

Why is Diotima a Woman?

“Now for the discourse about *erôs* which I once heard from a Mantineian woman, Diotima, who was learned in that subject and in many other things—she once got the Athenians to perform sacrifices against the plague and thereby procured them a ten-year delay of the disease—and it was she, as well, who taught me erotics: I shall try to run through for you, entirely on my own (insofar as I can), on the basis of what Agathon and I have agreed to, the discourse she pronounced.”

—Plato, *Symposium* 201d

1. The Problem

Socrates is the speaker of these words. The occasion of his uttering them is a symposium, an all-male drinking party, held at the home of the newly-victorious tragic poet Agathon. The topic of conversation at Agathon’s symposium is *erôs*, or passionate sexual desire, and in keeping with the paederastic ethos of classical Athens, to which Agathon and most of his guests subscribe, the evening’s discussion of *erôs* is couched almost exclusively in male, homoerotic terms. Socrates has just cross-examined Agathon about the latter’s stated views of *erôs* and, in so doing, has refuted them (at least, to his own and Agathon’s apparent satisfaction).¹ He is about to tell the story of how his own views of *erôs*, once similar to Agathon’s, were refuted in turn by Diotima, a prophetess, who imparted to him an account of *erôs* which he now believes and which he commends to others (212b).

Diotima is better informed about the desires of men than are men themselves. Without her expert intervention in their affairs men would never be able to uncover the true sources, objects, and aims of their own desires. It takes a woman to reveal men to themselves. Diotima’s instruction, moreover, does not consist in enlightening men about women, revealing to men only what they could not themselves be expected to discover about a realm of experience forever closed off to them by virtue of being, supposedly, the exclusive preserve of another sex. On the contrary, what Diotima propounds to Socrates is an ethic of “correct paederasty” (*to orthôs paiderastein*: *Symposium* 211b5–6; cf. 210a4–5, 211b7–c1)² aimed at regulating and enhancing relations between “men” and “boys.”★ She thereby founds, or re-founds, an impor-

★ The terms “men” (*andres* in Greek) and “boys” (*paides*) refer by convention to the senior and junior partners in a paederastic relationship (respectively), or to those who play the appropriate roles, regardless of their actual ages: see “One Hundred Years of Homosexuality,” note 26.

tant institution of male society in classical Athens, providing at the same time an ideological (philosophical) justification for it.

Why is Diotima a woman? Why did Plato select a woman to initiate Socrates into the mysteries of a male, homoerotic desire? It might seem that any adequate answer to this question would have to emerge from an understanding of “sexual difference” in Hellenic antiquity and from the unique, or distinctive, or (at the very least) characteristic attributes of women as they were defined in classical Greek culture. It is only by identifying those gender-specific features belonging essentially to women in the Greek imagination that we can discover, or so one might suppose, the sources of Diotima’s superior erotic expertise—and, thus, determine exactly what it is that qualifies her, in Plato’s eyes, to be a professor of (male) desire.

But the project, so described, turns out in practice to be highly paradoxical. For it focuses—necessarily—not on women but on men; it proves to be less about “sexual difference” than about male identity. Or, to be more precise, it traces the inscription of male identity in ancient representations of female “difference” and thereby recovers not the presence but the absence of “the feminine” from male constructions of it. Rather than attempt to escape these paradoxes, I have tried in what follows to make their operation visible at three levels of the analysis: (1) at the level of Plato’s text, which will be shown both to construct and to deny female “difference”; (2) at the level of scholarly commentary on that text, which in its efforts to explicate Diotima’s gender has replicated Plato’s own tactic, either denying her difference or resolving it into male identity; and (3) at the level of my own interpretative practice, which by erasing female presence from the terms of its discourse, even as it adheres to an ostensibly feminist program, reproduces and exemplifies the very strategies of appropriation—characteristic of male culture—that it purports both to illuminate and to criticize.

2. The Question and Two Commonsense Answers

Let us return, then, to the original question, and begin by asking, once again, in all innocence, “Why is Diotima a woman?” The two most plausible answers to this question that have been put forward hitherto have tended alike to take a negative form: Diotima is a woman, apparently, because she is not a man. Each of the arguments for this solution is worth reviewing briefly.

According to the first argument, Plato could not afford to portray the youthful Socrates as having been initiated into the mysteries of erotic desire by an older and wiser *male* because such a portrait would inevitably have suggested to Plato’s contemporaries that Socrates owed his much-vaunted insight into the nature of erotics³ to the passionate ministrations of a former paederastic lover.⁴ Now that is an insinuation Plato strenuously wanted to



Male revelers at a symposium disporting themselves in feminine attire. Female entertainers provide musical accompaniment. (The J. Paul Getty Museum, The Briseis Painter, Brygos (signed as the potter), Attic Red-Figure Cup, Type B, ca. 480–470 B.C., terracotta, height: 11.7 cm.; diameter: 30.7 cm. 86.AE.293)

avoid, not only because it would have lent the stamp of Socratic approval to a social practice for which Plato himself entertained the liveliest mistrust but, more importantly, because it would have had the effect of valorizing the Athenian institution of paederasty on the very grounds on which Plato's Pausanias, earlier in the *Symposium*, had celebrated it under the high-sounding cultic title of *Aphroditê Ourania* (or "heavenly love").⁵ For Pausanias had argued that a youth who is eager for moral self-improvement may legitimately, even laudably, choose to gratify the sexual passion of an older and wiser male in exchange for obtaining from his lover the edifying instruction he desires (182d–185c, esp. 184b–e).⁶ But Plato, for a variety of philosophical reasons, wishes to repudiate the paederastic ethos articulated by Pausanias⁷ along with the economic model used to justify it (cf. *Symposium* 175d; *Republic* 518b–d): that is the point of the famous episode in which Alcibiades proposes to Socrates precisely the sort of transaction endorsed by Pausanias and receives from his admired preceptor a sharp and uncompromising rebuff (*Symposium* 218c–219d). If Plato, then, had represented the youthful Socrates as having benefited—however passionlessly—from the erotic expertise of a mature male, the principle underlying Socrates's subsequent rejection of Alcibiades would have been obscured, and Plato would have risked conveying to his audience an impression diametrically opposite to the one he is determined to convey. Or so the first of these two arguments goes.

The second argument harmonizes nicely with the previous one. It so happens that Diotima's discussion of erotic desire issues, significantly, in the specification of a set of procedures to be followed by any truly serious student of "correct paederasty," as she calls it. If the author of those prescriptions had been a male, he might well have been suspected of being influenced in his framing of them by a variety of personal factors, inasmuch as his own sexual activity would be materially affected by whatever erotic curriculum he proposed. Diotima, by contrast, is not personally implicated in the content of the erotic discipline she recommends to the aspiring paederast. Plato, then, by omitting to make a male the mouthpiece of his erotic doctrine, manages to clothe that doctrine in the guise of pure disinterestedness; he also invests his chosen spokesman with an easy transcendence over potentially troubling sources of personal involvement in the subject under discussion.⁸ Diotima's serene mastery of her material gives her the requisite authority to perform her appointed task of wisdom-bearer within the larger scheme of Plato's dialogue.⁹

I have no wish to quarrel with those who argue that Diotima must be a woman because she may not be a man. Indeed, I consider the two arguments I have just run through to be plausible enough on their own terms. But to leave matters there would be, in effect, to collaborate with those age-old traditions in Western culture that define every "subject" as male and that tend to construe woman as a mere absence of male presence. Once we admit

the possibility that there may be more to being a woman than not being a man, we are obliged to seek for *positive* reasons behind Plato's startling decision to introduce a woman into the clannish, masculine society of Agathon's household in order to enlighten a group of articulate paederasts about the mysteries of erotic desire.¹⁰ Any sensitive reader of the *Symposium* will surely acknowledge, after all, that Diotima's gender loudly calls attention to itself within the dramatic setting of the dialogue.

Plato provides his modern readers with some additional encouragement to search for a positive philosophical dimension to Diotima's being a woman. He hints unmistakably that Diotima's gender is not without its significance for the erotic doctrine she articulates. Diotima underscores the specifically "feminine"★ character of her purchase on the subject of erotic desire by means of the emphatically gender-polarized vocabulary and conceptual apparatus that she employs in discussing it. She speaks of *erôs* as no male does, striking a previously unsounded "feminine" note and drawing on a previously untapped source of "feminine" erotic and reproductive experience. In particular, Diotima introduces and develops the unprecedented imagery of male pregnancy,¹¹ insisting on it despite what might seem to be the wild incongruousness of procreative metaphors in a paederastic context.¹² In Diotima's formulation, men become pregnant (*kyein*),¹³ suffer birth pangs (*ôdis*),¹⁴ bear (*gennan*)¹⁵ and bring forth (*tiktein*)¹⁶ offspring,¹⁷ and nourish their young (*trephein*).¹⁸ Indeed, the authentic aim of erotic desire, according to Diotima, is procreation (206e).¹⁹ Diotima's gender, then, is not a merely peripheral fact or an accidental circumstance, unconnected to her teaching; it is, apparently, a condition of her discourse, and it is inscribed in what she says. Just as all the other speakers in Plato's *Symposium* project onto *Erôs* the features of their own personalities,²⁰ so Diotima, too, seems to be existentially implicated in the content of her erotic doctrines;† by virtue of the very language she uses to enunciate them, she lets her audience know that a "woman" is speaking—or, to be more precise, that Socrates is speaking in what he expects his audience to recognize as a woman's voice. At any rate, Plato clearly means us to notice that Diotima's conceptualization of *erôs* derives from a specifically "feminine" perspective.‡

★ I enclose such terms as *feminine* and *masculine* in quotation marks because I do not wish to commit myself as the author of this essay to any of the various essentialist definitions of gender which I shall be discussing. By "feminine," then, the reader should understand *feminine as constructed by the writer, social group, or historical culture in question*.

† The Greeks seem to have been somewhat less obsessed with the talismanic power of disinterestedness to underwrite the authority of their experts, and more skeptical about the possibility of achieving it, than were certain nineteenth-century German methodologists—as the story of the Judgment of Paris indicates.

‡ I say "feminine," rather than "heterosexual," because what is foregrounded by Plato is Diotima's identity as a woman, not her relation to men, let alone her "sexuality."

What is it about such a perspective that Plato especially prizes? No immediate answer presents itself. Plato's attitude to women is notoriously ambivalent.²¹ The low social and economic status of women in classical Athens,²² the disparaging pronouncements by male authors in general, and the thoroughgoing depreciation of females by Aristotle in particular²³ have made it difficult for students of the classical period to identify those positive values conventionally associated with women by Plato's contemporaries which Plato might have sought to actualize through his sponsorship of Diotima. In what follows I propose, first, to review some (but by no means all) of the explanations that scholars have offered for Diotima's presence in the *Symposium* and, then, to add to them two novel ones of my own which are designed to highlight Plato's philosophical exploitation of femininity (as the ancients tended to construct it). ★ My general aim is to sharpen our awareness of the strategies by which the Greeks mapped socially and ideologically significant distinctions onto biological differences between the sexes;²⁴ more specifically, I should like to contribute a chapter to the still largely unwritten history of the function of "the feminine" in the social reproduction of male culture—whose latest chapter, no doubt, is represented by the appropriation of feminist scholarship by male academics (the present author not excepted).²⁵

3. Diotima and Platonic Psychopathology

The various explanatory hypotheses advanced in the scholarly literature can be conveniently divided into three basic groups according to whether they refer Plato's portrait of Diotima to personal, historical, or doctrinal factors. Let me begin with those explanations that connect Plato's artistic decision to his personal temperament. Scholars are occasionally heard to remark (though none, so far as I know, has yet confided this argument to print) that Diotima's presence in the *Symposium* shows Plato to have been a closet heterosexual; Plato, on this account, sought to endow relations between the sexes with greater dignity by sketching for the edification of his contemporaries an attractive picture of a fruitful intellectual exchange between a man and a woman.²⁶ Other commentators relate Diotima and her doctrines to Plato's alleged homosexuality—a diagnosis fast becoming entrenched in Platonic scholarship.²⁷ Indeed, one of the unexpected consequences of the spirit of candor about sexual matters that has animated classical studies in recent years has been the sudden outpouring into the scholarly literature of a flood of newly revealed academic hallucinations about the psychology of homosexuals, ancient and modern. Paul Plass, for

★ Readers who do not expect to be entertained by the vagaries of classical scholarship are invited to skip ahead to section 6, entitled "Erotic Hierarchies and Platonic Reciprocities," which introduces my own interpretation.

example, has assembled a collection of twentieth-century clinical evidence²⁸ that purports to document just how thickly fantasies of male pregnancy cluster about the inner lives of homosexual men; he suggests, further, that Diotima's talk of "pregnancy, birth pangs and delivery" may represent a kind of gay "argot," a set of "'in' phrases" whose emotional value teeters precariously on the edge between self-affirmation and self-mockery.²⁹ Bennett Simon, by contrast, interprets Diotima's procreative imagery to be "typical of pregenital sexual fantasy" and goes on to relate the central themes of Plato's philosophy to a trauma experienced by the philosopher as a child upon witnessing the primal scene.³⁰ In a much more light-handed and witty essay, Dorothea Wender claims that Plato's willingness to grant a certain measure of authority to women stemmed from his sexual disposition: he didn't like women, but since he was a "paedophile" and therefore indifferent to the sexuality of women he did not feel threatened by them, and so he had little motive to deny them social equality when they merited it—unlike Xenophon, for example, a heterosexual man who liked women, and liked them in their place.³¹ The chief accomplishment of this school of Platonic interpretation, in my view, has been to demonstrate that if Michel Foucault had never existed it would have been necessary to invent him.

4. Diotima and Athenian (Literary) History

Common, at least implicitly, to the views of all the authorities cited so far is the assumption that Diotima was not a real person but a fictional creation of Plato's. Many recent students of the *Symposium* share that assumption, but they were not always so numerous as they are today. With occasional exceptions, such as Wilamowitz (who declared himself a thoroughgoing agnostic about Diotima's historical existence)³² and Bury (who denied it altogether),³³ classical philologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended to grant Diotima a measure of historical authenticity,³⁴ and their arguments still merit consideration. Foremost among those arguments is the claim that Plato does not normally introduce fictitious persons into his dialogues.³⁵ Even off-hand allusions in Plato to people and places are on occasion confirmed in their historical accuracy by Greek inscriptions, or so it is alleged,³⁶ and those Platonic characters, such as Callicles, who have yet to turn up in our sources may well be casualties of gaps in the documentary record.³⁷ Thucydides (2.47.3) testifies to the early and scattered incidence of the plague in the years preceding its disastrous outbreak at Athens in 430, and it is not inconceivable that a foreign prophetess might have been called in for consultation during that period; Diotima may reflect Plato's recollection of what he had been told as a boy about the intervention of a Peloponnesian witch-doctor on behalf of the Athenians a decade and a half before his birth.³⁸ Some scholars have argued that Plato includes details

about Diotima's identity that seem irrelevant to the dramatic context in which they occur³⁹—Socrates tells us how, by ordering the Athenians to perform sacrifices, she managed to avert the plague from Athens for ten years (201d)—and such details would therefore seem to acquire the ring of historical authenticity.⁴⁰ But the parallel case of Epimenides, who staved off the Persian invasion of Attica for ten years by similar means (*Laws* 642de), does not inspire confidence;⁴¹ Epimenides is all too obviously a stock folktale figure (whatever his historical origin),⁴² and the willingness of some historians⁴³ to uphold his authenticity on the basis of the analogy to Diotima should be a warning to the rest of us. Other historians have claimed to unearth an ancient Mantineian tradition of female philosopher-sages,⁴⁴ but that tradition represents, in all likelihood, a folktale of the modern academic variety.

More compelling is the argument that in no extant source does Socrates name as his teacher a person who cannot be shown to have existed historically;⁴⁵ Diotima, who did indeed “teach” (*didaskein*) Socrates erotics, according to his own testimony (*Symposium* 201d5, 204d2, 207a5; cf. 206b5–6, 207c6),⁴⁶ would be the sole exception. But this argument begs the fundamental question of how we are to assess Diotima's function in Plato's dramaturgy: does her role more closely resemble that of Calicles or Er?⁴⁷ Should we, that is, regard her as a real person or as a pure device, a Jamesian *ficelle*? Such questions, unfortunately, are not easy to answer in principle; they lie at the core of interpretation. Moreover, the pertinent issue for the interpreter is not whether Diotima actually existed but what it is that Plato accomplishes by introducing her into the *Symposium*, and that is not an issue whose resolution depends on Diotima's historical authenticity. This point will become clearer, perhaps, once all the alternatives have been explored.

The search for Diotima has turned up a considerable number of ancient verbal and pictorial documents, including most notably a large sculpted relief, found in the *agora* at Mantinea and now housed in the National Museum at Athens, which dates to approximately 410–400 B.C. and depicts a woman holding in her hand what appears to be a liver: she was evidently an important local prophetess.⁴⁸ This and the other documents do indeed constitute a remarkable and significant body of material; unfortunately, none of them furnishes testimony that is either conclusive (in the case of the relief) or sufficiently early to escape suspicion of having been contaminated by Platonic influence. In weighing the fact that no mention of Diotima demonstrably independent of Plato survives we should remember that we possess vastly fewer names of classical Greek women than we do names of Greek men and that a number of cultural factors have systematically militated against their preservation.⁴⁹ Diotima, of course, is a perfectly good Greek name for a woman (it is securely attested in the early classical period).⁵⁰ Scholars have suspected Platonic wordplay in its etymology, to be sure, as well as in the etymology of the name of Diotima's birthplace: Diotima of

Mantineia means, literally, something like "Zeus-honor from Prophet-ville,"⁵¹ and Plato may have wished to underscore by means of such a pun the religious sources of Diotima's well-nigh oracular authority. But inasmuch as some priesthods in classical Greece were in effect the property of certain families,⁵² and girls belonging to those families who were expected to be priestesses were often given appropriately august names—a fact reflected in the actual names attested for Greek priestesses⁵³—the aptness of Diotima's name need not count against her historical existence, nor need it be ascribed to linguistic gamesmanship on Plato's part.⁵⁴ Moreover, the name of Socrates's mother, the midwife, is reported to have been Phaenarete (*Theaetetus* 149a; *Alcibiades Major* 131e)—literally, "she who brings virtue to light"—and if that name, which is almost too good to be true, is not taken to be an outright joke⁵⁵ (it is attested as a woman's name in Aristophanes's *Acharnians* [49] and is, more suspiciously, recorded as the name of Hippocrates's mother, who was also a midwife according to later legend), hardly any motive remains for doubting the authenticity of Diotima's. Let us suppose for the moment, then, that she was an actual person. What should follow from that supposition for our interpretation of her function in Plato's *Symposium*?

There are two alternatives.⁵⁶ First, it may be the case that Plato's account in the *Symposium* is an accurate, or roughly accurate, report of an actual conversation that really did take place between Socrates and Diotima many years before the dramatic date of Agathon's drinking-party: such was the view of A. E. Taylor, for example.⁵⁷ The very notion, however, that the historical Socrates was actually initiated into the mysteries of Platonic love—to say nothing of the Theory of Forms, on which Plato's erotic doctrine depends—around the middle of the fifth century B.C. by a Peloponnesian prophetess is so wildly improbable as to deprive its adherents of any further claim to a serious hearing.⁵⁸ The second and more likely alternative is that Diotima, though a real person, functions in the *Symposium* as a dramatic fiction, somewhat in the manner of Parmenides in the Platonic dialogue that bears his name.⁵⁹ The literary character corresponds to an actual individual, in other words, but the situation depicted in the dialogue is the invention of its author. Parmenides, of course, is an appropriate figure for Plato to bring forward to criticize the Theory of Forms, since that theory had its origins in a specifically Parmenidean problematic.⁶⁰ But even in the event that all the fragments of and references to Parmenides which we now possess had been lost and that his name meant as little to us as Diotima's does now, Plato still furnishes us with enough relevant information about him (he is, for example, a formidable logician)⁶¹ to make his presence in the *Parmenides* at least minimally perspicuous. In Diotima's case, by contrast, Plato gives us very little pertinent information: Socrates says only that he will relate a discourse about *erôs* which he once heard from a woman of Mantinea,

Diotima, who was learned in that subject and in many other things, and who gave the Athenians ten years' reprieve from the Great Plague by advising them to sacrifice—presumably in 440 B.C. (201d). Although we can never rule out the possibility that the most prominent authority on *erôs* in fifth-century Greece was a certain Diotima, whose name and doctrines have wholly vanished from the historical record, nothing in Plato encourages us to entertain it. Nor does Plato, superb portraitist though he is, attempt to give us much of a portrait of Diotima, as he might well have done had he decided to breathe life into a well-known historical personage (though, admittedly, his portrait of Aspasia in the *Menexenus* is hardly more lifelike, despite its historical basis, but then Plato seems to be less interested in her than in her relations with Pericles). Far from being vividly individualized,⁶² Diotima keeps a cool distance from us: she remains aloof—suavely impersonal and provocatively business-like.⁶³ We still have to figure out what she's doing in the *Symposium*.

There is yet a third possibility, however. The impetus to make Diotima a woman may have had its origin in history but not in actuality: that is, Plato may have been responding to a previous, and now largely lost, literary tradition. The topic of Socrates's relations with women seems to have furnished a staple, in fact, of Socratic literature in Plato's time.⁶⁴ In the *Memorabilia*, or "Recollections" of Socrates, for example, Xenophon tells the story of a visit paid by Socrates and his friends to Theodote, a famous *hetaira* or courtesan, whom Socrates proceeds to question and instruct in his usual manner about the art of seduction (3.11; cf. 2.6.28–39). Theodote, scantily clad, happens to be posing for a painter at the moment the company arrives, and Socrates inquires of his friends whether they ought to be obliged to her for allowing them to see her beauty or she to them for the privilege of being admired. After a brief, if breathtaking, display of discursive reasoning, Socrates triumphantly concludes, "We already desire to touch what we have seen; we shall go away excited, and when we have gone we shall feel an unsatisfied longing. The natural inference is that we are performing a service [i.e., by spreading her reputation] and she is receiving it" (3.11.2–3). Theodote is eventually persuaded of Socrates's expertise in these and other matters and invites him to visit her often, to which Socrates responds by declining to join her parties but encouraging her to attend his discussions; he promises to receive her—"unless," he adds rather ungallantly, "I have someone with me I like better" (3.11.15–18). The episode evidently became notorious in antiquity and was taken up by subsequent writers on Socrates.⁶⁵

The figure who seems to have dominated such stories about Socrates is Aspasia, a Milesian woman who was the mistress of Pericles and was, like Theodote, a *hetaira*. In the extant Socratic literature Aspasia's relation to Socrates is most fully adumbrated in Plato's *Menexenus*, where Socrates

claims Aspasia as his instructor in rhetoric (*didaskalos* . . . *peri rhêtorikês*: 235e; cf. 236c3) and says that she has made many other men good orators, especially Pericles (235e). He goes on to recite a funeral oration which, he maintains (236ab), Aspasia composed partly from what she happened to invent on the spur of the moment and partly from fragments of a previous funeral oration delivered by Pericles which, however, Socrates also ascribes to her authorship. Socrates adds that he learned the speech from her and was nearly beaten by her for failing to get it right (236bc); he is in the habit of visiting her, evidently (249d), and he knows some of her political speeches as well (249e). Menexenus, nonetheless, remains politely skeptical about Aspasia's responsibility for the discourses which Socrates persists in ascribing to her (236c, 249de).

Most of the other literary passages bearing on Socrates and Aspasia pertain to erotic matters, somewhat more in keeping with the tone of the Theodotee episode in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.⁶⁶ Elsewhere in that work, for example, Xenophon's Socrates claims to have gotten good advice from Aspasia about match-making (2.6.36); in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* Socrates offers to introduce Critobulus to Aspasia who, he says, can speak about the relations between husbands and wives more knowledgeably than he can (3.14; cf. 2.16). Antisthenes, perhaps the most philosophically flamboyant of Socrates's disciples, wrote a Socratic dialogue entitled *Aspasia*,⁶⁷ now lost, in which he described Pericles's passionate attachment to that lady;⁶⁸ how Antisthenes portrayed Aspasia and how he treated her relations with Socrates cannot now be securely reconstructed.⁶⁹ Another Socratic, Aeschines of Sphettus, also composed an *Aspasia*⁷⁰ which seems to have treated erotic themes;⁷¹ he portrayed Pericles as breaking down in tears while defending Aspasia against a charge of impiety,⁷² described Aspasia's cross-examination of Xenophon and his wife on the subject of marriage,⁷³ and claimed that Aspasia made the hitherto undistinguished Lysicles (with whom she lived briefly after the death of Pericles) the first man in Athens.⁷⁴ The Alexandrian poet Hermesianax included the (so far as we know) previously unattested tale of Socrates's passion for Aspasia in a rather heterogeneous catalogue of the loves of famous poets and philosophers in the third book of his lost elegiac poem, the *Leontion*.⁷⁵ Herodicus of Babylon, a pupil of Crates who flourished around 125 B.C. and wrote an anti-Platonic tract entitled *Pros ton philosôkratên* ("A Reply to the admirer of Socrates"), named Aspasia as Socrates's *erôtodidaskalos*, his instructor in love, and quoted a poem addressed to Socrates and supposedly composed by Aspasia, in which she alternately advises and chaffs Socrates about his passion for Alcibiades.⁷⁶ Plutarch, Lucian, Maximus of Tyre, and Athenaeus all refer to Aspasia as Socrates's teacher;⁷⁷ Maximus of Tyre and Synesius of Cyrene maintain specifically that she taught Socrates erotics.⁷⁸ Aspasia's name continues to be associated

with that of Socrates's throughout antiquity⁷⁹ and eventually seems to become interchangeable with Diotima's.⁸⁰ All of these passages as well as many others have been assembled and exhaustively analyzed by a recent *Quellenforscherin*, Barbara Ehlers, who derives virtually the entire tradition from Aeschines's lost dialogue, the *Aspasia*. In that dialogue, as she laboriously reconstructs it—on very slender but not unreasonable evidence—Aspasia did not appear in person; rather, Socrates cited her words and her example alike in order to demonstrate that *erôs* can be an instrument of moral improvement, a positive moral force in its own right (whether Socrates portrayed Aspasia as his instructor in erotics, as Ehlers claims, is, on my reading of the evidence she presents, much more doubtful).⁸¹ If Ehlers is correct, Plato's Diotima may be a stand-in for Aeschines's Aspasia⁸²: Plato did not wish to bring forward the same personage to fill the role of erotic expert because he wanted to distinguish his own views from those of Aeschines's; in the course of taking over and transforming Aeschines's erotic doctrine, he also displaced and replaced Aspasia with Diotima.⁸³

I find this line of reasoning both attractive and helpful. It explains, first of all, Plato's choice of an otherwise obscure woman to play what is after all a crucial role in his dialogue and it accounts for his rather perfunctory characterization of her: Plato can afford not to particularize her personality because she is filling a function previously performed by a much more notorious personage. Whereas Aspasia fits comfortably into the design of the *Menexenus* (since the topic of that dialogue is political rhetoric and Aspasia had a reputation for making her lovers into successful politicians), she would be quite out of place in the *Symposium*, where Plato clearly wants to put some distance between his own outlook on *erôs* and the customary approach to that topic characteristic of the Athenian demimonde.⁸⁴ Secondly, this way of answering our question puts Diotima's gender in the forefront of the explanatory strategy: rather than making her gender the consequence of some other, putatively more important, consideration, it implies that Plato had a primary reason for preferring a woman, any woman, to be the mouthpiece of his erotic theory. But in order to replace Aspasia with another woman who was *not* a *hetaira*, Plato had to find an alternate source of erotic authority, another means of sustaining his candidate's claim to be able to pronounce on the subject of erotics. In the *Phaedrus* he appeals to "the fair Sappho" as a fount of erotic wisdom (235c); in the *Symposium*, however, he looks to religious sources of authority, to which some Greek women were believed by the Greeks to have access.⁸⁵ This solution suggests, then, that Diotima's vocation is to be explained at least in part by reference to her gender, not *vice versa*. Plato makes Diotima a prophetess (or appeals to the historical figure of a prophetess), on this view, because he has already decided to make her a woman: he was not obliged to make her a woman because he had resolved to articulate his doctrine through the medium of a seer.

5. Diotima, Divination, and Platonic Metaphysics

For if Plato had wanted to invoke a religious authority, he need not have chosen a woman: he had manifold devices ready to hand for putting the prestige of traditional wisdom at the service of his own philosophy. In fact, Plato's usual strategy for introducing positive doctrines into his dramatic dialogues is to ascribe them to the authority of some more august personage than Socrates. The briefest survey of Plato's writings reveals the extraordinary flexibility and adaptability of this transparent subterfuge. In the *Meno*, for example, Socrates ascribes the doctrine of recollection to certain unnamed "men and women who are learned in divine matters [*sophoi peri ta theia pragmata*]"—specifically, "those priests and priestesses who have made it their business to be able to give an account [*logos*] of the functions they perform" (81ab).⁸⁶ In the *Charmides*, similarly, Socrates, pretending on the advice of Critias to know a cure for the ailment afflicting their handsome interlocutor, claims to have acquired medical expertise, while on military duty in Thrace, from one of the doctors who attend the god-king Zalmoxis (156d–157c, 158b, 175e).⁸⁷ Elsewhere, Socrates appeals for authority to Er (*Republic* 614b ff.), to "one of the sages" (*Gorgias* 493a1–2), to "some clever fellow, perhaps a Sicilian or an Italian" (*Gorgias* 493a5–6), and—in the case of the myth in the *Phaedo*—simply to "someone" (108c8; cf. *Theaetetus* 201c8, e1). In short, Socrates is quite eclectic about the authorities he cites and is hardly averse to revealing the sources of his wisdom. "Once I learn something," he declares in the *Hippias Minor*, "I never turn around and deny it or pretend that what I've learned is my own discovery. Rather, I praise my teacher for being a wise man and I make clear what I learned from him" (372c; cf. *Republic* 338b). Diotima's function in the *Symposium*, then, is but one variation on the recurring theme of Socratic modesty and Platonic anonymity.⁸⁸ As Paul Friedländer remarks, Diotima is "the highest embodiment, as it were, of the more or less vague 'somebody' whom [the Platonic Socrates] frequently posits playfully in conversation as another person in order to conceal himself ironically"; but in the case of Diotima, Friedländer adds, "there is much disagreement on the meaning and purpose of this creation."⁸⁹

But it might be objected that "the meaning and purpose" behind Diotima's vocation and gender are not as obscure as Friedländer pretends. Diotima's identity as a prophetess is directly connected, on one view, to the precepts she articulates: like the doctrine of recollection in the *Meno*, the doctrine of erotic aspiration in the *Symposium* properly demands to be entrusted to the authorship of a man or a woman who is learned in divine matters and able to give an account of his or her sacred function.⁹⁰ Diotima certainly fits that description neatly enough: not only does her record of successful intervention⁹¹ on behalf of the Athenians vouch for her expertise in divine matters,

but she also provides, in the form of her doctrine of daemonic mediation, a lucid account of the commerce between men and gods which is designed to explain the operation of Greek religious practice in general and of her own specialty, *mantikê*, in particular (202e–203a). To the extent that Plato characterizes Diotima at all, he characterizes her as a prophetess and he makes much of her identity as someone skilled in the mantic arts: at one point, in response to her declaration that the aim of erotic desire is “procreation in the beautiful, both in body and in soul,” Socrates remarks that it would take the art of prophecy (*manteia*) to figure out what Diotima means (206b9). Socrates, in fact, has good reason to be baffled, as Diotima subsequently acknowledges when she employs vocabulary proper to the mystery religions in order to represent her own teaching, implicitly at least, as a revelation: she speaks of the possibility of Socrates’s being “initiated into erotics” and she divides her own disquisition into two parts which she associates, respectively, with the Lesser and Greater Mysteries (209e5–210a4)—the former having to do with the erotic aim (207a5–209e4), the latter with the erotic object (210a4–212a7; cf. *Gorgias* 497c). To all these hints in the *Symposium*, moreover, one might add Socrates’s teaching in the *Phaedrus* that *mantikê* and *erôs* are akin to one another insofar as they are both forms of beneficial madness (244a–245c).⁹²

Plato’s mantic imagery is replete with philosophical significance. For despite what Plato’s Eryximachus alleges (to his disgrace),⁹³ Platonic erotics is not a science but a mystery—at least, for those who have yet to complete the mystical ascent to the Forms.⁹⁴ To study erotics is not merely to explore the phenomenon of sexual attraction but to inquire into the structure of reality; only a correct understanding of the nature of being will unlock the secret of our immortal longings.⁹⁵ As Plato’s Aristophanes establishes by means of his famous myth in the *Symposium*, the ultimate aim of sexual desire is not what most ancients and moderns alike believe it to be (namely, sexual intercourse) but something else, something that may well remain an impenetrable mystery even to the most experienced lovers. Those who spend their entire lives together “could not say what they wish to gain from one another,” according to Aristophanes. “No one would think it was sexual intercourse, or that for the sake of sex each partner so earnestly enjoys his union with the other. But it is clear that the soul of each lover wants something else, which it is not able to say, but it divines (*manteuesthai*) what it wants and hints at it” (192cd). Aristophanes’s lovers, in other words, stand just as much in need of prophecy to reveal to them what they really desire as Socrates stands in need of it when he is questioned by Diotima about the erotic aim. And just as Socrates greets Diotima’s definition of the erotic aim, once she unveils it, with wonder and amazement (208b7), even so, Aristophanes hypothesizes, if Hephaestus were to approach two lovers while they were in bed having sex and offer to fuse them into a single being, they

would instantly recognize the true goal of their desire (192de). Without the benefit of such a privileged glimpse into the deep structures of their motivation,⁹⁶ both the most experienced lovers and Socrates himself might remain ignorant of the reason and purpose behind their own *erôs*—what Aristophanes and Diotima alike call its *aition* (192e9; 207e7; cf. 207b7, c7).

In the *Republic*, Socrates uses language similar to that employed by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* in order to describe our difficulty in apprehending the nature of the Good: it is “what every soul pursues, that for the sake of which it does everything, something whose existence it divines (*apomanteuesthai*),” but cannot seize upon; rather, the soul remains “at a loss and unable to grasp adequately what it is” (505de). The ultimate erotic object, which Diotima reveals to be the Beautiful and which is quite possibly just another aspect of the Good, poses analogous problems for the human understanding: the project of identifying the precise idea or value instantiated in all the objects of one’s longing may take one, unaided, a lifetime to complete—as Proust later discovered. Plato is not, of course, the first Greek to use Eleusinian imagery in speaking of *erôs*—that honor goes, perhaps, to Euripides, who referred in a lost play to those “uninitiated [*atelestoi*] in the labors of *erôs*”⁹⁷—but his emphasis on the mysterious quality of erotic experience and on the difficulty of penetrating to an accurate understanding of it reflects a systematic element in his thinking. If philosophy is a form of revelation, then the mystery religions can provide a metaphor for philosophical enlightenment. But in order to prevent Socrates from appearing in the *Symposium* to be some sort of fake mystagogue—which is how Aristophanes had portrayed him in the *Clouds* (e.g., 143)—Plato needed to transfer the initiatory function proper to a professor of desire from Socrates to his alter ego, Diotima. And if Diotima is to qualify as an official representative of the Eleusinian mysteries,⁹⁸ according to this argument, she will need to be a woman.

But that, unfortunately, is where this line of reasoning breaks down: it serves very well to explain why Plato clothes his metaphysical theories in imagery borrowed from the Eleusinian mysteries—indeed, much more might be said about the correspondences between the mysteries and Plato’s erotic doctrines, both of which share an interest in the processes of birth, death, and renewal, in the miracles of sex and immortality—but it doesn’t explain why Diotima is a woman. For unlike the general run of classical Greek cults devoted to various female deities, and unlike other rites of Demeter in particular, the Eleusinian mysteries were dominated by male officials.⁹⁹ That, in fact, is why Alcibiades and his friends could be accused of parodying the mysteries, each of them taking a separate priestly role, at an (all-male) symposium (Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 19.1).¹⁰⁰ To be sure, there were also women associated with the cult—one priestess of Demeter and Kore, two hierophantids, and possibly a priestess of Pluto, to be exact, plus the regular priestesses of the sanctuary¹⁰¹—but the chief officers were drawn

exclusively from the (male) members of two prominent Attic *genê*, or clans, and some, if not all, of the *mystagôgoi*, the priests who actually performed the rites of initiation and inducted people into the cult, were also men. Diotima's gender, then, is not properly construed as making a specific reference to the Eleusinian mysteries,¹⁰² and Plato can hardly have borrowed a woman from earlier Socratic tradition simply in order to justify his practice of crowding Eleusinian images around his metaphysical "re-structuring of what there is on the scaffolding of what is more and less real."¹⁰³

Now that we are, at last, at the end of this digression, it may be useful to take stock of our progress. I am arguing (1) that the mysterious nature of Platonic *erôs* is not sufficient in itself to explain Plato's choice of a female spokesman for his erotic theory and (2) that Plato need not have emulated Aeschines and Antisthenes in making Socrates's conversation with a woman the occasion of an erotic discourse if it hadn't suited his own purposes: Plato is so resourceful in creating specious authorities for Socrates to cite that, if he had wished, he could well have imputed Diotima's doctrine to some male sage or other whom Socrates need never have met (thus sanitizing the paedagogic relation of any possible paederastic overtones) but whose account of *erôs* he had somehow managed to learn—that is, by the same devious and indirect means, whatever they were, that he managed to absorb the myth of the *Gorgias*, the myth of the *Phaedo*, or the myth of Er in the *Republic*.

One might even argue, for that matter, that it very nearly *doesn't* suit Plato's purposes to introduce a woman into the *Symposium* to play the role of a philosophical authority: Plato has gone out of his way, after all, from the very outset of the narrative, to make Agathon's drinking-party an unusually masculine affair. Greek symposia, of course, were by definition men's parties¹⁰⁴ but, as Xenophon's own *Symposium* (to say nothing of Attic vase-paintings) illustrates, there was plenty of occasion for women to be present at them, though in no very dignified capacity, to put it delicately.¹⁰⁵ At Agathon's, by contrast, the customary orgy of intoxication and copulation has been ruled out from the start and the flute-girl has been sent off to pipe to herself or to the women inside (176a–e); the female sex makes its reappearance at Agathon's only when Alcibiades staggers in with another flute-girl in tow (212cd). Furthermore, the first two speakers at the symposium take special care to disqualify both *erôs* for women and women's *erôs* from figuring among the topics of the proposed encomia: Phaedrus goes to ingenious lengths to devalue Alcestis's *erôs* for her husband in comparison to Achilles's *philia* for his comrade Patroclus (whom Phaedrus considers Achilles's *erastês*, or active lover), just as he disparages Orpheus's *erôs* for his wife (179b–180b),¹⁰⁶ while Pausanias restricts women as objects of *erôs* to the devotees of "vulgar Aphrodite" (181b2);¹⁰⁷ paederastic *erôs* is also singled out for (ironic) praise by Aristophanes (191e6–192a7). Alcestis is rehabili-

tated only by Diotima (208d) who, like Plato's Aristophanes, detaches the value of *erôs* from the gender of both its subject and its object (she has no more use than does Pausanias for the physical love of men for women: 208e–209e).¹⁰⁸ Far from picturing Socrates as amusing his friends by describing his private relations with a famous woman, as Aeschines apparently did and as Plato himself did in the *Menexenus*, the author of the *Symposium* has taken care to banish women from the dramatic setting as well as from the topics of conversation in that dialogue.¹⁰⁹ The ultimate effect is to achieve the maximum possible contrast when Socrates conjures up his encounter with Diotima, rendering her erotic authority so intrusive and making what she says so inappropriate to the terms of the foregoing discussion that it is hard to account for Plato's decision to include her *simply* by supposing that he was somehow wedded to an earlier tradition in Socratic literature or that for some reason he had to employ a prophetess at all costs in order to articulate his erotic doctrine. Those considerations may help to explain Diotima's presence, but they are not sufficient in and of themselves to account for it. I think it is time to confront the programmatic importance for Platonic doctrine of Diotima's being . . . not a surrogate for Aspasia, not a prophetess, not an Eleusinian priestess, but a woman.

6. Erotic Hierarchies and Platonic Reciprocities

I venture to suggest that Diotima's gender serves to thematize two of the most distinctive and original elements of Plato's erotic theory. By the very fact of being a woman, that is, Diotima signals Plato's departure from certain aspects of the sexual ethos of his male contemporaries and thereby enables him to highlight some of the salient features of his own philosophy. For Plato's philosophical explorations of erotic desire issue in a model of erotic dynamics that, in at least two respects, corresponds to the model, or models, of desire constructed as "feminine" according to the terms of the sex/gender system of classical Athens.

It would be wrong to ascribe to the Athenians a unitary, let alone a consistent, notion of women—a single discourse of "the feminine." As in many societies, the ideology of gender in classical Athens was subject to the shifting requirements of masculine interest; it therefore had room in it for all sorts of contradictory notions. Plato's philosophical exploitation of that ideology capitalizes on two, mutually conflicting, aspects of it. According to one Greek stereotype, women are less able than men to resist pleasures of all sorts; they enjoy sex too much, and once initiated into the delights of sex they become insatiable and potentially treacherous, ready to injure their own children—if necessary—or to introduce a suppositious child into their husband's household. According to a second stereotype, women do not possess (as men do) a free-floating desire that ranges from one object to

another, stimulated in each case by beauty, nobility, or other cultural values advertised by the object; rather, their desire is conditioned by their physical nature, which aims at procreation and needs to fulfill itself by drawing off substance from men.¹¹⁰

In Plato's conception (male) *erôs*, properly understood and expressed, is not hierarchical but reciprocal; it is not acquisitive but creative. Plato's model of successful erotic desire effectively incorporates, and allocates to men, the positive dimension of each of these two Greek stereotypes of women, producing a new and distinctive paradigm that combines erotic responsiveness with (pro)creative aspiration.¹¹¹ I shall take up each of these two points in turn, treating the first in this section of my essay, the second in the following section. In order to appreciate the nature and extent of Plato's originality in each department, we must begin by measuring how far the sort of desire defined and prescribed by his erotic theory departs from the conventional understanding and experience of male desire in classical Athens.

I have already argued in the title essay of this collection that sex, as it is represented in classical Athenian documents, is a deeply polarizing experience: constructed according to a model of penetration that interprets "penetration" as an intrinsically unidirectional act, sex divides its participants into asymmetrical and, ultimately, into hierarchical positions, defining one partner as "active" and "dominant," the other partner as "passive" and "submissive." Sexual roles, moreover, are isomorphic with status and gender roles; "masculinity" is an aggregate combining the congruent functions of penetration, activity, dominance, and social precedence, whereas "femininity" signifies penetrability, passivity, submission, and social subordination. In this socio-sexual system, the position of the junior partner in a pederastic relationship was, as Foucault has persuasively argued,¹¹² a necessarily problematic one. The Athenian ethos governing the proper sexual enjoyment of citizen youths attempted to negotiate the resulting difficulties by denying the youths a significant share in the experience of *erôs* in their relations with adult men. It was clearly unacceptable, after all, for the future rulers of Athens to exhibit any eagerness or desire to submit themselves to anyone, especially to their (eventual) peers.¹¹³

Xenophon is explicit: in his *Symposium*, Socrates emphasizes that "the boy does not share in the man's pleasure in intercourse, as a woman does; cold sober, he looks upon the other drunk with sexual desire" (8.21).¹¹⁴ The accuracy of Xenophon's characterization of the conventional Athenian *attitude*—if not of the social and sexual *actuality* concealed by it—is overwhelmingly confirmed by the pictorial representations of male homosexual behavior on Attic vases as well as by a variety of ancient literary sources. In Aristophanes's *Clouds*, for example, Just Argument, the defender of traditional morality, declares that a well-bred youth would never do anything to

encourage the interest of a lover, such as immodestly meeting his gaze: “he would not go about speaking in a forced, effeminate voice to his lover, acting as his own procurer with his eyes” (979–80).¹¹⁵ Since the Greeks located the source of *erôs* in the eyes (of the beloved, usually), and since they considered eye-contact between lover and beloved the erotic stimulus *par excellence*,¹¹⁶ the respectable youth’s downcast eyes signify his refusal to engage in the opening phases of an erotic relationship. Aristotle, for whom reciprocity is a necessary ingredient of friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1155b27–1156a5), refuses to consider the erotic relationship between man and boy a species of friendship on precisely these grounds¹¹⁷:

[In the case of friendships based on pleasure and utility,] the friendships are most enduring when they [the two friends] get the same thing—e.g. pleasure—from each other, and, moreover, get it from the same source, as witty people do. They must not be like the erotic lover and the boy he loves. For these do not take pleasure in the same things; the lover takes pleasure in seeing [gazing at] his beloved, while the beloved takes pleasure in being courted [or served] by his lover. When the beloved’s bloom is fading, sometimes the friendship fades too; for the lover no longer finds pleasure in seeing his beloved, while the beloved is no longer courted by the lover. Many, however, remain friends if they have similar characters and come to be fond of each other’s characters from being accustomed to them. . . . [In the category of friendships between contraries] we might also include the erotic lover and his beloved, and the beautiful and the ugly. Hence an erotic lover also sometimes appears ridiculous, when he expects to be loved in the same way as he loves; that would presumably be a proper expectation if he were lovable in the same way, but it is ridiculous when he is not (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1157a3–14, 1159b11–19, trans. Irwin, with my amplifications).

Perhaps the first hint of Plato’s departure from the hierarchical norm governing sexual relations between males can be glimpsed in Aristophanes’s speech in the *Symposium*: as Foucault has observed, Aristophanes’s notion that each lover is half of a former whole individual makes the desire of each human being formally identical to that of every other, and so militates against the asymmetry of conventional paederastic relations.¹¹⁸ Note, however, that Aristophanes avoids drawing such a conclusion from his own myth: in classical Athenian society, as he portrays it, male homoerotic individuals are philerasts and paederasts *by turns* (191e6–192b5). Plato makes a clean break with the conventional ethos of Athenian paederasty only in the *Phaedrus*, when Socrates describes the dynamic of attraction obtaining in a proper relationship between lover and beloved:

[When lover and beloved are together, a flood of passion] pours in upon the lover; and part of it is absorbed within him, but when he can contain no more the rest flows away outside him; and as a breath of wind or an echo, rebounding from a

smooth hard surface, goes back to its place of origin, even so the stream of beauty turns back and re-enters the eyes of the fair beloved; and so by the natural channel it reaches his soul and gives it fresh vigour, watering the roots of the wings and quickening them to growth: whereby the soul of the beloved, in its turn, is filled with love. So he loves, yet knows not what he loves: he does not understand, he cannot tell what has come upon him; like one that has caught a disease of the eye from another, he cannot account for it, not realising that his lover is as it were a mirror in which he beholds himself. And when the other is beside him, he shares his respite from anguish; when he is absent, he likewise shares his longing and being longed for; since he possesses that counter-love which is the image of love, though he supposes it to be friendship rather than love, and calls it by that name. He feels a desire, like the lover's yet not so strong, to behold, to touch, to kiss him, to share his couch: and now ere long the desire, as one might guess, leads to the act (255c–e, trans. Hackforth).

What the beloved experiences or ought to experience, according to Plato, is not *philia* but *erôs*, specifically an *anterôs* (“counter-love” in Hackforth’s translation)—that is, an *erôs* in return for *erôs*, which is an image or replica (*eidôlon*) of his lover’s *erôs*. Because *erôs*, on the Platonic view (as we shall see), aims at procreation, not at possession, and so cannot be sexually realized, Platonic *anterôs* does not lead either to a reversal of sexual roles or to the promotion of sexual passivity on the part of the beloved. Rather, Plato all but erases the distinction between the “active” and the “passive” partner—or, to put it better, the genius of Plato’s analysis is that it eliminates passivity altogether: according to Socrates, both members of the relationship become active, desiring lovers; neither remains a merely passive object of desire. By granting the beloved access to a direct, if reflected, erotic stimulus and thereby including him in the community of lovers, Plato clears the erotic relation between men and boys from the charge of exploitativeness and allows the beloved to grow philosophically in the contemplation of the Forms.¹¹⁹ Thus, the way is cleared for a greater degree of reciprocity in the expression of desire and in the exchange of affection. The younger man is now free to return his older lover’s passion without shame or impropriety.

Plato dramatizes his theory of erotic reciprocity in the Socratic dialogues, where relations between Socrates and the members of his circle abundantly illustrate the reciprocal dynamic of Platonic *erôs*. Some of the dialogues culminate in the actual conversion of a beautiful youth to an active and aggressive erotic role: the *Charmides* ends with its title character threatening playfully to “force” (i.e., rape) Socrates if the latter resists his pursuit (176b ff.);¹²⁰ in the *Alcibiades Major*, Socrates’s youthful interlocutor ruefully concedes that “we shall in all likelihood reverse the usual pattern, Socrates, I taking your role and you mine” (135d).¹²¹ More is at stake in these turn-arounds than subtleties of erotic psychology: Plato’s remodeling of the homoerotic ethos of classical Athens has direct consequences for his program

of philosophical inquiry. Erotic reciprocity animates what Plato considers the best sort of conversations, those in which each interlocutor is motivated to search within himself and to say what he truly believes in the confidence that it will not be misunderstood; mutual desire makes possible the ungrudging exchange of questions and answers which constitutes the soul of philosophical practice. Reciprocity finds its ultimate expression in dialogue.¹²²

Plato's (male) fellow-citizens, accustomed as they were to holding one another to an aggressively phallic norm of sexual conduct—and, consequently, to an ethic of sexual domination in their relations with males and females alike—preferred not to acknowledge or to understand mutuality in *erôs*. To be sure, they kept themselves in line by taunting one another with the scare-figure of the *kinaidos*, of the man who will do anything for pleasure and actively enjoys submitting himself to sexual domination by other men.¹²³ And a few widely scattered texts admit that some men actually enjoy “passive” sex.¹²⁴ But, for the most part, erotic reciprocity was relegated to the province of women, who were thought capable of both giving and receiving pleasure in the sexual act at the same time and in relation to the same individual, and whose enjoyment of sex is, at least according to Teiresias in Hesiod's famous myth,¹²⁵ far more intense than that of their male partners.¹²⁶ Like the interlocutors in a Socratic dialogue, women are both active and passive at once, both subjects and objects of desire: as Phaedrus and Diotima agree in Plato's *Symposium*, Alcestis's heroism proceeds from her active *erôs* (179b–180b, 208de).¹²⁷ Only women, according to the customary Greek idiom, normally experience *anterôs*¹²⁸: Xenophon's Socrates, speaking of a newly and happily married man, says that he desires and is desired in return by his wife (*erôn tês gynaikos anteratai*: *Symposium* 8.3).¹²⁹ The “passive” role, defined in relation to a conception of “activity” modeled on the act of penetration, is an indignity for a man to assume and a symptom of moral incapacity for him to enjoy, but on the Greek view it is natural and naturally pleasurable to a woman. The positive pleasure women take in passivity contributed to justifying, in masculine eyes, their socially as well as sexually subordinate position in Athenian society, for their enjoyment of the passive role signified to Greek men that women are naturally constituted in such a way that they actually *desire* to lose the battle of the sexes.

In the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle accordingly classes the predilection in males for the “passive” role in intercourse among those dispositions which are disease-like or a result of habituation, since they are pleasurable without being naturally so, although he does not deny the possibility that in some cases nature may be the cause of such degeneracy. He then goes on to observe that “no one could describe as ‘lacking in self-control’ those for whom nature is the cause, any more than (*sc.* we so describe) women (*lit.*) because they do not mount sexually but are mounted” (1148b26–35).¹³⁰ What is a sign of moral failure or incontinence in a man is

natural to a woman. Let us not put words into Aristotle's mouth: he says that no one *blames* women for liking to be penetrated because it is natural for them to like it. But in this very predisposition to passivity it is possible to measure, or so Aristotle seems to imply, the extent of the inferiority of women's nature to men's. Similar notions appear in Aristotle's biological writings and they continue to be echoed today by reputable sexologists, psychoanalysts, gynaecologists; and philosophers.¹³¹

Plato's contemporaries routinely contrasted male and female *erôs* in terms of hierarchy and reciprocity, respectively. Recall Xenophon's emphasis on the psychological distance between the man's inflamed desire and the boy's sober disinterest: "the boy does not share in the man's pleasure in intercourse, *as a woman does*. . . ." That remark is well illustrated by Attic vase-painting, according to Mark Golden, who has made an exhaustive study of this particular theme:

Women on the vases often appear to enjoy sex. But passive homosexual partners show no sign of pleasure; they have no erection and usually stare straight ahead during intercourse. . . . Women in vase paintings are depicted in a wide variety of sexual postures and are often shown being penetrated from behind. Women are sometimes shown leaning on or supported by their male lovers, physically dependent on them. . . . Passive males, however, regularly face their partners. They are upright; it is the active partner who bends his knees and (often) his head.¹³²

A corresponding emphasis on women's sexual and psychological responsiveness to men emerges from James Redfield's discussion of the place and function of *kharis* in the Greek ideology of marriage (e.g., Semonides, fr. 7.86–89 [West]).¹³³

After the classical period, the contrast between women and boys as sexual objects in terms of the relative degrees of their responsiveness to adult males becomes more explicit.¹³⁴ "I don't have a heart that's wild for boys," writes the Hellenistic epigrammatist Meleager, who goes on to ask, "What delight is there in mounting men if it involves taking [*sc.* pleasure] without giving [any]? After all, one hand washes another . . ." (*Palatine Anthology* 5.208 = Meleager, 9 [Gow-Page]). The remainder of the text is corrupt, but enough is decipherable to indicate that Meleager made the love of women an explicit point of contrast. Similarly Ovid, in the second book of his *Art of Love*, issued the following proclamation: "Let the man and woman derive an equal part of pleasure from the act; I hate couplings that do not gratify each of the two partners: that is why I am less inclined to the love of boys" (682–84).¹³⁵ Plutarch, championing the cause of *erôs* in marriage and emphasizing the benefits of sexual love, notes that impregnation cannot take place unless both parties have been moved or affected by one another; he goes on to

contrast the union of husband and wife with unerotic partnerships that are merely mixtures of separate elements, like Epicurus's atoms which collide but do not fuse (*Moralia* 769ef; also, 140ef; 142e–143a).¹³⁶ In the *Erôtes*, a work included in the Lucianic corpus that belongs to the same genre as Plutarch's work just cited, the contrast between the love of women and the love of boys is even more explicit; the advocate of the former argues as follows:

Why do we not pursue those pleasures that are mutual and bring delight to the passive and to the active partners? . . . Now men's intercourse with women involves giving like enjoyment in return. For the two sexes part with pleasure only if they have had an equal effect on each other—unless we ought rather to heed the verdict of Teiresias that the woman's enjoyment is twice as great as the man's. And I think it is honourable for men not to wish for a selfish pleasure or to seek to gain some private benefit by receiving from anyone the sum total of enjoyment but to share what they obtain and to requite like with like. But no one could be so mad as to say this in the case of boys. No, the active lover, according to his view of the matter, departs after having obtained an exquisite pleasure, but the outraged one suffers pain and tears at first, though the pain relents somewhat with time and you will, men say, cause him no further discomfort, but of pleasure he has none at all (27; trans. Macleod).

The most entertaining and sophisticated version of this debate occurs in the second book of *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, a Greek romance by Achilles Tatius. I quote, at obscene length, the remarks of the advocate of women from the forthcoming unexpurgated translation of Achilles Tatius by John J. Winkler:

A woman's body is well-lubricated in the clinch, and her lips are tender and soft for kissing. Therefore she holds a man's body wholly and congenially wedged into her embraces, into her very flesh, and her partner is totally encompassed with pleasure. She plants kisses on your lips like a seal touching warm wax; and if she knows what she is doing she can sweeten her kisses, employing not only the lips but the teeth, grazing all around the mouth with gentle nips. . . .

When the sensations named for Aphrodite are mounting to their peak, a woman goes frantic with pleasure, she kisses with mouth wide open and thrashes about like a mad woman. Tongues all the while overlap and caress, their touch like passionate kisses within kisses. Your part in heightening the pleasure is simply to open your mouth.

When a woman reaches the very goal of Aphrodite's action, she instinctively gasps with that burning delight and her gasp rises quickly to the lips with a love-breath, and there it meets a lost kiss, wandering about and looking for a way down: this kiss mingles with the love-breath and returns with it to strike the heart. The heart then is kissed, confused, throbbing. If it were not firmly fastened in the chest it would follow along, drawing itself upwards to the place of kisses.

Schoolboys are hardly so well-educated in kissing, their embraces are awkward, their love-making is lazy and devoid of pleasure (2.37).

While the speaker emphasizes the pleasures accruing to the lover from intercourse with a female partner, he makes it clear that her responsiveness contributes a great deal to her lover's enjoyment. Nor does the advocate of paederasty have much to say against that specific argument:

His kisses, to be sure, are not sophisticated like a woman's, they are no devastating spell of lips' deceit. But he kisses as he knows how—acting by instinct, not technique. Here is a metaphor for a boy's kiss: take nectar, crystallize it, form it into a pair of lips—these would yield a boy's kisses. You could not have enough of these: however many you took, you would still be thirsty for more, and you could not pull your mouth away from his until the very excess of pleasure frightened you into escaping (2.38).

Here all the emphasis is on the subjective sensations of the lover: he does not tell us what, if anything, his partner experiences or what it is like to be the recipient of a male lover's amorous attentions. The description is utterly self-referential and narcissistic: the boy registers on the lover's consciousness only insofar as he is the vehicle for a certain sort of private pleasure and the occasion of insatiable desire on the lover's part.¹³⁷

Sexual relations *between* women may reveal with particular clarity the mutuality of erotic responsiveness that is supposed to characterize women's eroticism—if, that is, we are to believe the somewhat idealized promotional advertisement devised by Simone de Beauvoir: "Between women love is contemplative; caresses are intended less to gain possession of the other than gradually to re-create the self through her; separateness is abolished, there is no struggle, no victory, no defeat; in exact reciprocity each is at once subject and object, sovereign and slave; duality becomes mutuality."¹³⁸ Some such construction of female eroticism seems to have commended itself to Plato, the only writer of the classical period to speak about sexual desire between women (*Symposium* 191e2–5);¹³⁹ at least, Plato valued it insofar as he could find in it an image of the reciprocal erotic bond that unites philosophical lovers who are jointly engaged in conversation and the quest for truth (cf. Plato, *Letter* 7.341cd). The ideal interlocutor, exemplified by Socrates, experiences desire and arouses it in others, and the members of his circle are equally encouraged to take an active, aggressive part in the pursuit of knowledge even as they continue to serve as objects of desire and sources of inspiration to others (cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.8.11). Since any beautiful soul can serve as a mirror for any other, reciprocal desire need not be confined to the context of physical relations between the sexes (which Plato, at least according to one reading of *Phaedrus* 250e, appears to have despised).¹⁴⁰ The

kind of mutuality in *erôs* traditionally imputed to women in Greek culture could therefore find a new home in the erotic dynamics of Platonic love.*

7. Erotic Acquisition and Platonic Procreation

I now turn to the second feature of Plato's erotic doctrine that sets it apart from the conventions governing male eroticism in classical Athens and assimilates it instead to a "feminine" paradigm—and, hence, is appropriately figured by a female authority on erotics. In a separate study,¹⁴¹ I have argued that it was characteristic of the ancient Athenians to regard sexual desire as an appetite and, hence, to construe it (by analogy with hunger and thirst) as an acquisitive passion, a longing for the possession and consumption of a desirable object. Now Lesley Ann Jones, in an important forthcoming paper, has shown that such a conception of *erôs*—with its emphasis on the object-directed, acquisitive nature of desire—represented to the Athenians a specifically "masculine" model of erotic dynamics. Female desire, as the Greeks constructed it, tended by contrast to be related to the physiological economy of the female body—to the body's needs, rather than the mind's desires; hence, it is not aroused by individual objects but is governed instead by the requirements of woman's physical constitution with its generative functions.¹⁴² The unreconstructed Socrates proves to be typically "masculine" in his outlook, and that is exactly where he goes wrong when Diotima initially interrogates him: in response to her question about what the lover of the beautiful desires, Socrates answers, predictably enough, "To have it" (204d). Diotima is not satisfied with that answer and eventually reveals to Socrates that "*erôs* is not for [*sc.* the possession of] the beautiful, as you think." "What is it for, then?" he asks. "It is for birth and procreation in the beautiful," she replies (206e).¹⁴³

This is not the place to explicate Diotima's doctrine of erotic procreation. It will be sufficient merely to note that Diotima's heterodox definition of the

* It is, I suppose, an embarrassment for the interpretation proposed here that Diotima's conversation with Socrates culminates in a mini-lecture by Diotima (208c1–212a7), though her lecture does conclude with a question and her discourse does occur in the context of a living conversation. Perhaps it is not necessary for Diotima to enact as well as to figure reciprocity; perhaps, too, the encounter is more reciprocal than it appears to us: that is, we know what the sexual version of erotic reciprocity looks like, so we are able to recognize it easily enough, but how do we detect the intellectual version? What does reciprocal intellectual eroticism look like to someone standing outside its incandescent circuit? Is it not possible that the very fact that Diotima's encounter with Socrates gave rise to a discourse that continues to be passed by word of mouth from one person to another over the generations and that awakens a desire to hear it in those who only have heard about it (*Symposium* 172a–173e, 215cd)—might this not testify to the intellectual eroticism animating, in a reciprocal dynamic, the two original interlocutors whose passionate conversation we are still prolonging? (So Kranz [1926/b], 323.)

erotic aim has momentous consequences for Plato's view of erotic intentionality: "For the picture of man as pleasure-chaser," Gregory Vlastos has observed, Diotima "substitutes an image of man as creator, producer, new-maker."¹⁴⁴ The notion that sexual desire aims not at physical gratification but at moral and intellectual self-expression, at the release of the lover's own creative energies, is one to which Plato remains deeply committed. It reappears in the *Phaedrus*, where spoken discourses that are written in the souls of the listeners become the speaker's sons (*hyeis*: 278a6),¹⁴⁵ and it figures most notably in a famous passage of the *Republic*, where the philosopher's *erôs* enables him to achieve intellectual intercourse with "what really is," to beget (*gennan*) intelligence and truth, and thereby to cease at long last from travail (*ôdis*: 490b).¹⁴⁶ In the *Theaetetus*, moreover, Socrates describes himself as a midwife and represents his dialectical method as a technique for delivering other people's ideas (148e–151d, 157cd, 160e–161b, 184ab, 210b–d).¹⁴⁷

Such an understanding of the function and purpose of erotic desire not only diverges from the conventional Athenian outlook in general: it also departs specifically from the traditional masculine paradigm of erotic pursuit and capture (most familiar to us from the lyric poetry of the archaic period)¹⁴⁸ and structures itself instead according to a model of erotic responsiveness whose central terms are fecundity, conception, gestation, and giving birth. Plato's theory of erotic procreativity, in short, is oriented around what his contemporaries would have taken to be a distinctively feminine order of experience.¹⁴⁹

To be sure, the metaphor of intellectual and masculine conception is—if not exactly conventional—at least not entirely original with Plato, although it does not seem to be attested earlier than Aristophanes's *Clouds*: in that play, Strepsiades is reproached by one of Socrates's disciples for kicking the door of the Thinkery and thereby causing the miscarriage of a newly conceived plan (135–37).¹⁵⁰ In the *Frogs* a great poet is characterized as one who is "fecund" (*gonimos*), although the term is not immediately perspicuous and requires some elucidation (96–98); later in the same play, Aeschylus claims that a poet must beget (*tiktein*) expressions that are equal in magnitude to the sentiments and thoughts they express (1058–59). Similarly, Cratinus, defending himself in *The Wineflask* from the charge of drunken decrepitude, maintains that no man who drinks water can produce (*tiktein*) anything decent.¹⁵¹ And in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* a character speaks of mental reflection as gestating (*kyein*: 5.4.35). But nothing in the previous literary tradition approaches Plato's imagery in the *Symposium*. Plato turned what was a mere figure of speech—or even, perhaps, a dead metaphor¹⁵²—into an extended allegory and an explicit programme, elaborating it deliberately and systematically as no one had done before.¹⁵³ Or, to be more precise, what Plato did was to take an embedded habit of speech (and thought) that seems to have become detached from a specific referent in the female body and, first, to re-

embody it as “feminine” by associating it with the female person of Diotima through her extended use of gender-specific language, then to *disembody* it once again, to turn “pregnancy” into a mere *image* of (male) spiritual labor, just as Socrates’s male voice at once embodies and disembodies Diotima’s female presence.¹⁵⁴

Some scholars, however, have doubted that Plato’s language images what the Greeks took to be a characteristically feminine experience;¹⁵⁵ they point to the widespread Greek tendency to regard the male parent as the only generative agent and to treat the female parent as a human incubator—a notion supported by the god of medicine himself in Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*,¹⁵⁶ though implicitly repudiated by Plato in the *Timaeus*.¹⁵⁷ Recent studies of Greek embryology, however, have shown that a major, if not the dominant, theme in ancient thinking on this topic emphasized the contribution which the female makes to conception;¹⁵⁸ not only are Alcmaeon, Parmenides, Democritus, Empedocles, and Epicurus, among others, reported by some sources (of widely varying quality) to have held that women emit seed,¹⁵⁹ but the Hippocratic writers and the anonymous author of a gynaecological treatise transmitted to us as the tenth book of Aristotle’s *History of Animals* went so far as to insist that woman’s sexual pleasure is necessary for conception because unless she achieves an orgasm she will not ejaculate her seed.¹⁶⁰ Aristotle’s contrary view, articulated in *On the Generation of Animals*,¹⁶¹ proved to be short-lived in antiquity: it was abandoned by Strato of Lampsacus, Herophilus, Erasistratus, and was ridiculed by Galen,¹⁶² although it subsequently regained its credibility.¹⁶³ More decisive than the academic disputes of the Greek physicians, however, is the kinship structure of classical Athens: the law permitted half-brother and -sister to marry only if they were descended from different mothers, thereby in effect denying the claim of the Aeschylean Apollo that the father is the only true parent.¹⁶⁴ The thesis that Plato’s contemporaries generally disbelieved that women played any contributory role in conception cannot plausibly be maintained.

But there are even more telling indications that what is imaged by Diotima’s figurative language in the *Symposium* is indeed what the Greeks considered a feminine, gender-specific experience. The clue is provided not merely by the recurrent, if banal, reference to procreation but by Diotima’s delineation of a peculiar type of eroticism in which the distinction between sexual and reproductive functions has been totally abolished. Diotima’s argument that *procreation* is the *aim* of erotic *desire* depends, after all, on a firmly unconscious assimilation of sexual to reproductive activity. Hence the difficulty of translating the central terms in her vocabulary: does *kyein* mean “to be pregnant,” “to conceive,” or merely “to be fertile or fecund”?¹⁶⁵ Does *tokos* mean “conception,” “procreation,” or “giving birth”? In certain passages Plato’s emphasis seems to fall on the sexual dimension: thus, we need beauty in order to procreate, for no erotic impulse is evoked in us by ugliness

(206cd, 209b); in the presence of the ugly we “contract” and “shrivel up,” Diotima declares, employing an almost embarrassingly anatomical metaphor to describe the soul’s revulsion from the formless (206d).¹⁶⁶ But in other passages the emphasis is on the procreative dimension, the connection between the two being furnished by the Greek verb *tiktein*, “to generate,” and its derivatives, which cover both sexual and reproductive functions.¹⁶⁷ Thus, when we attain puberty, our nature desires *tiktein*, which it is not able to do in an ugly medium but only in a beautiful one; moreover, the intercourse of man and woman is a *tokos* (206c3–6;¹⁶⁸ cf. 209b1–2). The climax to which beauty summons us, however, is manifestly not of a sexual kind, as every student of “Platonic love” knows: beauty arouses only those who are *already* pregnant, and intercourse culminates not in orgasm but in giving birth (206cd, 208e–209e). The two strands of sex and reproduction are so thoroughly interwoven in Diotima’s discourse that they are virtually impossible to disentangle, as the following passages illustrate: “When what is pregnant draws near to the beautiful,” Diotima tells us, it rejoices, “engenders [*tikteî*], and gives birth [*gennai*],” and thereby is “released from great travail [*ôdis*]” (206de); the young man who is spiritually pregnant with moral virtue “cherishes beautiful bodies rather than ugly ones *because he is pregnant*” (209b4–5). In short, Diotima speaks as if erotic desire consisted in an excitation brought on by pregnancy and climaxing in the ejaculation of a baby.¹⁶⁹

Even the figure of Diotima seems to span and unite in itself these two dimensions of human experience: she reveals, in addition to her powerful grasp of erotic phenomenology, something of a maternal dimension. When Socrates asks her what philosophers are, if neither ignorant nor wise, she replies chidingly, “Why such a thing is obvious even to a child!” (204b1), and throughout their conversation she gently incites her interlocutor with the goad of indulgent raillery, in the customary fashion of Greek mothers ancient and modern.¹⁷⁰

Diotima’s systematic conflation of sexual and reproductive functions indicates that Plato has shifted, intellectually and mythopoetically, to a realm of desire conventionally marked as female. For women’s *erôs*, as the Greeks constructed it, did not aim now at (non-procreative) pleasure, now at reproduction, as men’s did, but was intimately bound up with procreation.¹⁷¹ As Plato puts it in the *Timaeus*,¹⁷²

there is in women a living animal passionately desirous of making children [i.e., the womb, which,] when it remains fruitless for a long time past its season, bears its irritation harshly, wandering all about the body, blocking the channels of the breath and not allowing them to breathe, thereby driving the body to extremes of desperation and producing all sorts of illnesses, until the desire and passion [*erôs*] of man and woman drive them together, plucking down the fruit from the branching trees [of their reproductive systems] and sowing in the furrow of the womb living creatures unformed and invisible because of their smallness (91cd).

Woman's sexual nature desires to give birth;¹⁷³ the womb is an *animal avidum generandi*.¹⁷⁴ That the womb is "eager for procreation" is also a view enshrined in the gynaecological writings of the Hippocratic corpus, which treat women's sexuality only as it bears on the dynamics of reproduction¹⁷⁵ and which persistently conflate sexual and reproductive functions—prescribing sexual intercourse for diseases of the womb and curing gynaecological complaints with aphrodisiac drugs.¹⁷⁶

The amalgamation of women's sexual and reproductive functions is not simply an article of faith among certain authorities, however, but is implicitly rooted in ancient habits of thought—specifically, as the passage from the *Timaeus* illustrates, in the age-old homology between woman and earth. That the earth is female and that women are earthy, especially in comparison with men, seems to be a feature of Greek cosmology;¹⁷⁷ as Aristotle says, "Male is what we call an animal that generates into another, female that which generates into itself. That is why in the universe as a whole the earth's nature is thought of as female and mother, while the sky and sun or such others are called begetters and fathers" (*Generation of Animals* 716a14–17).¹⁷⁸ The same outlook is written into the *engyê*, the Athenian betrothal ceremony, in which the father of the bride says to her future husband, "I give you this woman for the plowing of legitimate children."¹⁷⁹ It reappears in the symbolic language of the ritual practices associated with such common Greek cults as the Thesmophoria, which represents the relation of husband to wife as a domestic form of cultivation homologous to agriculture whereby women are tamed, mastered, and made fruitful.¹⁸⁰ The notion also surfaces in the tendency of the natural philosophers and medical writers to insist that women are physically colder and wetter than men¹⁸¹ and require constant irrigation by men to keep their bodies healthy;¹⁸² in the absence of men, women's sexual functioning is aimless and unproductive, merely a form of rotteness and decay, but by the application of male pharmacy it becomes at once orderly and fruitful.

It may be typical of patriarchal cultures to view women's sexual capacity *functionally*—as a means of producing children for men—rather than as an autonomous domain of desire, a subjectivity of one's own. At any rate, the reluctance of modern readers to discern in Diotima's collapsing of the distinction between sexual and reproductive functions an appeal to what the Greeks took to be a specifically feminine order of experience may signify something of the extent to which contemporary male attitudes to female eroticism coincide—in this one respect, at least—with their ancient ideological forebears. For recent expressions of an outlook similar to that exhibited by classical Greek masculinist discourse one need look no further than the enlightened discipline of modern gynaecology, one of whose exponents has written, "The fundamental biologic factor in women is the urge of motherhood balanced by the fact that sexual pleasure is entirely secondary

or even absent.”¹⁸³ Now that, to be sure, was set down during the dark days before the Kinsey Reports (when, *no doubt*, it was true); but even after twenty years of scientific progress the author of an article on “Psychology and Gynaecology,” published in the third edition of a standard collection of essays on clinical obstetrics, could still write, “Childbirth should be the crowning fulfilment of a woman’s *sexual* development; her physical and psychological destiny have been achieved.”¹⁸⁴ In fact, *at least half* of the gynaecological textbooks published in the United States between 1963 and 1972 (when my information runs out) maintain that the sex drive in women aims primarily at reproduction, not at sexual pleasure.¹⁸⁵ The refusal to separate sexual pleasure and reproduction in women seems also to underlie the traditional insistence of modern gynaecologists on the reality and importance of the vaginal orgasm, an insistence that continued for decades after Kinsey claimed to observe that portions of the vagina contain no nerve endings and therefore lack all sensation; thus, one expert writing in 1962 sternly warns women to leave the clitoris alone: “If there has been much manual stimulation of the clitoris it may be reluctant to abandon control, or the vagina may be unwilling to accept *the combined role* of arbiter of sensation and vehicle of reproduction.”¹⁸⁶ This emphasis on the merging in female eroticism of the otherwise isolated impulses to sexual pleasure and to reproduction casts into a modern medical idiom what our evidence indicates to have been at least a prominent theme in Greek constructions of female *erôs*.¹⁸⁷

8. Plato’s Erotic Theory and the Politics of Gender

Plato’s exploitation of this theme raises a complicated and interesting question about the cultural politics of gender. For the interdependence of sexual and reproductive capacities is in fact a feature of male, not female, physiology. To be sure, neither in men nor in women does sexual desire necessarily *aim* at procreation. But it is only in men, not in women, that reproduction depends on sexual desire and that reproductive function cannot be isolated from sexual pleasure (to the chagrin of Augustine and others),¹⁸⁸ whereas in women orgasm and reproduction are entirely independent, as even Aristotle and Galen maintained.¹⁸⁹ Plato, then, would seem to be constructing female desire according to a male paradigm—as his ejaculatory model of female procreativity suggests; he would seem, in fact, to be interpreting as “feminine” and allocating to men a form of sexual experience which is masculine to begin with and which men had previously alienated from themselves by defining as feminine. In other words, it looks as if what lies behind Plato’s erotic doctrine is a double movement whereby men project their own sexual experience onto women only to reabsorb it themselves in the guise of a “feminine” character. This is particularly intriguing because it suggests that in order to facilitate their own appropriation of what

they take to be the feminine men have initially constructed “femininity” according to a male paradigm while creating a social and political ideal of “masculinity” defined by their own putative ability to isolate what only women can *actually* isolate—namely, sexual pleasure and reproduction, re-creative and procreative sex.

The determination of men to acquire the powers they ascribe (whether correctly or incorrectly) to women is a remarkably persistent and widespread feature of male culture. For many years now a number of anthropologists and their psychoanalytic collaborators have been detailing the various strategies by which males, in many different cultures, arrogate to themselves the power and prestige of female (pro)creativity: these strategies range from rites of ceremonial mutilation, in which adolescent boys, in the course of separating themselves from their mothers, inscribe female characters into their own flesh,¹⁹⁰ to the couvade—the stylized enactment by males of false pregnancy, labor, and giving birth coincident with the actual pregnancy and labor of a female family member (a practice that seems to have survived in Western societies in the form of certain psychosomatic illnesses that typically afflict the husbands of pregnant women)¹⁹¹—to, it has been claimed, the modern, male-dominated professions of obstetrics and gynaecology, in which men superintend and make themselves responsible for the successful realization of women’s fertility.¹⁹²

The most elaborate deployments of male pseudo-procreative imagery often occur (appositely enough, for the purposes of Platonic comparisons) in a paederastic context—specifically, in secret male initiation rituals (best studied in New Guinea) that feature sexual contact between men and boys.¹⁹³ The explicit ideological basis for such rituals is the notion that men are not born but made, that boys will not become men through a natural process of unassisted growth but must be transformed into men by means of intricate machinations (including sexual contact with grown men) designed to transfer physical prowess and social identity from one generation of males to the next. Thus, ritual paederasty represents the procreation of males by males: after boys have been born, physically, and reared by women, they must be born a second time, culturally, and introduced into the symbolic order of “masculinity” by men. The processes by which one generation of males gives birth to the succeeding one are explicitly thematized as female reproductive functions: ritual nose-bleeding, ear-piercing, scarification of the tongue, or penile incision signifies male menstruation,¹⁹⁴ for example, and the oral insemination of youths by older males is represented as breast-feeding.¹⁹⁵ It seems that when men go about reproducing themselves socially, socializing and acculturating the new generation of youthful males, they tend to claim for themselves a reproductive capacity analogous to that of women. Behind their claim, it is often alleged, lies a sense of male inadequacy in the face of women’s awesome power to generate new life. Men strive to compensate

for their perceived lack, for the absence of a womb, on this view, by means of a kind of cultural sublimation —by appropriating procreative functions from women and reconstituting them ritually in the form of cultural practices.¹⁹⁶ Such procedures have been interpreted, however, with at least equal plausibility, not as an expression of “male envy” but as a male strategy for controlling reproductive politics.¹⁹⁷

In the light of all this ethnographic evidence, Diotima’s metaphors of male pregnancy and parturition would appear to be not only not incongruous but, indeed, to be virtually inevitable, given the paederastic setting of Plato’s *Symposium*. Diotima’s figurative language has in fact been situated in just such a cross-cultural context by Barry D. Adam, a Canadian sociologist. Noting that in Melanesia sex between men and boys is represented as “one among many ways in which men reproduce themselves in opposition to women,” Adam interprets Greek paederasty as a crucial element in “the social reproduction of male culture” which functions as “a second stage of parenting that succeeds the mother-child relationship.”¹⁹⁸ Nothing so elaborate and explicit as the New Guinea initiation rituals has been documented in the case of classical Greece, to be sure, but some evidence for the existence of roughly similar rites in the archaic period has come down to us.¹⁹⁹ Bachofen found examples of the couvade attested in ancient sources;²⁰⁰ moreover, Greek males often voice a longing for the possibility of male asexual generation²⁰¹—seeming to fear, correspondingly, the prospect of female parthenogenesis (and, hence, male uselessness).²⁰² And Greek men’s fantasies about being able to give birth to themselves and their own institutions without the complicity of women usually involve the coöptation of “the feminine” in some suppressed capacity or other—think of Athena and the Erinyes in Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*.²⁰³

Diotima’s function in the *Symposium* invites a similar interpretation. Diotima’s feminine presence at the originary scene of philosophy, at one of its founding moments, contributes an essential ingredient to the legitimation of the philosophical enterprise; her presence endows the paedagogic processes by which men reproduce themselves culturally—by which they communicate the secrets of their wisdom and social identity, the “mysteries” of male authority, to one another across the generations—with the prestige of female procreativity. Diotima’s erotic expertise, on this view, constitutes an acknowledgment by men of the peculiar powers and capacities of women; thus, Diotima is a woman because Socratic philosophy must borrow her femininity in order to seem to leave nothing out and thereby to ensure the success of its own procreative enterprises, the continual reproduction of its universalizing discourse in the male culture of classical Athens.²⁰⁴

But Plato’s figuration of the feminine gender by means of the combined sexual and reproductive imagery which Diotima uses to convey the central tenets of her erotic theory—and which, in turn, uses Diotima to guarantee

the allegedly feminine character of the experience it images—does not simply represent an instance of male cultural imperialism, a typical attempt by men to colonize female “difference” in order to claim it for a universalizing male discourse. For at the same time as Plato invests Diotima with an erotic and prophetic authority, his construal of her “difference” takes back what it gives, denying in effect the autonomy of women’s experience. We can distinguish two strategies that combine to cancel Diotima’s “difference.” First, as we have seen, Plato’s figuration of Diotima’s supposed “femininity” reinscribes male identity in the representation of female “difference”: it is a projection by men of their own experience onto women, a male fantasy intended for internal consumption—a version of pastoral. Second, to construct woman as the presence of a quite specific male lack is to deny her difference just as surely as it is to construct her as a lack of male presence: such a procedure does not truly acknowledge otherness, does not admit the possibility of an autonomous experience different from that of men, but treats woman only as “the inversed *alter ego* of the ‘masculine’ subject or *its* complement, or *its* supplement.”²⁰⁵ Hence, when Diotima speaks, she does not speak for women: she silences them.²⁰⁶

The radical *absence* of women’s experience—and, thus, of the actual feminine—from the ostensibly feminocentric terms of Plato’s erotic doctrine should warn us not to interpret Plato’s strategy simplistically as a straightforward attempt to appropriate the feminine or as a symbolic theft of women’s procreative authority. For Plato’s appropriation of the Other works not only by misrecognizing the Other but by constructing “the other” as a masked version of the same—or, to borrow the language of Julia Kristeva, it works by constructing a “pseudo-Other.”²⁰⁷ To study the various strategies by which men simultaneously construct and coöpt female “difference,” in other words, is not at all to study men’s attitudes towards (real) women; rather, it is to study the male imaginary, the specular poetics of male identity and self-definition.²⁰⁸ The pseudo-feminocentrism implicit in Plato’s staging of Diotima’s discourse is, as Nancy Miller (writing about a modern variety of pseudo-feminocentrism) puts it, “a strategy elaborated to translate . . . masculine self-affirmation”; “‘woman,’” she adds, “is the legal fiction, the present absence that allows the male bond of privilege and authority to constitute itself within the laws of proper circulation” in “the phallogentric . . . economies of representation.”²⁰⁹

The use of “women” to license male speech is a striking feature of classical Greek high culture. As Helene Foley has recently emphasized, “Although women in fact play virtually no public role other than a religious one in the political and social life of ancient Greece, they dominate the imaginative life of Greek men to a degree almost unparalleled in the Western tradition. . . . Greek writers used the female—in a fashion that bore little relation to the lives of actual women—to understand, express, criticize, and experiment

with the problems and contradictions of their culture.”²¹⁰ What I have tried to suggest is that the silence of actual women in Greek public life and the volubility of fictional “women” (invented by male authors) in Greek cultural expression do not represent opposed, contradictory, or paradoxical features of classical Greek society but, on the contrary, are connected to one another by a strict logical necessity. Greek men effectively silenced women by speaking for them on those occasions when men chose to address significant words to one another in public, and they required the silence of women in public in order to make themselves heard—and to impersonate women—without impediment.²¹¹ As Agathon (not Plato’s Agathon, this time, but Aristophanes’s) says, explaining the relation between his composition of tragedies about women and his habit of dressing in women’s clothes, “Whatever we don’t have, we capture by *mimêsis*”—that is, by imitation or representation (*Thesmophoriazusae* 155–56).²¹²

The essential element in Plato’s staging of “femininity,” similarly, is a mimetic transvestitism.²¹³ What is crucial for Plato’s strategy is not that Diotima present a woman’s perspective but that she represent it in a form that is recognizable to men. This insight casts a new light on the ethnographic evidence cited above and offers a way of rereading it that more closely fits the features of Plato’s text. According to this new interpretation, the viability of the procedures by which men reproduce themselves culturally depends on a paradoxical combination of success and failure in their assumption of “feminine” attributes. Even in the midst of mimicking menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and breast-feeding, the male actors must share with their audience the understanding that their procreative performances are symbolic, not real—that nose-bleeding is *not* menstruating, that oral insemination is *not* breast-feeding. The point of all those rites, after all, is to turn boys into men, not into women: for the cultural construction of masculinity to succeed it is necessary that the process intended to turn boys into men be genuinely efficacious, no less “generative” than female procreativity itself, but it is also necessary that the men who do the initiating retain their identity as men—something they can only do if their assumption of “feminine” capacities and powers is understood to be an impersonation, a cultural fiction, or (at the very least) a mere analogy. The cultural traffic in “masculine” and “feminine” characters, in other words, is predicated on the basic non-confoundability of the genders.²¹⁴ The “feminine” identity acquired by men in the course of performing rites of initiation therefore must be an incomplete identity, and its status as a fiction—as an impersonation rather than a total appropriation of “the feminine”—must be exposed by a selective puncturing of the illusion, either by a dropping of the mask or by a thematizing of its status as mask. In this context, however, exposure is not demystification: it is not a strategy designed simply to make visible the contradictions in the cultural discourse of gender so as to explode the various meanings

(such as “masculinity,” “femininity”) constituted by it. On the contrary: the very act of self-exposure contributes an essential element to the successful operation of the symbolic procedures whereby “masculine” and “feminine” identities circulate within a continuous system of male self-representation.

9. Sexual Politics and Textual Strategies

That Diotima’s “femininity” is illusory—a projection of male fantasy, a symbolic language employed by men in order to explain themselves and their desires to one another across the generations—is similarly acknowledged by Plato. The textual strategies of the *Symposium* reveal Diotima’s fictionality as much as they conceal it. Plato hints that Socrates has—if not simply invented Diotima out of whole cloth—at least shaped the doctrine he ascribes to her to suit the needs of the present occasion. Socrates avails himself of Diotima’s authority, first of all, to depict *Erôs* as a barefoot philosopher, thereby portraying the god as a mythic embodiment of himself: in effect, Diotima teaches that *Erôs* by its very nature is intrinsically Socratic (203d). Alcibiades later confirms this identification of Socrates and *Erôs* by describing Socrates in terms that recall the ones Socrates himself had used to describe *Erôs* (219e–221b).²¹⁵

Next, Socrates has Diotima rebut the view of *erôs* that Aristophanes had articulated a few moments earlier, on the same evening as his own speech (205d–206a). To be sure, Socrates is not so artless as to have Diotima allude by name to his “future” interlocutor: she merely claims to have heard a version of what turns out to be Aristophanes’s account of *erôs* from other unspecified sources (she introduces her refutation with the vague but nonetheless pointed phrase, *kai legetai men ge tis logos*: “some people say. . .”). But Aristophanes is not fooled: Plato’s narrator tells us that when Socrates had finished speaking Aristophanes tried to say something *inasmuch as Socrates [not Diotima] had mentioned him by referring to his speech in his own speech* (212c). The sudden eruption of Alcibiades into the scene saves Socrates from having to confront Aristophanes’s implicit challenge to Diotima’s authenticity, but the suspicion has already been planted in the reader’s mind. Similarly, Socrates claims that his earlier conversation with Diotima dovetails so perfectly with the present discussion that Diotima’s arguments can be used to complete his reply to Agathon; conversely, the premises agreed upon by Socrates and Agathon can be imported intact into the logical foundation on which Diotima builds her own lesson in erotics.²¹⁶ Unless the author of the *Symposium* has been so beguiled by his own artistry that he doesn’t notice these strains on the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief in Diotima’s autonomous existence, he must actually want to let Socrates’s mask slip and to expose “Diotima” as an effect of Socratic ventriloquism.²¹⁷

Another hint that Diotima may be not a person but a mask, a “feminine”

costume designed from the start to be worn by men, can be found in the implied contradictions of the *Poros* and *Penia* myth. In the story of the birth, or origin, of *Erôs*, which Diotima narrates, *Penia* ("Poverty" or "Want") seduces *Poros* ("Means") and thereby conceives *Erôs*, who derives his ugliness and poverty from his mother, his enthusiasm for investigation and his resourcefulness in setting traps for his love-objects from his father (203b2–d8). Cleverness (*sophia*) is an attribute of *Poros* (204b6)—who is, in any case, the son of *Mêtis*, "cunning intelligence" (203b3)—and yet it is *Poros* who is tricked by *Penia*. An analogous reversal of roles appears to be played out in the narrative of the *Symposium*. Diotima, a source of wisdom, represents something of the plenitude of *Poros*, which is what Socrates represents to his fellow symposiasts, although compared to Diotima both he and they are figures of *Penia*.²¹⁸ Agathon, like Alcibiades, is aware of his lack and, like Alcibiades, believes he can draw off some of Socrates's wisdom by seducing and possessing him: "Come here, Socrates," Agathon urges his guest, "and recline next to me, so that I can lay hold of you and thereby enjoy the benefit of that piece of wisdom which occurred to you while you were on the porch; for it's clear that you found it and have it." Socrates, of course, rebukes Agathon, declaring his own wisdom to be as tenuous as a dream and explaining that, in any case, it is not in the nature of wisdom to flow from one person to another like liquid flowing from a fuller vessel to an emptier one (175c–e).²¹⁹ And yet, despite Socrates's denials, some such hydraulic transaction seems to have taken place between himself and Diotima. Socrates appears to have drawn off some of Diotima's wisdom, to have been filled sufficiently full of it to make him, by his own admission, an expert in erotics (177d7–8, 198d1–2) and to make his soul a repository of at least some of the golden adornments which Alcibiades discovers in it.²²⁰ Diotima, however, has been effectively emptied in the process; she is entirely used up in the course of her brief appearance in the dialogue. Depleted by Socrates, she vanishes, but Socrates's erotic wisdom and his entrancing speeches endure (as the elaborate narrative frame of the dialogue attests), remaining in perpetual circulation in Athenian society.²²¹

10. Conclusion

"Have you any notion how many books are written about women in the course of one year?" Virginia Woolf asked the audience at a women's college in 1928. "Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?"²²² Four years later, as if in response to these queries from his English publisher, Sigmund Freud began his hypothetical lecture on "Femininity" (a work recently made notorious by the brilliant commentary of Luce Irigaray), as follows.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,— . . . Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity— . . . Nor will *you* have escaped worrying over this problem—those of you who are men; to those of you who are women this will not apply—you are yourselves the problem."²²³

In the light of Woolf's questions and Freud's formulation, I shall appear to have been engaged throughout this essay in wrestling with a man's problem about a man's text: my own ostensible involvement with women's issues will be seen to have concealed—and, thereby, in a sense, to have disclosed—a more fundamental preoccupation with issues of great traditional importance to men. I had begun this paper by promising to identify those positive values conventionally associated with women by Plato's contemporaries that Plato might have sought to actualize through his sponsorship of Diotima. In the end, however, I have had relatively little to say about women but quite a lot to say about men. I have uncovered Diotima's absence rather than her presence: that very absence, moreover, has proven to be the empty center around which my entire discussion has revolved. Diotima has turned out to be not so much a woman as a "woman," a necessary female absence—occupied by a male signifier—against which Plato defines his new erotic philosophy. And my own interpretation of Plato has exemplified the same strategy, insofar as it has appropriated a feminist perspective for the purpose of legitimating its own discourse about the erotics of male culture.

But if I have reproduced, in effect, the traditional male strategy of speaking *about* women by speaking *for* women (the very strategy that served to erase Diotima's feminine presence from Plato's *Symposium* in the first place), if I have recovered not Diotima's presence but her absence and thereby obscured the real political significance of Plato's decision to represent a woman surpassing men in the practice of philosophy (a decision doubtlessly not unconnected to Plato's admission of women to his own Academy),²²⁴ I can claim to have done so as part of an effort to expose, to illustrate, and to reverse the assumptions articulated with such deliberately devastating candor by Freud in the opening gambit of his lecture. To be explicit, what I have tried to do is to suggest that whenever there is a question of understanding women, it is usually *men*, not women, who (in Freud's wry formulation) are themselves the problem—who constitute, that is, the very enigma they think they are trying to penetrate. For "femininity" must continue to remain a mystery so long as it is defined wholly by reference to "masculinity"—whether as a lack of male presence or as the presence of a male lack.

Thus, Plato's textual practice, along with the tradition of scholarly commentary generated by it (including my own commentary), dramatizes the originary and inescapable contradiction within any discourse about "sexual difference"²²⁵ that constructs such "difference" asymmetrically—making one gender (guess which?) the peculiar locus or site of "difference"—and that

thereby ultimately denies “sexual difference” altogether, reconstituting it instead as what Teresa de Lauretis calls sexual (*in*)*difference*.²²⁶ Even a would-be feminist analysis, such as my own, which aims to establish and to distinguish, or to salvage and preserve, what is authentically “feminine” from inauthentic male constructions of “the feminine,” must succumb to the same tendency so long as it clings to an essentialist notion of female “difference”: each progressive attempt to transcend traditional male-oriented discourses about “sexual difference” (in the hope of being able to specify what is *genuinely* “feminine”), or to invent a “politically correct” space outside such discourses, supposedly free from structures of domination (whether social or epistemological), simply reproduces at a higher level of abstraction the very asymmetry from which it had sought to escape. Instead of repeating vain attempts to transcend this originary contradiction, then, I have tried to elaborate and enlarge it, identifying and analyzing some of the various strategies by which men continually reinscribe male identity in their representations of female “difference” (as illustrated by Plato’s representation of Diotima as well as by scholarly representations of that representation). For it is precisely by working within such contradictions, I believe, that feminist criticism can create its most effective opportunities.

To conclude that Plato has in effect reinscribed male identity in his representation of female difference is not to answer the question I have been asking throughout this essay but to move well beyond it. I have argued that Plato found in “woman” a figure for representing two properly philosophical (i.e., *male*) values: reciprocity and creativity. Gender enters the text of Plato’s *Symposium*, then, not as it enters the text of Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals*—not, that is, as a subject of inquiry in its own right—but as part of a larger figurative project whose aim is to represent the institutional and psychological conditions for the proper practice of (male) philosophy. Women’s *erôs*, as Plato understands it, is evidently *like* the attitudes and dispositions exhibited by the ideal (male) philosopher who is engaged in the search for truth. “Diotima,” in short, is a trope for “Socrates”: “she” is a figure by means of which Plato images the reciprocal and (pro)creative erotics of (male) philosophical intercourse. That strategy of figuration, however, is distinctive to the *Symposium*; in the *Phaedrus*, by contrast, where Socrates is permitted to assert *explicitly* that the most philosophical sort of male lovers are animated by a reciprocal erotic desire (255c–e, quoted and discussed above), Plato can afford largely to ignore women: he is able to talk about erotic reciprocity directly and does not need to represent it figuratively.

But if Diotima is not a woman but a “woman,” it no longer makes any sense to inquire into her gender. For “woman,” too, turns out to be a trope: in the representational economy of Plato’s text (as elsewhere), “woman” is always a sign of something else—of a spurious sexual “difference” that men (as they see themselves) at once lack and possess. Nothing in herself,

“woman” is that pseudo-Other who both makes good what men want and exempts men from wanting anything at all; she is an alternate male identity whose constant accessibility to men lends men a fullness and totality that enables them to dispense (supposedly) with otherness altogether. “Femininity” is not referential, then, but figural: it is structured like a trope in the sense of being constructed as the opposite of “masculinity” according to the logic of “same-but-different” which, in classical rhetoric, defines the operations of simile and metaphor.²²⁷ To mistake this construct for “the authentically feminine” would therefore amount to the most elementary of rhetorical errors, which is to confuse a figural with a literal denomination. But it is hard to see how any representation of “the feminine” that defines it, in essentialist terms, as the opposite of “the masculine” will not be vulnerable to a similar critique. If we follow this logic, we find that from the perspective of the male world, at least, there is no such thing as authentic femininity. “Woman,” and “man,” are figures of male speech.²²⁸ Gender—no less than sexuality—is an irreducible fiction.²²⁹ And so to ask why Diotima is a woman is to pose a question that ultimately has no answer.

gynê ("woman"); it occurs for the first time alone, as a noun, in Herodotus, 2.135.5, and in Aristophanes, *Peace* 440.

- 160 See Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.11, for a detailed picture of this world and its economic base.
- 161 Cratinus, fr. 241; cf. Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*, 24.7.
- 162 The Greek system of classification, distinguishing as it does between a *pornê*, *hetaira*, and *pallakê*, seems to correspond exactly to the system documented by Moodie, esp. 245, for South African townships in the twentieth century, which distinguishes between a *nongogo*, *intombi*, and *ishweshwe*. Since the South African context also features paederasty, it merits special attention for the purposes of comparison with the classical Greeks, and Moodie himself elaborates some of the analogies.
- 163 Anaxilas, fr. 22: Dover (1978), 21.
- 164 Menander, *Samia* 392–93.
- 165 Machon, 451 (Gow); Athenaeus, 13.584c: see Gow, 120, *ad* Machon, 340.
- 166 Herter, 83.
- 167 *OGIS* 2.674: Pomeroy (1975), 141.

6 Why is Diotima a Woman?

An earlier version of this paper was presented at a meeting of the Women's Classical Caucus in December, 1981; subsequent, progressively revised versions were read at a series of conferences (starting in January, 1986)—"Perspectives on Love, Marriage, Friendship, and Sexuality in Antiquity" at the National Humanities Center; "Bodies and Minds: Sexuality and Desire in the Ancient World" at Princeton University; "Interpreting Plato" at the University of California, Santa Cruz; "Images of Women in Ancient Greece" at Emory University—as well as at the Stanford Humanities Center, Babson College, and the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard University. I am grateful to the organizers and audiences of these events for their interest as well as for their suggestions, many of which have been incorporated here. I wish to thank in particular Maria-Viktoria Abricka, Harry Berger, Jr., Ernestine Friedl, Jean H. Hagstrum, Judith P. Hallett, Myra Jehlen, Madeleine H. Kahn, Eva C. Keuls, David Konstan, John P. Lynch, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Parry, Cynthia B. Patterson, Richard Patterson, Ruth Perry, Sarah B. Pomeroy, Daniel L. Selden, Nicholas D. Smith, Gregory Vlastos, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin for much stimulating, sustained, and pertinent advice. The original impetus for this paper came from Susan Amy Gelman: I have specified the nature of my debt to her in note 10, below. An abbreviated version of this essay appears in Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin, 257–308.

- 1 Lowenstam, 89–91, 99–100, questions the validity of the refutation; Penwill, 156, questions the sincerity of Agathon's concurrence in it.
- 2 On Plato's conception of paederastic *orthotês*, see Kranz (1926/a), 445.
- 3 See Plato, *Symposium* 177d, 198d; *Lysis* 204bc; *Phaedrus* 227c, 257a; *Theages* 128b; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.6.28; *Symposium* 8.2; Aeschines Socraticus, fr.11 (Dittmar). On Socratic eroticism, see Friedländer, I, 44–50; Guthrie, 390–98; Dover (1978), 153–60; Vlastos (1987), 88–93; Kahn.
- 4 E.g., Thomas Gould, *Platonic Love* (London, 1963), 193, n. 34: "By choosing a woman he [i.e., Plato] avoided the suggestion that the wise one was the youthful Socrates' real 'Platonic' lover." (What Plato actually wished to rule out, to be precise, was the possibility

that Socrates and his instructor in erotics had been sexual, rather than merely “‘Platonic,’ ” lovers.)

- 5 On the cults of Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos at Athens, see Hug-Schöne, 41–43; Halperin, “The Democratic Body” (in this volume), Appendix 1. The association of the Athenian cult of Aphrodite Ourania with prostitution, to which Krell (1972), 444, has newly called our attention, depends on late and tenuous evidence.
- 6 Dover (1978), 91, summarizes Pausanias’s argument; see Penwill, 145–47, for a sympathetic treatment of Pausanias’s general outlook.
- 7 Harry Neumann, “On the Sophistry of Plato’s Pausanias,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 95 (1964), 261–67, argues this point rather crudely; see Krüger, 95–104, esp. 99–101. Eryximachus’s definition of *erôs* as a harmonious accord between opposite principles that are hateful to one another (186de and ff.) is both an elaboration, as Eryximachus himself acknowledges (186b), and a *reductio ad absurdum* of Pausanias’s formulation of Uranian paederasty; Aristophanes and Agathon, by contrast, argue that *erôs* obtains between likes (192a5, 195b5), not—as Pausanias and Eryximachus had assumed—between unlikes: see Brentlinger, 9–17; Krüger, 105–06. For Plato’s outlook on the traditional controversy over whether love is a relation between likes or unlikes, see Glidden.
- 8 Plato thus allays “our suspicion that cunning self-interest might be the mainspring of arguments for what is essentially a male homosexual foundation for philosophical activity,” according to Dover (1980), 137. See Nussbaum (1979), 145; (1986), 177: “Here, then, Socrates too, takes a mistress: a priestess instead of a courtesan, a woman who prefers the intercourse of the pure mind to the pleasures of the body, who honors (or is honored by) the divine rather than the merely human”; Zeitlin (1985), 88: “In Plato’s counter-drama the female as benevolent priestess has no cause of her own to protect and no conflictual interests to distract her. She is then free to lend whole-hearted support to the cause of men and to transmit to them a wisdom without tragic pain that may become entirely theirs.”
- 9 I have been assuming throughout that the erotic doctrines enunciated by Diotima are genuinely Platonic: for a sensible discussion of the supporting evidence, see Kranz (1926/a), 438–39. That assumption was called into question by Wilamowitz, I, 380; II, 169–76; it has been challenged more recently, if (to my mind) less persuasively, by Neumann and by Rosen, 225, who takes Diotima’s speech to represent an instance of the “noble lie.” The most powerful assault on Diotima’s authority has been mounted by Nussbaum (1986), 165–99, esp. 197–98, who elevates Alcibiades to the rank of rival authority and claims that Plato wishes us to choose between them (Nussbaum’s interpretation is followed closely—if silently—by Freeman); I have tried to argue against some aspects of that view in Halperin (1985), 183–84.
- 10 Singer, 79, remarks on the oddity of Plato’s appeal to Diotima in the dramatic context of the *Symposium*. I wish to thank Susan Amy Gelman, my student of many years ago, for patiently insisting to me that a positive account of Diotima’s gender must be given, not merely a negative one.
- 11 For a discussion of this imagery, its literalness, its antecedents in earlier Greek thought and expression, see James M. Edie, “Expression and Metaphor,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 23 (1963), 538–61, esp. 553–57; Morrison, 51–55; Neumann, 39; Vlastos (1981), 21n., 424; Burnyeat, 14, nn. 4, 5; Plass; Pierre Guiraud, *Sémiologie de la sexualité: Essai de glosso-analyse* (Paris, 1978), 78–83. For the “pregnancies” of Zeus as possible precedents, see the references to Hesiod’s *Theogony* in note 201, below.

- 12 Cf. Plass, 48: “. . . the notion of pregnancy does seem in some respects rather awkward in defense of pederasty. . . .” I shall argue below, however, that in a traditional paederastic context procreative language is not only not out of place but is, on the contrary, almost inevitable.
- 13 *Symposium* 206c1, 7, d4, 7–8; 208e2; 209a1–2, b1, 5, c3.
- 14 *Symposium* 206e1.
- 15 *Symposium* 206c8–d1, 3, 5, 7, e5, 7–8; 207a8–9, b2, d3, 7, e4; 208a1; 209a4, b2–4, c3–4, 8, d7, e2–3; 210a7; 211a1, b3. I have followed Kranz (1926/a), 443, in treating *genman* and *genesthai* in Diotima’s vocabulary as active and passive expressions, respectively, of the same idea; but see Wilamowitz, II, 172.
- 16 *Symposium* 206b7, c3–4, 6, d5, e5; 209a3, b2, c3; 210c1, d5; 212a3, 5.
- 17 *Symposium* 208b5 (*apoblastêma*); 209c5–e4 (*paides, ekgona*).
- 18 *Symposium* 207b2, 5; 209c4; 212a6.
- 19 This notion recurs, somewhat altered, in the *Theaetetus*, esp. 148e–151d: see Burnyeat.
- 20 See Friedländer, III, 25; Brentlinger, 19–21.
- 21 I refer only to the recent controversy: Wender; Christine Pierce, “Equality: *Republic* V,” *Monist*, 57.1 (1973), 1–11; Anne Dickason, “Anatomy and Destiny: The Role of Biology in Plato’s Views of Women,” *Philosophical Forum*, 5.1–2 (1973–74), 45–53; Sarah B. Pomeroy, “Feminism in Book V of Plato’s *Republic*,” *Apeiron*, 8.1 (1974), 33–35, and “Plato and the Female Physician (*Republic* 454d2),” *American Journal of Philology*, 99 (1978), 496–500; Christine Garside Allen, “Plato on Women,” *Feminist Studies*, 2.2–3 (1975), 131–38; Brian Calvert, “Plato and the Equality of Women,” *Phoenix*, 29 (1975), 231–43; W. W. Fortenbaugh, “On Plato’s Feminism in *Republic* V,” *Apeiron*, 9.2 (1975), 1–4; Geddes, 37–39; Martha Lee Osborne, “Plato’s Unchanging View of Woman: A Denial that Anatomy Spells Destiny,” *Philosophical Forum*, 6.4 (1975), 447–52, and “Plato’s Feminism,” Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville (1978); Julia Annas, “Plato’s *Republic* and Feminism,” *Philosophy*, 51 (1976), 307–21; Saxonhouse (1976), (1984), and (1985), 37–62; Susan Moller Okin, “Philosopher Queens and Private Wives: Plato on Women and the Family,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 6 (1977), 345–69, reproduced in the course of a longer discussion in *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, 1979), 15–70; William Jacobs, “Plato on Female Emancipation and the Traditional Family,” *Apeiron*, 12 (1978), 29–31; Lynda Lange, “The Function of Equal Education in Plato’s *Republic*,” in *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche*, ed. Lorraine Clark and Lynda Lange (Toronto, 1979), 3–15; Harry Lesser, “Plato’s Feminism,” *Philosophy*, 54 (1979), 113–17; Nicholas D. Smith, “The Logic of Plato’s Feminism,” *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 11 (1980), 5–11, and (1983), 468–74; Giallongo, 107–34; O’Brien, 119–39; Singer, 77–81; Monique Canto, “The Politics of Women’s Bodies: Reflections on Plato,” in *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Susan Rubin Sulciman (Cambridge, MA, 1986), 339–53; Cantarella, 58–59; David Cohen, “The Legal Status and Political Role of Women in Plato’s *Laws*,” *Revue internationale des droits de l’antiquité*, 3d ser., 34 (1987), 27–40; Gregory Vlastos, “Was Plato a Feminist?” *Times Literary Supplement*, No. 4,485 (March 17–23, 1989), 276, 288–89; and cf. Krell (1975). For the earlier history of the question, see now Natalie Harris Bluestone, *Women and the Ideal Society: Plato’s Republic and Modern Myths of Gender* (Amherst, MA, 1987), 21 ff.
- 22 See the informative, subtle, and judicious account by David M. Schaps, *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 1979), who shows that Athenian women were disadvantaged by comparison with women in other parts of classical Greece. See, also,

Victor Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy*, 2d rev. ed. (New York, 1962), 192–207; W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*, Aspects of Greek and Roman Life (Ithaca, NY, 1968), esp. 15–32, 100–76; Just; John Gould, “Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 100 (1980), 38–59, with references to previous work on the topic; now, H. S. Versnel, “Wife and Helpmate. Women of Ancient Athens in Anthropological Perspective,” in *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society*, ed. Josine Blok and Peter Mason (Amsterdam, 1987), 59–86. The horrific picture recently painted by Keuls should be viewed with caution; the relatively conventional sketch by Cantarella is untrustworthy in a different way. More balanced is Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York, 1975), esp. 57–92. Cynthia Patterson, “*Hai Attikai*: The Other Athenians,” in *Rescuing Creusa: New Methodological Approaches to Women in Antiquity*, ed. Marilyn Skinner = *Helios*, 13.2 (Fall 1986), 49–67, provides an important corrective to some of the more extreme claims advanced in the literature.

- 23 See, generally, *History of Animals* 538a22–b23, 608a21–b18 (authenticity disputed); *Parts of Animals* 661b27–662a6; *Generation of Animals* 732a1–11; *Politics* 1254b13–15, 1259b2–4; on the female as a “natural deformity,” “monstrosity,” or “infertile male,” see *Generation of Animals* 723a26–30, 728a17–21, 737a27–30, 765b8–767b13, 775a4–22, 784a4–11; and see Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.6, who claims (14.5) to be following Aristotle.

Once again, I cite only the recent literature, beginning with the fundamental study by Robert Joly, “La biologie d’Aristote,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger*, 158 (1968), 219–53, esp. 224–25, 228–29, 241–44; Anthony Preus, “Science and Philosophy in Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals*,” *Journal of the History of Biology*, 3.1 (1970), 1–52, and *Science and Philosophy in Aristotle’s Biological Works* (Hildesheim, 1975), 48–107; Christine Garside, “Can a Woman Be Good in the Same Way as a Man?,” *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, 10 (1971), 534–44, esp. 534–37; Geddes, 37–39; Stephen R. L. Clark, *Aristotle’s Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology* (Oxford, 1975), 206–11 (a heavily apologetic treatment, partially retracted in “Aristotle’s Woman,” *History of Political Thought*, 3.2 [1982], 177–91); Horowitz (a crude assault, deftly countered by Johannes Morsink, “Was Aristotle’s Biology Sexist?,” *Journal of the History of Biology*, 12 [1979], 83–112, who nonetheless fails to save Aristotle from Horowitz’s basic charge); W. W. Fortenbaugh, “Aristotle on Slaves and Women,” in *Articles on Aristotle, 2: Ethics and Politics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji (London, 1977), 135–39; Simon Byl, *Recherches sur les grands traités biologiques d’Aristote: Sources écrites et préjugés*, Académie Royale de Belgique, Mémoires de la Classe des Lettres, 2d ser., 64.3 (Brussels, 1980); Manuli (1980), 405–08, and (1983), 162–70; Rousselle (1980), 1101–04; Peter Tumulty, “Aristotle, Feminism and Natural Law Theory,” *New Scholasticism*, 55 (1981), 450–64; Saïd; Campese; Lloyd, 94–107; Giulia Sissa, “Il corpo della donna: lineamenti di una ginecologia filosofica,” in Campese, Manuli, and Sissa, 81–145; Smith, 474–77; Allen; F. Sparshott, “Aristotle on Women,” *Philosophical Inquiry*, 7 (1985), 177–200; Gareth B. Matthews, “Gender and Essence in Aristotle,” in *Women and Philosophy*, ed. Janna L. Thompson = *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Suppl. to vol. 64 (June 1986), 16–25; Cantarella, 59–61.

- 24 I borrow this formulation from Kirsten Hastrup, “The Semantics of Biology: Virginity,” in Ardenner, 49–65, esp. 49.
- 25 See, now, Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism* (New York, 1987).
- 26 A more nuanced understanding of Diotima’s contribution to the terms of the debate in the *Symposium* is provided, along roughly similar lines, by Vlastos (1981), 3–42, who, by

- contrast, does not doubt that Plato was homosexual by temperament (p. 25), but observes that Diotima's insistence on the importance of procreation as the aim of desire has the effect of structuring the erotic dynamic of Platonic love according to "a heterosexual paradigm"; he concludes, "What started as a pederastic idyl ends up in transcendental marriage" (pp. 40–42). Cf. Saxonhouse (1984), 11–22, for an analogous interpretation.
- 27 See Wilamowitz, I, 42–49; Kelsen; Brès, 229–32; Wender, 216–18; Vlastos (1981), 25–26; Burnyeat, 16, n. 23.
 - 28 The evidence, such as it is, is less than compelling: see, e.g., H. Nunberg, "Homosexuality, Magic and Aggression," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 19 (1938), 1–16; D. W. Cory, *The Homosexual in America* (New York, 1951), 201; James A. Knight, "False Pregnancy in a Male," *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 22 (1960), 260–66; John Money and Geoffrey Hosta, "Negro Folklore of Male Pregnancy," *Journal of Sex Research*, 4 (1968), 34–50. The anthropological side to this story is discussed below.
 - 29 Plass, 50–51.
 - 30 Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of Modern Psychiatry* (Ithaca, NY, 1978), 308, n. 20, and 171–79. The fundamental psychoanalytic study is by Kelsen; see, also, Noel Bradley, "Primal Scene Experience in Human Evolution and its Phantasy Derivatives in Art, Proto-Science and Philosophy," *Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, 4 (1967), 34–79, esp. 52–58; Paul Plass, "Eros, Play and Death in Plato," *American Imago*, 26 (1969), 37–55; Brès; Charles Hanley, "An Unconscious Irony in Plato's *Republic*," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 46 (1977), 116–47; Bohner-Cante; MacCary, 83–84, 191–95.
 - 31 Wender, 224–27.
 - 32 Wilamowitz, I, 379–80; earlier, Zeller (quoted by Rettig [1876], 262).
 - 33 Bury, xxxix; earlier, K. F. Hermann, *De Socratis magistis* (Marburg, 1837), 11ff.; 17, n. 37 (cited by Rettig [1876], 262, who also inclines to this view).
 - 34 The earliest advocate for Diotima's historicity cited by Rettig (1876), 262, is Creuzer, *Wiener Jahrbücher*, 56 (1831), 185ff.
 - 35 Hug-Schöne, xlvii n.; Taylor, 224; Kranz (1926/b), 321; E. R. Dodds, ed., *Plato: GORGLIAS* (Oxford, 1959), 12, with references to earlier work. Cf. Godel, 14, 26–27.
 - 36 Godel, 26–27, cites the case of a lavish offering to Pythian Apollo made by Aristocrates, son of Scellias, which is casually mentioned at *Gorgias* 472ab and seemingly confirmed by *IG I²*, 772—but, in fact, the inscription refers to the homonymous grandfather of Plato's Aristocrates, and Godel (or Plato) has simply confounded the two: see J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B.C.* (Oxford, 1971), 56–57, #1904.
 - 37 W. Dittenberger, "Zu Plutarch," *Hermes*, 38 (1903), 313–14; Hug-Schöne, xlvii n.
 - 38 Hug-Schöne, xlvii n.; cf. Kranz (1926/a), 437–38.
 - 39 But, for an interpretation that defends the relevance of such details, see Nussbaum (1979), 150–52, and (1986), 177, 195; also, Saxonhouse (1984), 20–22.
 - 40 Hug-Schöne, xlvii n.; Taylor, 224; Krüger, 142–43.
 - 41 See Wilamowitz, I, 380n; Robin (1929), xxiii n. Further parallels are adduced by Bury, 94–95, *ad Plato*, *Symposium* 201d4.
 - 42 See Walter Burkert, "Goës. Zum griechischen 'Schamanismus,'" *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 105 (1962), 36–55; Marcel Detienne, *Les Maîtres de la vérité* (Paris, 1967), 129–31; Philippe Borgeaud, *Recherches sur le dieu Pan*, Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana, 17 (Rome, 1979), 160; Vernant (1982), 70, 76–79.

- 43 Diels, *Sitzungsber. d. Berl. Akad.* (1891), 387 ff.; Kern, "Epimenides," *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. Georg Wissowa, vol. 6, pt. 1 (Stuttgart, 1907), cols. 173–78. I owe these references to Kranz (1926/a), 437–38.
- 44 Gustave Fougères, *Mantinée et l'Arcadie orientale*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 78 (Paris, 1898), 325–30; Godel, 14–21.
- 45 This argument has been made to me in conversation by Nicholas D. Smith.
- 46 See Kranz (1926/a), 438–39.
- 47 The analogy between Diotima and Er is discussed by Robin (1929), xxiv–xxv.
- 48 Literary references are collected in Otto Jahn, ed., *Platonis Symposium*, 2d ed. rev. by H. Usener (Bonn, 1875), 16–18; for references to pictorial representations of Diotima, see Hug-Schöne, xlviii n. For the relief, see Gustave Fougères, "Stèle de Mantinée," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* (Ecole française d'Athènes), 12 (1888), pl. iv and pp. 376–80; Hans Möbius, "Diotima," *Jahrbuch der deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, 49 (1934), 45–60, esp. 58; Karl Schefold, *Die Bildnisse der antiken Dichter, Redner und Denker* (Basel, 1943), 66; Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton, 1981), 141–42.
- 49 These factors are discussed by Just, 161; Schaps; Sommerstein, esp. 418, n. 56, on Diotima (who would not, however, have been affected: see note 63, below); Jan Bremmer, "Plutarch and the Naming of Greek Women," *American Journal of Philology*, 102 (1981), 425–26. Sufficient numbers of women's names do survive to provide at least some material for the social historian: see Mark Golden, "Names and Naming at Athens: Three Studies," *Echos du Monde Classique/Classical Views*, 30, n.s. 5 (1986), 245–69, esp. 246–52. The claim by Keuls, 88–90, that some Greek women may not have been given names at all should be resisted.
- 50 Dover (1980), 137; citations in Kranz (1926/a), 437.
- 51 Rettig (1876), 263; Bury, xxxix; Dover (1980), 137, followed by Nussbaum (1986), 177 and 467, n. 28; *contra*, Taylor, 224. The suggestion by Theodor Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, trans. G. Berry (London, 1913), II, 396, that "the chief object of this etherealized affection" promoted in the *Symposium* was in reality Dion of Syracuse (cf. Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said* [Chicago, 1933], 45) supplies, as Bury (xxxix n.) observed, another possible explanation for the choice of Diotima's name. Lowenstam, 93, takes "Diotima" to be a substitute for and duplicate of *theophilês*, the attribute of the human being who has completed the erotic ascent, at *Symposium* 212a6 (see p. 103, n. 33, for references to the scholarly literature on the resonances of that term), adding, "... if one is successful in ascending the philosophical hierarchy one becomes Diotima (i.e., one could give her speech)."
- 52 See Judy A. Turner, *HIEREIAI: Acquisition of Female Priesthoods in Ancient Greece*, Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara (1983).
- 53 Blaise Nagy, "The Naming of Athenian Girls: A Case in Point," *Classical Journal*, 74 (1978/79), 360–64.
- 54 I owe this line of argument, which seems entirely to have escaped scholarly discussions of Diotima's name, to the kind instruction of Sarah B. Pomeroy.
- 55 See Guthrie, 378, n. 1; Burnyeat, 7, 14, n. 3. Phaenarete's historical authenticity is defended by A. Raubitschek, *RE* 19.2, cols. 1562–63, and by Tomin. Some sensible remarks on this topic are provided by Tarrant, 118–20.

- 56 I wish to thank Nicholas D. Smith for helping me sort out the various possibilities.
- 57 Taylor, 224–25.
- 58 See Kranz (1926/a), 438. Should a fuller argument to this effect be required, Dover (1980), 10, dutifully supplies one.
- 59 So Hug-Schöne, xlvii n.; Kranz (1926/a), 438; Erbse, 206.
- 60 Charlotte L. Stough, “Forms and Explanation in the *Phaedo*,” *Phronesis*, 21 (1976), 1–30, esp. 29–30. See, also, Friedrich Solmsen, “Parmenides and the Description of Perfect Beauty in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *American Journal of Philology*, 92 (1971), 62–70; Rosamond Kent Sprague, “*Symposium* 211a and Parmenides Frag. 8,” *Classical Philology*, 66 (1971), 261.
- 61 See Harry Berger, Jr., “Plato’s Flying Philosopher,” *Philosophical Forum*, 13 (1982), 385–407.
- 62 Wilamowitz, I, 380n.
- 63 It might perhaps be supposed that such avoidance of detailed characterization on Plato’s part merely expresses the same respect and courtesy that also operates in the law-courts and on the comic stage and that militates against the mention of a respectable woman’s name: see Schaps, 330; Sommerstein. But that would be to misconstrue the Greek convention. Only those women are not mentioned who are decently secluded at home and whose names are therefore not presumed to be known by males outside the family. That is not the case with Diotima: she is a public figure, after all—someone to whom the Athenians turn at a time of public crisis, someone at least as well known as the Athenian priestesses whose names can indeed be mentioned without impropriety (Sommerstein, 395–96). Several other considerations reinforce this line of interpretation. First of all, Diotima is a foreigner, unconnected to an Athenian male by blood-tie or by marriage, so far as we know, and hence not someone whose name must be suppressed out of deference to the feelings of one’s fellow-citizens. Secondly, she is for Plato’s dramatic purposes a famous woman: far from attempting to conceal her name, Plato is prodigal in his use of it (201d2, e8; 202d12; 204a8, d5; 206b5; 207c5; 208b8; 212b1), though he also refers to her more obliquely by her place of origin (*hê Mantinikê gynê* or *xenê*: 201d2, 204c7, 211d1–2; cf. W. Dittenberger, “*Ethnika und Verwandtes*,” *Hermes*, 42 [1907], 1–34, esp. 14). Finally, Sommerstein presses two further points: (1) by the time Socrates mentions Diotima she is probably dead; (2) it is likely that no other man was present on the occasions when Socrates represents himself as addressing her by name (418, n. 56). Given the freedom with which Plato treats Diotima, then, it would hardly have been disrespectful of him to tell us a little more about her.
- 64 See Erbse, 210–14, who argues that Xenophon’s portrayal of Socrates’s positive attitude to women deserves more credence than it has received; cf. Giallongo, 81–85. Kahn has now provided a thorough treatment of Socratic *erôs* in Socratic literature. Also, Krell (1975), 406.
- 65 See, e.g., Athenaeus, 5.220ef, 12.535c, 13.588d.
- 66 Most of the information in this paragraph comes from Ehlers. On this general topic, compare Friedrich Schlegel, “Über die Diotima,” *Studien des klassischen Altertums*, ed. E. Behler, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, I.1 (Paderborn, 1979), 70–115 (essay first publ. 1795).
- 67 Athenaeus, 5.220d; Diogenes Laertius, 6.16. Fragments are collected in Dittmar, 299–300.

- 68 Fr. 1 (Dittmar). The story told by Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.5–6, derives from Antisthenes's dialogue, as Athenaeus, 13.589e, testifies (unless we emend the text to read *Aeschines*, who seems after all to be Plutarch's source [cf. *Pericles* 24.4]: see note 72, below).
- 69 Ehlers, 30–34, esp. 31n., basing herself on Athenaeus, 5.220e, imagines a scene in which Socrates resists the blandishments of Aspasia's flute-girls; she argues, with some plausibility, that the dialogue may have depicted Aspasia as the embodiment of morally corrupting *hêdonê* (cf. Heraclides Ponticus, *apud* Athenaeus, 12.533cd); Wender, 222–23, by contrast, notes that Diogenes Laertius ascribes to Antisthenes, on the authority of Diocles, the saying that *aretê* is the same for a man as for a woman (6.12)—a passage neglected by Ehlers (but discussed by Kahn, who nonetheless follows Ehlers).
- 70 Athenaeus, 5.220b; Diogenes Laertius, 2.61; fragments in Dittmar, 275–83. The authenticity of Aeschines's dialogues was challenged in antiquity by Menedemus of Eretria, Idomeneus, and others: Diogenes Laertius, 2.60–63; Athenaeus, 13.611de.
- 71 See Ehlers, esp. 63–100.
- 72 Fr. 25 (Dittmar). The story in Athenaeus, 13.589e (and cf. pseudo-Lucian, *Erôtes* 30), goes back to Aeschines, as Plutarch, *Pericles* 32.3, testifies.
- 73 Fr. 31 (Dittmar). Reported by Cicero, *De inventione* 1.31.51–53, who is subsequently quoted by Quintilian, *Institutes* 5.11.27–29; see, also, Marius Victorinus, in *Rhetorici latini minores*, p. 240.31ff. (Halm).
- 74 Reported by Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.4. For Aspasia's political or rhetorical ability, and her influence on her lovers, see Schol. *ad* Plato, *Menexenus* 235e = Callias, *Pedetai*, fr. 15 (Kock); Schol. *ad* Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 527; Didymus, *Symposium*, cited by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.19.122; Harpocration, *s.v.* Aspasia; Philostratus, *Letter* 73; pseudo-Lucian, *Erôtes* 30. An expanded version of the story can be found in an anonymous Greek treatise preserved only in Syriac translation (ed. Paul de Lagarde, *Analecta Syriaca* [London, 1858], 177–95; trans. J. Gildemeister and F. Bücheler, "Pseudo-Plutarchos *peri askêsêôs*," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 27 [1872], 520–38): the relevant portion is translated and discussed by Ehlers, 74–77.
- 75 Athenaeus, 13.597a–599c, esp. 599ab = fr. 7.89–94 (Powell).
- 76 Athenaeus, 5.219b–e; the verses are assigned to Socrates by Bergk, *PLG*⁴ 2.288. On Herodicus, see Ingemar Düring, *Herodicus the Crateteian: A Study in Antiplatonic Tradition* (Stockholm, 1941).
- 77 Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.3; Lucian, *De saltatione* 25; Maximus of Tyre, 24.4, 38.4b–d; Athenaeus, 5.219bc.
- 78 Maximus of Tyre, 24.4, 38.4b; Synesius, 1.18.59A (Petau).
- 79 Diodorus the Periegete, fr. 372.40 Jacoby (*FGHrist IIIb*, p. 239.6) = Schol. *ad* Plato, *Menexenus* 235e; Didymus, *Symposium*, cited by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.19.122; Aelius Aristides, *Oration* 46.127.15 (II, 171 Dindorf, also Schol. *ad* 46.131.2 = II, 176 Dindorf); Athenaeus, 13.569f, 589d; Themistius, *Oration* 26 (p. 396.25 Dindorf).
- 80 See Lucian, *Eunuch* 7; *Imagines* 17–18; Aristides, *Oration* 46.127.15 (II, 127 Dindorf with Schol. *ad loc.* = III, 468 Dindorf); Himerius, *Declamation* 1.18; Synesius, 1.18.59A; Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 1.17 (p. 9.10–15 Raeder); Libanius, *Tim. or.*, decl. 12.193 (vol. 5, p. 556 Förster).
- 81 The tradition of an erotic connection between Socrates and Aspasia begins much later, with Hermesianax, and is satisfactorily explained, to my mind, by the scholiasts' creative extrapolation from Plato's *Symposium*, *Menexenus*, and from Aeschines's *Aspasia*. In this

- I differ from Kahn, with whose excellent account I otherwise find myself in general agreement.
- 82 See Kranz (1926/a), 438; for similar views, see K. F. Hermann, *Disputatio de Aeschinis Socratici reliquiis* (Göttingen, 1850), 19; Gigon, *Kommentar* on Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.6.36; Konrad Gaiser, review of Ehlers, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 51 (1969), 200–209, esp. 208. (I owe these references to Charles Kahn.)
- 83 Cf. Ehlers, 131–36, following the interpretation of Dittmar, 40–41.
- 84 Dover (1980), 137, notes that “Socrates’ words [about Diotima] ‘she taught me *ta erôtika*’ (201d5) are a slyly humorous reminder of another kind of *erôtikos logos*, in which a smirking youth tells his friends about the accomplishments of a hetaira (‘Rhodopis taught me all I know . . .’); on the earlier tradition of *erôtikoi logoi*, cf. Hug-Schöne, x–xv; François Lasserre, “*Erôtikoi logoi*,” *Museum Helveticum*, 1 (1944), 169–78. It should also go without saying that Plato would not wish to suggest that a brothel is the proper place to learn the secrets of Platonic love.
- 85 Cf. Rosen, 224: “It is no accident that Socrates learnt physics from a man [i.e., Anaxagoras], but politics and the erotic mysteries from women. The domain of the political-religious is essentially that of peace, associated with the womanly arts of child-rearing, housekeeping, weaving, and the like.” (That politics is a womanly art would have come as a surprise to Pericles.)
- 86 See Wilamowitz, I, 380; II, 170–71; Morrison, 42–43.
- 87 See Bruce Rosenstock, “Rereading the *Republic*,” *Arethusa*, 16.1–2 (1983), 219–46, esp. 221–22, on the significance of Zalmoxis and the connection with the nightlong festival of the Thracian goddess Bendis which provides the setting for the first book of the *Republic*.
- 88 See, generally, Friedländer, I, 126–53; Philip Merlan, “Form and Content in Plato’s Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 8 (1947), 406–30; Ludwig Edelstein, “Platonic Anonymity,” *American Journal of Philology*, 83 (1962), 1–22; Paul Plass, “Platonic Anonymity and Irony in the Platonic Dialogues,” *American Journal of Philology*, 85 (1964), 254–78.
- 89 Friedländer, I, 148; he then goes on to discuss some of the usual interpretations: (1) By means of Diotima Plato distinguishes his own views from Socratic philosophy. (2) It is for the sake of courtesy to his host that Socrates ascribes Agathon’s notions to his own former self and allows Diotima to refute them, thus avoiding having to make a personal criticism of Agathon. (3) As a good dialectician Socrates cannot permit himself to make a speech. (4) As an ignorant man Socrates cannot present himself as a guide to the transcendental Ideas. Similar views are voiced by Robin (1929), xxv–xxvii.
- 90 On Diotima as prophetess, see Robin (1929), xxiii–xxiv.
- 91 Saxonhouse (1984), 20, contends, however, that it would have been better for Athens to have suffered the plague *before* the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and she taxes Diotima with a lack of political foresight in postponing it; applying this line of reasoning to the problem of Diotima’s gender, she concludes: “The female and the philosopher—the experts in *erotike*—abstract [*sic*] from the political world. Socrates learns of love from a woman because the lovers he describes are unlike the male-focused lovers of the earlier speeches; they are apolitical.”
- 92 But cf. *Timaeus* 70b–72d, where Plato appears to retreat from this sanguine view of mantic enthusiasm. On the mediating function of *erôs*, see Jerry Stannard, “Socratic Eros and Platonic Dialectic,” *Phronesis*, 4 (1959), 120–34.

- 93 Friedländer, III, 15–18; Krüger, 105–19; Brentlinger, 11–12; Penwill, 147–49. Eryximachus is treated more sympathetically by Ludwig Edelstein, “The Rôle of Eryximachus in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 76 (1945), 85–103, and by David Konstan, “Eryximachus’ Speech in the *Symposium*,” *Apeiron*, 16 (1982), 40–46, who also survey earlier work on the subject.
- 94 I wish to thank Richard Patterson for helpful guidance on this point. On the traditional connection between philosophical wisdom and the mystery religions in Greece, see Vernant (1982), 57–60; a rather more fanciful account can be found in Godel. Plato frequently adverts to the Eleusinian mysteries in metaphysical contexts, especially in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Symposium*: see Friedländer, I, 71–72, and for a list of citations, see Samuel Scolnicov, “Reason and Passion in the Platonic Soul,” *Dionysius*, 2 (1978), 35–49, esp. 45, n. 24.
- 95 What follows is a summary of an interpretation set forth at greater length in Halperin (1985), 167–69.
- 96 For Plato as a “depth psychologist,” see the eloquent and persuasive discussion by Glidden, 46–53; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Sather Classical Lectures, 25 (Berkeley, 1951), 218.
- 97 Fr. 897.6–7 (Nauck³) = Athenaeus, 13.561ab; the context is unknown. The fragment as a whole seems to anticipate the idea which, according to Ehlers (who neglects the fragment), originated with Aeschines—namely, that *erôs* conduces to virtue. For the connections between the erotic doctrines of Euripides and the Socratics, see Helen North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology, 35 (Ithaca, NY, 1966), 73–74, qualified by Vlastos (1981), 22, n. 63.
- 98 Cf. Kranz (1926/a), 445–46, and (1926/b), 322, who argues that Diotima represents herself as a hierophant of the mysteries.
- 99 See, generally, Clinton; H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians*, Aspects of Greek and Roman Life (Ithaca, NY, 1977), 57–62; Erika Simon, *Festivals of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary*, Wisconsin Studies in Classics (Madison, 1983), 27–29, 34.
- 100 Lowenstam, 92, claims that the mystic vocabulary employed by Socrates’s Diotima, in the presence of three persons (Alcibiades, Phaedrus, and Eryximachus) who were later to be exiled on the charge of profaning the mysteries, implies that everyone but Socrates profanes the mysteries of *erôs* in his life. For another ingenious application of the sacrilege trials to a reading of the *Symposium*, see Nussbaum (1986), 196.
- 101 Clinton, esp. 68–69, 86, 97–98.
- 102 There are, of course, other ways of tracing the cultural genealogy of Diotima as the female founder of a male institution—one thinks, for example, of Athena in the *Eumenides*: cf. Zeitlin (1984); Loraux, 119–53; Case, 320–21. It might be argued that Diotima, as a chaste priestess, plays a similar role, uniting in herself the natural (i.e., female) and the divine—but we must be careful to avoid the dangers of schematization: although Diotima, who could not decently be present at Agathon’s symposium, is presumably chaste, she is not a *parthenos*, a virgin like Athena, but a *gynê*, a woman (201d2); moreover, Plato does absolutely nothing to foreground her putative chastity, in contrast to his treatment of her prophetic authority. It is also misleading to speak of Diotima as a “priestess,” as is customary in the scholarly literature, thereby implying that Diotima holds some sacred office. On the contrary, Plato omits to mention any public function that Diotima regularly performs, nor does he say anywhere that she is a priestess; he merely says she has mantic expertise (*sophia*: 201d), presumably the sort of expertise that Teiresias and other male prophets also had (for references to itinerant female *manteis*, see Lloyd, 69). Perhaps there

is an analogy between Diotima and Lysistrata, whose name and authority may be intended to allude to that of her contemporary Lysimache, priestess of Athena Polias: see D. M. Lewis, "Notes on Attic Inscriptions (II), XXIII: Who Was Lysistrata?" *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 1 (1955), 1–13; Helene P. Foley, "The 'Female Intruder' Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*," *Classical Philology*, 77 (1982), 1–21, esp. 8; Loraux, 157–96. For an interesting treatment of some comparative material, see Elizabeth A. Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity," *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, Studies in Women and Religion, 20 (Lewiston, NY, 1986), 175–208.

- 103 Vlastos (1981), 56.
- 104 See John Patrick Lynch, "The Ancient Symposium as an Institution: Social Drinking and Educational Issues in Fifth Century Athens," *Laetaberis* (Journal of the California Classical Association), n.s. 4 (Spring 1986), 1–15, esp. 6–7, who compares the symposium to the modern institution of men's clubs and bars.
- 105 On sex at the symposium, especially fellatio, and its depiction on vases, see Keuls, 160–69, 180–86, 212–13, 267–73; Dover (1978), 182; Golden (1984), 313–14; Borthwick, 32.
- 106 To be sure, Phaedrus does deem Alcestis more heroic than Orpheus; he criticizes the latter not for being in love with a woman but for being a sissy; and his comparison of Achilles to Alcestis is not intended to promote *philia* over *erôs* but only to suggest that it is nobler to lay down your life for another when you have less incentive to do so. Nonetheless, the effect of what Phaedrus says is to dismiss both *erôs* for women and the *erôs* of women from the discussion.
- 107 Erbse, 201–02.
- 108 That is, her approval of Alcestis does not imply approval of heterosexual object-choice per se—another reminder that Plato does not consider the sameness or difference of the sexes of the sexual partners to be valid criteria for differentiating between kinds of "sexuality."
- 109 Kranz (1926/b), 321–22; Singer, 79; Saxonhouse (1985), 52–54; Freeman, 172–73.
- 110 See Jones (1991/b); Foucault (1985), 130–33.
- 111 I wish to thank Froma I. Zeitlin for making this aspect of Plato's strategy clear to me. Cf. Saxonhouse (1985), 62: Plato "has found in women—those who give birth, those who are different from the males, those who are closer to the private realm—a symbol that becomes useful for his critique of an Athenian society devoted to the political life of ambition, money, and war."
- 112 Foucault (1985), 187–225, esp. 215ff.
- 113 See, generally, Dover (1978), 52–53, 84–85, 103–06; further, Golden (1984); Halperin (1986); and Winkler (1989/a). In the paragraphs that follow I have summarized the thesis of Halperin (1986), which should be consulted for fuller documentation.
- 114 Quoted by Dover (1978), 52; see, also, Foucault (1985), 223–24.
- 115 Dover (1978), 85.
- 116 See the sources cited by Halperin (1985), 192, n. 36, and by David Armstrong and Elizabeth A. Ratchford, "Iphigenia's Veil: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 228–48," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* (University of London), 32 (1985), 1–12, plates 1 and 2.
- 117 See Patzer, 121–22.
- 118 Foucault (1985), 232–33, 242–43.
- 119 Foucault (1985), 239–40.
- 120 See Thomas S. W. Lewis, "The Brothers of Ganymede," in Boyers and Steiner, 147–65, esp. 161. For *biazein* in the sense of rape, see Aristophanes, *Wealth* 1092.

- 121 See Friedländer, I, 49, 139–42; further, Kahn's discussion of Aeschines's *Alcibiades*. See, also, Plato, *Lysis* 222a, where the entire conversation grinds to a halt when Socrates proves the logical necessity of erotic reciprocity.
- 122 Halperin (1986), 76–79.
- 123 On the figure of the *kinaidos*, see Winkler (1989/a) and Gleason.
- 124 E.g., Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1148b26–35; pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems* 4.26; Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* 4.9.137.
- 125 Hesiod, fr. 275 (M–W); cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.316–38.
- 126 On women's pleasure in intercourse, see [Hippocrates], *On the Seed* 4; Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 727b9–10, 727b35–36, 728a9–11, 728a31–32, 739a29–35; Soranus, *Gynaecology* 1.37–38, 44; Galen, *On the Seed* 2.1; *Usefulness of the Parts* 14.9, 11. Cf., also, Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 721b15; 723b32; 724a3; Lucretius, 4.1192–1208. Additional sources are cited by Lonie, 120–21.
- 127 On this point, see Rettig (1882), 424. Cf. Dover (1978), 52; also, the comment by Schnapp (1981), 110: "L'amour hétérosexuel [en Grèce] est sous le signe de la réciprocité alors que l'amour homosexuel est sous celui de la sociabilité."
- 128 For a possible exception, see Halperin (1986), 66n. Cf. Silvana Fasce, *Eros: la figura e il culto*, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di filologia classica e medievale, 49 (Genoa, 1977), 40–42, who ascribes *anterôs* to the *erômenos*, the junior partner in a paederastic relationship, whereas the term, when predicated of male subjects, normally signifies rivalry in *erôs*: see Dover (1978), 52, to whose list of citations should be added Euripides, *Rhesus* 184; Plutarch, *Moralia* 760b; Athenaeus, 540e.
- 129 Anterastilis is the Greek name of a prostitute in Plautus's *Poenulus*.
- 130 I quote the translation provided by Dover (1978), 168.
- 131 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 724a35–b6, 727b6–33, 729a9–11, a24–b21, 730a24–b33, 732a2–10, 768b15–30. Cf. Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," in Strachey, XIX, 159–70, esp. 162: masochistic fantasies "place the subject in a characteristically female situation; they signify, that is, being castrated, or copulated with, or giving birth to a baby" (and cf. Irigaray [1985/b], 34–67). Also, J. R. Willson, *Obstetrics and Gynecology* (St. Louis, 1971), 43: "The traits that compose the core of the female personality are feminine narcissism, masochism, and passivity"; James, 893: "Femininity tends to be passive and receptive, masculinity to be active, restless, anxious for repeated demonstrations of potency. . . ."; Thomas Jeffcoate, *Principles of Gynecology* (London, 1967), 726: "An important feature of the sex drive in the man is the urge to dominate the women [*sic*] and subjugate her to his will; in the women acquiescence to the masterful takes a high place" (quoted by Scully and Bart, 1048). From here it is a small step to Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge, 1979), 50–51, who considers sadism and masochism to be perversions but upholds a distinction between male and female sexuality in terms of aggressiveness and passivity; cf. the defense of "normal sado-masochism" by Scruton, 173–79, 298–304. Similar views were routinely expressed in the marriage manuals of the 1920's and 1930's: see Jackson, 62–63.
- 132 Golden (1984), 313–15. See, also, Dover (1978), 102–03; Sutton, 186–89, 224–25. Possible deviations from the usual pattern are discussed by Golden (1984), 321–22, and by Keuls, 277–85, esp. 277. For further discussion, see "One Hundred Years of Homosexuality," in this volume, note 31.
- 133 James Redfield, "Notes on the Greek Wedding," *Arethusa*, 15 (1982), 181–201, esp. 192–98; cf. Calame (1984), xvii–xxii; Vernant (1981).

- 134 See Foucault (1985), 245; (1986), 148–49, 151–52, 161–64, 179–80, 181–82, 206–10, 219–26.
- 135 Bizarrely interpreted by L. P. Wilkinson, “Classical Approaches. IV: Homosexuality,” *Encounter*, 51.3 (September 1978), 21–31, esp. 30, who concludes that the boy doesn’t have an orgasm because he is below the age of puberty; Keuls, 275, seems to be under the same impression.
- 136 On this ideal of unity in marriage, see Lisette Goessler, *Plutarch’s Gedanken über die Ehe* (Zurich, 1962); Foucault (1986), 162, who also cites Antipater, *Peri gamou*, *apud* Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 25.
- 137 The outstanding counter-example to the pattern I have been describing is provided by Petronius, 132—if, as recent editors argue, the passage in question has indeed been displaced from a paederastic context and inserted into a scene of heterosexual love-making where it did not originate: “The mere loveliness of his body called to me and drew us into love. There was the sound of a rain of kisses as our lips met, our hands were clasped and discovered all the ways of love, then our bodies were held and bound by our embrace [*iam alligata mutuo ambitu corpora*] until even our souls were made as one soul [*animarum quoque mixturam*]” (trans. Heseltine–Warmington). Richardson does not comment on this passage, which would seem to pose an obstacle to his interpretation.
- 138 Quoted from *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York, 1974), 465, by Stigers, 54. See, now, the elaboration of this outlook by Irigaray (1985/b), 23–33 and 205–18.
- 139 Unfortunately, Plato’s exact meaning is not clear, because the key word, *hetairistriaí*, occurs nowhere else in the classical period and its meaning is known only from the later glosses of ancient lexicographers: see Dover (1978), 172–73.
- 140 See Dover (1978), 163n.
- 141 Halperin (1985), 164–66.
- 142 Jones (1991/b).
- 143 Halperin (1985), 177–78.
- 144 Vlastos (1981), 41; cf. 21: “Beauty stirs us so deeply, Plato is saying, because we have the power to create and only the beauty we love can release that power.”
- 145 See, generally, *Phaedrus* 275d–278b, where *ekgona*, *patêr*, and *adelphos* recur (commentary by Jacques Derrida, “La pharmacie de Platon,” *La dissémination* [Paris, 1972], 69–197, esp. 84–95), although Socrates also employs agricultural imagery in speaking of literary production: cf. Page duBois, “The Homoerotics of the *Phaedrus*,” *Pacific Coast Philology*, 17.1–2 (1982), 9–15, esp. 14, and duBois (1988), 177–78.
- 146 Burnyeat, 13, calls our attention to the “degenerate” version of this passage at *Republic* 496a, where intercourse between unworthy persons and philosophy produces (*gennan*: a2, a6) bastards and sophisms. For other instances of procreative imagery in Plato, see *Phaedrus* 275d–278b; *Theaetetus* 148e–151d, with Burnyeat’s discussion.
- 147 For an excellent discussion of possible tensions between the accounts of erotic procreation in the *Symposium* and of intellectual midwifery in the *Theaetetus*, see Burnyeat; on the meaning of the image of midwifery itself, see Ruth Padel, “Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons,” in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (Detroit, 1983), 3–19, esp. 11.
- 148 For a conspectus of literary sources, see Maria Grazia Bonanno, “Osservazioni sul tema della ‘giusta’ reciprocità amorosa da Saffo ai comici,” *Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica*, 16 (1973), 110–20, and Anne [Carson] Giacomelli, “The Justice of Aphrodite in Sappho Fr. 1,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 110 (1980), 135–42, who discern

the same erotic dynamic in Sappho and in the male lyricists alike; for a study of Sappho's marked deviation from the dominant male pattern, see Stigers, 46–49. For some corresponding pictorial sources, see Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 107 (1987), 131–53.

- 149 I wish to make it clear that I do not consider there to be anything intrinsically masculine about an erotics of pursuit and capture or anything intrinsically feminine about an erotics of procreativity. The masculine and feminine paradigms of erotic feeling discussed here refer to features of the classical Greek sex/gender system, not to ideal types; I wish therefore to dissociate my own views explicitly from the frequent and typically obscurantist claims about the connection between femininity and generation—as exemplified by the following statement of Jung's: "Die Psychologie des Schöpferischen ist eigentlich weibliche Psychologie, denn das schöpferische Werk wächst aus unbewussten Tiefen empor, recht eigentlich aus dem Reiche der Mütter" (quoted by Krell [1975], 400). Compare Rochelle Paul Wortis, "The Acceptance of the Concept of Maternal Role by Behavioral Scientists: Its Effects on Women," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 41 (October 1971), 733–46; also, Callaway.
- 150 See Tarrant, 120. For this and for the passages that follow I am indebted to Burnyeat, 14, n. 4.
- 151 Fr. 199 (Kock).
- 152 See LSJ, s.v. *tiktô*, IV.
- 153 So Tarrant, 122.
- 154 I wish to thank Maria-Viktoria Abricka for calling my attention to this aspect of Plato's strategy.
- 155 Thus, Diskin Clay, "Platonic Studies and the Study of Plato," *Arion*, n.s. 2 (1975), 116–32, esp. 124–25, takes *kyein* in the *Symposium* to mean "be fecund" or "ripe"; cf. Robin (1964), 13–14.
- 156 *Eumenides* 658–666: the father alone qualifies as *tokeus*. See Lesky for a survey of the ancient embryological controversies; also, Joseph Needham, *A History of Embryology*, 2d ed., rev. A. Hughes (Cambridge, 1959); Geddes, 38–39; and Rankin, 141n. For a fascinating attempt to put the claims of the Aeschylean Apollo into anthropological perspective, see Delaney; also, Read, 14; O'Flaherty, 17–61, esp. 29–30.
- 157 Rankin, 141–42; *pace* Morrison, 54. Cf. Krell (1975).
- 158 Lloyd, 86–94; Detienne (1976), 80–81.
- 159 These reports (by Censorinus, *De die natali*, 5.4; Aëtius, 5.5.1–3) conflict in places, however, and their accuracy can be challenged; I follow Lonie, 119–20. Manuli (1980), 405, seems to accept these reports at face value; Lloyd, 87–88, provides a detailed and careful scrutiny. See, also, Joly, 78–80; Preus.
- 160 The Hippocratic writers seem to have agreed that women emit seed: see, esp., *On the Seed/Nature of the Child* 4–9, 12; *Regimen* 1.27–28; *Diseases of Women* 1.8, 17: discussed by Manuli (1980), 405; Rousselle (1980), 1093; Lloyd, 89–94; Lonie, 119–20. For the connection between orgasm and conception in women, see *On the Seed* 4 (implied rather than stated, *pace* Manuli [1980], 406–07: see Rousselle [1980], 1093); *History of Animals* 636b10–24, 636b36–39 (ascribing this view to women), 637b32–33: see Rousselle (1980), 1100–01, and (1988), 27–29. To be sure, the mere existence of female seed may not prove fatal to an androcentric, "monogenetic" reproductive ideology: it is necessary to establish, as Delaney, 46, n. 5, points out, that female seed is not conceived as inferior to or less generative than male seed—as Galen, for example, believed (*Usefulness of the Parts* 14.10–11); see, further, O'Flaherty, 17–61. Cf. Giallongo, 26–27, who claims that even those

writers, such as the Hippocratics, who concede the existence of female seed, agree with Aristotle and the Aeschylean Apollo in assigning the principal procreative role to the male.

- 161 See, generally, *Generation of Animals* 1.19–20.726a30–729a33, esp. 727b6–11, 728a31–33; also, 739a20–b19 (refuting the arguments of *History of Animals* 10, as Rousselle [1980], 1101–04, notes).
- 162 See Manuli (1980), 406–08; Preus; Michael Boylan, “The Galenic and Hippocratic Challenges to Aristotle’s Conception Theory,” *Journal of the History of Biology*, 17 (1984), 83–112; and, for the later tradition, Brown, 55–61. Soranus, *Gynaecology* 1.37, maintains the link between pleasure and conception in women, alleging even that a woman who conceives when raped must *eo ipso* have felt an unconscious, preëxistent desire; Galen, however, held that pleasure is not a necessary condition of conception (*De locis affectis* 6.5).
- 163 Horowitz, 183–89. Cf. Allen; Rousselle (1988), 29–32, who emphasizes the continuing influence of Aristotle in late antiquity. According to Thomas Laqueur, “Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology,” *Representations*, 14 (Spring 1986), 1–41, belief in a causal connection between orgasm and conception in women was not abandoned until the late eighteenth century.
- 164 See Harrison, 22–23, who notes that at Sparta the rule was the exact opposite, hence in line with the views of the Aeschylean Apollo. Cantarella, 45–46, offers some alternate interpretations of the meaning of the Athenian prohibition against the marriage of uterine siblings.
- 165 Vlastos (1981), 424, dismissing scholarly objections to translating *kyein* as “be pregnant,” does not seem to have noticed that in certain passages of Plato’s dialogue the word cannot mean “be pregnant” in any simple or straightforward sense (e.g., at 206c human beings are said to be pregnant *before* intercourse which is in turn called a *tokos*). But, despite this crucial incoherence, Plato’s vocabulary—as Burnyeat, 14, n. 5, justly says—“allows no backing away from the implications of the metaphor [of pregnancy and conception]. . . .” For a fuller discussion of “pregnancy” in the *Symposium*, see Burnyeat, 8, who notes that in Plato “pregnancy is the cause, not the consequence, of love; and the birth is love’s expressive manifestation.”
- 166 See Dover (1980), 147, who notes that Diotima’s description of the positive effect of beauty on the soul—the soul “melts,” “relaxes”—images a female rather than a male sexual response.
- 167 See Kranz (1926/a), 443.
- 168 This clause was condemned as a gloss on *tiktein* by Ast, Rückert, Rettig, and Hug, whose editorial decisions doubtless reflect a certain uneasiness about the way *tokos* is used here; the clause was retained as genuine by Stallbaum, Cousin, and Zeller (Robin [1964], 14n.).
- 169 Cf. Irigaray (1985/a), 73ff., for a discussion of Freud’s construction of *female* procreative desire in just these phallic terms.
- 170 See Kranz (1926/b), 322–23. Particularly expressive of the tone Diotima takes in talking to Socrates are the following passages: 202b10, 204b1, 207c2–4, 208c1, 209e5–210a4. One might compare the way that Jocasta’s maternal identity is represented by Sophocles in the *Oedipus Rex* through her magisterial opening speech: “Why have you two raised this senseless quarrel of words? Aren’t you ashamed to be pursuing private grudges when the city is as sick as it is? Why don’t you come inside, Oedipus, and you, Creon, go home. . . .” For the modern analogue, cf. Ernestine Friedl, *Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece*, Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology (New York, 1962), 78–81. By contrast, Rosen, 203, judges Diotima to be “a masculine woman, who dominates Socrates, prefers children

of the psyche to those of the body, and herself aspires to synoptic vision"; John P. Anton, "The Secret of Plato's *Symposium*," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 12 (1974), 277–93, esp. 282, however, takes Diotima's rebukes to Socrates to express her prophetic anticipation of what Anton considers his erotic and educational failure with Alcibiades.

- 171 See Jones (1991/b).
- 172 See Colin Murray Turbayne, "Plato's 'Fantastic' Appendix: The Procreation Model of the *Timaus*," *Paideia*, 5 (1976), 125–40.
- 173 Cf. *Symposium* 203c3–4: *tiktein epithymeî hêmôn hê physis*; is there a pun on *physis* here, which also means (female) genitalia? (See Winkler [1989/d], 217–20.)
- 174 Manuli (1983), 189.
- 175 Rousselle (1980), 1092, 1098; Manuli (1980), 393–94, describes the topic addressed by Hippocratic gynaecology as women's "genitality" rather than "sexuality" and discusses the physicians' isolation of and concentration on the reproductive function in women (pp. 393–403); so, also, Manuli (1983), 152.
- 176 Rousselle (1980), 1095, ascribes a belief in the therapeutic value of sexual intercourse and pregnancy to the female patients as well as to the Hippocratic doctors; see, also, Manuli (1980), 400–01, and (1983), 157–58; Lloyd, 84–85, for contrasting treatments of this issue. On the ancient practice of prescribing for women drugs made from animal parts associated with male potency, see Lloyd, 83; note that the plant "cyclamen," which often figures in Hippocratic prescriptions for a variety of gynaecological complaints, is said by Theophrastus (*History of Plants* 9.9.3) to be useful in *philtr*a, presumably love-potions: Lloyd, 129, 133.
- 177 Cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge, 1966), 15–85; Vernant (1974), 149–50; duBois (1988), 39–85.
- 178 D. M. Balme, trans., *Aristotle's DE PARTIBUS ANIMALIUM I and DE GENERATIONE ANIMALIUM I* (with passages from *II.1–3*), Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford, 1972), 23. Cf. Aeschylus, fr. 44 (Radt); Plato, *Menexenus* 237e–238a, with the cautionary remarks of Loraux, 89n.
- 179 See Menander, *Perikeiromenê* 435–36/1013–14, *Dyscolus* 842–43, *Misoumenos* 444–45, *Samia* 726–27, *Fragmentum dubium* (p. 300 Sandbach), fr. 720 (Kock).
- 180 Detienne (1977), 78–81; Vernant (1981); Burkert (1985), 242–46. See, generally, Allaire Chandon Brumfield, *The Attic Festivals of Demeter and their relation to the Agricultural Year*, Monographs in Classical Studies (Salem, NH: The Ayer Company, 1981), 236–39, on the connection between the festivals of Demeter, agriculture, and women. For a reconstruction of the meaning of the Thesmophoria to the Greek women who were its sole participants, interpreting it (in opposition to Detienne) not as a triumph over but as a celebration of women's fertility, see Winkler (1989/c). On the female body as arable land or furrow, see Theognis, 582; Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 754; Pindar, *Pythian* 4.254–57; Sophocles, *Antigone* 569, *Trachiniae* 31–33, *Oedipus Rex* 1211, 1257, 1485, 1497–8; Euripides, *Medea* 1281, *Ion* 1095, *Orestes* 553, *Phoenissae* 18, 22; Plato, *Cratylus* 406b, *Laws* 839a; Plutarch, *Moralia* 144b; pseudo-Aristotle, *Economics* 3.2; Soranus, *Gynaecology* 1.35ff.; Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.51, 2.24: discussion by Vernant (1974), 140–41; duBois (1988), 67–81. On marriage as taming, see Calame (1977), I, 411–20; Seaford; now, Carson.
- 181 See the opinion of Empedocles quoted by Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 723a25, 764a3–b3; [Hippocrates], *Regimen* 1.27, 34; Galen, *On the Seed* 2.5; *Usefulness of the Parts* 7.22, 14.6–7, who claims (14.5) to be following Hippocrates and Aristotle; Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 726b30–727a1, 728a17–21, 765b2–766b26, 775a14–21; *Parts of Animals* 648a9–15; cf. 650b19–651a19; *Problems* 4.25.879a33–34; cf. 4.28.88a12–20 (cited by Carson); Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 3.16; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.19.2 (discussed by

Gleason). See Lesky, 31–38/1255–62; Joly, 80–81; Saïd, 113–15; James Longrigg, “Galen on Empedocles (Fragment 67),” *Philologus*, 108 (1964), 297–300; May, I, 382n.; Lloyd, 90–91; Jones (1991/a). The homology between women and earth in the ancient medical writers is discussed further by Hanson; the coldness and wetness of women is treated by Carson.

Since, as I have stated above, Greek notions of women were not stable or consistent but variable according to the context of masculine interest, women’s bodies can also be thought of as hotter than men’s if it is to men’s advantage that they be so: see Parmenides, quoted by Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 648a29–30; the anonymous writers (identified as the Hippocratics by Hanson) to whom Aristotle refers at *Generation of Animals* 4.1.765b; and the author of [Hippocrates], *Diseases of Women* 1.1, who claims that women are moister but warmer. Hanson maintains that the Hippocratics generally considered women warmer, and cites *Epidemics* 1.13 (case 14), 3.17 (cases 7 and 12) as evidence; so, also, Manuli (1983), 159. For other instances of the same outlook, one might mention the various Greek expressions that represent women’s bodies as stoves in which phalluses and babies are cooked: see Jeffery Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven, 1975), 47–48; duBois (1988), 110–29.

- 182 E.g., [Hippocrates], *On the Seed* 4: see Foucault (1985), 128–30. A similar view was expressed by Marie Stopes, the modern British sexologist, who claimed that women’s bodies required the periodic infusion of male secretions in order to escape being physiologically “starved”: see Jackson, 66.
- 183 Willard R. Cooke, *Essentials of Gynecology* (Philadelphia, 1943), 59–60, quoted by Scully and Bart, 1046.
- 184 James, 893, quoted by Callaway, 169 (*italics mine*).
- 185 Scully and Bart, 1048.
- 186 Langdon Parsons and Sheldon C. Sommers, *Gynecology* (Philadelphia, 1962), 501–02, quoted by Scully and Bart, 1047 (*italics mine*). For a critique of this tradition as it surfaces in psychoanalysis, see Irigaray (1985/b), 34–67.
- 187 Detienne (1977). Cf. J. Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis* (Evanston, 1972), 224–25: “. . . we encounter a long and incredible history of theoretical misadventures and observational errors in male science regarding the physiology of reproduction. These fantastic theories and fantastic observations are not misapprehensions, the usual and necessary mistakes on the road to scientific progress; they are recurrent deprecations of the feminine phrased in the unimpeachable, objective language of the science of the period. The mythic factor recurs disguised in the sophisticated new evidence of the age” (quoted by Zeitlin [1984], 180); cf. Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (New York, 1985). For a discussion of Greek science as the “literate representation of Greek folklore,” see Lloyd, 201–17; also, Robert Joly, *Le Niveau de la science hippocratique. Contribution à la psychologie de l’histoire des sciences* (Paris, 1966).
- 188 E.g., Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 1.4.17, 1.27.24. See Paula Fredriksen, “Augustine and his Analysts: The Possibility of a Psychohistory,” *Soundings*, 61.2 (1978), 206–27, esp. 216–17; Brown, 61–67.
- 189 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 727b6–12, 728a31–33, 739a29–31; Galen, *De locis affectis* 6.5. See Manuli (1980), 405–08; Rousselle (1980), 1101–04, 1111–12.
- 190 Bettelheim, 100–08; J. S. La Fontaine, “Ritualisation of Women’s Life-Crises in Bugisu,” in *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A. I. Richards*, ed. La Fontaine (London, 1972), 159–86, esp. 180; J. van Baal, “The Role of Women as Care-Givers,” *Reciprocity and the Position of Women: Anthropological Papers* (Assen, 1975), 97–123, esp. 116–18.

- 191 For a general survey, see P. G. Rivière, "The Couvade: A Problem Reborn," *Man*, n.s. 9 (1974), 423–35; Rancour-Laferrière, 362–64, with plentiful references to the medical and scholarly literatures, to which should be added Joel Richman, W. O. Goldthorp, and Christine Simmons, "Fathers in Labour," *New Society* (October 16, 1975), 143–45.
- 192 Callaway, 170; Kittay (note 196, below), 114–15.
- 193 See, esp., Herdt (1981). On male initiation rites featuring pseudo-procreative imagery (but not necessarily sexual contacts between men and boys), see Read; Robert Murphy, "Social Structure and Sex Antagonism," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 15.1 (1959), 81–96; Bettelheim, 113–21; M. J. Meggitt, "Male-Female Relationships in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea," *American Anthropologist*, 66.2 (1964), 204–24; M. Allen, *Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia* (Melbourne, 1967); Hogbin; L. R. Hiatt, "Secret Pseudo-Procreation Rites Among the Australian Aborigines," in *Anthropology in Oceania: Essays Presented to Ian Hogbin*, ed. Hiatt and Chandra Jayawardena (Scranton, PA, 1971), 77–88; Langness; Marilyn Strathern, *Women in Between: Female Roles in a Male World* (London, 1972).
- 194 On male menstruation (not necessarily linked with paederasty), see Read, 15; Bettelheim, 105–08; Hogbin, 87–89, 91, 114–21; Langness, 203; Anna S. Meigs, "Male Pregnancy and the Reduction of Sexual Opposition in a New Guinea Highlands Society," *Ethnology*, 25 (1976), 393–407, esp. 397–400; Herdt (1981), 185, 190–94, 244–46; La Fontaine, 127–29; Gregor, 186–94; Chris Knight, "Menstrual Synchrony and the Australian Rainbow Snake," in *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*, ed. Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb (Berkeley, 1988), 232–55, with further references to the anthropological literature.
- 195 Herdt (1981), 211, 234–35.
- 196 For a frank avowal to this effect by the Kunapipi, see Paula Weideger, *Menstruation and Menopause* (New York, 1976), 105. For some of the earlier literature on male "envy," see Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York, 1949), 102–04; Bettelheim; Ruth W. Lidz and Theodore Lidz, "Male Menstruation: A Ritual Alternative to the Oedipal Transition," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 58 (1977), 17–31; Eva Feder Kittay, "Womb Envy: An Explanatory Concept," in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcot (Totowa, NJ, 1984), 94–128, esp. 108–12; Rancour-Laferrière, 369–84, esp. 370–71, with references to the psychoanalytic literature. For a somewhat analogous approach to Greek material, which however avoids the simplistic literalism of "envy" models, see Zeitlin (1984), 177–81, and "Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysus and Demeter," *Arethusa*, 15 (1982), 129–57, esp. 147–48, comparing Platonic philosophy, understood as a drive for hidden realities, to the male fascination with feminine secrets, with what a woman conceals; cf. Nussbaum (1986), 189–90, for a similar argument. My own interpretation follows, instead, the somewhat different lead provided by Zeitlin (1985), esp. 65–66, 84–88, picking up from the point where she leaves off.
- 197 Keesing, 23, summarizing this aspect of the New Guinea ethnographies, has written, "Women's physical control over reproductive processes and emotional control over their sons must be overcome by politics, secrecy, ideology, and dramatized male power." See, also, Langness.
- 198 Adam (1985/a), 22–23.
- 199 See "Two Views of Greek Love," in this volume, note 18.
- 200 J. J. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht*, ed. K. Meuli (Basel, 1948), II, 629–30.
- 201 E.g., Euripides, *Medea* 573–75; *Hippolytus* 616–24; see Vernant (1974), 132–38; Loraux, 76. Note, also, Zeus's womb (*nêdys*) in Hesiod, *Theogony* 487, 890, 899 (cf. 460).

- 202 E.g., Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 741b4–5: see Horowitz, 194–95; Manuli (1980), 406–08; Detienne (1976). Compare O’Flaherty, 28–29, 37–38.
- 203 See Zeitlin (1984), for the definitive study of this theme in Aeschylus; also, Arthur, 111–12.
- 204 Cf. O’Brien (1981), 127–33, esp. 132: “Plato is struggling with the biologically based realities of male reproductive consciousness. The products of female reproductive labour—species integration and genetic continuity—are deprived of their unity of understanding and action precisely because this unity is not immediately accessible to men. It must be mediated. The experiential moments of female reproductive consciousness, confirmed in actual labour, are thus denigrated and dehumanized, given a low value while they are quite frankly imitated in a ‘higher’ sphere, the creation of concepts in a male intercourse of spirit and thought”; duBois (1988), 169–83, esp. 169: “I believe that Plato’s appropriation of the reproductive metaphors of Greek culture used to describe the place of women and his use of this metaphorical network to authorize the male philosopher are linked to a metaphorical project—to the task of a monistic metaphysics, the positing of a one—father, sun, god—who is the source and origin of the good.”
- 205 Irigaray (1985/b), 156.
- 206 For this and much of what follows, I owe a great deal to the work and conversation of Madeleine H. Kahn.
- 207 Julia Kristeva, *Le texte du roman* (The Hague, 1970), 160. I owe this reference to Miller, 49.
- 208 For the most extensive meditation on this topic, see Irigaray (1985/a), who analyzes both Freudian psychoanalysis and Platonic metaphysics in these terms but fails unaccountably to discuss Diotima (Irigaray is followed by duBois [1988], 169–83, who concentrates on the *Phaedrus* and similarly neglects Diotima); that omission is partially (if perfunctorily) rectified by Freeman.
- 209 Miller, 49.
- 210 Helene P. Foley, “Women in Greece,” in Grant and Kitzinger, 1301–17, esp. 1301–02; compare the statement quoted by Woolf (1957 [1929]), 45n., from F. L. Lucas, *Tragedy*, 114–15: “It remains a strange and almost inexplicable fact that in Athena’s city, where women were kept in almost Oriental suppression as odalisques or drudges, the stage should yet have produced figures like Clytemnestra. . . . [T]he paradox of this world where in real life a respectable woman could hardly show her face alone in the street, and yet on the stage woman equals or surpasses man, has never been satisfactorily explained.” Lucas goes on, in the passage Woolf cites, to note that “in modern tragedy the same predominance exists.” Woolf conducts her own survey of literature; her conclusion, if accurate, suggests that this paradox of social oppression and poetic license may not be so distinctive to Greek culture as Foley imagines: “if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater. But this woman is in fiction. In fact . . . she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room. A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband” (pp. 45–46).

- 211 See Case, 318: "the suppression of actual women in the classical world created the invention of a representation of the gender 'Woman' within the culture. This 'Woman' appeared on the stage, in the myths, and in the plastic arts, representing the patriarchal values attached to the gender of 'Woman' while suppressing the experiences, stories, feelings, and fantasies of actual women."
- 212 See Zeitlin (1981), 177–78. For a close parallel that does not depend on gender-crossing, see Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1974).
- 213 For some different accounts of Socratic transvestitism, see Bohner-Cante, 69–81; John Brenkman, "The Other and the One: Psychoanalysis, Reading, the *Symposium*," in *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading—Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore, 1982), 396–456, esp. 426, 448–50; Page duBois, "Phallogentrism and its Subversion in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Arethusa*, 18 (1985), 91–103, amplified in duBois (1988), 174–83; Freeman, 172; Stanley Rosen, "Platonic Hermeneutics: On the Interpretation of a Platonic Dialogue," in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy: Volume I* (1985), ed. John J. Cleary (Lanham, MD, 1986), 271–88, esp. 285. On transvestitism in Greek culture, see Zeitlin (1981), 177–81, and (1985), 65–66, with further references on p. 89, n. 9; duBois (1988), 176–77; Nicole Loraux, "Herakles: The Super-Male and the Feminine," and Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux and François Lissarrague, "From Ambiguity to Ambivalence: A Dionysiac Excursion through the 'Anakreontic' Vases," both translated by Robert Lamberton in Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin.
- 214 The issue, of course, is considerably more complex than I have made it out to be: in a culture, for example, in which both women and men "menstruate," might not menstruation mean something quite different from what it means when it is associated with a gender-specific physiology? In such a culture, in other words, might not "menstruation" simply refer to (e.g.) a process of purification which both men and women periodically undergo, albeit in different ways? See Gilbert Lewis, *Day of Shining Red: An Essay on Understanding Ritual* (Cambridge, 1980), esp. 111–12; La Fontaine, 129. For an analysis of the relation between (female) menstruation and (male) nose-bleeding in the ancient medical writers—an analysis that coincides on many points with the results of anthropological work in Melanesia—see Jones (1991/a), and, for the mediaeval analogue, see Bynum (1986), 421–22, 436.
- 215 Maximus of Tyre, 24.4, remarked that Socrates fashioned *Erôs* in his own image—but in the image of himself as it had appeared on the comic stage (see, in addition to Aristophanes's *Clouds*, Eupolis, fr. 352; Ameipsias, fr. 9 [Kock]).
- 216 Note the use of *homologeîn* and its compounds to express the unbroken continuity of assumptions spanning the two conversations: 199b9, d9; 200b6, d6, e7; 201b1, b9 (thus far Agathon); 201e (Socrates's justification for replacing himself with Diotima); 202b3, b6, c1, d1, d4 (Diotima takes over).
- 217 It was on these grounds that Wilamowitz, II, 170–76, esp. 174, suspecting that Plato was having a bit of fun with his reader, refused to accept the early portions of Diotima's speech as Platonic doctrine; other scholars have confined their skepticism to Diotima's historicity: Bury, xxxix, maintains, "It is only for purposes of literary art that Diotima here supplants the Platonic Socrates: she is presented, by a fiction, as his instructor, whereas in fact she merely gives utterance to his own thoughts"; similarly, Robin (1929), xxv–xxvii, and Friedländer, I, 148–50 and III, 25, argue that Diotima is the creation not of Plato but of the Platonic Socrates: she is an ironic mask behind which the Platonic Socrates conceals himself (Friedländer's interpretation has been followed recently by Lowenstam, esp. 86). For another discussion of how Plato sometimes allows Socrates to

- undermine his own narratorial reliability, see Harry Berger, Jr., "Facing Sophists: Socrates' Charismatic Bondage in *Protagoras*," *Representations*, 5 (1984), 66–91, esp. 72–74.
- 218 See Lowenstam, 98, on this "confusion of roles"; cf. Saxonhouse (1985), 54, who emphasizes Socrates's identification with *Penia*.
- 219 On the magical qualities associated with Socrates's person in Socratic literature, see Dorothy Tarrant, "The Touch of Socrates," *Classical Quarterly*, n.s. 8 (1958), 95–98. On the imagery of filling and emptying in the *Symposium*, see Lowenstam, 88–89, 96–97; Bruce Rosenstock, "Socrates' New Music: The *Symposium* and the *Phaedo*" (unpublished ms.) For interpretations of the Alcibiades episode as an illustration of the myth of *Poros* and *Penia*, see O'Brien, 128–129; Lowenstam, 98–100.
- 220 Compare Lowenstam, 100.
- 221 See my paper, "Plato and the Erotics of Narrativity," in *Methodological Approaches to Plato and His Dialogues*, ed. James Klagge and Nicholas D. Smith, forthcoming.
- 222 Woolf (1957 [1929]), 26. "What could be the reason, then, of this curious disparity, I wondered," Woolf continues. "Why are women . . . so much more interesting to men than men are to women?" (p. 27; see, generally, pp. 26–37).
- 223 Freud, "Femininity," *New Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey, in Strachey, XXII, 112–35 (quotation, with Strachey's italics, on p. 113). See Irigaray (1985/a), 13ff., esp. 13: "It is a matter, then, for you, men, to speak among yourselves, men, about woman who is not at all interested by the reception or production of a discourse concerning *the riddle*, the *logogriphe* which she represents to you. The mystery which *is* woman thus will constitute *the aim*, *the object*, and *the sport* of a masculine discourse, of a debate among men which will not pose the question to her, which should not concern her. About which she should know essentially nothing." (I quote here the translation provided by Timothy Murray in *Theatre Journal*, 37 [1985], 272.)
- 224 See, e.g., *P. Oxy.* 3656; Diogenes Laertius, 3.46: discussion by Alice Swift Riginos, *Platonica: The Anecdotes concerning the Life and Writings of Plato* (Leiden, 1976), 183–84. (I wish to thank Mary Lefkowitz for providing me with these references.)
- 225 Note that "sexual difference" is typically put into the singular, as if there were only one difference between the sexes that really counted. . . .
- 226 See Teresa de Lauretis, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation," *Theatre Journal*, 40 (1988), 155–77, who derives this concept from Luce Irigaray, esp. Irigaray (1985/b), 86: in Western discourses on female sexuality (psychoanalytic discourse is the case in point here) "*the feminine occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects*. Which implies that there are not really two sexes, but only one. A single practice and representation of the sexual." See, also, Irigaray (1985/a), 28: Freud, defining "sexual differences [note Irigaray's plural] as a function of the a priori of the same," has "recourse, to support this demonstration, to the age-old processes [of classical philosophy]: analogy, comparison, symmetry, dichotomic oppositions, and so on"; he thereby exposes "sexual 'indifference' " as a condition of traditional metaphysical coherence. Irigaray also renders this concept by her punning coinage *hom(m)osexualité*—a concept best illustrated by the textual practice of the conservative British philosopher Roger Scruton, esp. x, who, in his discussion of (hetero)sexual desire, retains the masculine pronoun for both the subject and object of desire, on the ground that "it is stylistically correct." Here we see the paradoxical implications of what Scruton calls "traditional practice" plainly exposed: by regularly treating the ungended subject as male and thus excluding women, it creates a unitary, universalizing discourse whose uniquely masculine terms, for all their ostensible involvement in heterosexist paradigms, produce an unintended homoerotic effect—pre-

cisely the conjunction that Irigaray's coinage is designed to represent. See Jones (1991/a), who makes a similar argument about Hippocratic medicine.

- 227 See Glenn W. Most, "Seming and Being: Sign and Metaphor in Aristotle," in *Creativity and the Imagination: Case Studies from the Classical Age to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Mark Amsler, Studies in Science and Culture, 3 (Newark, 1985), 11–33.
- 228 Cf. Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," *Feminist Issues*, 1.1 (Summer 1980), 103–11, who, having argued that " 'man' and 'woman' are political concepts of opposition, and the copula which dialectically unites them is, at the same time, the one which abolishes them" (p. 108), concludes that " 'woman' has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. Lesbians are not women" (p. 110); Rubin (1975), 178–80.
- 229 I wish to thank Daniel L. Selden for supplying me with the formulations contained in the last two paragraphs.