necessarily supplanted by the physical reality of Socrates, Phaedrus' addressee. But since in this dialogue Socrates is dramatically portrayed as Isocrates' lover, his assuming the persona of Lysias' fictional 'beloved' entails a double falsification of his erotic nature: he is required both to impersonate a nonexistent individual and to exchange his own active erotic role for an alien, passive one.

17. See for example 231b7–d6 and 232c3–d1.

Phaedrus' mimetic role, as the Lysianic non-lover, and his attitude toward Lysias' *logos* exacerbate the speaker's murky identity painted by L-quawritten product. For as we have seen, that speech reveals the non-lover's muddled understanding of the differences between selfless, asexual *philia*—the prideful privilege of the non-lover—and self-benefiting, sexual *eros*—the lamentable alternative of the irrational lover—and suggests that the Lysianic notions of *eros* and non-*eros* may not be as rigidly demarcated as the speaker makes them out to be. Now, Phaedrus' mimetic role shows that the Lysianic lover and non-lover are in fact similar, inasmuch as they both reduce their respective beloveds to mere instruments for the promotion of their self-interest. The lover's view of the beloved, according to Lysias, is strictly utilitarian, as the *eromenos* is simply a means to the satisfaction of the *erastes'* evanescent erotic desire. When Phaedrus takes on the part of the Lysianic non-lover, however, he enacts the erotic model condemned by the speech, since he hopes to “use [Socrates] as [his] training partner” (228e3–4).<sup>18</sup> Thus the kind of erotic selfishness against which Lysias' non-lover protests in the context of L finds its dramatic analogue in the behavior of the non-lover, Phaedrus, toward his ‘beloved,’ Socrates, in the dialogic interlude preceding the oral recitation of the speech.

The conceptual kinship between the Lysianic lover and non-lover finds further support in the nature of Phaedrus' attitude toward the *logos* of his beloved, Lysias. His unhesitating endorsement of the quality of Lysias' speech is short-lived, as it is soon eagerly, and rather thoughtlessly, transferred to Socrates' second speech (257b7–c4). In his obsessive love of speeches Phaedrus resembles the intense but inevitably passing desire of the lover condemned by L, since both he and the Lysianic lover are too quick to offer and withdraw their erotic allegiance (231b7–d6). In addition, his eager memorization of Lysias' speech, a sign of an almost reverential attitude toward his beloved's *logos*, echoes L's depiction of the lover's empty adulation of his beloved (233a5–b1). Just as the lover “will praise what you say and what you do far beyond what is best,” so Phaedrus' admiration of Lysias' written composition seems excessive and hollow (228a1–2, 234c6–7, e3–4, 235b2–5).<sup>19</sup> By glorifying issues of length, conceptual novelty, and verbal impressiveness and by neglecting to assess the epistemic value of words or

18. One has to wonder, of course, about the nature of Phaedrus' relation toward his beloved, Lysias. The urgency of his desire for self-satisfaction is so strong as to cause him to “use” not only Socrates, with whom he does not share emotional ties, but also Lysias himself: he meets Socrates' suggestion that Lysias write a eulogy of *eros* as a form of self-purification with the rejoinder that he will compel him to write (Λυσίαν ὅπ' ἐμοῦ ἀναγκασθῆναι γράψαι) another speech as soon as possible (243d5–7). Phaedrus' use of compulsion is also mentioned at 228c3, 236e4–5, 237a9–10, 242b2, 257a5–6.

19. His fascination with the speech is first attributed to its “clever ingenuity” (227c7: *κεκόμψευται*), then to its choice of words (234c7: *τοῖς ὀνόμασιν*), and afterwards to its impressiveness and completeness (234e3: *μείζω καὶ πλείω*). A little later, when Socrates agrees to deliver a speech offering an alternative version of L's approach to *eros*, Phaedrus inquires about the identity of the speech's authors and wishes to know whether they have produced “better” (235c1: *βέλτιω*) speeches than L, without specifying the basis of his evaluative assessment. The same disinterestedness in the grounds of normative valuations is evident in his begging Socrates to deliver a *logos* “that makes more and better points” than those scored by L (235d6–7).



the necessity for their logical structuring, Phaedrus' speech obsession (242a7–8: Θεϊός γ' εἶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους, ὃ Φαῖδρε, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς θαυμάσιος) places importance on L's most superficial formal characteristics as opposed to its content.

The fictionality of the addressee appears also in the context of L as oral *logos*. Phaedrus' words are the vocal equivalents of Lysias' silent written signs, the sounds that bring to life the dead linguistic symbols of written discourse.<sup>20</sup> By reciting the speech verbatim, Phaedrus embodies, as it were, Lysias' scroll and becomes the mimetic medium for the communication of an already dead *logos*. The performative context in which the recitation is embedded echoes the necessarily asocial nature of the speech's composition. The banishment of the dialogic enterprise ensured by the written medium, in which the author's thoughts yield an uninterrupted, univocal narrative, is reflected in Phaedrus' equally monologic oral delivery. Consequently, and despite the fact that L is delivered to a real auditor (Socrates), from a philosophical perspective it displays the same irremediable weaknesses as the philosophically barren written version it iterates: Lysias' *logos* is consigned to the silent written medium, while ostensibly addressing an absent and unspecified beloved, and Phaedrus' oral reporting of it is essentially a soliloquy directed at a convenient but otherwise silent addressee. The oral version thus duplicates the written speech's inattention to the addressee's psychic disposition and is equally subject to Socrates' critique of harmful *logos* in the second half of the dialogue (273d8–e4, 276e4–277a4, 277b8–c6).

## 2. SOCRATES' VERSION OF THE LYSIANIC MODEL OF *EROS*

Socrates' first speech (*S*<sub>1</sub>) is presented as a formal reconfiguration of its Lysianic antecedent. To Phaedrus' challenge to deliver a speech that makes more and better points than L "without repeating a word from [it]" (235d7–8), Socrates retorts that it is impossible to make any additional essential (236a1: ἀναγκαῖα) points to those already made by it. But whereas Lysias shows the superiority of the non-lover's sober *sophrosyne* by contrasting it with his rival's selfish erotic practices, Socrates explores solely the ruinous nature of *eros*. *S*<sub>1</sub>'s main argument rests on a sharp dichotomy between reason, which desires the good, and irrational impulse, which seeks pleasure. As a kind of madness, *eros* is destructive and must be avoided at all costs: it devours the beloved's body and soul and leaves him worse off than he was before the inception of the affair.

While sharing L's negative depiction of *eros*, *S*<sub>1</sub> is primarily a skillful rearrangement (236a4: διόθεσιν) of the main points of Lysias' speech. As Socrates makes clear in the subsequent discussion of the speech's thematic and formal characteristics, the principles of *S*<sub>1</sub>'s reformulation of L are

20. Farness (2003, 120) says: "Writing involves a system of representations according to which marks on paper correspond to vocal sounds of speech. But writing—as it is enacted or read aloud, as Greeks usually read—is also an embodied art, and an expression of a speaking, gesturing, signifying body and so it participates in . . . performative mimesis."

distinctly philosophical, namely, the tools of conceptual definition and of the appropriate ordering of the parts of a whole (263d2–264e2).<sup>21</sup> As a fusion of rhetorical content and philosophic form,  $S_1$  is an essentially schizophrenic *logos*: it harks backward to L—whose odd conceptualization of *eros* it attempts to reproduce—and looks forward to  $S_2$ —whose formal philosophical categories it explicitly adopts. As we shall see, this “double vision” governs  $S_1$ ’s treatment of the characters’ dramatic identity.

From the point of view of the speaker’s erotic identity,  $S_1$ ’s thematic dependence on L creates the expectation that Socrates will adopt the persona of the non-lover, in emulation of the Lysianic non-lover. Contrary to this, he takes on the persona of the lover, which he describes as the true version of his competitor’s false “non-eroticism” (237b).<sup>22</sup> Socrates’ unveiling of the true erotic nature of L’s speaker settles the conceptual ambiguity encountered earlier: the non-lover’s deeply problematic fusion of asexual, altruistic friendship and sexual, self-serving *eros* is now to be understood as the result of his masked attempt to deceive. Although Socrates provides no reasons for the non-lover’s deceptive behavior, one may plausibly attribute it to his desire to win the boy away from his other suitors by means of a fanciful (un)erotic speech.<sup>23</sup> His erotic duplicity is dramatically served by the mimetic context in which  $S_1$  is embedded: just as the non-lover is in actuality a concealed lover, so Socrates is really a philosophic lover cast in the role of a conventional lover of the Lysianic subtype.

Socrates’ clarification and adoption of the true version of Lysias’ erotic persona elucidates Lysias’ dramatic nature without *eo ipso* revealing that of Socrates. Whereas in his recitation of L, Phaedrus blithely adopts the persona of the Lysianic non-lover and his reverential treatment of the speech betrays no ideological disagreement with its content, Socrates’ dramatic assimilation with the Lysianic lover right before the delivery of  $S_1$  fails to obliterate his individuality: he becomes the dramatic embodiment of the Lysianic lover, while at the same time insinuating his difference from it. His attempt to break through the pattern of identity dissimulation established by L prepares the ground for the speaker’s assumption of his genuine erotic identity in  $S_2$ . Socrates invites us to notice that his enactment of the Lysianic lover is different from who he dramatically is by either explicitly distancing himself from or downright subverting the erotic ideology of the Lysianic lover he propounds. This he accomplishes in three ways.

21. Among those who argue for an Isocratean influence on  $S_1$ ’s organization and content, see Asmis 1986, 160–61; Brown and Coulter 1971, 405–23; Howland 1937, 151–59. Although I find their arguments plausible, I think that Socrates’ praise of the organization of  $S_1$  in his subsequent dialectical exchange with Phaedrus legitimizes my viewing his first speech as a formally philosophical construct.

22. Burger (1980, 35) claims that “Socrates refrains from identifying the argument of the speech as his own. By accounting for the perspective of the nonlover who delivers the speech, Socrates’ narrative report seems to overcome the illusory objectivity exhibited by a direct dramatic representation.” The narrative frame in which  $S_1$  is embedded (237b2–6) replaces Lysias’ direct discourse, which is a genuine specimen of “mimetic poetry,” of the kind castigated in *Resp.* 394d–398b. For other interpretations of Socrates’ use of a narrative style, see Hackforth 1952, 40; Price 1989, 59.

23. According to White (1993, 37), “this strategy is practically shrewd. If the loved one is persuaded to favor only the nonlover, then he will favor that one of his lovers who has appeared in the guise of a nonlover. This one will then win the prize over all other lovers precisely by posing persuasively as a nonlover.”

First, his frequent disclaimers of authorial responsibility strongly convey his detachment from  $S_1$ . As spiritual parents of his *logos* Socrates instead names (a) the wise men and women of old who have spoken or written about these matters (235b7); (b) Sappho and Anacreon or some kind of prose writers (235c3–4); (c) a stream filling him through the ears like an empty pitcher (235d1); (d) the Muse (237a7); (e) the gods of the place (238c9–d2); (f) the Nymphs to whom Phaedrus has exposed Socrates (241e4); (g) Phaedrus (244a1); (h) Lysias (257b2); and (i) Phaedrus and Socrates together (265a6). These attributions foreground some form of external agency: either individuals other than Socrates (a–c, g, h), or some sort of divine entity (d–f), or the hybrid authorial act of Socrates-*cum*-Phaedrus (i). There has already been a great deal of interpretative speculation about the meaning and significance of Socrates' reference both to traditional poetic figures and to various divinities, and I shall refrain from further belaboring the issue. Two points are, however, pertinent to my interpretation: (1) the inspiration derived from the nymphs is externally induced, caused by the beautiful vision of the sacred grove and Phaedrus' illuminated face (234d2–4, 238d5). As such, it is quite different from the daimonic inspiration suffusing Socrates' soul when he delivers  $S_2$ .<sup>24</sup> (2) Socrates frequently alludes to the fact that  $S_1$ 's delivery results from the irresistible pressure exerted on him by his interlocutor (236e4–8, 237a5, 238d5, 242b1–5, d5). The exact nature of this odd authorial collaboration is brought out at 242d11–e1: “Not I think by Lysias [was it said that Love is the son of Aphrodite, and a god], at any rate, nor by your speech, which came from my mouth, bewitched as it was by you” (οὐ τι ὑπὸ γε Λυσίου, οὐδὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ σοῦ λόγου, ὃς διὰ τοῦ ἐμοῦ στόματος καταφαρμακευθέντος ὑπὸ σοῦ ἐλέχθη).<sup>25</sup> By attributing the provenance of his “dithyrambic” creativity (238d3) to forces outside himself, Socrates distances himself from  $S_1$ 's ideology, reserving for himself the role of a mere speaking voice of others' beliefs. This sort of authorial passivity echoes the orator's unreflective acceptance of public opinions, which he is content to reiterate without properly processing and internalizing them.

Second, Socrates' rejection of the ideas expressed in  $S_1$  is dramatically conveyed by the fact that their utterance causes him shame and makes him cover his head (237a4–5). Ronna Burger sees Socrates' figurative blindness as punishment meant to reflect the sin that invited it, namely, his lack of complete vision. She also claims that “Socrates' simulated self-blinding . . . serves as a warning that his first speech on *eros* must be understood in the context of its compulsory delivery, its attribution to a source external to himself, and its motivation by the desire to compete with Lysias for the

24. For a good discussion of these two sorts of inspiration, see Burger 1980, 33–34; cf. Griswold (1986, 53): “In this way the speech he is about to deliver is devalued from the start. Hence Socrates' statement that the speech has been poured into him as if into a vessel from an outside source is literally false but metaphorically true. Moreover, he thereby pretends that he is very much like Phaedrus into whom Lysias' speech was poured.”

25. I adopt Rowe's translation here (1986, 86), as it brings out forcefully the contrast between Socrates' unwillingly “bewitched mouth” and Phaedrus' principal authorial responsibility for the creation of  $S_1$ .

admiration of Phaedrus.”<sup>26</sup> While agreeing, I would also like to suggest that Socrates’ symbolic blindness serves at least two more functions: (1) it duplicates the dramatic situation attending the written composition of Lysias’ speech. The veiling of Socrates’ face dispenses with his interlocutor’s physical presence. Phaedrus is thus ironically made to resemble Lysias’ invisible ‘beloved.’ Socrates’ figurative blindness neutralizes the potency of his interlocutor’s physical beauty, on whose inspirational force Socrates comments only prior to his second speech (234d1–4). (2) In light of the subsequent emphasis placed by S<sub>2</sub> on vision as the appropriate receptive channel of truth, the philosopher’s figurative blindness can be understood as a means of dramatically signaling S<sub>1</sub>’s epistemic inferiority.<sup>27</sup> When seen from the vantage point of S<sub>2</sub>, the symbolic elimination of the beloved’s face, caused by the lover’s inability visually to apprehend its beauty and thus actively to be reminded of the Form of Beauty, hints at S<sub>1</sub>’s falsity.

Regarding the figure of Socrates’ addressee, we discover that S<sub>1</sub> is spoken not to Phaedrus, the philosopher’s present interlocutor, but to Lysias’ absent, fictional beloved: “There once was a boy, a youth rather, and he was very beautiful, and had many lovers. One of them was wily . . . And once in pressing his suit to him, he tried to persuade him that he ought to give his favors to a man who did not love him rather than to one who did. And this is what he said” (237b2–6). The passage clearly suggests that, as speaker of S<sub>1</sub>, Socrates speaks the words addressed by the Lysianic suitor to his boy, thereby foregrounding the identity of all participating characters. Socrates does not speak *in propria persona*, but as the dramatic embodiment of the Lysianic lover, and Phaedrus is not addressed qua Phaedrus, but qua Lysias’ fictional beloved.

While S<sub>1</sub> fails fully to delineate the figure of the beloved, it succeeds in animating to some extent his hitherto lifeless dramatic existence. Use of verbal forms in the second-person singular and first-person plural, as well as Socrates’ frequent apostrophizing, conveys the impression of a tangibly interpersonal communication that supplants Lysias’ purposefully disinterested aloofness. But since S<sub>1</sub> is self-consciously a philosophical recasting of a rhetorical definition of *eros* and is directed at an absent addressee, it appropriately avails itself most often of impersonal forms of address. The ensuing combination of two distinct styles of communication perfectly captures the ambivalent nature of the speech itself. On the one hand, as a recasting of L, the speech’s use of impersonal linguistic forms is quite legitimate, even necessary: just as an epideictic *logos* aims to captivate the anonymous audience to which it is addressed, so S<sub>1</sub> attempts to offer persuasive advice to an unknown recipient who lacks any concrete individuality. On the other hand, S<sub>1</sub>’s philosophical aspects necessitate the existence of a specific “other,” the interlocutor, whose distinct personality crucially affects the flow of the discussion and whose psychic needs influence the kind of speech

26. Burger 1980, 35. For a different interpretation of this dramatic feature, see Asmis 1986, 162–63.

27. For other interpretations, see Asmis 1986, 162; Dorter 1971, 282; Waterfield 2002, 82; White 1993, 32.

used.<sup>28</sup> The tension between these two styles of address is in accordance with the speech's intermediate position between L (conventional oratory) and S<sub>2</sub> (scientific oratory).

As speaker of S<sub>1</sub>, then, Socrates first corrects the Lysianic persona of non-lover and then takes on the role of lover, which he posits as the true erotic identity of L's speaker. The Lysianic lover is now seen not as the impassionate non-lover who disinterestedly advocates the superiority of his practices, but as the calculating bad lover who, like the bad orator, pontificates on the evil nature of *eros*, while actively embracing it in his erotic practices. Thus S<sub>1</sub>'s endorsement of L's condemnation of love proves to be its most ironically subversive critique, precisely because it succeeds in undermining it, while working from within its conceptual framework. The character of the addressee remains largely unaccounted for. As a rhetorical speech, S<sub>1</sub> is still spoken to an unknown addressee, Lysias' fictional beloved, while as a philosophical *logos*, it attempts to create the illusion of a dialogue by utilizing interpersonal forms of address. By the end of S<sub>1</sub>, however, the speech's recipient is practically as elusive as it was at the beginning of L.

### 3. SOCRATES' ALTERNATIVE TO THE LYSIANIC MODEL OF *EROS*

Socrates' second *logos* (S<sub>2</sub>) is introduced as corrective of both L and S<sub>1</sub>, quite literally as a palinode (243b2), designed to purify the author from the offensive lies contained in the previous two speeches. *Eros* is now viewed not as a paralyzing madness, but as a divinely inspired *mania* and as a rational force indispensable for the best possible life, the philosophic life. Erotic madness, Socrates submits, is cultivated by the vision of earthly beauty that causes the mad lover to recollect the Form of Beauty beheld by his immortal soul during its disembodied travels. Lover and beloved are thus partners in a journey that brings them as close as possible to the apprehension of the transcendental world of the Forms and of the ultimate truth that emanates from it. Far from serving the lover's sexual gratification, the beloved is viewed as an individual whose gain is of an intellectual sort: after he has spent time with his worthy lover, he falls in love with his own image of beauty reflected back at him through his lover's eyes, and thus eventually with Beauty itself. Although sexual pleasure is not altogether banished, its importance is clearly secondary, and the two members of the paederastic relationship enjoy a long-lasting friendship of mutual respect and growth.

Socrates' primary aim in S<sub>2</sub> is to restore the truth about *eros*, as he proclaims at 247c4–6: "I must attempt to speak the truth, especially since the truth is my subject" (τολμητέον γὰρ οὖν τό γε ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ περὶ ἀληθείας λέγοντα). This theoretical reorientation is dramatically brought

28. It is for this reason, I think, that Socrates hastens to provide some information about his addressee. At 237b2, Socrates corrects the age of the beloved to whom the speech is addressed, "there was once a boy [*pais*], or rather a young man [*meirakiskos*] . . ." who is not just *kalos*, as Phaedrus earlier said (227c6), but *mala kalos*, and who is desired by "very many suitors" (237b3). Although Socrates' description is not considerably more informative than Phaedrus', it intensifies the youth's beauty, thereby rendering his suitors' competitiveness more plausible.

out by the speaker's abandonment of the mimetic erotic persona forced upon him by Lysias' *logos* and recovery of his authentic erotic identity. The unveiling of his face underscores this move. Modeling himself after Stesichorus, the poet who regained his sight after he composed a palinode retracting his false *logos* concerning Helen's abduction, Socrates restores his vision by revealing his head and undertakes to deliver a speech about the soul's wondrous visions in its disincarnate state (243a–b). But whereas in Stesichorus' case the restoration of eyesight is a divine gift appropriately bestowed at the completion of the palinode, Socrates' symbolic reacquisition of his vision precedes the composition of his recantation.<sup>29</sup> This temporal inversion, I suggest, calls attention to the truth of the palinode: while in Stesichorus' case, the restoration of vision is a gift that rewards the poet's having already told the truth, Socrates claims for himself the gift before he has actually earned it, thereby signaling the truthfulness of his nascent account.<sup>30</sup>

The credibility of that account increases, if we construe Socrates' restored vision as the bodily analogue for the vision of the soul, which alone, according to the palinodic myth, enables it to behold the truth.<sup>31</sup> With his eyesight intact, Socrates is able to take in Phaedrus' physical beauty, by means of which he recollects the Form of Beauty, itself the philosophic progenitor of *eros*. Thus the speech's truthful description of the soul's visual appropriation of Beauty finds its dramatic analogue in Socrates' visual apprehension of Phaedrus' physical attractiveness. This point is verbally illustrated by the fact that, when Socrates at the beginning of  $S_2$  addresses Lysias' imaginary boy, he employs for the first time the word "beautiful" (243e9: ὁ παῖ καλός). Finally, the exercise of Socrates' regained vision foregrounds the existential dimension of the speech's addressee. While his symbolic blindness in  $S_1$  virtually obliterates Phaedrus' presence, the current recovery of his vision reaffirms his interlocutor's inescapable physicality. The addressee's move from non-existence ( $S_1$ ) to existence ( $S_2$ ) echoes the beloved's progression from being merely an object of erotic desire ( $S_1$ ) to gaining full-fledged individuality ( $S_2$ ). The concealed lover's conscious attempt in  $S_1$  to reduce his beloved to a weak and malleable *eromenos*, a mere slave of the *erastes*' erotic desire, is dramatically conveyed by the self-centered attitude of the metaphorically blind Socrates-qua-lover who, having veiled his face, can only inspect himself. On the contrary, the restoration of his vision in  $S_2$  brings about the sudden awareness of the "other," namely Phaedrus, who so inspires him as to become co-author of his speech.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas Socrates' true dramatic persona is finally restored, Phaedrus' character acquires a heretofore undetected two-dimensionality, emerging both as his own physical self and as the psychic representation of another.  $S_2$  restores Phaedrus' individuality by according him unobstructed visibility: he

29. For a different interpretation, see Burger 1980, 47.

30. For an alternative interpretation of Socrates' symbolic act of recovering his vision, see Griswold 1986, 73.

31. In the speech's mythic account, the "head of the charioteer" (248a3: τὴν τοῦ ἡνιόχου κεφαλὴν) peers above the rim of the heavens to see "the things that are" (248a5: τὰ ὄντα).

32. Cf. 242b4–5, 257a3–6.

now leaves behind the obscurity of anonymity and assumes his place as the real—because visually perceptible—interlocutor. His existential independence from Lysias' fictional beloved emerges in Socrates' address to the "beautiful boy" in the midst of the palinode: "you beautiful boy, I mean the one to whom I am making this speech" (252b2: ὃ παῖ καλέ, πρὸς ὃν δὴ μοι ὁ λόγος).<sup>33</sup> His awareness of Phaedrus' person as distinct from Lysias' fictional beloved is also foregrounded at the beginning of S<sub>2</sub>: "where, then, is the boy to whom I was speaking? Let him hear this speech, too. Otherwise he may be too quick to give his favors to the non-lover" (243e4–6: Ποῦ δὴ μοι ὁ παῖς πρὸς ὃν ἔλεγον ἵνα καὶ τοῦτο ἀκούσῃ, καὶ μὴ ἀνήκοος ὢν φθάσῃ χαρισάμενος τῷ μὴ ἐρῶντι). This inquiry into the whereabouts of the youth both situates S<sub>2</sub> within the broader context of the dialogue's speech-performances and conveys the speaker's anxious, personal investment in the presence of his addressee.<sup>34</sup> These observations suggest that Socrates is conscious of an irremediable rift between the physical and the mental aspect of his addressee: Phaedrus may be the physically present, visible, tangibly "real" listener of Socrates' words, but the "intended" addressee of his speech is the soul of Lysias' absent and invisible beloved.

The suggestion that Phaedrus' character hosts both himself and another receives corroboration from a neglected piece of textual evidence that adds yet another layer to his dramatic persona. To Socrates' desire to know where his intended addressee is, Phaedrus responds: "He is here, always right by your side, whenever you want him" (243e7–8: οὗτος παρά σοι μάλα πλησίον ἀεὶ πάρεστιν, ὅταν σὺ βούλῃ). Phaedrus' use of the adverb "always" (ἀεὶ) and the striking open-endedness of his response, conveyed by the generalizing temporal clause "whenever you want him" (ὅταν σὺ βούλῃ), suggest that he identifies himself not only with the fictional beloved for the duration of Socrates' second speech, but also with the indeterminate beloved who is always by Socrates' side. Phaedrus thus emerges as the dramatic representation of two psychic abstractions, Lysias' imaginary beloved and any beloved of philosophical discourse.

But why would Phaedrus' soul be assimilated to the soul of Lysias' fictional beloved or, more generally, to that of any potential beloved of philosophy? Isn't he after all a real character, one that participates in the dialogue's dramatic action, and thus fundamentally unlike Lysias' imaginary addressee or, even less plausibly, any of Socrates' interlocutors with a penchant for philosophy? An answer suggests itself when one considers the performative nature of the first half of the dialogue and its ramifications for

33. An interesting echo of this phrase appears as one word at 261a3 characterizing Phaedrus: καλλιπαῖδα. Asmis (1986, 165) points to "the juxtaposition of 'beautiful boy' and 'Phaedrus' with the pun *paid-* . . . *Faid-*" and concludes that "Phaedrus is identical with the beautiful 'boy' who has kept reappearing throughout the dialogue." The verbal link is indeed striking and lends plausibility to Asmis' case, but I argue that a *tout court*, or even exclusive, identification of Phaedrus with the beautiful beloved fails to exhaust the text's semantic subtleties. I discuss these below.

34. Notice the contrast between Socrates' use of the impersonal construction of the verbal adjective ἵεῖον in the earlier passage and the immediacy conveyed by his use of the direct question in the current passage. The personal tone of this question is intensified by the prominent position of the *dativus ethicus* μοι.

the delineation of the soul of its characters. Whereas the delivery of L and S<sub>1</sub> requires of both Socrates and Phaedrus to enact the erotic situation of characters of unknown, and, in the case of the fictional beloved, unknowable souls, S<sub>2</sub> qua Socrates' product demands that he assume his own person and voice. Phaedrus, however, never really breaks free from the playful impersonation of the previous two speeches. He never becomes his own self, because selfhood and personal identity presuppose, at a minimum, mental and moral independence, qualities that Phaedrus lacks. As passive recipient and unreflective admirer of his beloved's rhetorical pieces, he has compromised his intellectual and moral autonomy, because he views the delivery of speeches as a competitive performance to be prized on the ingenuity and persuasiveness rather than the truth and moral value of their propositions. His indirect engagement with Socrates in the first half of the dialogue further indicates the loss of his own voice. Phaedrus, then, may be seen as a convenient analogue for any Athenian youth, thoughtlessly fascinated by common rhetorical practices and unaware of their potentially harmful effect on his soul.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have attempted to elucidate the ways in which the dramatic interludes preceding and following the speeches situated in the first half of *Phaedrus* both illuminate the approaches to *eros* taken up in the speeches themselves and contain the seeds of Socrates' critique of bad rhetoric and writing in the second half of the dialogue. I have argued that all the speeches delivered prior to Socrates' recantation are embedded in a heavily mimetic context that necessitates the falsification of the characters' erotic identity. The paradoxical nature of the Lysianic non-lover's proposition which, while it appears to advance a selfless and ultra-rational relation, foregrounds an irresolvable confusion of the very terms in which it is couched, is dramatically borne out by the performative elements of the prepalinodic speeches: the speaker is invited to enact mimetically an erotic identity that subverts his dramatic one.

The identity ambiguities besetting the figure of the addressee are dramatically justified by the fact that the speeches prior to the palinode are either addressed to a fictional beloved (L as written *logos* and S<sub>1</sub>) or conflate the imaginary "other" with the present interlocutor by imposing on the latter the erotic role of the former (L as oral *logos*). The palinode (S<sub>2</sub>) shatters this mimetic construct. Socrates uncovers his true dramatic face and delivers the speech *in propria persona*, while the identity of his interlocutor acquires a two-dimensionality emblematic of his role in the first half of the dialogue: Phaedrus is both the physical embodiment of his own self—thereby providing Socrates with visual inspiration for the composition of his truthful account of *eros*—and the psychic representation of the Lysianic beloved and any philosophic beloved, in whose mental *poikilia* he participates.

The elaborate dramatic construct of the first half anticipates an important theoretical preoccupation of the second half. Dialectical discourse, as Socrates states there, requires the presence of an appropriate soul, that of the active



participant of the elenchus, in which the dialectician plants the seeds of his *logos*. The performative scaffolding of the first half of the dialogue, however, makes it impossible for Phaedrus' soul to meet this requirement. From L to S<sub>1</sub>, the addressee is Lysias' fictional beloved, an individual of unknown psychic needs. As Socrates' addressee in S<sub>2</sub>, Phaedrus inherits his predecessor's psychic indeterminacy because he is called to represent it. This representation accords with Phaedrus' own lack of psychic particularity, since throughout the first half of the dialogue he has failed to emerge as a person in his own right, an individual with a distinct voice. His adulation of Lysianic rhetoric and insatiable competitiveness have governed his interest in speeches, even in those that, like Socrates', endorse different ideological presuppositions. Phaedrus' soul thus becomes the convenient dramatic representation of the soul of any youthful addressee who happens to cross the philosopher's path, eager to converse philosophically about another's moral dilemma but ultimately confused about his own intellectual alliances and ethical commitments. Perhaps the philosopher's best strategy for sparking wonder in these unenlightened but potentially philosophical souls, Socrates teaches us in *Phaedrus*, is indeed the deployment of scientific rhetoric.<sup>35</sup>

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