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THE SUBJECTION OF MUTHOS TO LOGOS: PLATO'S CITATIONS OF THE POETS*

We should not be at all concerned with who said it, but with whether it is true or not.
(Plato, *Charmides* 161c5–6)

According to Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (α) 2.3, 995a7–8, there are people who will take seriously the arguments of a speaker (including, it seems, those of a philosopher) only if a poet can be cited as a 'witness' in support of them. Aristotle's passing observation sharply reminds us that Greek philosophy had developed within, and was surrounded by, a culture which extensively valued the authority of the poetic word and the poet's 'voice' from which it emanated.[1] The currency of ideas, values, and images disseminated through familiarity with poetry had always been a force with which philosophy, in its various manifestations, needed to reckon. As a mode of thought and discourse which proclaimed its aspiration to wisdom, philosophy could not easily eschew some degree of dialogue with an art whose practitioners had traditionally (and for much longer than anyone had been called a 'philosopher') been ranked prominently among the *sophoi*. Even Aristotle, who keeps aloof from the assumption that philosophical contentions stand in need of poetic support, cites and quotes poetry regularly in his own writings in ways which indicate the influence on him of a prevailing mentality that regarded poets and philosophers as pursuers, up to a point at least, of a common wisdom.[2]

In the case of Plato, an engagement with the culturally powerful texts and voices of poetry is so evident, so persistent, and so intense as to constitute a major thread running through the entire fabric of his writing and thinking. It is in Plato, after all, that an awareness of 'a long-standing quarrel between philosophy and poetry' articulates itself explicitly and urgently (*Rep.* 10.607b5–6).[3] This awareness emerges pre-eminently, of course, in the discussion and analysis of poetry to be found in works such as *Ion*, *Republic*, Books 2, 3, and 10, and *Laws*, Books 2 and 7. But important though such passages of sustained treatment are (and parts of them will receive some attention in the course of my argument), they do not by any means exhaust the material on which an understanding of Plato's attitudes to poetry needs to be based. For the Platonic dialogues contain hundreds of places in which extracts from poetry are quoted or paraphrased, as well as others in which reference to poetic texts is more

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[1] The metaphor of the poet's 'voice', here perhaps suggesting both the idea of oral tradition and that of personal authority, appears at Plato, *Prt.* 347e3 (a passage I discuss later).

[2] Aristotle's own quotations from poetry are analytically indexed in D. Moraitou, *Die Äusserungen des Aristoteles über Dichter und Dichtung ausserhalb der Poetik* (Stuttgart, 1994), 130–42; but Moraitou's discussion of the material (120–4) is superficial.

[3] P. Murray, *Plato on Poetry* (Cambridge, 1996), 230–1, unnecessarily suspects that the quarrel was largely of Plato's own making; so too, for more complex reasons, does A. W. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1995), 19, n. 15 and 60–7: see my remarks in *Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1997), 455–6.

allusively conveyed.[4] Counting all such occasions as 'citations' of the poets, I propose in this essay to address a set of questions about how Plato invokes, confronts, and absorbs poetic texts within his own philosophical writing. The scope and character of Plato's dialogues allow us to scrutinize his practices and strategies of citation from poetry with a closeness that is hardly possible with any other Greek prose-writer before the Imperial period.[5] My argument will attempt to identify certain principles behind Plato's philosophical assimilation of poetry, and will lead to a larger thesis about the kind of place which Plato might be seen to occupy within a history of 'reading'.

The type of person envisaged in the passage of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* from which I started appears to hold an extreme attitude: to require poetic 'witness' in support of every argument is to make a radical assumption about not only the sagacity of poets but also the completeness of their perspective on life. But Aristotle's remark makes sense against the background of something we know to have been far from extreme or unusual, namely the general Greek practice of invoking and citing poetic texts to formulate, illustrate, or reinforce a point of view. The evidence of many kinds of Greek literature (including oratory, comedy, history, as well as philosophy itself) permits us to see the widespread and persistent nature of this habit, at least among people whose upbringing entailed anything more than the most banausic of training.[6]

[4] L. Brandwood, *A Word Index to Plato* (Leeds, 1976), supplies a very useful 'Index of Quotations' (991–1003) which lists 397 Platonic and pseudo-Platonic passages (section A), and 275 passages of Greek literature (section B), the great majority from poetry; all references to 'Brandwood' in the following notes are to this index. However, Brandwood gives no criteria for inclusion of a passage in section A, and his list embraces a variety of partial or allusive references to poetry, as well as overt quotation and verbally close paraphrase, but not (n.b.) citations that lack specific verbal elements from the original (e.g. *Rep.* 1.331d–e, *Crat.* 392b–d, *Symp.* 190b7–c1). Moreover, Brandwood omits some passages which contain certain or possible verbal allusions to poetry: see e.g. *Prt.* 310d1 (ὁ ὕπνος ἀνῆκεν, a discreet allusion to e.g. *Il.* 2.71), *Rep.* 5.457a6–7, 458d5, 8.546e1, and *Phaedo* 95b7–8 (where Homeric allusion is signalled, but the phrase is not attested).

[5] I will not, however, be concerned with questions of the textual accuracy of Platonic quotations (nor does my use of the term 'text' carry any implications about the state or availability of written copies). The fullest handling of this subject is J. Labarbe, *L'Homère de Platon* (Liège, 1949), who argues for the influence of an ongoing performance tradition; cf. G. Nagy, *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge, 1996), 142–6 (in the context of a highly controversial thesis). The older treatment by G. E. Howes, 'Homeric quotations in Plato and Aristotle', *HSCP* 6 (1895), 153–237, may be right to minimize the idea of error due to faulty memory, but his arguments are not always sufficiently rigorous. D. Tarrant, 'Plato's use of quotations and other illustrative material', *CQ* 45 (1951), 59–67, at 62, thinks some inaccuracy in Platonic quotation is due to imitation of conversational informality. Much Platonic 'rewriting' is diagnosed in the three-part investigation by G. Lohse, 'Untersuchungen über Homerzitate bei Platon', *Helikon* 4 (1964), 3–28; 5 (1965), 248–95; 7 (1967), 223–31.

[6] My case does not depend on a comprehensive hypothesis about the extent of interest in poetry within Greek societies: it is sufficient that Plato both depicts, and writes for, people who shared this interest. However, the evidence of both texts from and the cultural institutions of democratic Athens establishes that the ability to quote and/or recognize substantial amounts of poetry was widely spread among male citizens: for oratory, see S. Perlman, 'Quotations from poetry in Attic orators of the fourth century B.C.', *AJP* 85 (1964), 155–72; J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, 1989), 177ff.; A. Ford, 'Reading Homer from the rostrum: poems and laws in Aeschines' *Against Timarchus*', in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (edd.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge, 1999), 231–56. Comedy calls for separate treatment in its own right: its evidence is complicated by numerous distortions; thus e.g. Strepsiades' expectations at *Clouds* 1354–65 may be filtered through an element of symposiac parody.

The use and memorization of large amounts of poetry in education, and the incorporation of poetic performance within the cultural institutions of festival, theatre, and symposium, made parts of the works of many poets readily and constantly available, not as a corpus of writings to be 'looked up' (a separate issue), but as a collection of materials stored in the mind and imagination—a source of phrases, ideas, motifs, and images that might be recovered and cited in conversation, argument or public speech, and for which one's friends or hearers could be expected to have a shared appreciation.[7]

All the dialogues of Plato depict both characters and a cultural milieu to which the preceding remarks are applicable. In the *Symposium*, for example, every one of the seven main participants uses poetic quotation or allusion to lend éclat and refinement to their speech and conversation: the ability to quote poetry, and to respond appreciatively to the same ability in others, is here patently a matter of sociocultural 'style' and adeptness. Across the *oeuvre*, in both Socratic and later works,[8] it is often taken for granted that the parties to discussion, whatever else may distinguish them (age, background, profession, and so on), are sufficiently immersed in poetry, above all the Homeric epics but many other genres and authors as well, to be able either to quote or to recognize quotation, or even indeed to recall passages without the benefit of quotation.[9] This is true, not least, of Socrates himself, who is shown as possessing a particularly well-endowed memory for poetic texts.[10] We need, of course, to make some allowance for stylization and idealization as factors in Plato's presentation of character; it would be misguided to draw exact inferences about, say, the historical Socrates' knowledge of particular passages of poetry. But it is the general impression which matters, since we are interested here in Plato's own engagement, as philosophical dramatist, with certain patterns of behaviour and with the mentality that underpins them.

Although my central concern in this article will be with quotations which in some degree direct critical attention towards the ethical 'authority' of their sources—for it is these that foreground a particular kind of philosophical anxiety over the cultural prestige of poetry—it is worth preliminary notice that Platonic characters sometimes employ poetic quotations in ways that mark their own conversational finesse rather than any immediate question about the evaluation of what they choose to quote.[11]

[7] The citation of poetry would be, of course, precisely one way of sharing it and giving others an opportunity to acquire or renew familiarity with it: in Plato, note esp. *Prt.* 339b4, where Protagoras, having started to quote Simonides' song, asks Socrates if he knows it (Socrates replies that he knows it well) and whether he needs to quote it in full; cf. ps.-Pl. *Theages* 125d11–12. On the traditional availability of poetry by performance and memorization, see J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama* (Berkeley, 1985), chs. 1–2. Poetry is one, though not the only, thing that Isocrates (if he is the author of *Ad Demonicum*) has in mind in recommending the storing up and maintenance of a mental stock of useful logoi: Isoc. 1.18–19 (cf. 51).

[8] Some variations in the frequency of quotation are noted by Tarrant (n. 5), 59 (though some of her figures should be adjusted in the light of Brandwood section A). I note that all thirty-four quotations from *Laws* in Brandwood section A belong to the Athenian (a subtle cultural colouring?); yet we are left to infer that the Spartan and Cretan can at least appreciate his use of poetry (a point specifically made at 1.629b).

[9] Quotation is dispensed with at e.g. *Crat.* 392b6–8, *Laws* 3.682a1–2 (second reference); elsewhere, we are often given no more than a token indication: e.g. *Laws* 1.629a–b ff.

[10] For what it is worth, Xenophon too depicts a Socrates extensively *au courant* with poetry; note *Mem.* 1.2.56–9, where Xenophon defends Socrates against the charge of having quoted the poets to support heterodox views.

[11] Tarrant (n. 5), 59, distinguishes between integral and embellishing quotations; cf. P. Vicaire, *Platon critique littéraire* (Paris, 1960), 81–2. But see n. 17 below.

Such cases characteristically involve striking or pointed turns of phrase, but tend not to require familiarity with the exact origin of the citation. Obvious enough examples of this type are Gorgias' echo of the Homeric use of the verb 'I vaunt myself' (εὔχομαι) at *Grg.* 449a7–8;[12] Socrates' quotation of the hortatory phrase, σύνες ὅ τοι λέγω, 'understand what I tell you', from a poem of Pindar's (fr. 105[a] Snell–Maehler) at *Meno* 76d3 (also used by Phaedrus at *Phdr.* 236d2); the use of the Homeric phrase ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῶι, 'on the threshold of old age', by Socrates at *Rep.* 1.328e6; and the quasi-Empedoclean metaphor (cf. fr. 152 DK), ἐν δυσμαῖς τοῦ βίου, 'in the sunset of life', employed by the Athenian at *Laws* 6.770a6. In certain cases we may be dealing with language that already had the status of quasi-proverbial sayings or catch-phrases.[13] But whether or not this is so, there is a range of quotations where what counts most, as in the instances just mentioned, is the adaptation of a recognizably poetic piece of wording for a purpose that is both highly localized (a passing touch of emphasis or embellishment) and relatively independent of the original. Partially similar, though requiring a more direct recollection of the source text, are cases where an explicit element of analogy or wit arises, as with Socrates' playful comparison of himself, as (putative) disciple of Euthyphro, to the Trojan horses of Aeneas (*Crat.* 407d8–9);[14] his suggestion at *Meno* 100a2–5 that the true statesman would be as unique as Teiresias in Hades ('he alone has reason, the others flit as shadows', *Od.* 10.495); or his parodic clips from the Underworld scenes of *Odyssey* 11 at *Prt.* 315b9, c8, which enrich the irony of his description of the sophists' gathering in the house of Callias.

Poetry can be quoted or invoked, then, for its elegance of language,[15] or for the aptness of some illustrative application to which a phrase or line may lend itself. In such cases, some element of the poetic text or its ethos is, so to speak, 'borrowed' or appropriated by the speaker principally for the sake of displaying his own cultural stylishness and adroitness, or perhaps in order to strike a certain (not necessarily genuine) note. Even at this level, it is significant that the Platonic dialogues contain so many citations in the mouth both of Socrates and of others, since it means that Plato deliberately allows his images of philosophical discussion both to reflect and, up to a point, to endorse the cultural habit of drawing on poetic texts to lend colour, wit, and force to other forms of discourse.[16] This comment should, however, be subordinated to, and may need to be modified by, the much deeper and more far-reaching observation that the overwhelming majority of poetic quotations in Plato cannot be regarded as functioning exclusively at the level of the speaker's own social grace, but

[12] Brandwood A78 (with B131 for three other allusions to the same line, but not to the verb) refers only to *Il.* 6.211, but the verb of course occurs elsewhere too.

[13] One example of this is Homer's οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ δρυός . . . οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης, 'neither from oak nor rock' (*Od.* 19.163), quoted at both *Apol.* 34d4–5 and (loosely, without any metrical shape and without the negatives) at *Rep.* 8.544d7–8: for this and cognate expressions, see M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), 167–9, on line 35. Plato himself marks proverbial status, in another case, at *Laws* 7.818b1–3, for a phrase which is cited, never in the same wording, twice more in *Laws* (5.741a4–5, 7.818e1–2). Tarrant (n. 5), 62–4, lists poetic 'tags' which are akin to proverbs.

[14] For Socrates' relationship to Euthyphro, see the humorous hints at *Crat.* 396d, 399a, 409d, 428c.

[15] Cf. the adverb χαριέντως, in connection with poetic quotation, at *Prt.* 344b2, *Rep.* 1.331a3; but in neither of these cases is χάρις divorced from the meaning of the text.

[16] The significance of this point needs ideally to be set within the larger framework of poetic influences on Platonic writing—influences which, at an extreme, help to generate the production of full-blown muthos of Plato's own.

take us unequivocally into the domain of the ethical import of the quoted speech.[17] This larger category of citations is intrinsically more complex, partly because the poetic materials belonging to it are not restricted to particular phrases or lines, but encompass reference to entire scenes, characters, or even poems. Even so, much of Plato's attention to what his dialogues present as the ethical implications (and interpretations) of poetry is focussed, in fact, on specific and limited quotations, and this in itself raises questions which will call for closer investigation.

A crucial link between the general cultural practices of quotation and Plato's tendency to embed ethical issues inside the representation of those practices is supplied by a Greek propensity to locate within poetic texts specific 'utterances' or 'sayings', *ῥήματα*,[18] which may then be treated as encapsulating important insights, principles, or views of life, and whose authors can accordingly be cited as 'witnesses' in support of an argument or conviction.[19] The category of 'sayings' is, of course, much wider than that of poetry, and could include anonymous proverbs, folk wisdom, and the pronouncements of non-poetic sages. It is illuminated by Socrates' remarks at *Prt.* 342a ff., where he argues that the Spartans are secret practitioners of philosophy and suggests that this fact is glimpsed in their ability to insert short, concentrated sayings into conversation with the force and precision of javelin-throwers (342e2–3). According to Socrates, the capacity to produce *ῥήματα* has been recognized as a sign of philosophical education and has been put into practice by all the great sages from Thales onwards. And it was with the intention, he claims, of controverting one such saying of Pittacus' (that 'it is hard to be good'), that Simonides wrote the song whose interpretation has been at issue between Protagoras and Socrates since 339a. Poet is 'in competition' (*ἐρίζοντα*, 343d3) with philosopher, and their disagreement can be traced and read, on Socrates' view, in the conflicting sayings in which they condense their moral wisdom.

Plato does not, of course, regard all poetry as consisting straightforwardly of

[17] I do not mean to claim that there is a sharp dividing-line between quotations which do and those which do not address the significance of the source text. At *Phlb.* 47e8–9, for example, it would be artificial to decide whether Socrates quotes *Il.* 18.108–9 (on anger 'sweeter than dripping honey') because it contains a memorable simile or because it lends weight to the idea of mixed psychological pleasures and pains. Different again is *Rep.* 5.457b2–3, which adapts a phrase of Pindar's (fr. 209 Snell–Maehler) both to play piquantly with a poetic image and in order to reply to the criticism of philosophers in the original context: see my commentary, *Plato Republic 5* (Warminster, 1993), ad loc.

[18] For the noun *ῥῆμα* see esp. *Prt.* 342e–3d, and e.g. *Rep.* 1.336a1; in this usage the term implies an especially striking or pregnant expression (cf. e.g. Pindar, *Pyth.* 4.278, Aristoph. *Frogs* 97). *ῥήματα* in this sense are akin to, and part of the same larger cultural phenomenon as, the forms of verbal wisdom considered by J. Russo, 'Prose genres for the performance of traditional wisdom in ancient Greece: proverb, maxim, apophthegm', in L. Edmunds and R. W. Wallace (edd.), *Poet, Public and Performance in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore, 1997), 49–64. Note also passages such as *Rep.* 5.466c2–3, *Laws* 3.690e2–3, where Hesiod's wisdom is cited in a saying which was almost certainly an independent proverb: see *Works & Days* 40, with West's note ad loc. Closely related to the idea of a *ῥῆμα* is that of a *γνώμη*, a concise and memorably turned 'judgement' or statement of 'opinion': see *Prt.* 340b7 for a poetic instance of the concept; cf. Isoc. 2.44 (in connection with the idea of poets as 'guides for life', ibid., 43), Aeschin. 3.135. All such sayings presumably played a part in the process of excerpting and anthologizing poetry which Plato himself attests at *Laws* 7.811a: on the history of gnomologies and related ancient collections, see H. Chadwick, 'Florilegium', in T. Klauser (ed.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1969), 7.1131–60.

[19] The idea of poets as 'witnesses' occurs in Plato at e.g. *Symp.* 196e3–4, *Laws* 1.630a3, 3.680d2–4; cf. e.g. Arist. *Met.* 995a7–8 (cited above in my text), *Rhet.* 1375b28–9, with n. 46 below. On its more general occurrence, see J. Dalfen, *Polis und Poesis* (Munich, 1974), 41ff.

ῥήματα. Nonetheless, as the passage just mentioned can help us to understand, he does show a marked inclination, which manifests itself in the extent and nature of poetic citation in his writings, to focus on short excerpts from poetry in a way that turns them into implicit and concentrated bearers of an ethical idea or attitude. The resulting habits of 'sententious' quotation exhibited by Platonic characters take us beyond the level of social and conversational finesse, and powerfully direct attention towards the ethical implications of the thought (supposedly) conveyed by the source text. Take, as an immediate illustration, *Charm.* 161a, where Socrates quotes *Od.* 17.347, αἰδὼς δ' οὐκ ἀγαθὴ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρεῖναι ('shame is not a good thing for a man in need'), in order to challenge Charmides' conviction that self-discipline (σωφροσύνη), with its affinity to shame/inhibition (αἰσχύνη, αἰδώς, 160e), is a fine and good thing. We meet here a clear example of the extraction of a ῥῆμα, an apophthegmatic and pregnant ethical pronouncement, from a poetic text. Observe, in addition, the precise manner of Socrates' (purported) appeal to Homer: 'do you not believe (πιστεύειν) that Homer speaks well when he says . . . ?' πιστεύειν, like the related verb πείθεσθαι elsewhere,[20] implies that the poet's voice is expected to be instructive and authoritative, a source of insight or guidance with established, pre-eminent credentials in the cultural tradition. In this particular setting, such an appeal carries a further dramatic nuance, since it is being addressed to an Athenian adolescent of just the class for whom a thorough education in Homeric poetry is *de rigueur*—the class whose education is described by Protagoras at *Prt.* 325d–6c. It is almost as if Socrates momentarily plays the schoolteacher, reminding Charmides of a moral authority which his upbringing virtually obliges him to revere. But from the perspective of a modern reader, what might strike us most forcefully here, as in many other Platonic passages, is that the Homeric line is quoted out of (or at any rate free of its) context. The notion that Homer here 'speaks well' is allowed to transcend, indeed ignore, the fact that the line in question does not belong to the first-person of the narrator, but is spoken by Telemachus in circumstances that give special motivation, and somewhat ironic shading, to his words.[21] The authority of the poet's own voice can be heard, it seems, even through the voices of his characters. Alternatively (and to anticipate my later argument), what might, especially in Homer's own terms, be regarded as muthos—(dramatic) 'speech'—is here treated unquestioningly as logos or overt (authorial) statement.

Is Plato, then, simply perpetrating a hermeneutically naïve or unsophisticated error? Anyone tempted to convict him of this charge on the basis of passages such as the one just considered will find it hard to avoid a self-confounding circularity: to

[20] πείθεσθαι: see *Rep.* 1.331d5, 2.365e6, 3.408c2, 5.468d7, e8, 469a3, 7.536d1; cf. the negative ἀπιστεῖν at *Rep.* 5.331e5–6.

[21] Cf. *Laches* 201b, where the line is again cited approvingly by Socrates. Likewise at e.g. *Euthyphro* 12a–c, where Socrates quotes and disagrees with some anonymous lines of epic (*Cypria* F24 Davies) which contain the statement that 'where there is fear there is also inhibition (αἰδώς)': here, not only is the dramatic status of the words ignored, but Socrates illegitimately takes the remark to have universal applicability to all cases of fear and αἰδώς, when the context (slender though it is) suggests that what is meant is limited to fear of persons. Similarly contestable extrapolation can occur even when dealing with a first-person voice which has some claim to be equated with the poet: see e.g. Socrates' disagreement at *Rep.* 7.536d1–2 with Solon (fr. 18W) over the view that a person can learn many things in old age, which apparently depends on taking as a generalization what in its context is a personal claim ('I am always learning many things in my old age'); the same line is used positively by Laches at *Laches* 189a4–6; cf. ps.-Plato, *Amatores* 133c6.

ascribe a mistake of this kind to Plato would be to repeat the very confusion between dramatic character and author that is alleged to constitute the fault in question. Conversely, to the extent that we find it defensible to read 'Plato', however circumspectly, through the voice of 'Socrates', we are surely obliged to hesitate about deeming the discovery of Homer's ideas or wisdom in the speech of his characters to be merely an interpretative misunderstanding. Even at this broad level of principle, the question is complex, since there is no *a priori* reason why all such Platonic passages need be taken in exactly the same way. At *Charm.* 161a itself, we might want to conclude that Plato is depicting a certain kind of strategy on Socrates' part, a strategy which involves exploiting a common cultural appeal to poetic authority but without thereby committing itself to a simple acceptance of this practice, and a strategy which, as I have already intimated, is complicated by the subtlety of Socrates' dialectical manner towards young Charmides. If that is so, it remains an open question what we are to make of similar 'out of context' citations elsewhere.

Before trying to make further headway, we need to consolidate the recognition that such citations function, in part at least, as the dramatic image of an ingrained cultural practice and the mentality which informs it. The practice is engaged in by a wide range of other Platonic characters in addition to Socrates himself. Thus we find, for example, Callias quoting Pindar, Euripides, and Homer to give poetic support to his radical outlook and his attack on philosophy;[22] Meno taking one of his definitions of virtue straight from poetry (*Meno* 77b3); Cephalus invoking Pindar for an optimistic view of old age in which he can take comfort and solace (*Rep.* 1.331a); Critias explaining that he learnt the different meanings of 'working' and 'doing' from Hesiod (*Charm.* 163b4–5); and many other instances besides. In the most sustained series of such citations produced by anyone other than Socrates, Adeimantus in *Republic* 2 builds his elaborate request that Socrates should expound the intrinsic, not just the instrumental, value of justice (a request that, reinforced by Glaucon's, provokes the main arguments of the entire work) around a depiction of considerations which he claims are commonly induced or supported by poetic authority.[23] In this way, Adeimantus simultaneously attests to and practises the habit of calling poetic witnesses. Although his own stance towards the prevailing weight of cultural opinion is implicitly hostile—especially in its ironic allusions to the 'wisdom' of the poets (365c1–2, 5–6) when he characterizes the workings of the cynical mind which tells itself that injustice behind a façade of justice will bring the best success in life—his use of poetic quotation and citation nonetheless seems to presuppose the force lent to certain claims by the calling of poetic 'witnesses' (364c5–6): if that were not so, the whole thrust of the challenge to Socrates would lose its pertinence and its dialectical bite.

Adeimantus' speech enables us to see with great clarity why the practice of citing poets should matter so much to Plato, since it reveals a mentality which penetrates as far as the deepest ethical convictions both of individuals and of the culture as a whole. Yet because such citations do not serve a single, invariable function, but are interwoven with these convictions (generating, exemplifying, and corroborating them in varying patterns), we should not expect Platonic interest in the practice to be limited to a concern with how any particular poetic utterance is situated in its original locus.

[22] There are seven passages of poetic citation in Callias' speech: see Brandwood A83–9 for references. On Callias's use of Euripides' *Antiope*, in particular, see R. B. Rutherford, *The Art of Plato* (London, 1995), 166–8; Nightingale (n. 3), 73–87.

[23] For references, see Brandwood A254–64.

Instead, we need to consider Plato's poetic citations in relation to a double model of meaning as, on the one hand, grounded in internal context, and, on the other, modified by a further interpretative act of application or appropriation.[24] However, as we examine more evidence for the place of citations within Plato's writings, we are likely to find that this very suggestion of doubleness, and the relationship between these conceptually separable aspects or levels of interpretation, is itself implicitly brought into question.

Certainly we have no immediate reason for foreclosing the entire issue by presuming Plato guilty of simple naïvety, and not only because of the risk of circularity which I have already stressed. The practices of citation and criticism that Plato's text presents, and to some extent arguably endorses, cannot plausibly be taken as merely unreflective. In particular, the possibility of distinguishing between authorial voice and the voices of characters is one that Plato can hardly have overlooked, since it is the very basis of the analysis of mimetic modes put forward at *Rep.* 3.392c ff., and is acknowledged in other ways elsewhere, even, on occasion, in the act of citation. At *Phaedo* 107e–8a, for instance, Socrates rejects an eschatological view voiced by the eponymous character Telephus in Aeschylus's play, and no overt attribution of the view to Aeschylus himself is made. Similarly, when at *Apol.* 28b–d Socrates invokes the example of the Iliadic Achilles, to rebut the suggestion that he himself is insufficiently troubled by the risk of death, he does so by constructing (through a combination of paraphrase and quotation) a concentrated image of a character and his attitude to life; but nothing is actually said about the poet who embodies this image in his epic. At a more sustained level of principle, in the ethical and psychological criticisms of Homer advanced in both Books 2–3, and 10 of the *Republic* it is crucial that objection is taken to the presence of certain ideas and feelings in the mouths of particular characters, above all those (gods and heroes) whose special status is assumed to give their utterances a heightened force for influence on hearers or readers.[25] This last point indicates that any cleanly asserted distinction between 'meaning in context' and 'interpretative application' is likely to come under strain within Plato's perspective, which is orientated towards a cultural milieu—with all its procedures of 'reading', transmission, and teaching—in which the experience of poetry is implicated in wider systems of belief and value. If this milieu ascribes a normative status to particular characters (including the Iliadic Achilles, appealed to in the *Apology*),[26] then the interpretation of their utterances cannot confine itself to some putatively self-contained domain of dramatic meaning—not, at any rate, without employing principles of critical demarcation and exclusion which are themselves open to question. This is a central topic to which I shall have to return.

[24] My formulation of this double model of meaning is deliberately provisional and designed to promote further elucidation of the principles active in Platonic citations from poetry. Such a model has, of course, been a focus of contention in much modern theory of (literary) interpretation, from the historically intentionalist hermeneutics of E. D. Hirsch, with its distinction between 'meaning' and 'significance' (e.g. *The Aims of Interpretation* [Chicago, 1976], 1–13), to the (qualified) anti-intentionalism of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, with its insistence on the indeterminacy of 'context' and the necessary 'iterability' of language (see esp., in this connection, 'Signature Evénement Contexte', in *Marges de la philosophie* [Paris, 1972], 367–93).

[25] On this factor see my edition, *Plato Republic 10* (Warminster, 1988), on 605d1, 606b2; for its place in Plato's larger views of mimesis, see my 'Plato and the psychology of drama', in B. Zimmermann (ed.), *Antike Dramentheorien und ihre Rezeption* (*Drama* 1: Stuttgart, 1992), 55–73, at 56–64 (revised version forthcoming in my book, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* [Princeton, 2000]).

[26] On the importance of Achilles to Plato, see Tarrant (n. 5), 60.

In another passage where the concept of characterization is explicitly mentioned, *Laws* 4.719c–e, we can discern a factor of fundamental relevance to the entire practice of poetic citations in Plato. In describing the activity of poets to the hypothetical lawgiver, the Athenian states that 'because his art is mimesis, [the poet] is compelled, by making characters whose natures are opposed, to contradict himself frequently, and does not know whether one or the other set of utterances is true' (719c5–d1). This passage is actually unusual in linking characterization directly to inspiration (c3–5), as though it is a function of the latter to enable the poetic mind to see things from the dramatic viewpoints of various kinds of person or agent.[27] But what is entirely symptomatic is the idea of 'self-contradiction' between poetic utterances. The *Laws* passage may look extreme in applying this idea to the utterances of different characters, but at *Meno* 95d–6a Socrates goes even further in finding self-contradiction between separate poems by Theognis. It is probably safe to suppose that the notion of poetic self-contradiction was not new with Plato; Protagoras is made to bring such a charge against Simonides at *Prt.* 339a ff., and Aristotle's treatment of the problem at *Poet.* 25.1461a31 ff., 61b15–18, is evidently aimed at a wide range of previously identified interpretative difficulties, some of which are likely to have been old by this date.[28] But it is in Plato that we have the fullest opportunity to understand how the making of such a charge could arise from a particular conception of authoriality, to which I now turn my attention more closely.

At *Phaedo* 94d–5a, Socrates cites *Od.* 20.17–18 to support the contention that the soul controls the body, and is not merely a 'harmony' supervening on a corporeal state. The passage in question, cited elsewhere too in Plato with approval,[29] is one where the poet describes Odysseus beating his breast and rebuking his own 'heart'. Socrates' construal of the text, which allows him to produce it as testimony to a certain kind of psychological theory, depends upon the discernment of a poetic 'thought' or even 'meaning' (διάνοια < διανοεῖσθαι, 94e2)[30] implicit in both the description and the dramatization of Odysseus's state of mind. On this interpretation, the speech may be Odysseus' but the ideas in it are just as much 'Homer's' as is the narrative framework: the poet is held responsible, in a more than creative or causal sense of the word, for both.[31] The same point emerges pervasively from the critique of Homer in *Republic*

[27] This link is never overtly made in the treatment of inspiration in *Ion*, even though Ion himself draws attention (abortively) to the poet's dramatizing imagination at 540b3–5.

[28] See D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle, Poetics* (Oxford, 1968), on 61a31–61b9: Aristotle's examples are not of straightforward self-contradiction, but his language seems clearly enough to cover such (alleged) cases too. In his *Homeric Problems*, a much larger work which probably lies behind the compressed material of *Poetics* 25, Aristotle seems to have discussed numerous alleged contradictions: see esp. frs. 146, 149, 153 Rose (= O. Gigon, *Aristotelis Opera* III [Berlin, 1987], frs. 370, 373, 377). For a further approach to the issue of poetic contradictions, see the reference to Antisthenes and Zeno the Stoic at Dio Chrys. 53.5.

[29] See *Rep.* 3.390d, 4.441b–c: on the Homeric passage see my 'Traditional Greek conceptions of character', in C. Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1990), 32–59, at 38–42.

[30] Other occurrences of this idea are *Prt.* 341e8, 347a4 (see my text below), *Ion* 530b10, c4, *Lysis* 205b2, *Rep.* 1.332c1; cf. the definition of διάνοια as inner dialogue, to be expressed outwardly in logos, at *Soph.* 263e. This point warrants a qualification on the claim of E. Asmis, 'The poetic theory of the Stoic "Aristo" ', *Apeiron* 23 (1990), 147–201, at 148, 153, 156, that the idea of poetic διάνοια was a conceptual innovation of the Hellenistic period. Basic pre-Hellenistic occurrences of the διάνοια/λέξις distinction occur at e.g. Lys. 10.7, Isoc. 9.11.

[31] A later but interestingly explicit formulation of such an interpretative principle is offered by ps.-Long. *Subl.* 4.7, criticizing Herodotus for revealing *mikropsuchia* in the sentiments he gives to the Persians at 5.18.

2–3, where the quoted and cited passages juxtapose, without explicit distinction, statements by the poetic first-person (e.g. 3.387a, twice) and extracts from the utterances of characters.[32] It can scarcely be that Plato is simply oblivious to this distinction; he is not, and this stretch of the work, as I noted earlier, more than once links the import of dramatic speech to the perceived status of the speaker. But the fact remains that the argument refuses to translate the distinction between author and character into an interpretative principle that seals off certain poetic elements from ethical criticism. The poet's own voice can be heard in and through all the elements of his poem; on this analysis, it is no more than a technical distinction whether we take him to be 'making' his characters act/speak in certain ways or 'speaking' himself,[33] since authoriality means total, i.e. fully ethical, responsibility for everything that is included in a poetic work.

If we ask how passages such as those just considered relate to the Platonic contrast between muthos and logos, the answer must be complex. This is especially clear in the case of *Republic* 2–3, since there the whole discussion bases itself upon a scheme which treats muthoi—'stories', 'myths', or perhaps 'fictions'—as constituting a species of logoi (2.376e, cf. 7.522a), 'statements', 'utterances', but also 'arguments' and 'propositions'. Muthoi form a subset of logoi by virtue of being, as a class, ψευδεῖς, which might in principle be translated as either 'false' or 'fictive'. But in the critique of poetic muthoi that unfolds in Books 2 and 3 it is not always easy to separate the concepts of falsehood and fiction, above all because the argument employs, at different levels, both factual/'historical' and normative criteria of truthfulness. As I have maintained elsewhere, the point is not that Plato fails to grasp the need for a clear distinction between falsehood and fiction, but that he senses the deep problems which surround such a distinction inside a cultural perspective where poetry is widely regarded as embodying ethical wisdom and insight.[34] In such a context, the question of whether and how far poetry's materials are (or are understood to be) fictive in a factual sense ('did these things really happen . . . ?') may come to seem of less significance than the weight of the poet's authority as a purveyor of normatively powerful images and paradigms of human experience. In addition, there is the possibility of interpreting certain muthoi as allegorical, and thereby of finding in them a concealed logos.[35] At *Phaedo* 60c Socrates suggests that an Aesopic fable could be composed to

[32] But see the last part of my text for a possible defence of one of the citations found in this section of the work.

[33] 'Making' (ποιεῖν) is of course the standard term for creating/composing poetry, but it serves to convey implicit responsibility in such passages as *Rep.* 3.388a6, b3–4, 8, 390a8. For poets 'saying' or 'telling' (λέγειν), see e.g. 2.377d4–6, e7, 379d2, 380a1; and cf. *Ion* 531a5–6 (Homer and Hesiod sometimes 'say the same things'). A passage which reveals that such 'saying' can be a matter of conveying a (supposedly) implicit moral/message is *Rep.* 2.378b2–5, where the verb λέγειν shades from 'telling', i.e. reciting, a poetic story into 'asserting' and endorsing its point. The technique of paraphrase later known as *metathesis* (cf. N. Greenbert, *TAPA* 89 [1958], 262–70) was designed in part to identify the logos within a text: note Plato's allusion to such techniques at *Rep.* 10.601b2 (with my note ad loc.).

[34] See 'Plato and the psychology of drama' (n. 25 above), 57–8, and 'The *Republic*'s two critiques of poetry', in O. Höffe (ed.), *Platon: Politeia* (Berlin, 1997), 313–32, at 317–22. Another recent discussion of these issues, which emphasizes Plato's lack of a determinate concept of fiction, is C. Gill, 'Plato on falsehood—not fiction', in C. Gill and P. Wiseman (edd.), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (Exeter, 1993), 38–87.

[35] See *Rep.* 2.378d6 (with Xen. *Symp.* 3.6) for the idea of poetic ὑπόνοια or '(allegorically) concealed meaning': this is not a sufficient defence against the dangers of poetry to the young, but Plato does not rule it out as a more general hermeneutic strategy. Cf. the references to poetic 'double meaning' (αἰνίττεσθαι) at *Rep.* 1.332b9 (ironic), *Tht.* 194c8.

express symbolically a certain view of the inextricability of pleasure and pain. When, just after this (61b), we hear that Socrates has been versifying some of Aesop's fables while in prison, it is hard to suppose that the exercise had a merely technical appeal for him. It is hard, too, to take his remark that 'the poet should compose muthoi not logoi' (61b3–4) to be the statement of a clean disjunction between two modes of discourse: the *Phaedo* as a whole is as good an example as any of philosophy's own interweaving of muthos and logos.[36] To have the title of a muthos is not to be immune to judgements of truth and falsity, as *Grg.* 523a paradoxically bears out.

Approached with such considerations in mind, the *Republic*'s subsumption of muthoi ('stories' with a prima-facie claim to imaginative or fictive status) within the larger class of logoi (roughly, [quasi-]assertoric uses of language that invite appraisal in terms of truth/falsehood) is neither a simply analytical device nor a crudely tendentious strategy. Even once the broadly 'fictive' status of muthos has been granted (376e–7a), questions can still legitimately be asked about the ethical implications and force of what the poet chooses to include and show in his stories. It is in order to frame and press such questions that *Republic* 2–3, and many other Platonic passages where poetic citations are made, insist on a more-than-formal sense in which all poetry is logos—'statement' and 'argument'—and treat this sense as equivalent to the common formula by which the poet can be said, in whatever kind of context (narrative, dramatic, and so on), to 'speak' (λέγειν) in and through his poetry.[37] The logos of poetry, on this view, is discourse for which the poet's authorial voice, a voice that is granted cultural authority to 'speak' on the most important matters of life,[38] must be held responsible and subject to the ethical interrogation of philosophical enquiry.

This argument can be both expanded and refined by reminding ourselves of the longest discussion of a single poetic text in Plato, at *Prt.* 338e–48a. This passage has been copiously analysed by others, especially for its various construals of Simonides' poem (fr. 542 *PMG*) and the implications of these construals for the debate over virtue between Socrates and Protagoras.[39] My own interest here is restricted to the central interpretative presupposition which underlies the treatment of Simonides' text by both speakers. The discussion takes place at the prompting of Protagoras, who not only asserts that the ability to understand poetry is educationally important (338e7), but also assumes that a poet can be (ethically) called to account for what he 'says' or 'speaks' (339a1, 6, b9, c2, and so on), i.e. for the logos that can be identified in, and extracted from, his work: hence the possibility, already noticed, of bringing a charge of self-contradiction against the poet (339b9–10). Socrates' response falls into two main parts. In the first, he produces (with a whimsicality that is signalled in a clear sequence of stages: esp. 339c8–9, e3–5, 341d6–9) a series of linguistic considerations designed to save Simonides from self-contradiction. Despite some irony, Socrates is

[36] *Phaedo* 61e2 seems to use μυθολογεῖν, to 'tell stories' or 'mythologize', in anticipation of the work's dialectical discussion of the soul's destiny after death, not just its concluding 'myth'. In any case, the dialogue as a whole patently combines things which can be called logos or muthos. Poetry, by the same token, is said to comprise logoi at *Grg.* 502c.

[37] For what poets 'say' (λέγειν), see n. 33. It is interesting that Isoc. 11.38, 40 refers to poetic mythology as λόγους . . . εἰπεῖν in a context where he voices moralistic criticism of the kind developed by Socrates in *Rep.* 2–3.

[38] For the motif of poetry speaking about 'the greatest things', see *Prt.* 347a2, *Rep.* 10.599c7.

[39] A recent discussion, citing earlier scholarship, is G. W. Most, 'Simonides' ode to Scopas in contexts', in I. J. F. de Jong and J. P. Sullivan (edd.), *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature* (Leiden, 1994), 127–52: Most contends that literary interpretation calls for both internal and external contextualization.

here using a form of exegesis which was available for serious use in contemporary intellectual circles: it is germane that the semantic arguments he brings to bear are of the kind later included in Aristotle's analysis of poetic 'problems' in *Poetics* 25.[40] This is confirmed by the fact that comparable linguistic details enter into the second (and more earnest) part of Socrates' response, when, after suggesting that Simonides' poem was intended to negate and compete with the wisdom of one of Pittacus' 'sayings', he offers a new construal of certain features of the song, making syntactical and verbal remarks which once again anticipate interpretative techniques codified in Aristotle's *Poetics*.[41]

In both parts of his response to Protagoras, Socrates accepts and indeed develops his interlocutor's premise that it is possible to locate a logos, a 'statement' that is also an 'argument', spoken by the 'voice' (cf. 347e3) of the poet in the poem. The extent to which, bypassing consideration of generic conventions of utterance, he thereby turns the poem into a sequence of personal declarations is vividly emphasized by his device of imagining Simonides conversing and disputing directly with Pittacus (343d, 343e–4a, 346b–7a).[42] The whole reading is predicated, in short, on the idea of Simonides 'speaking a logos' (λέγειν λόγον, 344b6–7),[43] and on the equivalent idea that the poet's discourse embodies a 'cast' and 'intention' (τὸν τύπον . . . καὶ τὴν βούλησιν, 344b3–4), a pattern of 'thought' or 'meaning' (διάνοια, 347a4: cf. n. 30), which it is the purpose of ethical criticism to identify and appraise.

Yet Socrates concludes his response to Protagoras, somewhat deflatingly, with what apparently amounts to a radical elimination of poetic citation and criticism from the kind of philosophical enquiry which is pursued in his own dialectical conversations. In a facetiously patronizing image, he suggests that those who need the testimony of poets to mediate their discussions are like symposiasts who cannot take sufficient pleasure in one another's company but require the entertainment of female dancers and musicians (347c–e). Why reconstruct an argument between Simonides and Pittacus, he intimates, when Socrates and Protagoras can pursue a live argument of their own? The question can stand for a larger issue about the place of poetic citation within the kind of philosophical activity both depicted and enacted in Plato's own writings. The case put by Socrates in this section of *Protagoras* seems to entail the complete exclusion of poetic witnesses from the philosophical 'scrutiny' or 'cross-examination' that constitutes *elenchos*.[44] Indeed, Socrates moves so far in this direction that he also undermines the confidence with which he earlier interpreted the meaning and intention of Simonides' poem. For he asserts that cultivated gatherings 'have no need of the voice of others, not even of poets, whom it is impossible to

[40] On the immediate point of self-contradiction, see n. 28 above.

[41] Socrates' exegesis of 'punctuation' at 343d6 ff., 345e ff., 346e, corresponds to the method of solving problems listed at Arist. *Poet.* 25.1461a23–5; the verb διαλαμβάνειν (346e2–3), for 'dividing' up word-groupings in or between clauses, corresponds to διαστίζειν at Arist. *Rhet.* 3.5.6, 1407b13. Socrates' interpretation of a particle at 344a4 ff. is another kind of argument from *lexis* (*Poet.* 1461a9 ff.): for particles as part of *lexis* see *Rhet.* 3.5, 1407a19 ff.

[42] Compare *Laws* 1.629b–e, where the Athenian imagines his companions questioning Tyrtaeus about his views. This hypothetically contravenes the idea that poets cannot be questioned about their meaning (cf. nn. 47–8).

[43] The 'as if' of b6 refers not to the sense of λέγειν λόγον, which we have seen applied to poetry elsewhere (n. 33 above), but to the hypothetical notion of Simonides making his utterance *in person* to Pittacus.

[44] Note that at *Prt.* 344b4 Simonides' response to Pittacus is itself described as *elenchos*: this fits in with the characterization of the poem as a rebuttal of Pittacus's supposed wisdom; but it also helps in due course to heighten the force of Socrates' remark at 347e3–7 (see my text).

question about the things they say', while most people do cite poets as witnesses but find themselves disagreeing about what the poet 'thinks' or 'means' (*νοεῖν*),[45] and thereby become locked in disputing something 'which they cannot resolve by cross-examination (*ἐξελέγχειν*)' (347e).[46] The idea that poets cannot be questioned about the meaning of their works parallels the wider critique of books and writing developed in the *Phaedrus*.[47] When coupled with the acknowledgement that some indeterminacy bedevils interpretation of poetry, this idea might be thought to pose acute difficulties for the principle that poetic texts can be construed as logoi which express the thoughts of their authors. It is important, however, to see that Socrates perceives such difficulties not as a reason for doubting this principle itself, but as an impediment to making much use of poetry for the purposes of ethical discussion and enquiry. Poems may indeed count as logoi for which their authors are accountable, but the more they are regarded as personal 'utterances', the more unsatisfactory it becomes that the poets themselves cannot (in practice)[48] be subjected to the kind of 'scrutiny', *elenchos*, by which all such utterances must be assessed if they are to carry the weight of ethical authority that may be placed on them. The logoi embodied in poetry (however contestably) are found wanting because they are unable to give an account of themselves, and thereby sustain a claim to insight and sagacity. The supposed authority of poetry, therefore, cannot be comprehensively upheld or the practice of citing the poets as witnesses entirely vindicated, because poetry is unable to defend itself in the face of a specifically philosophical method of enquiry.

The relationship between poetic citation and philosophical *elenchos* can be further clarified with reference to the passage of *Republic* 1 where Polemarchus invokes Simonides (fr. 137 *PMG*) for the definition of justice as 'giving to each person what is owed to him' (331e). Polemarchus cites a poet in a fashion representative of the cultural habits already documented, suggesting, with merely formal hesitation, that Simonides is someone whose utterances one might be prepared to 'trust' or 'believe' (*πείθεσθαι*, 331d5; cf. n. 20). The treatment of a poetic text as logos is here perhaps accentuated by the manner in which Polemarchus paraphrases, rather than strictly quoting from, Simonides.[49] Socrates, while ostensibly allowing the prima-facie authority of the poet's voice ('it isn't easy to distrust Simonides, since he is a wise and godlike man . . .', 331e5–6),[50] nonetheless requires Polemarchus to explain precisely

[45] One should note here that the verb *νοεῖν* can be used of the meaning of words without necessarily implying conscious intention on the part of a speaker: see e.g. *Crat.* 397e2–3, with the sophistry of *Euthd.* 287c–e.

[46] The verb *ἐπάγεσθαι* at 347e4 means to 'introduce' as a witness: cf. *Lysis* 215c7, *Hp. Mj.* 289b4, *Rep.* 2.364c5, Arist. *Met.* 995a8, with n. 19 above. The judicial metaphors of *Prt.* 347e probably presuppose the older Athenian practice, which prevailed until *c.* 380 (when it was replaced by written depositions), of requiring witnesses to testify orally in court and to be open to cross-examination.

[47] See also *Hp. Min.* 365c–d, with the comments of M. Whitlock Blundell, in J. C. Klagge and N. D. Smith (edd.), *Methods of Interpreting Plato and his Dialogues*, *OSAP* Suppl. Vol. (Oxford, 1992), 151, 167–8. Cf. n. 42 above.

[48] Contemporary poets are, of course, the exception, as *Apol.* 22a–c famously shows: Socrates asked the poets 'what they meant' or 'what they were saying' (*λέγειν*) in their works. Their inability to withstand this *elenchos* is there used to ground the inference that poets create by inspiration, not by knowledge or 'wisdom' (*sophia*).

[49] Brandwood omits the passage from his index (see n. 4 above). Cf. Page *PMG* 642 (Simon. fr. 137).

[50] *θεῖος*, 'godlike', is elsewhere used of poets/poetry at e.g. *Ion* 530b10, *Meno* 81b2, 99c, *Phaedo* 95a2, *Laws* 1.629b9, 3.682a3: in some of these contexts inspiration is implied, but this does not seem to be invariably the case.

what he takes Simonides to 'say' or 'mean' (λέγειν, e6–7). This request serves a similar purpose to Socrates' own (hypothetical) exposition of a different Simonidean text in the passage already considered from *Protagoras*, namely to identify a specific point-of-view, a poetic meaning or intention,[51] of the kind that could be personally authenticated and thus made the subject of a philosophical dialogue and *elenchos*: in this connection, it is significant that in *Republic* 1 Socrates imagines someone questioning the poet face-to-face about his views (332c), analogously to the way in which he dramatized a personal exchange between Simonides and Pittacus in the *Protagoras*. But what is especially telling in this context of *Republic* 1 is that Socrates' entire interrogation of Polemarchus about Simonides' meaning is itself a process of *elenchos*. Strictly speaking, Simonides' views are kept at one remove from the argument, since, in the absence of quotation, they remain purely a matter of what Polemarchus supposes them to be (esp. 332b2–3). Not only does this allow some doubt to attach to, and be later (335e7–8) voiced about, the correctness of Polemarchus' ascription. It also highlights the fact that, as the *elenchos* proceeds, it is not really Simonides' ideas about justice which are at stake, but Polemarchus's own claims, for it is only the latter who is in a position to explain, modify, and defend certain propositions or definitions against the scrutiny of Socrates' questions and objections. Although the poet is notionally mentioned when the 'retributive' view of justice is finally deemed to have been rebutted (334b4, cf. e4), the reference is not entirely ingenuous, still less convincing.

If anyone has been refuted here, then, it is surely Polemarchus not Simonides, since the strict force of the *elenchos* applies only to the person who can assert and uphold his views in the procedures of dialectic. At the same time, the passage does appear to raise grave uncertainty about the value of poetic citation for the exploration and formation of ethical principles. At the best, the poet's voice is apparently too indistinct, and cannot be given the force of 'living' conviction in argument; at the worst, the views ascribed to the poetic text are ones that, if we accept the validity of Socrates' argument, it would be difficult to defend in the face of philosophical attack. The upshot, therefore, seems close to that of our previous text from the *Protagoras*, where even the much more explicit and detailed examination of Simonides' song yielded eventually to the conclusion that poems and poets cannot give an account of themselves sufficient for the practices and the personal commitment of elenctic dialogue. If we now glance back at another passage already mentioned, *Phaedo* 94d–5a, we can see that that too is compatible with the implications of these sections of *Protagoras* and *Republic* 1. When Socrates quotes from *Odyssey* 20 to exemplify a psychology in which the soul controls the entire person, he is in fact using the poetic text to support a position that has been independently proposed and argued for. It is in keeping with this function of citation that he goes on to conclude that if he and his companions were to accept the view of the soul as a 'tuning' (*harmonia*), 'we would be disagreeing both with Homer, a godlike poet, and with ourselves' (95a1–2). The poet may indeed be a respectable and even impressive witness in this context, but a case for the soul's nature cannot invoke him in more than a secondary, confirmatory capacity. The logos that can be interpretatively discerned within the poetic muthos is one that, from philosophy's vantage point, has an independent truth-status. If we are to turn to the poets at all for the wisdom of true logos, we need to be able to do so with a prior (and larger) understanding that can subject poetic utterances to enlightened

[51] Cf. the verb διανοεῖσθαι at *Rep.* 1.332c1, with n. 30 above.

judgement, rather than accepting them as intrinsically authoritative. Witnesses may or may not point us to the truth, but the truth itself resides outside and beyond them.[52]

These and related tenets are not only intermittently adumbrated in Plato's dialogues, but can be regarded, I believe, as latent and available throughout the Platonic corpus's dealings with poetry, even in passages where the validity or exemplary quality of poetic utterances is overtly accepted. When, for example, in Book 5 of the *Republic* Socrates turns to Homer (extracting, we note, a normative proposition from a piece of narrative) for a partial paragon of how heroic Guardians of the ideal city should be rewarded and honoured for their military prowess (468c–d), and turns to Hesiod for a conception of how such Guardians should be religiously regarded as *daimones* after their death (468e–9a), poetry is certainly being employed as a source of, in the broadest sense, ethical paradigms: the invocation of Homer and Hesiod is evidently meant to add some *gravitas* to the proposals for the status of the Guardians in their city. But the reader of this section of the *Republic* could hardly suppose that the poets are being treated as unquestionable authorities. At the same time as it recommends one aspect of the world of Homeric heroism, Plato's text in fact reminds us of the extensive criticisms brought to bear on that world in Books 2 and 3: that is the allusive point of Socrates' remark that 'we'll believe/trust Homer in *this* instance, at any rate' (*πείσομεθα ἄρα . . . ταῦτά γε Ὁμήρῳ*, 468d7). The selective approbation of Homeric poetry was actually anticipated in the context of that earlier critique, when Socrates observed, near the end of Book 2 (383a7), 'there are many things in Homer which we can approve (*ἐπαινεῖν*), but . . .'. What we now see, in this stretch of Book 5, is that such approbation always implies the superior judgement of the philosophical interpreter. Moreover, the identification of logoi within the text involves a kind of reading which is only minimally attentive to such distinctions as that between narrative and dramatic voice/mode. The result is that Plato's own text, using dramatic voices to shape its own logoi, seems to aim both to 'absorb' and to supersede the Homeric and Hesiodic motifs which it cites, since the purpose is not so much to confirm the contents of the poetic sources as to exploit them in the process of creating a new philosophical ideal of Guardians who can occupy the role of 'heroes' in both the military and the religious sense of the word. In this as in so many other respects, the *Republic* reinterprets features of traditional thought by translating them into a new vision of human possibilities.[53]

One prominent passage which might seem to ascribe to poetry an authority that is not directly subject to philosophical judgement is the well-known portion of the *Meno* where Socrates cites Pindar, alongside certain 'priests and priestesses', for the idea of the soul's immortality and reincarnation (81a–c). The immediate impression here is of a poetic source that is taken to contain deep and even esoteric religious wisdom, and the description of Pindar and other poets as 'godlike' (*θεῖοι*) may hint at an inspiration which goes beyond ordinary human knowledge.[54] Yet even here poetry's authority remains subordinate to an understanding that is ultimately philosophical. For one thing, the view attributed to Pindar and to the priests and priestesses is not mystical in

[52] There is an interesting sense in which Plato's construal of the relationship between philosophy and poetic 'testimony' may reflect the relative importance of litigants and witnesses in the Athenian judicial system: for the place of witnesses in that system, see esp. S. C. Todd, 'The purpose of evidence in Athenian courts', in P. Cartledge *et al.* (edd.), *Nomos: Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990), 19–39, at 23–31.

[53] For more detail on *Rep.* 468c–9a, see the notes in my edition (n. 17 above).

[54] See n. 50 above.

the strong sense of being beyond rational scrutiny. Socrates describes the priests, at any rate, as being able to 'give an account' (λόγον διδόναι, 81a11–b1) of their doctrines—a phrase that signals the possibility of a rational statement and defence of the doctrines in question. Socrates also invites investigation of these doctrines by asking Meno to consider whether the ideas of immortality and reincarnation 'seem to you to be true' (81b2–3); and the ensuing section of the dialogue returns to the methods of elenctic discussion in pursuing certain putative grounds for believing in recollection from pre-existence. It is, moreover, taken to be one implication of such belief that it encourages a commitment precisely to intellectual search and enquiry (81d7–e1). Despite the note of religious esotericism sounded at the start of this passage, therefore, the citing of a poetic witness is not something which bypasses philosophy's own techniques or powers of arbitration.

It is no part of my aim in this paper to suggest that all citations of poetry in Plato's writings can be reduced to a single pattern of explanation, or to underestimate the subtle range of tone and function which quotations and allusions can possess in their particular settings. But underlying the variety of these citations there is a constant interplay between Plato's willingness to reflect and even perpetuate, with modifications, the traditional power of poetic authority, and his need to submit this authority—by a whole repertoire of dramatic, linguistic, and conceptual means—to the standards of discourse and reason embodied in, and advocated by, his own philosophical writing. The forms which that interplay takes could be analysed in much fuller detail than I have attempted here. But notwithstanding that general qualification, I have argued that there is a strong impulse which articulates itself explicitly in a number of passages, can be diagnosed beneath the surface of others, and deserves to be regarded as Plato's guiding principle in incorporating poetic citations into his own works. And I have tried to show that this impulse can be described, in Plato's own terms, as the subjection of muthos to logos—the subjection of (story-) telling to 'statement', or of imaginative to truth-framing uses of language.

Although Platonic texts sometimes recognize a difference of status between the modes of muthos and logos, this difference is never allowed to block the possibility of questioning muthos within the perspective of logos, nor, equally, of scrutinizing poetic logos in the light of philosophical logos. For my purposes, this means that neither the imaginative dimension of a poetic scenario, nor the narrower fact that certain utterances belong immediately to dramatic characters (or, in some cases, to a fictively first-person voice) rather than 'the poet himself', removes the apparent Platonic conviction that *all* utterances (and all thoughts) are somehow open to interrogation and interpretation within the purview of logos—logos as the domain of reason, argument, and a discourse that aspires to truth. From the point of view of many modern readers of literature, this inescapably exposes Plato to the charge of possessing an underdeveloped (or, perhaps, wilfully repressed) sense of fictionality, narrative form, and artistic convention. But this charge needs, at the very least,[55] to be tempered by a clear realization of two pertinent factors. The first, as I stressed in the earlier part of the paper, is that Platonic engagement with the idea of poetic authority represents a reaction to the established and influential Greek inclination to find knowledge, sagacity, and exemplary guidance in the texts of the poets.[56] The second is more

[55] I leave aside the further, and far from rhetorical, consideration that it might be thought psychologically implausible to accuse a supreme writer of fictional dialogues of an underdeveloped sense of narrative and dramatic form.

[56] It is highly likely that this inclination had already established strongly 'anti-contextualist'

far-reaching: namely, that the tenets and practices of what one might call critical contextualism, which Plato has often been felt to be blind to, do not represent a timelessly obvious way of reading poetry, but need to be seen as the product of special and extremely sophisticated cultural expectations.

By 'critical contextualism' I do not mean a single, neatly circumscribed method of treating 'literary' texts, but a cluster of interpretative principles and approaches broadly characterized by a conviction that the primary frame of reference in the criticism of such texts is *internal* context, and that any individual element of a text must be seen as functioning principally in relation to the organization of the work as a whole. There are, accordingly, degrees of contextualism, varying according to the extent to which literary meaning is regarded as defined and bounded by self-sufficient conventions, or, conversely, to the extent to which it is accepted that literary works are legitimately open to criticism on external, and especially ethical, grounds. To read without *any* contextualist sense would be difficult if not impossible. We have already seen that some Platonic arguments draw direct attention to contextual factors in the sources of poetic quotations, as with the importance of gods and heroes as the speakers of Homeric utterances criticized in *Republic* 2–3; and in at least some other cases it is plausible to assume that matters of internal context are not so much overlooked as deliberately left on one side. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that from the heavily entrenched habits of contextualism which have become standard in most modern literary criticism, the form taken by many Platonic engagements with poetic texts inevitably appears problematic. It is, therefore, with some extremely compressed thoughts on what might be taken to be Plato's antipathy to contextualism that I wish to conclude.

We can perhaps most aptly see what it is that so many Platonic citations from poetry ostensibly deny by glancing at a statement of literary critical convictions which was surely formulated very much with Plato in mind. In ch. 25 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle sets out principles for judging poetry which rest on the axiom that the art of poetry possesses distinctive criteria of 'correctness': 'poetry does not have the same standards of correctness as politics, nor as any other art' (*Poetics* 25.1460b13–15). It is no accident that in the course of doing so he touches on the kinds of alleged fault (including moral offence and self-contradiction) for which poets are regularly arraigned in Plato's works.[57] Aristotle's position in this passage is not without its complications, and it should certainly not be regarded, in my view, as defining anything like a watertight formalism or a contextualist extreme.[58] But there is no doubt that it does integrate a considerable degree of methodological contextualism, in that it repeatedly insists on the necessity of taking full and careful account of the precise setting of any poetic utterance or depicted action. In this key respect, *Poetics* 25 distances itself from the kind of approach which we have seen manifesting itself again and again in places where poetry is cited in Plato's dialogues.

habits in general Greek attitudes to poetry, especially Homer, before Plato's time: A. Ford, 'The inland ship: problems in the performance and reception of Homeric epic', in E. Bakker and A. Kahane (edd.), *Written Voices, Spoken Signs* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 83–109, at 91–101, assembles evidence for the archaic and early classical practice (sometimes on the part of poets themselves!) of treating the Homeric poems as sources of self-standing utterances rather than as larger artistic wholes.

[57] But Aristotle's relationship to Plato is not straightforward, since some of this chapter's considerations are anticipated in Plato's own writings; see nn. 28, 41 above.

[58] See my 'The importance of Plato and Aristotle for aesthetics', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* v [1989] (Lanham, MD, 1991), 321–48, at 339–47.

Critical contextualism is something which has come to seem familiar, congenial, and virtually obligatory to most modern students of literature. If American New Criticism is often singled out as stringently and programmatically contextualist, it needs stressing here that there is a much broader set of contextualist instincts which have become common to almost all literary critics. But this is not, one must insist, because of any timelessly or naturally self-evident quality which recommends those instincts, but because (in part) of the combined and cumulative effect, over two centuries or more, of cultural forces which have increasingly resisted a directly moral, religious, or didactic function for the category of literature, and have instead claimed for it a status which makes it imaginatively autonomous. That, of course, is a sweeping proposition, but it is virtually inescapable as a way of indicating the gulf which separates attitudes to poetry exhibited in Platonic texts from the attitudes of most of those who now read poetry (or Plato himself).[59] It is also an index of the size of the task facing us if we wish to grasp a little of what may have impelled the Platonic approach in the first place.

To see that there are still urgent issues lurking behind what I have called Plato's subjection of muthos to logos is not to suppose that we could (still less should) easily recover a set of attitudes such as those I have tried to trace within Plato's own writings. Nor do I wish to defend Plato against every possible allegation of 'misreading' or of quoting illegitimately out of context, though we do need to remember my earlier caution about the potential confusion of imputing misinterpretations to Plato himself on the basis of passages where Socrates and others apparently equate character with author. It is one thing to espouse the principle that a muthos can be the conveyor of a logos, but quite another to discern or identify the logos in every case, and yet another to ascribe an avowal of the logos to the author himself. However, what matters more is to see beyond what might count, by some standards and in certain instances, as contextual distortions, to the larger issues of evaluation and influence which inform so many of the strategies of citation dramatized by Plato. A modern critic may think that Plato is 'unfair' to Aeschylus at *Republic* 2.380a when he allows Socrates to quote selectively from the context of a speech in the *Niobe* in which someone observes that 'god plants blame in humans, when he wants to destroy a household utterly', without acknowledging what seems to have been the note of pious caution struck in the ensuing lines.[60] But quite apart from the uncertainties which cloud the exact sequence of thought in this fragment, it is vital to recognize the coherence of the 'critical' position adopted here by Socrates. He is apprehensive about letting young Guardians (but others too, 380b–c) hear a religious sentiment which could, if assimilated, lead to a false view of the gods. If we are as rigorous in treating Plato's text as we would like Plato to be in treating Aeschylus', it is not strictly true that Socrates simply ascribes the sentiment in question to the poet himself, but rather that he holds Aeschylus

[59] Even so, it is interesting that a modern critic working with strongly contextualist methods can still arrive at a concept of authorial responsibility which has much in common with the one I have attributed to Plato: see the (moral) notion of the 'implicit author' used in Wayne Booth's *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley, 1988), whose motivation I would describe, however oxymoronically, as a kind of 'liberal Platonism', but which can also be said to balance considerations of muthos and logos much more finely than Plato seems interested in doing.

[60] The quotation is from Aesch. fr. 154a.15–16 Radt (fr. 273 Mette); the most recent text is that of J. Diggle (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta Selecta* (Oxford, 1998), 20–1. Plato is convicted of unfairness by E. Fraenkel, *PBA* 28 (1942), 239, and the point is repeated by H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus*^{2} (Berkeley, 1983), 207, n. 70 (where the reference to Fraenkel is doubly inaccurate).

responsible for allowing the sentiment to be uttered, in imposing poetic language and in a context (Niobe's tragedy, caused by a god) whose dramatically powerful nature might well render the idea of vindictive gods psychologically persuasive to an audience. As Socrates will emphasize in *Republic* 10 (605b–6b), outpourings of emotion on the part of major characters in tragedy can carry a charge that sweeps along an audience, and this effect, we might add, has the capacity to imprint the thoughts and feelings of the characters on the audience's own minds. A good case can be made, therefore, for saying that at *Republic* 380a Socrates does not so much ignore context as make certain shorthand assumptions about the psychological force of (part of) that context. Moreover, we have independent reason for supposing that in picking out the sentiment which he quotes here from Aeschylus, Socrates is doing something that would have struck a chord with many members of Plato's culture.[61] In short, Socrates' 'anti-contextualism' is as much a defence of an alternative model of 'context'—the external context of ethical reception and influence—as it is a disregard for the internal context of narrative voice and situation.

My argument as a whole has been designed, then, to bring us to the point at which we can begin to recognize both the historical and the conceptual grounds for avoiding the reductive conclusion that Plato displayed a simple naïvety about the nature of poetic texts. However far from our own habits of interpretation Plato may seemingly move in his citations from the poets, we should at least pay him the respect of seeing that his practices grew out of a deep concern with the ideas, the values, and the powerfully expressive images involved in the uses of poetry within his own culture. In this regard the Platonic dialogues afford a particularly rich insight into patterns of reading and quotation which were to prove widespread in antiquity and beyond, and which have left a deep mark on traditions of moralism in the understanding of literature.[62] If a full history of the changing methods and mentalities of reading is ever to be written, Plato will need to occupy a conspicuous place in it.

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[61] It is a revealing coincidence that at Men. *Aspis* 412–13 Daos quotes exactly the same words from the *Niobe*: that Daos is here striking a ludicrously overwrought 'tragic' attitude does not detract from the reflection of a cultural mentality which can find imposing thoughts encapsulated (as *gnomai*, cf. *γνωμολογεῖς*, *Aspis* 414, with n. 18 above) in a poetic text.

[62] Of later ancient readers (who obviously cannot be documented in detail here), Plutarch would make the most interesting case-study within the Platonic tradition itself (cf. I. G. Kidd, 'Plutarch and his Stoic contradictions', in W. Burkert *et al.* [edd.], *Fragmentsammlungen philosophischer Texte der Antike* [Göttingen, 1998], 288–302, for Plutarch's treatment of philosophical quotations): although he follows Platonic patterns in many respects, even taking over poetic quotations sometimes from the text of Plato, his *De aud. poet.* makes a number of modifications to the idea that a character's words can be equated with the poet's own views, esp. in the comments on characterization at 18b–f. For an especially interesting Stoic case in which we can trace the importance of quotation within a moral view of literature, see R. B. Rutherford, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: A Study* (Oxford, 1989), 26–33. The fullest and most wide-ranging study of an individual ancient reader is B. Stock, *Augustine the Reader* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); and for the evolution of readings of a single author, see R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney (edd.), *Homer's Ancient Readers* (Princeton, 1992). But there is much more work to be done on what methods and patterns of quotation can reveal about habits of reading.