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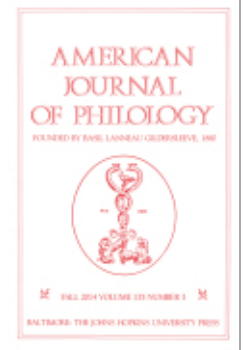
## Satyr Play in Plato's Symposium

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# SATYR PLAY IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*

M. D. USHER



IN THE *SYMPOSIUM*, SOCRATES JOKINGLY DECLARES THAT “the satyric—nay silenic—drama” of Alcibiades’ drunken panegyric was perfectly clear to the guests that evening at Agathon’s house (222d3–4).<sup>1</sup> Though this statement implies an extended treatment of a theme, discussions of silenic elements in the dialogue have rarely ventured far beyond the overt comparison of Socrates to a Silenus or Marsyas figure in Alcibiades’ speech (215a4–222b7).<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Paul Zanker has observed (1995, 38), “There is surely more than one aspect to the comparison of Socrates to Silenus.” In fact, the final scenes of the *Symposium* are riddled with satyric motifs, many of which Plato inverts or otherwise adapts, in the pointed critique of wealth, beauty, and sexual attraction that he achieves in the character of Socrates.

Let me begin defending this thesis with a Platonic analogy and suggest that if we look at the big letters first, we will be able to read the smaller ones more readily: Though it has only recently, and only in passing, been adduced as a source (Clay 2000, 74), much of the scene involving Alcibiades and Socrates is modeled on the myth of King Midas’ capture of the satyr Silenus.<sup>3</sup> While the extant sources for the Midas legend are disparate and fragmentary, an investigation into its literary provenance and the uses to which it was put in antiquity (section 1 of this essay) suggests that the encounter between Midas and Silenus was something of a literary set piece that had been used as a vehicle for popular wisdom and philosophic critique long before Plato’s time. Indeed, in

<sup>1</sup> ἄλλ’ οὐκ ἔλαθες, ἀλλὰ τὸ σατυρικὸν σου δρᾶμα τοῦτο καὶ σιληνικὸν κατάδηλον ἐγένετο. This and all other translations in this article are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Despite her title, Belfiore (1980) says very little about silenic motifs.

<sup>3</sup> The ample visual evidence leads Roller to conclude that “the legend of Midas and Silenos was known throughout the Greek world, and that a standard iconography of this legend had been established by the mid-sixth century B.C.” (Roller 1984, 262). The capture and bondage of satyrs is itself a typical theme of the satyr play (see Seaford 1988, 33–36). It appears in *Cyclops*, Sophocles’ *Amykos*, *Inachus*, and possibly in *Ichneutai*, and in Aeschylus’ *Lycurgus*, *Kerkyon*, and *Sphinx* (see Ussher 1977, 293–95).

reusing the story in just this fashion in his lost dialogue, the *Eudemus*,<sup>4</sup> Aristotle highlights both its popularity and antiquity, describing it as “having been carried about on the lips of men for many years now.”<sup>5</sup>

The finer print (section 2) involves another source never previously adduced in discussions of the *Symposium*, Euripides’ *Cyclops*, where we will consider both what is particular to that play (our only complete satyr drama) and what is typical of the genre.<sup>6</sup> *Cyclops* was produced in the last five years of Euripides’ life,<sup>7</sup> when an impressionable Plato, that “nursling of Attic drama,”<sup>8</sup> was in his early twenties.

An awareness of the extent of Plato’s use and adaptation of satyr lore in the *Symposium* is essential for a full appreciation of his philosophy of love, his technique as an author, and the purpose of the dialogue. Einstein once said that the secret to creativity is hiding one’s sources. In constructing the final scenes of the *Symposium*, Plato is deeply unoriginal in precisely this sense. It would be well to emphasize at the start, however, that the satyric motifs adduced here—as legendary and mythic material—would have had a wide currency in many media, and one need not advance or defend arguments for strictly literary dependence. Indeed, it will be seen that the way Plato incorporates silenic elements into the *Symposium* is suggestive and indirect, though no less compelling, important, or even intentional for that reason. That Plato’s purpose in including them is as apologetic as it is literary and philosophical is discussed in a concluding section where I attempt to bring some recent readings of Plato under one head.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. 44 Rose = [Plut.] *Moralia* 115b–e.

<sup>5</sup> διὰ στόματος ὃν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις . . . ὃ ἐκ πολλῶν ἐτῶν περιφέρεται θρυλούμενον.

<sup>6</sup> For the relationship of *Cyclops* to the larger genre, see Seaford 1988, 33; Ussher 1978, 177; but note Ussher (1977, 288), who cautions that *Cyclops*’ parody of intellectualism (to be discussed below) may in fact be specifically Euripidean.

<sup>7</sup> Seaford 1988, 48; probably in 408 (see Seaford 1982), though Sutton (1980, 77–81) has proposed 424, arguing that it formed part of a tetralogy that included the *Hecuba*. Euripides’ death in 406 provides the decisive *terminus* and places the *Cyclops* a good twenty years before the composition of the *Symposium* (sometime between the years 384–379; see Dover 1965).

<sup>8</sup> The phrase is Dover’s (1980, viii). On the young Plato’s dramatic and poetic aspirations, see Riginos (1976, 44–48), who makes the startling claim that these strands in the biographical tradition “have no historical basis.” To the contrary, see Tarrant 1955, 82–89; and Brock 1990, 39–49.

## I. THE CAPTURE OF SILENUS

Some minor variants notwithstanding,<sup>9</sup> the basic outline of this story is as follows: Silenus is captured while sleeping by Midas' henchmen, who have tricked him by spiking a river with wine; whereupon, in exchange for his release, Silenus agrees to reveal to Midas hidden wisdom about man and the nature of the world.<sup>10</sup> Both the apprehension of the satyr while sleeping and the conversation that follows in the myth are adapted by Plato in the part of the *Symposium* where Alcibiades describes his unsuccessful romantic overtures toward Socrates. Having prevailed upon Socrates to come to dinner and spend the night, Alcibiades approaches the satyr-sage in bed and asks if he is sleeping (218c3). By Plato's inversion, however, it turns out that Socrates, unlike the Silenus of the myth,<sup>11</sup> is fully awake—indeed, preternaturally sober and vigilant (220a4–5; cf. 223d9–13) in spite of the drinking trick (τὸ σόφισμα) that Alcibiades tries to play on him at 214a4.<sup>12</sup>

Socrates does, however, like Silenus, engage his would-be captor in conversation—he imputes a motive to Alcibiades for his attempted “capture.”<sup>13</sup> Not unlike Midas in the myth, Alcibiades, he suggests, wants to strike a deal with him and exchange beauty for beauty, specifically, his own bodily beauty for Socrates' entirely different silenic beauty and

<sup>9</sup> These include the setting of the encounter, which is variously Macedonia or Phrygia, the exact circumstances of capture, and the content of Silenus' speech. See Roller 1983, 299–313.

<sup>10</sup> Theopompus of Chios, our principal extant authority (*FGrH* 115F74a and F75a–c), recounted the story in detail in his *Philippica* (published after 324). Here is a succinct paraphrase of Theopompus' version from Servius Danielis: “[Theopompus] enim apprehensum Silenum a Midae regis pastoribus dicit, crapula madentem et ex ea soporatum; illos dolo adgressos dormientem vinxisse. postea vinculis sponte labentibus liberatum de rebus naturalibus et antiquis Midae interroganti disputavisse.” Cicero, who also relates the story, says specifically that Silenus offered his remarks to Midas as payment in exchange for his release: “adfertur etiam de Sileno fabella quaedam, qui cum a Mida captus esset, *hoc ei muneris pro sua missione* dedisse scribitur: docuisse regem non nasci homini longe optimum esse, proximum autem quam primum mori” (*TD* 1.48.114). Most of the sources reviewed here are also discussed in Hubbard 1975 and Roller 1983.

<sup>11</sup> Said to be *crapula madens*; see note 10 above.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *dolo* in Servius' paraphrase/translation of Theopompus, note 10 above. Ironically, it is the drunken Alcibiades who is portrayed as satyric as he crashes Agathon's party with a κῶμος of revelers (212c7), decked out in ivy and festive ribbons (212e1–2).

<sup>13</sup> To describe it this way is consistent with Plato's portrayal: Alcibiades' sexual advances increase in intensity from his merely trying to steal a moment alone with Socrates (217a2–b7), to private naked wrestling (b7–c4), to an all-out assault (217c5: ἐδοξέ μοι ἐπιθετέον εἶναι τῷ ἀνδρὶ κατὰ τὸ καρτερόν).

wisdom—as qualitative a difference, Socrates informs us, as that between an opinion about beauty and the truth, or between brass and gold.<sup>14</sup> The mention of gold here alludes primarily to *Iliad* 6.236, where Glaucus trades his golden armor for Diomedes' bronze, "Zeus having snatched his wits." But given the several other silenic references in this episode, it also recalls an element in the Midas story, for in the myth it is in return for Midas' hospitality to Silenus that Dionysus grants the king the gift of the golden touch.<sup>15</sup> In an additional detail from Hyginus (191.11) we learn that Silenus wound up in Midas' rose gardens in the first place after he strayed (*aberravit*) from the military θίασος of Dionysus on its way back from conquering the East.<sup>16</sup> If the military delinquency of Silenus was current in Plato's time, it makes Socrates' resolute courage and fortitude at Potidaea and Delium all the more striking (*Symp.* 219a, 221a). Be that as it may, Socrates' bravery is itself an inversion of a silenic topos, for the skittishness of satyrs is a traditional theme of the satyr play (Seaford 1988, 92 and 216).

In connecting Socrates' contempt for beauty and wealth with his silenic nature at the very beginning of Alcibiades' speech, Plato draws attention to the themes that he will single out for criticism in his use of the Midas myth: "You can be sure he doesn't care a bit if someone is handsome," Alcibiades concludes, "nor if he's rich, nor even if he possesses any other of those honors counted as a blessing by most people" (216d7–e1).<sup>17</sup> Despite Alcibiades' efforts to seduce him, Socrates de-

<sup>14</sup> ὦ φίλε Ἀλκιβιάδη, κινδυνεύεις τῷ ὄντι οὐ φαῦλος εἶναι, εἴπερ ἀληθῆ τυγχάνει ὄντα ἃ λέγεις περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ τις ἔστ' ἐν ἐμοὶ δύναμις δι' ἧς ἂν σὺ γένοιτο ἀμείνων · ἀμήχανόν τοι κάλλος ὁρῶς ἂν ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ τῆς παρὰ σοὶ εὐμορφίας πάμπολυ διαφέρων. εἰ δὴ καθορῶν αὐτὸ κοινάσασθαι τέ μοι ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ ἀλλάξασθαι κάλλος ἀντὶ κάλλους, οὐκ ὀλίγῳ μου πλεονεκτεῖν διανοή. ἀλλ' ἀντὶ δόξης ἀλήθειαν καλῶν κτᾶσθαι ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ τῷ ὄντι χρύσεια χαλκείων διαμείβεσθαι νοεῖς (218d7–219a1).

<sup>15</sup> Ovid, *Met.* 11.100–103; cf. Hyg. 191.13: "At Midas Liber pater ob beneficium optandi dedit potestatem, ut quicquid tetigisset aurum fieret" (for *potestatem* cf. δύναμις at *Symp.* 218e1). For Aristotle (*Pol.* 1257b16), the detail of the golden touch was proverbial, though he makes no mention of Dionysus, saying simply that the golden touch was granted to Midas διὰ ἀπληστίαν τῆς εὐχῆς. In versions of the myth recounted by Servius (on *Aen.* 10.142) and Maximus of Tyre (11), Silenus himself grants the golden touch.

<sup>16</sup> Theopompus' description of Silenus as θεοῦ ἀφανέστερος τὴν φύσιν (*apud* Aelian, *VH* 3.13) may have carried the connotation not only that he was "less obvious than a god by nature" but that he was "more wayward" than a god should be, meaning that he was a delinquent soldier (*LSJ* s.v. ἀφανής 2.2.a); this may be the origin of Hyginus' version.

<sup>17</sup> ἵστε ὅτι οὔτε εἴ τις καλός ἐστι μέλει αὐτῷ οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ καταφρονεῖ τοσοῦτον ὅσον οὐδ' ἂν εἰς οἰηθεῖν εἴ τις πλούσιος, οὐτ' εἰ ἄλλην τινὰ τιμὴν ἔχων τῶν ὑπὸ πλήθους μακαρίζομένων.

spises and mocks his good looks, treating them with utter contempt (219c3–5).<sup>18</sup> To have a beautiful, rich, and drunken man say such things in the context of a symposium is deeply ironic, for the blessings of beauty and wealth are traditional aristocratic values frequently celebrated in sympotic poetry.<sup>19</sup> The recognition of this fact is key to the interpretation of this passage. Consider, for example, this popular fifth-century *skolion* attributed to Simonides on “the four best things”:<sup>20</sup>

ὑγιαίνειν μὲν ἄριστον ἀνδρὶ θνατῷ,  
δεύτερον δὲ φῦαν καλὸν γενέσθαι,  
τὸ τρίτον δὲ πλουτεῖν ἀδόλως,  
καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ἡβᾶν μετὰ τῶν φίλων.

To be healthy is best for a mortal man;  
second, to be handsome in body;  
third, to have wealth without guile,  
and fourth, to feel young among friends.

As Manuela Tecusan observes, the sympotic values articulated here—health (ὑγιαίνειν), beauty (καλόν), wealth (πλουτεῖν), and youth/good cheer (ἡβᾶν)—provide the point of departure for much of the philosophical critique in Plato's works.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Plato quotes all but the last line of this popular poem at *Gorgias* 451e in order to subject its claims to critical scrutiny. When he paraphrases the Simonides *skolion* again at *Laws* 661a, it is interesting to observe that he does so in a passage that also invokes Midas, citing piecemeal an elegiac poem of Tyrtaeus, where the king's proverbial attachment to wealth serves as a negative exemplum in the exhortation of soldiers.<sup>22</sup>

In Aristotle's *Eudemus*, the encounter between Silenus and Midas

<sup>18</sup> κατεφρόνησεν καὶ κατεγέλασεν τῆς ἐμῆς ὥρας καὶ ὑβρίσεν.

<sup>19</sup> On Alcibiades' good looks (ὥρα), see also *Symp.* 217a3–6 and *Plut. Alc.* 1.4. On *καλός* as a leitmotif in the ancient Lives of Alcibiades, see Gribble 1999, 39. For an idea of the extent of Alcibiades' personal, inherited wealth (cf. *Symp.* 218c9–d1), one need only mention his chariot racing at Olympia, his sponsorship of a dithyrambic chorus, his commissioning of works of art, and his vast network of *ξενία* relationships.

<sup>20</sup> *Athen.* 15.694e. On the attribution, see Bowra 1936, 431.

<sup>21</sup> Tecusan 1990, 240. On sympotic values as political virtues, see Levine 1985.

<sup>22</sup> *Fr.* 9.6 Campbell, quoted at *Laws* 629a, and echoed in at least two other places (*Laws* 660e, *Rep.* 408b). In Tyrtaeus, Midas' wealth is placed on par with the strength of the Cyclopes, the swiftness of Boreas, the beauty of Tithonus, the kingliness of Pelops, and the rhetorical skill of Adrastus, suggesting the mythological proportions this historical king of Phrygia had acquired by the seventh century (cf. Roller 1983, 302).

provides the occasion for a philosophical meditation on the soul.<sup>23</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch picks up Aristotle's story at the point where the King has captured Silenus on a hunting expedition and is interrogating him on the topic of "What is best for man?"<sup>24</sup> Silenus, according to the unnamed narrator of the dialogue, replies only with great reluctance,<sup>25</sup> but when he does speak, he says impatiently:

Δαίμονος ἐπιπόνου καὶ τύχης χαλεπῆς ἐφήμερον σπέρμα, τί με βιάζεσθε λέγειν ἃ ὑμῖν ἄρειον μὴ γνῶναι; μετ' ἀγνοίας γὰρ τῶν εἰκείων κακῶν ἀλυπότατος ὁ βίος. ἀνθρώποις δὲ πάμπαν οὐκ ἔστι γενέσθαι τὸ πάντων ἄριστον οὐδὲ μετασχεῖν τῆς τοῦ βελτίστου φύσεως· ἄριστον γὰρ πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι, τὸ μέντοι μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ἀνθρώποις ἀνυστῶν τὸ γενομένουσ' ἀποθανεῖν ὡς τάχιστα.

Thou ephemeral seed of a difficult fate and a toilsome god, why do you force me to say what is better not to know? For in ignorance life is free from the usual grief. But it is not altogether possible that men have that which is best of all, nor that they participate in the nature of the best. You see, it is best for all men and women not to be born. However, that which is second best—and foremost of those things within human grasp—is for those who are born to die as quickly as they can.

That this episode from the Midas legend is traditional and part of the *Gemeingut* available to Plato and his audience may be seen from the many thematic and structural features it shares with another legendary encounter between a wise man and a wealthy king, in Herodotus' story of Solon and Croesus (*Hist.* 1.29–33). In both stories, a great king entertains a humbler sojourner and asks a question that his guest cannot answer, or will answer only with some misgivings.<sup>26</sup> Both passages also embrace a similar pessimism. In Herodotus, Solon describes the lot of man as "all misfortune" and says he can count no man happy until he is dead.<sup>27</sup> In the Cleobis and Biton story (*Hist.* 1.31), the mother's prayer to

<sup>23</sup> The precise relationship of the episode to the larger theme of the dialogue is unknown, but based on the fragmentary quotation, it appears that Aristotle somehow used Silenus' words to illustrate the blessings of life after death.

<sup>24</sup> τί ποτέ ἐστι τὸ βέλτιστον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ τί τὸ πάντων αἰρετώτατον.

<sup>25</sup> οὐδὲν ἐθέλειν εἰπεῖν ἀλλὰ σιωπᾶν ἀρρήτως.

<sup>26</sup> Solon: ἐκεῖνο δὲ τὸ εἶρέο με οὐ κώ σε ἐγὼ λέγω, πρὶν τελευτήσαντα καλῶς τὸν αἰῶνα πύθωμαι.

<sup>27</sup> Solon: πᾶν ἐστὶ ἀνθρώπος συμφορῇ . . . οὐ γάρ τι ὁ μέγα πλούσιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ἐπ' ἡμέρην ἔχοντος ὀλβιώτερός ἐστι, εἰ μὴ οἱ τύχῃ ἐπίσποιο πάντα καλὰ ἔχοντα εὖ τελευτήσαι τὸν βίον.

give her sons “what is best for men” (τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ τυχεῖν ἄριστον) is answered by having them die in their sleep. Solon says expressly that the god did this to show “how much better it would be for a man to be dead than alive” (ὥς ἄμεινον εἶη ἀνθρώπῳ τεθνάναι μᾶλλον ἢ ζῶειν). In the *Eudemus*, by contrast, Silenus advises that ignorance of one’s inevitable fate is bliss. Though the direction of their thinking is somewhat different, each sage couples true happiness with death. Significantly, both also disparage wealth as an index of happiness. In the narrative frame provided by Aristotle, the interlocutor in the *Eudemus* is addressed as ὁ κράτιστε πάντων καὶ μακαριστότατε, suggesting his high prestige, if not royal stature. Croesus’ stature and material fortune are similarly emphasized by Herodotus<sup>28</sup> preliminary to the domestic and political tragedies that follow.<sup>29</sup> In short, as Lynn Roller has observed (1984, 263), it is clear that “the story of Croesus . . . follows a traditional Greek pattern already established for Midas.”

The content and style of Silenus’ words, however, belong squarely in the tradition of sympotic poetry. Though he provides no narrative context, Theognis alludes to the capture of Silenus at 425–28, providing our earliest literary reference. In Theognis, as in Aristotle, Silenus declares that of all things in the world, it is best not to be born and second best to die as quickly as possible thereafter:

πάντων μὲν μὴ φῦναι ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἄριστον  
μηδ’ ἐσιδεῖν ἀγὰς ὀξέος ἡελίου  
φύντα δ’ ὅπως ὤκιστα πύλας Ἀΐδαο περῆσαι  
καὶ κεῖσθαι πολλὴν γῆν ἐπαμησάμενον.

For men who dwell on the earth, it is best of all not to be born

Nor to see the rays of the dazzling sun.

For the man who is born, it is best to enter the gates of Death as soon as  
he can

and lie buried under a pile of dirt.

These lines were frequently quoted, paraphrased, and imitated in antiquity,<sup>30</sup> and commentators agree that Theognis himself is probably quoting an earlier hexameter poem that he has glossed with pentameters to

<sup>28</sup> Solon: ἐμοὶ δὲ σὺ καὶ πλουτέειν μέγα φαίνεαι καὶ βασιλεὺς πολλῶν εἶναι ἀνθρώπων.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. too the remarks of Artabanus to Xerxes at Abydos, just prior to the Persian invasion of Greece (*Hist.* 7.46)

<sup>30</sup> Notably by Sophocles *OC* 1225 (μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾷ λόγον) and Bacchylides 5.160–62 (θνατοῖσι μὴ φῦναι φέριστον / μηδ’ ἀελίου προσιδεῖν / φέγγος).

form an elegiac.<sup>31</sup> Given the sympotastic motif already present in the Midas myth<sup>32</sup> and the context of Theognidean poetry generally,<sup>33</sup> perhaps we might imagine this passage as issuing from a sympotic parlor game, Silenus' dark vision of humanity an instance of *veritas in vino*.<sup>34</sup> Be that as it may, Silenus' discourse in the *Eudemus* recalls the language not only of Theognis and Simonides,<sup>35</sup> but of Herodotus as well,<sup>36</sup> suggesting perhaps the atmosphere Aristotle was trying to evoke.

While the structure of the *Eudemus* passage reflects a traditional narrative pattern used also by Herodotus, and the sentiment and phrasing go back at least to the sympotic poetry of Theognis, one other detail in Aristotle's version suggests yet another source—a mythological doublet of the Midas-Silenus encounter—that has a direct bearing on the *Symposium*. This concerns Silenus' contemptuous address of the wealthy King Midas as ἐφήμερον σπέρμα, which has a close parallel in a lost lyric poem of Pindar (fr. 157 Maehler/Race), where a different satyr, Marsyas, rebukes a different Phrygian king, Olympos, in almost identical terms:<sup>37</sup>

ὦ τάλας ἐφάμερε, νήπια βάζεις  
χρήματά μοι διακομπέων.

Thou wretched creature of a day, you're babbling like a fool,  
boasting about money to me.

<sup>31</sup> See van Groningen 1966, 170. The two hexameters are spoken by "Homer" in the *Certamen* (78–79; with variants ἀρχὴν for πάντων and ὅμως for ὅπως), which, though Hellenistic, is believed to contain archaic material.

<sup>32</sup> Theopompus, *apud* Aelian (*VH* 3.18), actually uses the word συνουσία to describe the encounter.

<sup>33</sup> On the relationship of Theognis' poetry to the symposium, see Rösler 1995, 106–11.

<sup>34</sup> On the antiquity of this proverbial notion, note the fragment of Alcaeus, cited by the scholiast on *Symp.* 217e3–4: οἶνος, ὦ φίλε παῖ, καὶ ἀλάθεα. On its sympotic context, cf. Rösler 1995.

<sup>35</sup> τὸ πάντων ἄριστον οὐδὲ μετασχεῖν τῆς τοῦ βελτίστου φύσεως · ἄριστον γὰρ πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι, τὸ μέντοι μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ἀνθρώποις ἀνυστῶν τὸ γενομένους ἀποθανεῖν ὡς τάχιστα.

<sup>36</sup> Compare the phrasing in the story of Cleobis and Biton: τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ τυχεῖν ἄριστον . . . ὡς ἄμεινον εἶη ἀνθρώπῳ τεθνάναι μᾶλλον ἢ ζῶειν. Note, too, Croesus' complaint that in holding such views Solon is counting the king's εὐδαιμονία as nothing (ἐς τὸ μηδέν).

<sup>37</sup> Though Herodotus (8.138), and probably Theopompus and Aristotle, sets the capture of Silenus in Macedonia, it is equally traditional (and historically accurate) to situate Midas in Phrygia. See Roller 1983, 306. Hedreen (1992, 177 n. 80) makes a passing remark that this wise silen in Pindar is somehow connected with Socrates in the *Symposium* but does not pursue the question.

Notably, the scholiast who quotes these lines from Pindar is commenting on *Clouds* 223, where Socrates haughtily addresses Strepsiades as a lowly creature of the day (τί με καλεῖς, ὦ ἡήμερε). The scholiast suggests that Aristophanes is parodying the Pindar passage here in order to draw attention to Socrates' satyr-like appearance. While K. J. Dover finds this suggestion "far-fetched" (1968, 126), there are good reasons for entertaining the notion. Not only are these the first words Socrates speaks in the play, they are synchronized dramatically with his spectacular entry onstage in a mechanical basket (218), giving the audience its first good look at Socrates' mask. An anecdote retold by Aelian (*VH* 2.13) states explicitly that the actor who played Socrates wore a mask that resembled the real Socrates and so therefore must have been more or less silenic in appearance.<sup>38</sup> Whether or not Socrates was actually in the audience, as Aelian goes on to relate, and, if he was, why he stood up during the performance when foreigners in the audience were puzzled about the identity of the play's leading character is less certain. T. B. L. Webster took Socrates' supposed gesture as a sign of his assent that the mask was indeed a lifelike resemblance (1956, 60). Dover, on the other hand (1968, xxxiii), thinks Aelian means to suggest that Socrates stood up to demonstrate quite the opposite (an interpretation that implies a grotesque caricature mask). In any event, for Aristophanes to have combined a parody of a silen's speech from Pindar with silenic costume in Socrates' ludicrous entry on stage strikes me as a *coup de théâtre* typical of Old Comedy. Of course, for divinities to address mortals as ἡήμεροί is nothing unusual in and of itself.<sup>39</sup> But the *Clouds* scholiast's suggestion is strengthened by the evidence from the *Eudemus* (quoted above), where Silenus uses the very same condescending form of address. That the context in both Aristophanes and Pindar involves money (Strepsiades' lack of it; Olympos' inordinate love of it) strengthens his case further.

Alcibiades, it will be remembered, cites Marsyas and Olympos in the *Symposium* as a paradigm for his relationship with Socrates. Like Marsyas, Socrates is a pied piper who casts spells over his disciples, not with pipes but with mere words. So strong is his magic that even the protégés who pipe his songs have the same effect (215c1–7). Alcibiades

<sup>38</sup> οἱ σκευοποιοὶ ἔπλασαν αὐτὸν ὥς ὅτι μάλιστα ἐξεικάσαντες. But compare Dover (1967, 28) on the dilemma of producing a good caricature mask of Socrates: "the result of [the mask maker's] attempt to portray a real person would resemble what he had often done before in portraying fictitious characters."

<sup>39</sup> See Fränkel 1946. Plato himself uses the word in Lachesis' speech to mortals in the myth of Er (*Rep.* 617d): ψυχαὶ ἡήμεροί, ἀρχὴ ἄλλης περιόδου θνητοῦ γένους θανατηφόρου.

supports his point by declaring—with what sounds like a proverbial tag—that whatever songs Olympus may play, they really belong to Marsyas his teacher (215c2–3).<sup>40</sup> By comparing Socrates to an αὐλητής like Marsyas, Plato is, of course, implicitly equating Alcibiades with a figure like Olympus and thus appropriating to Socrates the satyr's traditional role as tutor or παιδαγωγός to royal and/or heroic young men.<sup>41</sup> But in what sense, given Socrates' claim in the *Apology* and elsewhere not to have been anyone's teacher?<sup>42</sup>

Prior to Alcibiades' arrival at the party, Socrates/Diotima describe how an ἐρώμενος, having been raised (παιδαγωγήθη) by his ἐραστής to view moral and intellectual beauty as more admirable than a beautiful body (210b6–7), ought then to be initiated into the joys of metaphysical beauty (evocatively described as θαυμαστὸν τὴν φύσιν καλόν [210e5] and αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλόν . . . μονοειδές [211e1–4]). This is just the sort of pedagogy Plato invites us to consider in the comparison of Socrates to Marsyas, for Olympus was traditionally the παιδικά of Marsyas (*Minos* 318b4–5).<sup>43</sup> However, this traditional (one might say happy) courtship between Marsyas and Olympus is little more than a fantasy for the Alcibiades of the *Symposium*, for when he speaks of his own romantic designs on Socrates, he declares he had to behave more like an ἐραστής to get what he wanted<sup>44</sup> in violation of the Athenian norm.<sup>45</sup> Plato playfully inverts the paradigm here and uses the social impropriety of Alcibiades' advances to highlight his desperately appetitive nature. The emphasis on the adverb ὁρθῶς in Diotima's philosophy of love (repeated three times in short space at 210a2–6) indicates that method is all important in the philosopher's erotic ascent and that, ultimately, the traditional pederastic system, perhaps even sexuality itself, is cast off in the process

<sup>40</sup> ἄ γὰρ Ὀλύμπος ἡϋλεῖ, Μαρσύου, λέγω, τούτου διδάξαντος.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Zanker 1995, 38; Seaford 1988, 38, 40. Silenus himself was traditionally παιδαγωγός to the infant Dionysus.

<sup>42</sup> On this thorny question and its relationship to Socratic irony, see Nehamas 1998, 59–69 (a response primarily to Vlastos 1991).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ovid *Met.* 6.393, where Olympus is *carus*, the “boy favorite” of Marsyas. As in the *Symposium*, the author of the *Minos* describes the wild music of Marsyas' *aulos* as “most divine” because it shows people their need for the gods (215c5–6; cf. *Minos* 318b6–7).

<sup>44</sup> ἄπερ ἂν ἐραστής παιδικοῖς ἐν ἐρημίᾳ διαλεχθεῖν (217b4); ὥσπερ ἐραστής παιδικοῖς ἐπιβουλεύων (217c7–8); αὐθις δ' ἐπιβουλεύσας (d2–3).

<sup>45</sup> Socrates, the older man (53 in 416 B.C.E., the dramatic date of this dialogue), is loved by Alcibiades (34), thus making the younger man the ἐραστής and Socrates the παιδικά. Cf. Dover 1978, 91–100; Nussbaum, 1986, 188–92. Edmonds (2000, 277–83) notes several other role reversals involving other characters.

of noetic maturation.<sup>46</sup> Alcibiades would be one of Marsyas' beneficiaries, were he not afraid of growing old and idle with this satyr. Socrates' philosophy is a temptation he forcefully resists, blocking his ears from its music as from Sirens (216a8).<sup>47</sup> Though the primary reference is to the Sirens' enchanting song in Homer, it is hard not to hear a secondary reference in the larger passage to another musical contest—that of Marsyas and Apollo, where a beautiful god successfully vanquishes the music of a hybristic satyr.<sup>48</sup> The image of beautiful Alcibiades “launching his arrows” at Socrates (ἀφείς ὥσπερ βέλη) thinking he will get the better end of the brass-for-gold bargain is at once erotic and Apolline (219b4).<sup>49</sup> Plutarch even lends an air of historicity to the comparison. He reports that as a young man Alcibiades mounted something of a student protest against playing the *aulos*, citing παίζων ἅμα καὶ σπουδάζων the fate of Marsyas at the hands of Apollo in support of his cause (*Alc.* 2.5–6). In Plato's inversion of this motif, however, it is Marsyas (Socrates) who wins.

Another way in which Alcibiades is like Olympos is in his association with the fashions and politics of the East. Quite apart from his actual defections to the Persians after the Sicilian fiasco and his murder in Phrygia in 404, the literary sources consistently portray Alcibiades as a man given over to oriental luxury and ostentation. In the Greek polis, such behavior was not perceived as a harmless display of personal taste but as a political act of treason. The portrait of himself that Alcibiades commissioned to commemorate his athletic victories, for example (Paus. 1.22.7), was seen in just this light. Though Athenians gathered in throngs

<sup>46</sup> On the extent of asexuality and impersonality in Diotima's erotics, see the invigorating discussion in Price 1989, 36–54.

<sup>47</sup> βίᾳ οὖν ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν Σειρήνων ἐπισχόμενος τὰ ὄντα οἴχομαι φεύγων, ἵνα μὴ αὐτοῦ καθήμενος παρὰ τούτῳ καταγῆράσω. In this respect Alcibiades is like the Eros imagined by Agathon, who also flees old age: φεύγων φυγῇ τὸ γῆρας (195b1).

<sup>48</sup> Apollodorus 1.4.2 (with Frazer's notes); Hyginus 165. Cf. Gagarin (1977, 31), with whose larger conclusions, however—including the argument that Socrates' satyric hybris “helps explain his failure as a teacher”—I must disagree. I note in passing Vickers's theory (1989a, 1989b) that Alcibiades' lisp (Plut. *Alc.* 1)—in particular the confusion in pronunciation of the letters lambda and rho as exploited by Aristophanes in the *Birds* and the *Thesmophoriazousae*—would have affected the pronunciation of Σειρήνων, making it Σειληνῶν (an alternate spelling of Σιληνῶν). Whether Plato intended such subtlety here, however, is highly uncertain.

<sup>49</sup> The encounter between Marsyas and Apollo also happens to be a contest over which Midas traditionally presided (Ovid, *Met.* 11.153–93; though the contestant here is Pan, this is clearly an Ovidian reworking of the story told at *Met.* 6.382–400, where Marsyas is flayed).

to admire the beauty of it, the older generation saw his actions as “tyrannical and illegal.”<sup>50</sup> Thucydides, too, says as much when he claims that the excesses of Alcibiades’ personal life aroused suspicions among the people that he was desirous of tyranny (6.15.3–4).<sup>51</sup>

In considering further the comparison of Socrates to Marsyas, let us begin again where Alcibiades does, with the visual analogy. While Socrates’ real physical peculiarities undoubtedly invited the comparison, to compare a man to an animal δι’ εικόνων, as Alcibiades does in his speech, is a familiar trope of Old Comedy,<sup>52</sup> and Socrates’ silenic features drew the attention of at least two other Socratic writers besides Plato.<sup>53</sup> Xenophon, for example, in his *Symposium* (5–6.1), allegorizes Socrates’ face. Xenophon contrives a beauty contest between Socrates and the handsome Critobulus, where Socrates is pressed to justify his “beauty” in the presence of detractors. He insists that his own eyes, though bulging and like a crab’s, are the better for seeing since they see from all sides; his snub, pig-snouted nose with flared nostrils is not only the better for smelling, but does not interfere with his sight; the mouth like a donkey’s the better for eating, and his thick lips far better for kissing. But the greatest proof of all is the paradox that Sileni like himself are traditionally the sons of lovely nymphs (6.1). As in Plato, beauty is linked with wealth in Xenophon’s symposium: Socrates lightheartedly insists that the ballots in this contest be secret lest Critobulus win the vote by bribes (5.8).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> οἱ δὲ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ τούτοις ἔδυσχέρανον ὡς τυραννικοῖς καὶ παρανόμοις (Plut. *Alc.* 16).

<sup>51</sup> See Gribble 1999, esp. 61, 71, 84–85, on the literary representation of Alcibiades’ Medizing tendencies. It is worth noting briefly here that there is a precedent for Plato’s application to Alcibiades and Socrates of the cluster of musical, educational, erotic, and political themes traditionally associated with the paradigm of Marsyas and Olympos in Plato Comicus, where Pericles’ musical tutor, Damon, is mocked as a Chiron (traditionally, the tutor of the heroes Achilles and Jason; F191 K = Plut. *Per.* 4: σὺ γάρ / ὥς φασι Χείρων ἐξέθρεψας Περικλέα). In the same breath that he quotes these lines from Plato, Plutarch relates how Damon was ostracized on the charge of being φιλοτύραννος, which Stadter takes to refer to Damon’s intimate connection with Pericles at a time when the statesman was being “accused by his enemies of tyrannical ideas” (1989, 71). Given the traditionally erotic element in this kind of relationship, it is tempting to think of Damon “the tyrant-lover” as being part of the joke, connected somehow with Plato the comedian’s portrayal of him as the centaur Chiron.

<sup>52</sup> See Brock 1990, 45, citing Arist. *Birds* 801ff., *Wasps* 1308ff.

<sup>53</sup> Rankin (1983, 182) calls it “an old Socratic theme that became a commonplace.”

<sup>54</sup> δέδοικα γὰρ τὸν σὸν καὶ Ἀντισθένης πλοῦτον μὴ με καταδυναστεύσῃ. The wealth of Antisthenes and Critobulus referred to here is of different kinds, Critobulus’ actual, Antisthenes’ the serene, Socratic self-sufficiency he describes in his speech at 4.34–44. On Alcibiades’ thought to bribe Socrates into becoming his lover (*Symp.* 219e1–2), see Rowe 1998, 211.

Phaedo of Elis also discussed Socrates' appearance in his lost dialogue the *Zopyrus*.<sup>55</sup> In what one commentator speculates "must have been one of the most striking passages in all Socratic literature,"<sup>56</sup> a physiognomist named Zopyrus—in the company of Alcibiades—is brought to Socrates claiming to be able to read a man's character in his demeanor. He immediately surmises from Socrates' thick neck that he must be a dull and stupid man, and that his bulging eyes are "the eyes of a pederast" (ὄμματα παιδεραστοῦ),<sup>57</sup> at which point Alcibiades bursts out laughing. Alcibiades' appearance as a character in the *Zopyrus* is very intriguing.<sup>58</sup> Is the namesake of this dialogue the same Zopyrus as the old slave appointed by Pericles to be Alcibiades' παιδαγωγός (*Alcib.* 1.122b2)?<sup>59</sup> It would certainly explain their association in Phaedo's dialogue. It would also add considerable color to Alcibiades' outburst, given his unsuccessful attempts to seduce Socrates, as recounted in Plato's *Symposium*. Alcibiades knows all too well that Socrates is no ἐραστής in the traditional sense,<sup>60</sup> and if characterization in Phaedo was anything like it is in Plato,<sup>61</sup> it is tempting to think that it was not only "the eyes of a pederast" that Alcibiades found so funny but the watchful eyes of his pedagogue.

In Plato, it is an "outer casing" (σχῆμα) that Socrates wears, like a sculpted silenus; crack him open, however, and Socrates "is full of sobriety and golden, god-like statues."<sup>62</sup> Once he has established the visual connection between Socrates and a silenus figurine δι' εἰκόνων in 215a5,

<sup>55</sup> Fragments collected in Rosetti 1980.

<sup>56</sup> Kahn 1998, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Cicero (fr. 6 Rosetti = *De fato* 10) says only that he was a "womanizer" (*muleriosus*). That he has glossed Phaedo's original to bring it into line with Roman sexual mores is clear from Cassianus, a late Latin author who quotes Phaedo's Greek (fr. 11 Rosetti = *Conlat.* 13.5.3). The paraphrase of the story given by the scholiast on Persius, *Sat.* 4.24 (= fr. 8 Rosetti) uses the more neutral word *libidinosus*.

<sup>58</sup> He also seems to have been a character in Phaedo's *Simon* and is the namesake of the author's own *Alcibiades*. See Giannantonio 1991, 4:119.

<sup>59</sup> Kahn follows Gisinger's article in the *RE* (s.v. *Zopyrus* 3) and assumes that he is an oriental magus (1998, 10), but this identification is by no means sure; it is based on a report in Diogenes Laertius (II.45) that some unidentified work of Aristotle mentioned a magus from Syria who once predicted Socrates' death. In *Alc.* 1 Zopyrus is called a Thracian.

<sup>60</sup> According to Xenophon, when Critobulus fell for Clinias, his father Crito put him into Socrates' hands, thinking he would be safe there (*Symp.* 4.24).

<sup>61</sup> The grammarian Aelius Theon thought highly of Phaedo's talents (fr. 1 Rosetti).

<sup>62</sup> τὸ σχῆμα αὐτοῦ . . . ἔξωθεν περιβέβληται, ὥσπερ ὁ γεγλυμμένος σιληνός. ἔνδοθεν δὲ ἀνοιχθεῖς . . . γέμει . . . σωφροσύνης . . . ἀγάλματα . . . θεῖα καὶ χρυσᾶ . . . πάγκαλα καὶ θαυμαστά (216d4–e8; cf. 215b3; 216d5–7).

Alcibiades moves on to the behavioral aspects of Socrates' σχῆμα (216d2–7), which, as he sees it, include his professed agnosticism (216d3–4) and his supposed erotic disposition toward beautiful people (216d2). As we learn in the course of the speech, Socrates' erotic disposition is a σχῆμα because he is impervious to sexual advances—impervious because, as Diotima herself says, when the pregnant soul comes upon the morally ugly it “recoils, turns away, goes limp, and does not reproduce” (206d4–7).<sup>63</sup> In using the verb καταφρονεῖν in Alcibiades' speech to describe Socrates' contempt of beauty and wealth (216d7–9; 219c3–5), Plato connects Alcibiades' personal experience with Diotima's normative statements about physical beauty in 210b5–c5, where the same forceful verb, and a synonymous phrase, σμικρὸν ἡγεῖσθαι, is used to describe the correct attitude to bodies in the individual's rigorous ascent to the Beautiful.<sup>64</sup> At 219c5 καταφρονεῖν is coupled with the more colorful verb ὑβρίζειν, making Socrates doubly silenic: like the satyr he is δεινὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά and ἐρωτικῶς διακεῖται (216d2), yet, paradoxically, shows hybristic contempt for beautiful bodies.

But how is Socrates' disavowal of knowledge silenic? This is foreshadowed by Agathon's charge at 175e7 that Socrates' pretended ignorance is hybristic (ὑβριστῆς εἶ) and then explained in 221e1–2, where Alcibiades adds Socratic irony to the qualities that are described as σχήματα in 216d2–7.<sup>65</sup> Here Alcibiades speaks not of Socrates' σχῆμα, but more picturesquely of this “hybristic satyr's hide” (σατύρου δὴ τινα ὑβριστοῦ δοράν), bringing the speech to a close with the silenic imagery with which it began. Whereas Marsyas loses his hide in the contest with Apollo, it is as if Plato's purpose in Alcibiades' encomium were to transform Socrates *into* a satyr. By the end of the speech that metamorphosis is effectively complete. Socrates' silenic ignorance, we are left to infer, like his ugliness, is only skin deep. Alcibiades' bald commentary on Socrates' hybristic nature—“he considers all these possessions to be worth nothing; indeed he considers us nothing” (216e3–4)<sup>66</sup>—especially the last phrase, is perhaps a distant echo of Silenus' words of wisdom to Midas.<sup>67</sup> Like Silenus, the ironist Socrates is always holding something

<sup>63</sup> συσπειράται καὶ ἀποτρέπεται καὶ ἀνεῖλλεται καὶ οὐ γεννᾷ. For the sexual, almost Freudian metaphor here, see Gould 1981, 48.

<sup>64</sup> A complete table of such “responions” between Alcibiades' speech and the rest of the dialogue may be found in Bury 1932, lx–lxiv.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Bury 1932, xx; Rutherford 1995, 201; Rowe 1998, 208, 210.

<sup>66</sup> ἡγείται δὲ πάντα ταῦτα τὰ κτήματα οὐδενὸς ἄξια καὶ ἡμᾶς οὐδὲν εἶναι.

<sup>67</sup> Clay (2000, 74) hears an echo of Silenus' otherworldly wisdom in Socrates' farewell to Evenus at *Phaedo* 61b7, that if he wants to be wise, Evenus will follow Socrates in

back, and, like Midas, Alcibiades must force his Silenus to speak the hard truth.<sup>68</sup> Also like Silenus in the myth, whom the interlocutor in Aristotle adduces as theological support for his argument, Socrates is daimonic<sup>69</sup>—the δαίμων Eros in Diotima's speech, the son of Resourcefulness and Poverty, who is not at all καλός or ἀπλός, but tough, hardened, and dirty, poor, barefoot, and homeless (203c5–d1), just like the merry members in the train of Dionysus.

## II. *CYCLOPS*

With the arrival of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, a flirtatious interlude ensues among Agathon, himself, and Socrates (212c4–215a3). Of special note there is Socrates' appeal to Agathon to avert Alcibiades' amorous overtures (213c6–d6). It is a playful appeal for help since, as far as he is concerned, "the love of this man is no small affair."<sup>70</sup> In particular, Socrates fears Alcibiades' jealousy (ζηλοτυπῶν . . . καὶ φθονῶν) because, like the love couples in Pausanias' speech (182e2), Alcibiades "resorts to amazing tactics" (θαυμαστὰ ἐργάζεται) in pursuit of an erotic relationship, including abuse (λοιδορεῖται) and violence (βιάζεσθαι). A similar episode of comic flirtation appears in the *Cyclops* beginning at line 503. Significantly, the setting is a mock symposium: Silenus and Polyphemus are reclining and conversing together over wine in a cave.<sup>71</sup> On the recommendation of Odysseus, Silenus sets himself to the task of distracting the drunken monster, while Odysseus and the chorus of satyr boys fire up the stake to put out his eye. Once the cunning plan is afoot, the intoxicated Polyphemus emerges from the cave, bellowing πλέως μὲν οἴνου / γάννυμαι δὲ δαιτὸς ἥβῃ (503–4). Based on the action that immediately follows, the phrase γάννυμαι . . . ἥβῃ in line 504 appears to be a double entendre: the drunken Polyphemus is not only "enjoying the

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death as soon as he can (ὥς τάχιστα). However, an even shriller note of silenic music is sounded at *Phaedo* 115c4–5, where, in response to Crito's question "How are we to bury you?" Socrates replies, "However you want—if, that is, you can catch me and I don't elude you" (ὅπως ἂν, ἔφη, βούλησθε, ἔάνπερ γε λάβητέ με καὶ μὴ ἐκφύγω ὑμᾶς).

<sup>68</sup> See again the *Eudemos* passage quoted above.

<sup>69</sup> The *Eudemos* passage concludes: πολλοῖς οὕτω παρὰ τοῦ δαιμονίου μεμαρτύρηται. Cf. too Theopompus, where Silenus is described as θεοῦ μὲν ἀφανέστερος τὴν φύσιν, ἀνθρώπου δὲ κρείττων, εἰ καὶ ἀθάνατος ἦν.

<sup>70</sup> ὥς ἐμοὶ ὁ τοῦτου ἔρωσ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐ φαῦλον πρᾶγμα γέγονεν, where the genitive (subjective or objective?) is ambiguous.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Hamilton 1979, 287–92.

good cheer of the symposium” but intends to make “the strength and vigor of youthful manhood” (ἥβη) his meal, referring obliquely to an unlikely patient, the fat, elderly Silenus.<sup>72</sup> The chorus of satyr boys seem to know that it is not merely cannibalism that the Cyclops has in mind, but a sexual conquest, as the bridal metaphor they use of themselves suggests (511–18). But all this is only foreplay to the comic tryst with Silenus inside the cave. The object of Euripides’ γάννυμαι ἥβη pun comes into view when the drunken Polyphemus, in visionary ecstasy, sees, but rejects, the archetypal, heterosexual intercourse of Earth and Sky, the ἱερὸς γάμος, rejects even the alluring Graces, preferring instead his “Gany-mede,” Silenus:

ὁ δ’ οὐρανὸς μοι συμμεμειγμένος δοκεῖ  
τῇ γῇ φέρεσθαι, τοῦ Διὸς τε τὸν θρόνον  
λεύσσω τὸ πᾶν τε δαιμόνων ἄγνὸν σέβας.  
οὐκ ἂν φιλήσαιμ’; αἱ Χάριτες πειρῶσί με.  
ἄλλις· Γανυμήδη τόνδ’ ἔχων ἀναπαύσομαι  
κάλλιον ἢ τὰς Χάριτας, ἥδομαι δέ πως  
τοῖς παιδικοῖσι μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς θήλεσιν.

Heaven looks to me as if he’s joined in union with  
the Earth, and I can see the throne of Zeus  
and all the holy host of gods.

Shall I not kiss them?—the Graces are tempting me—

No!—I have a Ganymede here, and will enjoy myself with him  
in finer fashion than I would the Graces. Yes, for some reason  
I take more pleasure in boys than in women.

Silenus, now at the monster’s mercy, pleads (with a sexual innuendo of his own): “Ouch! I’m done for, kids! I’m about to be violated . . . and catch a glimpse of the most bitter sort of wine” (587, 589).<sup>73</sup> The source of the humor here is not so much Polyphemus’ sexual aggression<sup>74</sup> as the fact that the Zeus-Ganymede myth is about to be reenacted by two characters of very dubious credentials—the shaggy, Neanderthal Polyphemus and an equally shaggy and corpulent Silenus. Though neither is even remotely καλός, their comically flirtatious exchange is full of play

<sup>72</sup> See Ambrose 1996. The innuendo consists in taking a metaphorical idiom literally. It is reinforced by the etymological pun γάννυμαι (504) / Γανυμήδης (582, 585).

<sup>73</sup> ἀπόλωλα, παῖδες, σχέτλια πείσομαι κακά . . . οἷμοι. πικρότατον οἶνον ὄψομαι τάχα. On the innuendo, see Seaford 1988, 211.

<sup>74</sup> Both hetero- and homosexual aggression is typical of the satyr play. See Ussher 1977, 289.

on the word. At 553 Silenus defends his taking an extra gulp of wine by saying “But *it* [the wine] kissed *me*—because I look handsome” (ἀλλ’ ἔμ’ οὗτος ἔκυσεν ὅτι καλὸν βλέπω). When Polyphemus threatens to strike him for the theft, Silenus insists (555), “No, really, it says it loves me because I’m handsome!” (μού φησ’ ἐρᾶν ὄντος καλοῦ). At 583, as we have seen, the Cyclops expects to enjoy Silenus in finer fashion than he would the Graces (κάλλιον ἢ τὰς Χάριτας) and has himself been mysteriously transfigured, looking laughably handsome to the chorus of satyrs (511–12: καλὸν ὄμμασιν δεδορκῶς . . . καλὸς ἐκπερῶ μελάθρων). Judging by what we have of the genre, this sort of burlesque was probably typical of satyr drama. Here it pokes fun at the Athenian pederastic ideal, an ideal that finds its perfect expression in the heroic male nude of classical Greek sculpture and on the countless red-figure symposium vessels inscribed simply καλός, where sexually explicit scenes emphasize the gesture, poise, and gait of ephebic youth in full bloom and where the participants are often flanked by their mythological counterparts—Zephyrus and Hyacinthus, Zeus and Ganymede.<sup>75</sup>

There is an interesting parallel to this playful inversion of a cherished norm in the *Symposium*. In the opening paragraphs of the dialogue we discover that Socrates has washed and is wearing sandals for his visit to Agathon, “things which he seldom did” (174a3–5, 8–9). When asked about it, Socrates replies that he has done these things so that he “might arrive looking handsome at a handsome man’s house.” The humorous absurdity of this statement is emphasized by Plato with a threefold play on the word καλός.<sup>76</sup> It comes at a crucial moment, for this comic incongruity, the very sort we find in *Cyclops*, marks the beginning of Plato’s critique of beauty, a subject to which he returns in Agathon’s speech and Socrates’ rebuttal (193d6–199c2). In his own speech, Agathon seeks to correct the shortcomings of the previous encomia (195a7–8) by recounting “what sort of person the god Eros is” and then going through his gifts. He anticipates the procedure later used by Alcibiades in describing Socrates by focusing first on physical appearance: perennially youthful (ἀεὶ νέον), soft (μαλακός), supple (ὑγρός) and delicate (ἀπαλός), Eros is a thing of beauty and a joy forever (196a–197e)—an object worthy of an Agathon’s affection and of the punning dramatic fragment attributed to

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Zanker 1995, 32, who speaks of Socrates’ appearance as “flouting the High Classical standard of beauty.”

<sup>76</sup> ταῦτα δὴ ἐκαλλωπισάμην, ἵνα καλὸς παρὰ καλὸν ἦω; cf. too the pun at 174e5 (εἰς καλὸν ἤκεις ὥπως συνδειπνήσης). It is a blemish in Gagarin’s study (1977, 27) that he takes Socrates’ self-beautification here at face value and not as part of his silenian σχῆμα.

him that “loving springs from looking.”<sup>77</sup> Agathon’s euphuistic speech concludes proclaiming Eros the font of every blessing (197d–e5). In expressing apprehension about not being able to live up to such rhetorical flair in his response (198b1–d8),<sup>78</sup> Socrates is deriding Agathon’s sophistry. The pun on the name of the sophistic adept, Gorgias of Leontini, and the facetious allusion to *Odyssey* 9.622 suggests, of course, that Agathon’s eloquence approaches the garishness of a Gorgon’s head. That the sarcasm is directed specifically at Agathon’s conception of beauty (and perhaps, good-naturedly, even at beautiful Agathon himself) is underscored by the fact that the word *καλός* and its cognates occur no fewer than seven times in Socrates’ misgivings about the speech. Moreover, Plato’s intentional misconstrual of that proverbially sophistical line from Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (612)—“my tongue swore, but not my mind” (199a5–6)<sup>79</sup>—makes it clear that Socrates is answering sophistry with sophistry in a sophistical tit-for-tat. Plato is poking fun at Gorgianic figures, but the point of this joke at Agathon’s expense is that Agathon has said nothing true (198d3).

As in the *Symposium*, sophistical one-upmanship is a prominent theme in *Cyclops* as well. One scene is particularly telling: after Odysseus’ hopelessly rhetorical plea to guest friendship and conventional piety to avert his own death by cannibalism (285–312), Polyphemus ventures some sophistry of his own (316–46). It is a homily on how wealth and ease are the wise man’s gods. In it Euripides plays with philosophical buzzwords and carefully balanced phrases so that we cannot miss the point that he is stylizing Cyclops as a Sophist, or perhaps the Sophists as Cyclopes.<sup>80</sup> Functionally, the speech furnishes the audience with ample evidence of Polyphemus’ comic flaw: Polyphemus the Sophist equates himself with great Zeus. The Cyclopes’ Zeus-confusion is augmented by the leitmotif οὐ μέλει μοι, which underscores his dangerous nonchalance and impiety. Hitherto, Euripides has characterized Polyphemus along the lines of the Homeric story—ignorant of agriculture, polis, and ξενία (110–30). Here, the caricature of the sophist *qua* Polyphemus (or vice

<sup>77</sup> Fr. 29 Nauck: ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἐσορᾶν γίγνεται ἀνθρώποις ἐρᾶν.

<sup>78</sup> This echoes his coy *recusatio* to Agathon at 175e.

<sup>79</sup> ἡ γλῶσσα οὖν ὑπέσχετο, ἡ δὲ φρὴν οὐ.

<sup>80</sup> When Biehl (1986, 138) says of the first line—ὁ πλοῦτος, ἀνθρώπισκε, τοῖς σοφοῖς θεός—that it is “eine vulgare Form der für das sophistische Zeitalter charakteristischen Indoktrination, die hier groteskerweise ‘in den Mund des urzeitlichen Wilden’ [citing Pohlenz],” he hits the nail on the head. For Euripides’ broad familiarity with sophistic terminology and argumentation, see Kerferd 1981, 170–71.

versa) adds this nuance: the Sophists' schools are, for Euripides in this play, a contemporary smithy of Cyclopean hybris. This point must be borne in mind when we reach the dramatic climax—the ogre's attempted rape of Silenus. The Cyclops' actions, we are left to infer, like Alcibiades' in the *Symposium*, proceed “logically” from his careless philosophy.

Though hardly said by Plato to be making Socrates into his Ganymede, the drunken Alcibiades is infected by a similar self-infatuation. And, like Polyphemus in Euripides, he is oddly attracted to Socrates' silenic beauty: its effect on him produces an *ἀτοπία* that he says is difficult to explain for a man in his condition (215a2–3; cf. 221d2–6) and flies in the face of Agathon's law of erotics that “like is always attracted to like.”<sup>81</sup> There is also a Cyclopean quality in Alcibiades' assault on Socrates (217c5, with note 13 above). Like Alcibiades, Polyphemus courts his Silenus roughly, as a desperate *ἐραστής* might a reluctant *παιδικά*, which is in both cases ironic, given “the fact that the satyrs are more often the perpetrators than the victims of rape.”<sup>82</sup> In the use of the verbs *ἐπιχείρω* and *ἐπιτίθημι* to describe Alcibiades' behavior at *Symposium* 214e2 and 217c5–6, we are reminded of the monstrous threat posed by the androgynes and same-sex creatures in Aristophanes' speech, who, like the Titans Otta and Ephialtes, would attempt a *coup d'état* against Zeus in heaven (190 b5–c1).<sup>83</sup>

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As I suggested in the introduction to this essay, the relationship of *Cyclops* to the *Symposium* constitutes the finer print. Certainly, the quality of the humor is much the same, with role reversal and verbal/visual parody being pressed into the service of cultural critique. What is beyond

<sup>81</sup> ὅμοιον ὁμοίῳ ἀεὶ πελάζει (195b5).

<sup>82</sup> See Seaford's comments on line 588 (1988, 209) and 581. On *hybris* as sexual assault, see Dover 1978, 36. On the aggressive nature of Alcibiades' pursuit of Socrates, see note 13 above.

<sup>83</sup> Perhaps we should also place in the category of “monstrosity” Alcibiades' oath by Poseidon in 214d6 (μὰ τὸν Ποσειδῶ). As Dover (1980, 163) observes, the oath by Poseidon is “frequent in comedy but otherwise unexampled in Plato.” The invocation of Poseidon that readily comes to mind in this context is the one sworn by Polyphemus, who, as Poseidon's son, calls down a curse on Odysseus and his men in Homer (*Od.* 9.528). Bury (1932, 142) detects a pun on πόσις.” Rosen (1987, 306) tentatively suggests that we are also meant to hear “a ‘Homeric’ double-entendre” in μὴ σε λανθάνω οὐδὲν ὄν (219a1–2): “Is this a franker version of the words of Odysseus [*Od.* 9.275ff.], who, while making the overconfident Polyphemus drunk and sleepy, tells him that his name is ‘no one’ (οὐτις)?”

dispute, however, is that with Alcibiades' speech Plato retreats from the somber tones of Diotima's systematic philosophy and plunges headlong into a more playful application of her weighty principles. Initially, Alcibiades set out "to crown the wisest and most beautiful head" in Athens (212d8–9), his beautiful young host Agathon, Lenaeon victor in 416. But by the time he has untied the ribbons from his own beautiful crown we learn that the "amazing wonderful head" really belongs to the satyr Socrates (213e1–2), who "conquers all people in words, not just the other day as . . . [Agathon] did, but always" (e3–4). The meaning of Agathon's prediction to Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue that "you and I will settle whose wisdom/talent is superior—and Dionysus shall be the judge!" (175e9–10)<sup>84</sup> comes fully into view only when we realize that, by the end of the dialogue, Plato's snub-nosed satyr has become the subject of a dramatic victory in which Alcibiades, that marvelously Dionysiac individual, is the coryphaeus, and the theatrical god of wine the judge.<sup>85</sup>

Why might Plato have chosen to represent Socrates in this way? Ion of Chios, whose lost work, the *Visitations*, is often cited as a precursor to the Socratic dialogue, is reported to have said that "Like a tragic tetralogy, ἀρετή should have its share of the satyric."<sup>86</sup> What exactly Ion meant by this remark is not known, but it is clear to many readers of Plato that Socratic ἀρετή—the art of living well that "Socrates had somehow come to possess in an inarticulate and unsystematic manner"—was for Plato, as it is for us still, "the real Socratic problem" (Nehamas 1998, 90). In the *Symposium*, Plato seems to be especially alert to what many modern readers have also felt, namely that Socrates' philosophical views do not adequately explain his extraordinary mode of life (cf. Nehamas 1998, 96). It is this, I suggest, the Socratic mystique, that Plato sought to capture, if not fully explain, by his use of satyric motifs in the *Sympo-*

<sup>84</sup> διαδικασόμεθα ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ περὶ τῆς σοφίας, δικαστὴν χρώμενοιτῶ Διονύσῳ.

<sup>85</sup> For this general interpretation see, *inter alios*, Bacon 1959, Clay 1975, Sider 1980, Patterson 1982, Nussbaum 1986, and Rutherford 1995, 204–5. Cf. Rowe (1998, 214–15), who sees Socrates himself as embodying both the tragic and comic.

<sup>86</sup> ὥσπερ τραγικὴν διδασκαλίαν, ἀξιοῦντα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἔχειν τι πάντως καὶ σατυρικὸν μέρος (Plut. *Per.* 5.4).

<sup>87</sup> There is a fine statement of this view in Clay 2000, 75: "Alcibiades' icons of Socrates carry a warning for Plato's reader. Plato, in the vehicle he chose to convey his philosophy, was not and could not be a systematic philosopher. Systems were for another age and for philosophers who believed not only that knowledge was within their grasp but that it could be communicated to others once grasped. Plato did not share their optimism about the possibility of the communication of knowledge, but he was so successful as a literary artist and [as a] maker of images that his dialogues leave us with the impression that, if we know nothing else about the Platonic dialogues, we know Socrates at least."

sium.<sup>87</sup> The *Symposium*, then, whatever else it may also be, is Platonic praise for (in Ion's phrase) that strange σατυρικὸν μέρος of Socratic ἀρετή.

The inclusion of satyric elements in the *Symposium* is also highly apologetic.<sup>88</sup> R. G. Bury and others have argued that the dialogue is a direct response to a lost *Symposium* by Polycrates, the author of the damaging *Accusation* of Socrates, in which Alcibiades, not Agathon, was the host, and where Socrates was portrayed as being responsible for Alcibiades' social and political affronts to the democracy.<sup>89</sup> Plato himself, of course, singles out Aristophanes' *Clouds* as contributing to Socrates' demise in 399, but it is important to remember that Aristophanes was not the only comedian to lampoon Socrates.<sup>90</sup> In using comedy and satyr lore in the *Symposium* to praise Socrates and to undermine traditional sympotic values, Plato is using the comedians' own weapons, as it were, against them.

But there is yet another sense in which the *Symposium* is apologetic, and it relates to the question of Plato's originality, which I cast into doubt at the beginning of this essay. R. B. Rutherford and C. H. Kahn have drawn attention to Plato's literary debt to the burgeoning tradition of *Sokratikoi logoi*, the themes and type scenes of which he reworks to suit his own purposes.<sup>91</sup> Kahn calls this Plato's "philosophic use of a literary form" and has argued in detail that the dogmatic discrepancies we see in Plato's work do not necessarily represent different stages in his thinking, but different literary moments in the presentation of his thought. Plato's motive for such selective presentation, according to Kahn, is that Plato was acutely aware of the "seismic gap" between his audience's worldview and his own. This gap is "most vividly dramatized in the frustrated passion of Alcibiades, who is unable to establish emotional contact with Socrates, even in bed, because they inhabit different worlds."<sup>92</sup> If Kahn is right here, this makes the *Symposium* doubly apologetic in

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Rowe 1998, 205; Zanker also thinks that the comparison of Socrates to a silen "probably originated with his enemies and detractors" (1995, 34).

<sup>89</sup> Bury 1932, xvii–xix; cf. too lii, lxiv–lxv; and Gribble 1999, 245: "Plato's reaction to the charges made against Socrates in 399 B.C. and in the *Accusation of Polycrates* has shaped Plato's thought in a way that makes it impossible to separate 'apology' from the philosophical thought of the dialogues."

<sup>90</sup> The sources are conveniently collected in Giannantoni 1991, vol. 1; cf. Brock, 1990, 40.

<sup>91</sup> Rutherford 1995, 10–16; Kahn 1998, 1–35.

<sup>92</sup> 1998, 69. In this Kahn seems unwittingly to echo the similar conclusion of Erasmus in his essay *Sileni Alcibiadis*: "In this world there are really two worlds" (Wootton 1999, 185).

that Plato adapts recognizable conventions of satyric myth and drama in order to justify not only the historical Socrates against his historical detractors but his own alien, metaphysical vision of the world as well. What better comparandum for Socrates could there have been than the race of otherworldly-wise satyrs, those “antitypes of the Athenian male citizenry” (Lissarrague 1990, 235)? What better medium to extol him than satyric myth and drama, which “plays in a different key, with the displacement, distortion, and reversal of what constitutes the world and culture of men” (236)? And what better occasion than the symposium, where, as Plato himself will express it later in his discussion of symposia in the *Laws* (649d9), “in wine there is both proof of one’s character and lighthearted play” (ἐν οἴνῳ βάσανος καὶ παιδιά)? Like the sympotic values he invokes only to debunk, conventional Athenian attitudes toward the body ran counter to the metaphysics of Diotima. The comic and touching depiction of Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Symposium*—an ancient tale of Beauty and the Beast—may well be the best *Apology* Plato ever wrote.<sup>93</sup>

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