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Claremont McKenna College

A Reading of Phaedrus's Eulogy in Plato's *Symposium*

Submitted to

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Senior Thesis

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## Chapter 1: Pederasty in Ancient Greece

The goal of my thesis will be to guide new readers of the *Symposium* by Plato through Phaedrus's eulogy of Eros. It would be impossible to guide such readers through the eulogy, however, without first providing a context of pederasty in Ancient Greece. Pederasty, simply defined, is sexual activity involving a man and a boy. Pederasty comes from the Ancient Greek word παιδεραστία, or *paidēraστia*, which is a compound of *paides*, or children, and *erastēs*, or he who loves. Although there is no evidence of pederasty as a common and accepted practice during Homer's time, by the 7th century BC pederasty had become customary throughout Ancient Greece. Classics scholar Celsiana Warwick says that "pederasty may indicate that a profound cultural change occurred between the eighth and fifth centuries with regard to the way Greek, particularly Athenian, society characterized intense emotional relationships between men. In classical Athens, pederastic *erōs* was a conspicuous form of male love among the upper classes"<sup>1</sup>. By the time the *Symposium* was written in Athens, around 385 BC, pederasty was an accepted, respected, and prolifically practiced form of relationship throughout Ancient Greece.

Despite the word *paidēraστia* translating to lover of children, pederasty refers only to sexual activity taking place with two males, an adult and a youth. In Ancient Greece, only pederastic relationships involving men and adolescent boys were considered socially acceptable. Erotic relationships with women were frowned upon. Women, traditionally, were excluded in fundamental ways from Ancient Greek society. William O'Neal writes,

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<sup>1</sup> Celsiana Warwick, *The Chaste Consecration of Thighs: Post-Homeric Representations of Achilles and Patroclus in Classical Greek Literature*, (Davis: Explorations: The Undergraduate Research Journal, 2002), 2.

For the most part, women were legal nonentities whom the Greek male excluded from any participation in the political or intellectual life of the city. Generally, the women did not attend school and did not learn to read and write. According to one scholarly view, they were uneducated except for domestic training; they were virtually imprisoned in their homes.<sup>2</sup>

Women, instead, were expected to play domestic roles like those of wife, mother, and home-keeper. In Ancient Greek households, women were led by a *kyrios*, or ‘man in authority’.

Historian David D. Philips writes, “The *kyrios* exercised legal control and guardianship over his dependents, typically his wife, minor sons, and unmarried daughters... Women, however, were never legally independent persons but were always subject to a *kyrios*. From birth to marriage, a woman’s *kyrios* was her father”<sup>3</sup>.

Marriages, too, in Ancient Greece, were traditionally arranged by the father of a bride. Philips continues, “Marriage was a contract of betrothal between the *kyrios* of the bride—the consent of the bride herself was not legally relevant—and the groom. For the marriage to be complete and valid, *ekdosis* (lit., ‘giving out’; i.e., ‘giving in marriage’) had to take place: this was the delivery of the bride by her *kyrios* to her husband”<sup>4</sup>. Dowry’s were often involved, and marriage, ultimately, functioned as business arrangement between two men. Ancient Greece, in short, was a very sexist society. By the time Plato was writing, in the fourth century BC, women had become so excluded from Greek life that not even literature coming from them survives.

O’Neal writes,

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<sup>2</sup> William J. O’Neal, *The Status of Women in Ancient Athens*, (International Social Science Review 1993), 117.

<sup>3</sup> David D. Philips, ‘*Marriage and Dowry.*’ In *The Law of Ancient Athens*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 138

<sup>4</sup> *ibid* 138

A comprehensive and unbiased view of the role of women in Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries is difficult to ascertain. There were no Athenian women writers in that period. There is very little literature of any kind which comes from the middle or lower classes of society. The view of women in Athens in the literature comes from the writings of males from the upper middle class.<sup>5</sup>

These views, often, were unkind. Prejudice towards women ran rampant in Ancient Greece during this time, and even among the better depictions, women never escaped domesticity.

O'Neal says, "The two primary good roles played by women were those of wives and of mothers. Among the bad roles were those of lovers, rebels, and witches"<sup>6</sup>.

The popularity of homoerotic pederasty developed in Ancient Greece, at least in part, because the treatment and view of women on the part of men was so poor. Characters in the *Symposium*, too, exclude women and treat them disdainfully. From the offset of the story, the only woman present is told to leave. Eryximachus says, "I next propose to dismiss the flute girl who just came in and to let her flute for herself, or, if she wants, for the women within, while we consort with each other today through speeches"<sup>7</sup>. The men, wanting only to speak to and hear from other men, agree and the flute girl is dismissed to be with the rest of the women. In Phaedrus's eulogy, Phaedrus speaks poorly of women when a punishment for one of his characters is performed "at the hands of women"<sup>8</sup>. Also in Pausanias's speech, Pausanias says that the worst sort of lover is "no less in love with women than with boys"<sup>9</sup>. Rather, the most

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<sup>5</sup> William J. O'Neal, *The Status of Women in Ancient Athens*, (International Social Science Review 1993), 116.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* 117

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 6.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid* 10.

noble love, for the characters in the *Symposium*, occurs not between men and women, but between men and boys.

It is important for a reader of the *Symposium* to understand the role of pederasty and women in Ancient Greece, also, because the text's characters are engaged in pederastic relationships. Often their speeches, while speaking of love and Eros, are only applied in a pederastic context. Within both the *Symposium* and historical literature, there is evidence that four characters were involved in pederastic relationships. Phaedrus and Eryximachus are the first known couple. Evidence of their relationship becomes clear at the beginning of the *Symposium* when, at two points, Eryximachus speaks for Phaedrus. At first, Eryximachus says that he and Phaedrus will not drink, and later Eryximachus speaks of a series of private conversations occurring between only him and Phaedrus. Eryximachus says, "On several occasions Phaedrus has said to me in annoyance, 'Isn't it awful, Eryximachus, that hymns and paeans have been made by the poets and gods, but for Eros, who is so great and important a god, not one of the many poets there have been have ever made even a eulogy?'"<sup>10</sup>. We can see the characters flirting too when Phaedrus says that he is "used to obeying [Eryximachus]"<sup>11</sup> and when Eryximachus says that he desires to make "a loan to please [Phaedrus]"<sup>12</sup>.

Scholar Eugene Gendlin attests to the connection in his paper on the *Symposium* when he writes, "In the introduction Eryximachus, the lover of Phaedrus, prescribes the topic and arrangement, but attributes the origin to Phaedrus, his love object, who then must speak first, as

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid* 6.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* 6.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid* 6.

being truly the force that inspires the whole sequence”<sup>13</sup>. Christopher Long, too, hints at their relationship, saying that the pair ultimately lived together outside of Athens: “Phaedrus and Eryximachus were accused of complicity in the destruction of the herms and sent into exile”<sup>14</sup>.

The *Symposium's* introduction, furthermore, alludes to a relationship between Agathon and Pausanias. The connection it makes is subtle; Socrates pairs the two of them together after Eryximachus finishes speaking. Socrates replies, “No one will cast a vote against you, Eryximachus, for I would surely not beg off, as I claim to have expert knowledge of nothing but erotics; nor would Agathon and Pausanias beg off, to say nothing of Aristophanes, whose whole activity is devoted to Dionysus and Aphrodite”<sup>15</sup>. Socrates is saying that a eulogy of love is a fitting task for the group. Because Socrates has expert knowledge of the erotics, Agathon and Pausanias are engaged in the erotics, and Aristophanes is devoted to the erotic gods, these characters should all be able to speak on the subject with precision and grace.

In addition, it is an accepted fact in modern scholarship that Pausanias and Agathon were engaged in a pederastic relationship. Scholar Charles Salzman, also confirming the previous relationship we studied, writes “Phaedrus and Eryximachus have long been a couple with Eryximachus the *erastes* or older lover; Pausanias and Agathon are likewise a pair, with Agathon

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<sup>13</sup> Eugene Gendlin, *Who Controls the Dialectic?: Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2018), 193.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher P Long, *Is There Method in This Madness?: Context, Play, and Laughter in Plato's Symposium and Republic*, (Northwestern University Press 2007), 179.

<sup>15</sup> Plato and Seth Benardete, *Plato's Symposium*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7.



the *eromenos* or younger beloved”<sup>16</sup>. As Long treats what happened to Phaedrus and Eryximachus, he does so again with these two: “Agathon and Pausanias seem to have left Athens to take up with the tyrant Archelaus of Macedonia”<sup>17</sup>. If we are to trust these scholars, then it seems these two couples, in addition to being together at the *Symposium*, ultimately finished their days together.

The knowledge of these relationships impacts our interpretation of the *Symposium* in two ways. First, it localizes the scope of these characters arguments. Phaedrus and Pausanias, especially, speak of Eros and love only in terms of pederastic relationships. Without such knowledge, we would miss the aims of their speeches altogether. Second, in knowing that the characters share these relationships, a reader should interpret their speeches as both communicating something about love or Eros *and* communicating something to their partner. We will see, Phaedrus gives his eulogy to theorize love, but also to solicit action from Eryximachus.

Bearing this interpretive framework, we see that Phaedrus’s speech is both a eulogy of love and a eulogy of pederasty. Before delving straight into his speech, however, we should first learn more about the dynamics of pederastic relationships in Ancient Greece. By the time Plato was writing, pederastic relationships had developed specific social roles for each partner. Of course, the first role was age: one partner was much older and the other was much younger. As Pausanias says, the younger of the two should begin entering these relationships “close to the

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Salzman, *Anthropogony and Theogony in Plato's "Symposium"*, (The Classical Journal, 1991), 214-25.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher P Long. *Is There Method in This Madness?: Context, Play, and Laughter in Plato's Symposium and Republic*, (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 179.

time when the beard first appears”<sup>18</sup>. Another significant social role within pederastic relationships is a distinction between a lover, or *erastês*, and a beloved, or *erômenos*. Warwick writes,

the paradigm of pederastic homosexuality that was the norm in certain parts of Greece, particularly among the Athenian upper classes from the sixth through the fourth centuries. Such relationships involved an older, dominant partner, called the *erastês*, and a younger, submissive partner, called the *erômenos* or *paidika*. The *erastês* was usually an adult, while the typical *erômenos* was an adolescent boy who had not yet grown a beard.<sup>19</sup>

In English, we can see, our translation into lover and beloved reveals a relationship between the two terms. A beloved, clearly, is the object of somebody's of something's love, and a lover is somebody that loves. In Ancient Greek, too, the terms share this relationship. Warwick continues, “The grammatical construction of these terms reveals the inherent inequality of the two roles: *erastês* is active, ‘he who loves,’ while *erômenos* is passive, ‘he who is loved.’”<sup>20</sup>

This inequality, we will see, forms the basis of Phaedrus's eulogy. Phaedrus, the beloved, speaks of love and Eros only to be loved. Love, for Phaedrus, is one of two things. It is the lovers loving of a beloved, or it is the beloveds being loved by the lover. Phaedrus wishes to escape the burdens of loving, and devises a clever way to achieve the benefits of his partner's actions without the requirement of loving himself.

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<sup>18</sup> Plato and Seth Benardete, *Plato's Symposium*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>19</sup> Celsiana Warwick, *The Chaste Consecration of Thighs: Post-Homeric Representations of Achilles and Patroclus in Classical Greek Literature*, (Explorations: The Undergraduate Research Journal, 2002), 1.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid* 2.

## Chapter 2: The Eulogy

When we read Phaedrus's eulogy, we must first understand that Phaedrus is speaking in the presence of his lover, Eryximachus. We know that Phaedrus is Eryximachus's younger beloved and that Eryximachus is Phaedrus's older lover. When Phaedrus speaks of Eros, his statements always contain dual-meanings. The first is literal: Phaedrus's statements about Eros can be read simply as statements about Eros, each contributing to Phaedrus's theory of love as a whole. The second meaning concerning these statements regards his own relationship with Eryximachus. Phaedrus's eulogy of Eros is also utilized by Phaedrus to communicate with his lover. We will see, sometimes Phaedrus describes Eros to flatter Eryximachus; others he speaks of Eros so Eryximachus will confer benefits upon him.

Accordingly, Phaedrus begins his speech by praising Eros's older age, an obvious gesture towards his older lover. Phaedrus says, "For the god to be ranked among the oldest is a mark of honor"<sup>21</sup>. As proof, Phaedrus offers that the great ancient authors, Hesiod, Parmenides, and Akousilaus, all agree that Eros is among the oldest gods. Hesiod, the classic Greek poet who wrote around 700 B.C.E., considers the origins of the world and gods in his epic poem *Theogony*. In it, Hesiod describes the beginning of the world with generation of four gods: Chaos, a void, was filled with Gaia, the earth. Tartarus filled the depths of the earth, and then came Eros, who, according to Hesiod, "is the most beautiful among the immortal gods, the dissolver of care, who overpowers the mind and thoughtful counsel in the breast of all gods and human beings"<sup>22</sup>. In addition to playing humanlike roles in the *Theogony*'s narrative, these gods

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<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7. Quote is taken from Benardete's footnotes

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* 6.

were also, in a manner of speaking, the fundamental forces of the universe. In this sense, the gods in this poem serve both as personified deities, like the gods of Olympus, and as cosmogonic forces. For Hesiod, everything traces back to these four.

Parmenides, a philosopher born in 515 B.C.E, wrote that, “First of all gods, devised Eros”<sup>23</sup>. Of course, this quote is a known fragment. Without the context, it may be impossible to say what exactly Parmenides meant. Similarly, the work of Akousilaus, a 6th century B.C.E Greek mythographer, has been largely lost. It is unlikely that we will know exactly what Phaedrus had access to and whether his usage of Parmenides and Akousilaus was faithful. Nonetheless, Phaedrus asserts that for each, Eros is among the eldest gods. By citing these three authors, Phaedrus does two things: first, he establishes that Eros is young, and a thus primordial, fundamental force in the universe. Much like the cliché, Eros makes the world go round. He establishes this by an appeal to classic Greek authors, ones whom his audience undoubtedly knew and whose quotes possessed authority. And second, Phaedrus is appealing to Eryximachus. By saying it is an honor for Eros to be among the oldest, Phaedrus also means that it is a mark of honor for Eryximachus to be the elder in their own relationship. So, by praising Eros’s age, Phaedrus praises and dignifies Eryximachus’s status as his older lover.

Phaedrus goes on to say that “And as [Eros] is the oldest, we have him as the cause of the greatest goods”<sup>24</sup>. Continuing this logic, by saying that Eros is the cause of the greatest goods, Phaedrus also means that Eryximachus, or lovers, bring about the greatest goods for their beloveds. For Phaedrus, we will find, the greatest goods always benefit a beloved. In this sense,

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid* 8.

Phaedrus wishes to impress Eryximachus by praising his age, but he also wishes for Eryximachus to impress him by bringing about the good, for him. So, for Phaedrus, in pederastic relationships, because the eldest are the agents of the greatest goods, then it is also their burden to bring them to their beloveds. In other words, Phaedrus is establishing a relationship where lovers must fulfill the good for a beloved, while omitted, of course, is a beloved's responsibility in fulfilling the good for a lover.

In this sense, Phaedrus's depiction of love is self-centered. Because Phaedrus occupies the position of a beloved, it is clear that his theory of love is also a projection of his own desires. Phaedrus would like Eryximachus to confer as many benefits as possible onto him without actually being required to give anything himself. Love in pederastic relationships, for Phaedrus, is a one way street. Lovers are slaves who exist to serve their beloveds, and beloveds are vacuums which suck everything good from their lover. Later, we will find that Phaedrus's bias for beloveds forms the basis for Pausanias's speech: Pausanias, an older lover, speaks to shift the burden of good onto the beloved.

So because for Phaedrus only lovers are responsible for bringing about the good, Phaedrus concludes that the greatest good is for a youth to have a "good lover, and for a lover, a beloved"<sup>25</sup>. That is, a beloved needs a good lover, one that brings him the greatest goods, but a lover, we see, is suited to be with a beloved of any quality. With this dynamic, Eryximachus must be devoted to bringing about the good for Phaedrus, while Phaedrus can act however he wishes. Phaedrus might do things to hurt Eryximachus; he could damage Eryximachus's reputation, cheat and steal. According to Phaedrus, this sort of behavior, performed on the part of a beloved,

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid* 8.

would be permissible. Because the lover must bring about the greatest goods, the beloved has no obligations. Love in these relationships, then, is only possibly measured by the lover's goodness.

In this sense, the praise of Eryximachus' age is duplicitous. On the outside, Phaedrus's praise demonstrates his respect for Eryximachus. Phaedrus is complementing Eryximachus when Phaedrus tells him that his age is a "mark of honor"<sup>26</sup>, and that this makes him "the cause of the greatest goods"<sup>27</sup>. But beneath this initial valence of meaning, we find that Phaedrus really means that Eryximachus should do things for him without any expectation of reciprocation, in any form. Lovers possess this obligation because, according to Phaedrus, only they have the god within them. Phaedrus says, "A lover is a more divine thing than a beloved, for he has the god within him"<sup>28</sup>. Beloveds, without Eros's presence, should be permitted to licentiousness and avarice because they have no god inspiring them to act otherwise. Phaedrus writes, "there is no one so bad that, once the god Eros had entered him, [a lover] would not be directed toward virtue"<sup>29</sup>.

As we can see, again, Phaedrus is doing two things. First, he is admiring Eryximachus, complementing him as divine and virtuous. But underneath this pandering, we can see that Phaedrus is really just paying lip service. Phaedrus indulges Eryximachus's ego to convince Eryximachus that he has to bring him the greatest goods. According to Phaedrus, if all lovers have the god within them, then they must be directed towards virtue. Any indication of

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid* 7.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid* 8.

Eryximachus acting differently could be counted by Phaedrus as proof of Eryximachus's lack of love. If Eryximachus performs immoral deeds, Phaedrus could say that Eros is not within him. So, by claiming that Eros is only found within lovers, Phaedrus puts Eryximachus on thin ice. In order to prove his love for Phaedrus, Eryximachus must act virtuously, all the time.

Why might a lover want to love beloved, then, if beloveds do not bring about the good for lovers? The answer is twofold. First, we should infer, there is some value for a lover in having a beloved. If a lover gets nothing out of his relationship with a beloved, then there is no reason for him to be with that beloved over another. If loving all beloveds were miserable, then nobody would be lovers. We can see within the text, too, that Phaedrus does do things for Eryximachus. At one point, Phaedrus says that he is used to "obeying [him]"<sup>30</sup>. The second answer is that lovers, in loving beloveds, become more virtuous people.

Phaedrus explains that this love allows lovers and beloveds to "live fairly throughout their lives"<sup>31</sup>. The beloved's presence, according to Phaedrus, provokes a lover's "shame in the face of shameful things and honorable ambition in the face of beautiful things"<sup>32</sup>. The lover, acting with this honorable ambition, accomplishes "great and beautiful deeds"<sup>33</sup> for a beloved, and in turn is guaranteed to live a life of fairness and peace. Because he is driven to make more honorable and less shameful decisions, he has merit to be respected by his community. A lover should take pride in the great and beautiful deeds he performs, even though they exist, by design,

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid* 6.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid* 8.

for a beloved. Engaging in a pederastic relationship, ultimately, benefits lovers by making them better people.

Having Eros within a lover, we see, motivates the shame and honorable ambition experienced before a beloved. The shame and honorable ambition, in turn, inspires the lover's bringing about of the greatest goods. Because of their beloved's presence, a lover should be inclined to bring about great and beautiful deeds. Of course, Phaedrus is really saying that because of his own presence, Eryximachus should carry out such acts for him. On the most basic level, an example of a great and beautiful deed might be abstaining from shameful things. Rather than partaking in shameful things and feeling ashamed, a lover would resist partaking altogether. A lover, for instance, may feel tempted by "deserting his post or throwing away his weapons"<sup>34</sup>. He may want to sleep with another beloved, or to drink heavily in his beloved's presence, and he would likely feel ashamed afterwards if he had yielded to such temptations. A lover's love for a beloved should be so strong, however, that "he would choose to be dead many times over before that happened"<sup>35</sup>. The great and beautiful deed the lover might accomplish, then, could be resisting his own temptations.

It is possible that Phaedrus is asking Eryximachus to refrain from embarrassing him. At many points, it seems Eryximachus shows *hubris* for his involvement with the medical sciences; he also scoffs at his companions. After Eryximachus finishes his speech and notices that Aristophanes had finished hiccuping he says, "My good Aristophanes, look at what you are

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* 8.



doing. You have made [us] laugh just as you were about to speak”<sup>36</sup>. Ludwig Edelstein says that “there is almost general agreement among modern interpreters that Plato, in representing him, has drawn an ironical portrait of the pedantic expert and scientist”<sup>37</sup>. Eryximachus is a figure which “Plato holds up to ridicule”<sup>38</sup>. So, because Eryximachus does not restrain himself in Phaedrus’s presence at the *Symposium*, there is reason to think that Phaedrus is urging him to abstain from engaging in embarrassing behavior. And this abstention, in effect, could count as a great and beautiful deed.

Nobody’s presence, according to Phaedrus, can make a lover as ashamed as the presence of his beloved. He says that if a lover was “doing something shameful”<sup>39</sup> he would not be as ashamed as being “observed by either his father, his comrades, or anyone else as by his beloved”<sup>40</sup>. The same holds true for any beloved, who, according to Phaedrus, is “exceptionally shamed before his lovers whenever he is seen to be involved in something shameful”<sup>41</sup>. So because lovers and beloveds experience a mutual desire to abstain from shameful things, Phaedrus concludes that if a city could be composed exclusively of lovers and beloveds, then “there could be no better way for them to manage their city”<sup>42</sup>. Before acting shamefully, a lover

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid* 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ludwig Edelstein, *The Rôle of Eryximachus in Plato's Symposium* (Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 1945), 85.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* 85.

<sup>39</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid* 8

<sup>42</sup> *ibid* 8.

or beloved would think of their counterpart and “abstain from all that is shameful and be filled with love of honor before another”<sup>43</sup>. Here Phaedrus concedes that beloveds share some responsibility towards their other. Beloveds too, we see, can abstain from acting shamefully for the benefit of their partner.

But Phaedrus quickly shifts back to the lover. The most shameful thing a lover could do, according to Phaedrus, would be to abandon a beloved who was in danger. He says that, if a beloved were in danger, “there is no one so bad that, once the god Eros had entered him, he would not be directed towards virtue”<sup>44</sup>. If Phaedrus were in danger, then, Eryximachus would have to fight for him. A lover could never live with himself if he were unable to defend his beloved. If a lover would prefer to be “dead many times over than abandon [his] post”<sup>45</sup>, we can only speculate the shame he would experience in the failure to protect his beloved. Of course, under these terms, a beloved shares no role in the couple’s protection. Escaping responsibility in protecting himself or Eryximachus, Phaedrus concludes that “lovers are the only ones who are willing to die for the sake of another”<sup>46</sup>.

What Phaedrus means when he says that shame and honor bring about the greatest goods is ‘it impresses me when a lover does honorable things before me’. Phaedrus is using Eryximachus as a means to receive the great and beautiful deeds Eryximachus accomplishes. Likewise, when Phaedrus says that only lovers die for the sake of others, Phaedrus is really

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid* 8.

saying to Eryximachus, ‘die for me!’. Phaedrus urges lovers to act heroically when he says that as “‘the strength that the god breathed’ into some of the heroes, Eros supplies from himself to lovers”<sup>47</sup>. Again, the burdens Phaedrus creates, this time the burdens of protection, heroism, and self-sacrifice, fall solely onto the lover. To corroborate his earlier claim, that “lovers are the only ones who are willing to die for the sake of another”<sup>48</sup>, Phaedrus interprets the stories of Alcestis, Achilles, and Orpheus.

Alcestis was a myth popularized by a Euripides play of the same title. In the story, Alcestis’ newlywed husband Admetus faces death. Apollo convinces the Fates to let Admetus live, but in return another must die in his stead. After nobody volunteers themselves, including Admetus’s parents, Alcestis comes forward and surrenders her life. Heracles, a demigod and ‘divine hero’ who played roles in many Greek myths, goes to the underworld and returns with a living Alcestis. In Phaedrus’s account, Alcestis was returned from the underworld as ordered by the gods, on account of the sacrifice she made for Admetus. He says “Her performance of this deed was thought to be so noble in the opinion not only of human beings but of the gods as well that, although there have been many who have accomplished many noble deeds, the gods have given to only a select number of them the guerdon of sending up their souls again from Hades”<sup>49</sup>.

Achilles was a Greek warrior in the epic poem *The Illiad* by Homer. In *The Illiad*, the Greeks and Trojans are embroiled in battle. Agamemnon, the Greek king, is forced to surrender a Trojan woman he took as a slave, Chryseis, and he immediately replaces her with Briseis,

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid* 9.

another Trojan woman taken slave. Briseis, however, was Achilles's prize, and the king's decision to take her from Achilles upsets Achilles greatly. Achilles refuses to fight and even Zeus, on account of Achilles, turns the war in the Trojan's favor. Eventually, after suffering great defeats at the hands of Troy, Agamemnon offers Achilles gifts, including Briseis, in an effort to appease him. Achilles does not accept and continues refusing to fight.

What inspires Achilles to fight again is the death of his companion, Patroclus. Patroclus dies at the hands of Hector, the Trojan prince, and Achilles sets out for revenge. Before he begins fighting, however, Achilles's mother Thetis warns him that he will die if he goes onto battle. In Phaedrus's words, "though [Achilles] had learned from his mother that he would be killed if he killed Hector, and that if he did not, he would return home and die in old age, still he dared to choose to come to the aid of his lover Patroclus"<sup>50</sup>. In the end, Thetis's prediction becomes reality. Paris, son of the king and queen of Troy, shoots Achilles in the heel, sending him to his death.

On initial encounter, these two stories seem to make little sense: Alcestis is a woman and Achilles, according to Phaedrus, a beloved. Setting off initially to answer why "lovers are the only ones who are willing to die for the sake of another"<sup>51</sup>, Phaedrus ends up demonstrating the opposite, that women and beloveds also die for their partners. It would make sense if Achilles were Patroclus's lover. If this were the case, we could count a statement like "[Achilles] dared not only to die on [Patroclus's] behalf but to die after him who had died"<sup>52</sup> as evidence for lovers

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid* 9.

being the only ones to die for another. If Alcestis were a lover, likewise, the fact that “she alone was willing to die on behalf of her husband”<sup>53</sup> would also count as evidence for this claim.

However, immediately after claiming that lovers are the only group of people which dies for others, Phaedrus goes back on himself. He concedes that this “is not only true of real men but of women as well”<sup>54</sup>.

What we see occurring is a shift in Phaedrus’s argument. At first, Phaedrus sets out to create a theory of love which requires lovers to do great things for a beloved and requires of beloveds nothing in return. Phaedrus wants Eryximachus to perform endless great and beautiful deeds for him while he can act however he wishes. Here, however, we see Phaedrus arguing that all men and women are capable of dying for another, an act which Phaedrus had previously specified only lovers could perform. Alcestis, a woman, and Achilles, a beloved, both die for their partner. Now, it seems, Phaedrus is arguing that all people can bring about the greatest goods for their partner. Women and beloveds, too, can share in this responsibility.

Loving, for Phaedrus, is abstaining from shameful things and pursuing honorable ambition before another, and loving must be good because it pleases the gods. The gods, according to Phaedrus, “hold in very high esteem that virtue which concerns love”<sup>55</sup>. After each story, Phaedrus tells the room how the gods reward each protagonist’s acts of love. Alcestis died on behalf of her husband, and the gods rewarded her by bringing her soul back from Hades. Her

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*20.

“deed was thought to be so noble”<sup>56</sup> that the gods performed this in “admiring delight at her deed”<sup>57</sup>. Achilles, likewise, died avenging his lover, and the gods sent him to “The Isles of the Blest”<sup>58</sup>. They “gave him outstanding honors, because he had made so much of his lover”<sup>59</sup>. We can conclude that, because the gods conferred rewards onto Alcestis and Achilles, the actions they performed and thus their love for their partners was good. Lovers, perhaps, are the only ones supplied with Eros, but all people, for Phaedrus, are capable of loving. By abstaining from shameful things and pursuing honorable ambition before another, any person loves inasmuch as the gods find their deeds noble.

But not all acts of love are good. In Phaedrus’s rendering of the myth of Orpheus, Orpheus is punished because his deeds were deemed as foul. In most tellings of this story, Orpheus goes to the underworld to bring his wife, Eurydice, back to the world of the living. Eventually, he encounters Hades, who tells him that he can take Eurydice back; however, if Orpheus were to look back during their exit, Eurydice would vanish and be gone from him forever. Orpheus looks back, and Eurydice, tragically, is sent back to the underworld. However, in Phaedrus’s version, Orpheus fails to retrieve Euridyce simply because the gods thought unfavorably of his actions. Phaedrus says, “they did not give her very self to him, because it was thought he was soft, like the lyre player he was, and had not dared to die for love like Alcestis, but contrived to go into Hades alive”<sup>60</sup>. In Orpheus’s case, the deeds he performed for Eurydice

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid* 9.

could not have been honorable or good, because the gods penalized him for them. In this telling of the story of Orpheus, “[the gods] imposed a punishment on him, and made him die at the hands of women, and did not honor him”<sup>61</sup>. These stories, then, in addition to arguing for the virtue of certain love acts, argue for the baseness of others. In this sense, Phaedrus is guiding Eryximachus in what and what not to do before him.

It would embarrass Phaedrus, for instance, if Eryximachus were to play the lyre, so Eryximachus should refrain from playing one. Likewise, Eryximachus should never “[contrive] to go to Hades alive”<sup>62</sup>. Because Orpheus “had not dared to die for love like Alcestis”<sup>63</sup>, had not died “after him who had died”<sup>64</sup> like Achilles, the gods thought him weak and punished him. In other words, Orpheus should have died for his partner. If Phaedrus were in the underworld, then, he must be there on some account of Eryximachus’s failure to protect him. Eryximachus would feel so great a shame he would surely “choose to be dead many times over before that happened”<sup>65</sup>. In the case of this event, thus, Eryximachus should take his own life. Rather than seeking Phaedrus out in the underworld, as Orpheus did for Eurydice, Eryximachus must protect Phaedrus in the present. The deeds which he performs must benefit Phaedrus in life, therefore, in order to be seen as virtuous by the gods.

It is unclear whether Phaedrus would do the same for Eryximachus. Earlier, as we saw, Phaedrus demonstrated how all people, not just lovers, can perform great and beautiful deeds for

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid* 8.

their partners. Alcestis and Achilles died for their partner's, and, according to Phaedrus, such acts were virtuous because they were rewarded by the gods. Nonetheless, Phaedrus only requires lovers to perform such deeds for their beloveds. As Eros is a god who only enters lovers, it is only lovers who *must* be directed towards virtue by him. We remember, there is no lover so bad that "once the god Eros had entered him, he would not be directed towards virtue"<sup>66</sup>. In this sense, lovers are slaves to virtue. It is impossible for lovers to act without virtue if Eros is truly present within them. Beloveds and women, on the other hand, lack Eros. Without the god to direct them at every turn, beloveds and women can corrupt. But despite this capacity for immorality, these groups can still love their partners. Inasmuch as their experience of shame and honorable ambition before their partner results in great and beautiful deeds, beloveds and women love their partners. So, we see, lovers must be virtuous to love their partners, while beloveds and women can behave more flexibly. Although beloveds and women are not required to love their partners, Phaedrus insists that their loving is good.

Because Achilles avenges Patroclus and dies on his behalf, Phaedrus concludes that beloveds too do great and beautiful deeds for their lovers. In fact, it is even more praiseworthy when Phaedrus does something for Eryximachus because Phaedrus is not required to act on his behalf. After all, Eros is not within him. The gods, too, with this knowledge, "wonder, admire, and confer benefits even more when the beloved has affection for the lover than when the lover has it for the beloved"<sup>67</sup>. After all, as Phaedrus remarks, "[the gods] honored Achilles more than

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid* 9.



Alcestis and sent him to the Isles of the Blest”<sup>68</sup>. But because it is the lover’s burden to have affection for the beloved, to bring about great and beautiful deeds for him, Phaedrus concludes that “A lover is a more divine thing than a beloved, for he has the god within him”<sup>69</sup>. Eros, we remember, gives himself to lovers like the gods breathe strength into heroes.

So, it remains Eryximachus’s responsibility to perform great and beautiful deeds for Phaedrus. As Eros is always being supplied to him, Eryximachus must always be performing for Phaedrus. Thus, Phaedrus’s eulogy should be read in two ways. First, it functions as a request for Eryximachus to perform these deeds for him. And second, it functions to justify his request by appealing to virtue. Loving, for Phaedrus, is “[abstaining] from all that is shameful and [being] filled with love of honor before another”<sup>70</sup>. We see that love begets great and beautiful deeds, deeds which involve heroism and sacrifice, honor and shame. The gods enjoy seeing lovers and beloveds performing such deeds, and reward them accordingly. On this basis, Phaedrus concludes true love must be good. He finishes, saying, “So this is how I assert that Eros is the oldest, most honorable, and most competent of the gods with regard to the acquisition of virtue and happiness by human beings both when living and dead”<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid* 10.

## Chapter 3: A Lover's Sacrifice

There is another way, however, to interpret Phaedrus's allusions. We recall, Phaedrus began telling the three stories to prove that "lovers are the only ones who are willing to die for the sake of another"<sup>72</sup>. In our first interpretation, we concluded that Phaedrus's aim shifted: rather than set off to corroborate his claim, Phaedrus provides the stories to demonstrate the virtue of anyone's love for their partner. Alcestis, a woman, and Achilles, who Phaedrus says is a beloved, both die on behalf of their partners, and the gods find their deeds even more virtuous than a lover's because these two groups, unlike the lover, are not required to act virtuously, because they lack the god within them. But Phaedrus is selfish. In another interpretive mode, Phaedrus may actually be setting out to prove his initial claim. Behind this apparent shift, where it appears Phaedrus concedes that non-lover's have some share in loving, lies again duplicity.

Phaedrus wishes to prove that only lovers are willing to die for the sake of another to prod Eryximachus towards doing this for him. To prove to Phaedrus that he is a good lover, Eryximachus must be willing to die for his beloved, Phaedrus. Self-sacrifice, for Phaedrus, would be the ultimate among "great and beautiful deeds"<sup>73</sup>: virtuous, heroic, and extreme. But behind self-sacrifice lies death. In our first interpretation, the acts of self-sacrifice on the part of non-lovers for their partners were rewarded even more than those of lovers because non-lovers had no requirement to act on behalf of their partner. In the cases of Alcestis and Achilles, the gods found their sacrifices virtuous. We recall, "the gods really hold in very high esteem that

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<sup>72</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid* 8.

virtue which concerns love”<sup>74</sup>. But for lovers the situation is reversed. Required to always act virtuously, lovers *must* always be willing to die for the sake of their partner. So, while Phaedrus tells the stories to demonstrate a lover’s virtue in partaking in self-sacrifice, behind his praise is the requirement that any good lover be willing to face death.

Death, however, is a heavy price to pay. At what cost should a lover sacrifice his own life? For Phaedrus, on behalf of the beloved, any. And this is exactly the problem with Phaedrus's argument: Phaedrus wishes a lover to face death on his behalf, even at the expense of the lover’s virtue or common sense. Evidence of this becomes clear even at the beginning of Phaedrus’s speech when he says that a man in love should rather “choose to be dead many times”<sup>75</sup> over “deserting his post or throwing away his weapons”<sup>76</sup>. But there are many situations when it is smarter and even more beautiful to desert ones post over dying. One could argue that it is more beautiful for a lover and beloved to finish their days together than for a lover to end his life senselessly. It becomes painstakingly obvious, however, that violence and death are more beautiful, for Phaedrus, than life and virtue. As such, Phaedrus crafts each story to convince Eryximachus to fight and die and die for him. Let us begin first with the myth of Alcestis.

Here, if we understand Phaedrus's telling of the myth as his proof of only lovers dying for the sake of another, then Alcestis, despite her womanhood, must be the lover, Eryximachus, and Admetus, the beloved, Phaedrus. We will see, Phaedrus not only wishes Eryximachus to be willing to die for him, but to actually proceed and die for him under dishonorable circumstances.

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid* 9.

In *Alcestis*, Admetus is *rightfully* fated to die. As classicist CS Jerram describes, “Admetus incurred the anger of Artemis by neglecting to sacrifice to her at the marriage feast”<sup>77</sup>. For Artemis, the fate of death was a just punishment for Admetus. In our first interpretation, we considered Alcestis a non-lover and Admetus a lover. We concluded that it was Phaedrus's goal to demonstrate how non-lovers could also die for the sake of their partner. Here, the goal and roles have changed.

Evidence that Alcestis is meant to represent the lover lays also within Plato’s text. At the end of Phaedrus’s eulogy, Phaedrus says that the gods “confer benefits even more when the beloved has affection for the lover than when the lover has it for the beloved... This is the reason why they honored Achilles more than Alcestis and sent him to the Isles of the Blest”<sup>78</sup>. This passage suggests that Achilles, thus, is a beloved and Alcestis a lover. Later, I will question whether Achilles was truly a beloved and Alcestis a lover, but, we know, Phaedrus treats them as such.

By making Alcestis the lover, Phaedrus does two things: first, he pokes fun at Eryximachus by feminizing the lover. Of course, taking place in Ancient Greece where pederasty was honored and relationships with women were considered lesser, the attendees of the Symposium shared common prejudices against women. Pausanias, in describing ‘Aphrodite pandemus’, which in his speech represented common and less noble forms of love, says that lovers of this sort “are no less in love with women than with boys... they are in love with the

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<sup>77</sup> Euripides, *Alcestis*, trans. CS Jerram, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), xi.

<sup>78</sup> Plato, *Plato’s Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9.

stupidest that can be"<sup>79</sup>. We know Phaedrus to share Pausanias's disdain. We recall, Phaedrus tells us that Orpheus was punished by being made to "die at the hands of women"<sup>80</sup>. Second, by making Alcestis the lover, Phaedrus requests self-sacrifice of Eryximachus, even at the expense of Eryximachus's virtue and life.

Naturally, if Alcestis represents Eryximachus, in this scenario, then Admetus represents Phaedrus. Admetus, we will see, is a coward who uses the help of a criminal god to cheat the gods and fate. It will become clear that *nobody* should have offered to give their life for his. Admetus could have accepted his punishment from Artemis and died with virtue. Instead, fearfully, Admetus called in the help of Apollo, who tricked the fates into letting Admetus live, so long as another die in his stead.

Long before Admetus had received his fate, Apollo was exiled from Olympus and sent to serve a mortal for a year. Written around the second century AD by an unknown author, the *Bibliotheca*, a respected collection of Greek myths, describes the quarrel between Apollo and Zeus:

But Zeus, fearing that men might acquire the healing art from him and so come to the rescue of each other, smote him with a thunderbolt. Angry on that account, Apollo slew the Cyclopes who had fashioned the thunderbolt for Zeus. But Zeus would have hurled him to Tartarus; however, at the intercession of Latona he ordered him to serve as a thrall to a man for a year. So he went to Admetus, son of Pheres, at Pherae, and served him as a herdsman, and caused all the cows to drop twins.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid* 8.

<sup>81</sup> Unknown, *Apollodorus, The Library, Gwith an English Translation by Sir James George Frazer*, trans. Sir James George Frazer, (University of California Libraries, 1921), 19-21.

Here we see, Apollo was exiled from Olympus to serve a man, and Admetus was the man to harbor him. From the start, Apollo is characterized as lacking virtue, disobeying Zeus in a most violent fashion. Zeus was so angry that he almost "hurled [Apollo] to Tartarus"<sup>82</sup>. Other accounts of Apollo, too, are damning. In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, the Chorus and Apollo speak:

Ch: In Pheres' house your actions were the same,  
 persuading the Fates to let a mortal live.  
 Ap: And is it not right to help at all times the man  
 who worships you, especially when his need is dire?  
 Ch: You undermined the dispensations of an elder time,  
 beguiling with wine the elder goddesses.<sup>83</sup>

In this fragment, the conversation directly concerns the *Alcestis* plot. Here, too, Apollo acts dishonorably, having undermined the old gods' rules, by allowing Admetus to live, and deceiving the Fates with drink.

Euripides' *Alcestis*, in addition, represents Apollo as a dishonorable character. At the beginning of the play, Apollo and Death have a conversation. Apollo tries to justify his past misdoings, but is seen through quickly by his colleague. Death retorts,

Ah!  
 Why are you at this house? Why are you in this city  
 [Apollo]? Will you wrong again the infernal realms,  
 defrauding of their honors, torn from them, or delayed.  
 Sufficed it not to have snatched Admetos  
 from his doom, deluding the Fates  
 with fraudulent arts?<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid* 19.

<sup>83</sup> Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, trans. Robin Bond, (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 2014), 21.

<sup>84</sup> Euripides, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, trans. R. Potter, (Nabu Press: 2010) 126.

Apollo could have decided not to trick the Fates. He could have denied the deal that another must die in Admetus' stead. No, rather, Apollo manipulates the rightful course of things to allow Admetus to remain alive, as a coward, ultimately at the expense of Admetus's own wife.

For such a reason, Phaedrus makes a great Admetus. Phaedrus wants to act freely, to be free to act both dishonorably and good. And Phaedrus gives himself a justification to act in such a way. We recall, beloved's have no obligation to act virtuously but are rewarded by the gods when they do. And now, interpreting Admetus as a beloved, we see that Admetus does just that. CS Jerram says,

[Admetus] is pious, liberal, hospitable even to a fault,—the whole plot indeed turns upon the reward of piety—he will do nothing that he considers base, he loves the company of the good; but he lacks the active manly virtues of stoutheartedness, resolute defiance of danger, even of fortitude under misfortune.<sup>85</sup>

Both Admetus and Phaedrus share a self-rewarding sense of virtue. At the heart of Phaedrus's eulogy is an ethos, that 'I, the beloved, should be rewarded for acting virtuously, because I have no obligation to do so'. Perhaps Admetus truly thought he was doing good by harboring Apollo. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the fact Apollo also *served* Admetus for a year. Profiting from his 'virtue', Admetus reaped the benefits of Apollo's labors, who caused all his "cows to drop twins"<sup>86</sup>. Furthermore, Admetus takes no issue using Apollo to change his rightful fate, even at the expense of his wife. And this is exactly Phaedrus's attitude. Phaedrus would be happy to elude death by making his partner take his fall.

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<sup>85</sup> Euripides, *Alcestis*, trans. CS Jerram, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), xvii.

<sup>86</sup> Unknown, *Apollodorus, The Library, Gwith an English Translation by Sir James George Frazer*, trans. Sir James George Frazer, (University of California Libraries, 1921), 21.

Considering Admetus' vice, we should ask, does our interpretation from the first chapter still work? That is, can we interpret Admetus to represent Eryximachus now that we know of his his misdeeds? We might think no: Because lovers are bound to virtue and Admetus lacks virtue, then Admetus clearly is not a lover. If Eryximachus is a lover, then Admetus cannot be representative of him. To this I say nay. Admetus, surely, is a bad partner; characterized as a lover or a beloved, yes, Admetus certainly lacks virtue. He's a coward. Yet, Admetus and Alcestis are married, husband and wife. No literature other than Phaedrus treats them as lover and beloved. So, first, we can say, Admetus and Alcestis are husband and wife, thus neither of them are *really* lovers or beloveds. Phaedrus must be extrapolating from their relationship and projecting their narrative roles onto lovers and beloveds. Second, if we accept Phaedrus's projection, and we interpret Alcestis to be the beloved and Admetus the lover, we could conclude, Admetus is a *bad* lover, but, retaining his relation to Alcestis, a lover nonetheless. Eryximachus, perhaps too, is a bad lover. Earlier we explored how Phaedrus, in describing love as "shame in the face of shameful things and honorable ambition in the face of beautiful things"<sup>87</sup>, was urging Eryximachus to refrain from embarrassing him. Even scholars noted Eryximachus's rudeness and pedantry.

Eryximachus, ultimately, is a lover far from perfection in Phaedrus's eyes. Taking Admetus to represent Eryximachus, Admetus's cowardice points out Eryximachus's cowardice. It calls Eryximachus out for being inadequate, and the equivalence urges Eryximachus to be a better person. Taking Alcestis to represent Eryximachus, Eryximachus is womanly and dies

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<sup>87</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.



dishonorably. Nonetheless, using either interpretation, Phaedrus speaks poorly of his own partner. In the first, where Admetus is Eryximachus, Phaedrus calls out his partner's cowardice and lack of virtue. In the second, where Admetus is Alcestis, Phaedrus embarrasses Eryximachus by feminizing him, and forces the role of self-sacrificer onto him, even in the most dishonorable of circumstances. In both cases, Eryximachus is either dishonored or hurt by Phaedrus. Phaedrus, meanwhile, collects the benefits. He is either rewarded by the gods for dying for the sake of his lover, or he is never held accountable for his misdoings because of his status as a beloved. Let us now move on to the next story.

When we first interpreted the story of Orpheus and Euridyce, we already drew a comparison between Orpheus and Eryximachus. Orpheus was thought soft for playing the lyre and was punished by the gods for "contriving to go to Hades alive"<sup>88</sup> rather than "die for love like Alcestis"<sup>89</sup>. We concluded that Phaedrus was signaling to Eryximachus to refrain from embarrassing him. By playing the lyre or failing to protect Phaedrus, Eryximachus would be performing inadequately as a lover. I believe this to be a sound interpretation; unlike the case of Alcestis and Admetus, where we could interpret both characters to be Phaedrus or Eryximachus, Orpheus is clearly meant to be Eryximachus and Euridyce Phaedrus. If Orpheus were meant to represent Phaedrus, or beloveds, then Orpheus would have never been punished by the gods for traveling to the underworld to rescue Eurydice. Beloveds, we remember, have license, in Phaedrus's mind, to act dishonorably.

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<sup>88</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid* 9.

We can begin interpreting the story of Orpheus and Eurydice with a fresh eye with a turn towards mythology. First, however, let us remember what Phaedrus said of Orpheus. In Phaedrus's rendering of the story, Eurydice had died and left the world to be in Hades. Orpheus, heartbroken, went after her, but was "sent back from Hades unfulfilled"<sup>90</sup>. The gods, according to Phaedrus, "thought he was soft"<sup>91</sup> for playing the lyre and failing "to die for love like Alcestis"<sup>92</sup>. In Phaedrus's account, too, we should note, Orpheus and Euridyce are married. The gods, we recall, rather than giving Orpheus Euridyce, merely "showed him a phantom of his *wife*" and left him empty handed. Clearly married, we must also assume the same of Orpheus and Euridyce as we did of Alcestis and Admetus: setting out to prove why only lovers die for the sake of another, the two characters must be seen as projections of lovers and beloveds.

Interestingly, Phaedrus's account of Orpheus and Euridyce is the first surviving full account of their story. Before *Symposium* was written, the 6th century BC poet Ibycus is attributed to mentioning Orpheus in what survives of a fragment. All that remains is "onomaklyton Orphēn", or, 'famous Orpheus'. Impossible to know what else Ibycus wrote, we are confronted with two options. The first is to accept Phaedrus's rendering at face value because it came first. And the second is to compare his story with other respected versions, written after Plato's death.

Accepting Phaedrus's story, we are left with the same interpretation that we reached before: Orpheus is a projection of Eryximachus. Orpheus acts softly by playing the lyre and

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<sup>90</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid* 9.

cowardly by failing to self-sacrifice for the sake of Euridyce, and Phaedrus uses these actions to guide Eryximachus. If confronted with this situation, Eryximachus should be brave, leaping to action instead playing music, protecting Phaedrus by dying for him instead of chasing him through the underworld. And this, I contend, is a sound interpretation. Regardless of how other works characterize the story, Phaedrus's rendering always functions to guide Eryximachus in this way.

When we look at other renderings of Orpheus and Euridyce, however, we see an entirely different plot. In Virgil's *Georgics*, published around 29 BC, Orpheus does not leave empty handed simply because the gods thought him unworthy. Rather, when Orpheus travels to the underworld, he is given Eurydice. Hades warns him, however, that upon exiting the underworld, if Orpheus were to look back at any time, Eurydice would return to the underworld forever. The poem reads,

Eurydice was his again and on the brink of light, and who knows  
what possessed him  
but he turned back to look. Like that, his efforts were undone,  
and the pacts he'd entered  
with that tyrant had dissolved. Three peals of thunder clapped  
across that paludal hell.<sup>93</sup>

Ovid, too, in his *Metamorphoses*, has a similar account. In both works, Orpheus makes a pact granting him and Eurydice safe passage to the world on the condition that he not look back.

Ovid's poem reads,

The Underworld could not deny the prayer,  
And called Eurydice. She was among

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<sup>93</sup> Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. Peter Fallon, (Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 2004), 491-496. Note: Here I am providing line numbers instead of page numbers because page numbers were not given

The recent ghosts and, limping from her wound,  
 Came slowly forth; and Orpheus took his bride  
 And with her this compact that, till he reach  
 The world above and leave Avernus' vale,  
 He look not back or else the gift would fail.<sup>94</sup>

Both versions, we can see, agree that one: Orpheus *does* retrieve Eurydice, and two: Orpheus does so by making a pact.

Ovid's poem continues:

And, fearing lest she faint, longing to look,  
 He turned his eyes—and straight she slipped away.  
 He stretched his arms to hold her—to be held—  
 And clasped, poor soul, naught but the yielding air.  
 And she, dying again, made no complaint  
 (For what complaint had she save she was loved?)  
 And breathed a faint farewell, and turned again  
 Back to the land of spirits whence she came.<sup>95</sup>

Here too, Virgil's and Ovid's accounts agree. The reason Orpheus 'leaves unfulfilled' is not because the gods thought him soft and cowardly, as Phaedrus says. Rather, Orpheus fails because he breaks the pact he makes, looking back and fating Eurydice to stay in the land of spirits for eternity.

What can we make of the differences between Phaedrus's account and that of these two? The first possibility is that Phaedrus's rendering was an accepted version of the story, and the versions produced by Virgil and Ovid became far more popular, eventually erasing the version Phaedrus tells from the public sphere. Of course, however unlikely it is, we cannot out-rule this possibility because Phaedrus's account came first and the other two were produced hundreds of

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<sup>94</sup>Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 226.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid* 226.

years later. There was ample time for different versions of the story to proliferate, gain popularity, and die. Nonetheless, Virgil's and Ovid's accounts remain the most accepted version of the story, which are agreeing accounts both fundamentally different than Phaedrus's, and there are no other versions which support Phaedrus's account. This leads us to our second possibility: Phaedrus may be distorting the story of Orpheus and Eurydice to suit his own desires of Eryximachus.

And, even upon telling Orpheus, Phaedrus begins distorting the goal of his argument to do this. At first setting of to prove how lovers are the only ones willing to die for the sake of another, Phaedrus uses the story of Orpheus ultimately to demonstrate the characteristics of a bad lover to guide Eryximachus into becoming a better lover. Orpheus, the 'lover' in the story, does not die for the sake of another; rather, he goes to Hades alive and is punished by the gods. Had Phaedrus provided the version of the story depicted by Virgil and Ovid, Orpheus would have died because of his *hubris* rather than his cowardice. And it is entirely possible, if not likely, that their version was the accepted telling in Greece at the time. If this were so, we would conclude that Phaedrus changes the story for his argument's convenience.

There is evidence, furthermore, that Phaedrus manipulates the plot of Alcestis to foist spoils from Eryximachus. In the most popular version of the story, by Euripides, it is not the gods who return Alcestis from Hades. Of Alcestis sacrifice, Phaedrus says that,

Her performance of this deed was thought to be so noble in the opinion not only of human beings but of the gods as well that, although there have been many who have accomplished many noble deeds, the gods have given to only a select

number of them the guerdon of send gin up their souls again from Hades, and hers they did send up in admiring delight at her deed.<sup>96</sup>

According to Phaedrus, Alcestis is returned from the underworld because the gods thought well of her sacrifice. But in Euripides account, which we remember was published *before Symposium*, Alcestis is rescued by the demigod Heracles. Alcestis, furthermore, is not rescued for the virtue of her deed, but rather, because Heracles is impressed with Admetus's hospitality. In Euripides *Alcestis*, Heracles says,

O my much enduring heart and my right hand,  
 Show now what a son the daughter of Electryon,  
 Alcmena of Tirynthia, bore to Zeus.  
 I must save [sôzô] the woman who has just died,  
 And, to Admetos rendering grateful [kharis] service,  
 Restore his lost Alcestis to his house.<sup>97</sup>

And this is exactly how the plot proceeds. Heracles goes to the underworld, retrieves Alcestis, and brings her back to the house of Admetus.

Had Phaedrus been faithful to the version his audience was familiar with, Alcestis would have been returned on account of Heracles. Her reentry to the world could not signify the virtue by which she died, but rather the desire of Heracles to please Admetus. But Phaedrus, we know, ultimately wants Eryximachus to die for him, and changing the story allows Phaedrus to accomplish this in two ways. First, by making the gods reward Alcestis's sacrifice, Phaedrus establishes that self-sacrifices made on account of a beloved are *always* good. And second, by

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<sup>96</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>97</sup> Euripides, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, trans. R. Potter, (Nabu Press: 2010) 154.

establishing Alcestis's self-sacrifice as virtuous, Phaedrus gives Eryximachus more reason to do the same for him.

Phaedrus, I contend, is not able to justify himself. Phaedrus cannot prove that lovers are the only ones willing to die for the sake of another. He cannot because, more than he wishes to prove this, Phaedrus wishes to criticize Eryximachus, coerce self-sacrifice, and reward himself. From the offset, Phaedrus struggles to even provide stories of lovers and beloveds. Instead he projects their roles onto husbands and wives. But there's an obvious problem with using husbands and wives to prove his claim: namely, the group which Phaedrus says exclusively performs self-sacrifice for the sake of another is never actually seen performing self-sacrifice. Alcestis, a wife, dies for her husband, and Achilles, who Phaedrus says is a beloved, dies for Patroclus. At the very least, Phaedrus would have to extend his claim to, 'lovers, wives, and beloveds are the only ones willing to die for the sake of another'.

Phaedrus's argument further crumbles when he tells the Orpheus story because he loses his aim. In his telling of Alcestis, at least, his goal remained clear: setting out to prove why only lovers die for the sake of another, Phaedrus describes Alcestis, who dies for Admetus, as a lover. By the time we get to Orpheus, Phaedrus's goal, it appears, is to guide Eryximachus in how to and how not to act before him. Phaedrus's duplicity unveils itself: looking initially like Phaedrus was providing stories to demonstrate the lover's virtue via self-sacrifice, Phaedrus ultimately speaks to criticize and manipulate Eryximachus. Phaedrus criticizes Eryximachus in both stories: in his telling of Alcestis, Phaedrus does Eryximachus dishonor by feminizing him, and in his telling of Orpheus, Phaedrus portrays Eryximachus as soft and cowardly.

Phaedrus manipulates each story, ultimately, to coerce Eryximachus's self-sacrifice. Because Alcestis dies for Admetus, even though Admetus should have accepted his own fate, Eryximachus should die for Phaedrus. Because the gods rewarded Alcestis for her sacrifice, such sacrifices are virtuous and Eryximachus should perform them for him. No matter how selfish or dishonorably Phaedrus acts, Eryximachus remains chained to Phaedrus's wishes. In the case of Orpheus, Phaedrus too likely manipulates the actual myth. Desiring Eryximachus to die for him, Phaedrus would be imprudent to tell a version of the story where Orpheus ultimately fails because he breaks a pact.

Had he told this version, the story would bear no relevance to his relationship with and desires of Eryximachus. His audience would conclude that Orpheus died on account of his *hubris* rather than cowardliness. Though telling the story as he tells it, Phaedrus is able to set parameters around the actions he finds cowardly. In this sense, Phaedrus's meaning is didactic: because Orpheus is thought soft for playing the lyre, Eryximachus should not play the lyre; because Orpheus "had not dared to die for love like Alcestis, but contrived to go into Hades alive"<sup>98</sup>, Eryximachus should die protecting Phaedrus instead of retrieving him from the underworld. And Phaedrus's wish is Eryximachus's command. Bound by virtue, Eryximachus must fulfill his beloved's even most sinister whims.

As Phaedrus may manipulate the stories of Alcestis and Orpheus to better serve his ends, Phaedrus may do the same to his account of Achilles. In our last interpretation, we read

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<sup>98</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9.



Phaedrus's rendering as a way to reward himself for doing good deeds while retaining a lack of obligation to do them. Achilles, we remember, was

sent away to the Isles of the Blest, because, though he had learned from his mother that he would be killed if he killed Hector, and that if he did not, he would return home and die in old age, still he dared to choose to come to the aid of his lover Patroclus; and with his vengeance accomplished, he dared not only to die on his behalf but to die after him who had died. On this account, the gods were particularly impressed and gave him outstanding honors, because he had made so much of his lover.<sup>99</sup>

Hearing that he would be fated to die if he chose to return to battle, Achilles had the choice to participate in combat. A beloved, not bound by virtue, Achilles could have gone home and lived a good life. Nonetheless, Achilles chooses to fight for the sake of his lover. Although the virtue of fighting and war is questionable, the gods clearly found his actions virtuous and rewarded him greatly.

Alcestis, who Phaedrus characterizes as a lover, is rewarded too by the gods for her 'virtuous' deeds. But a lover, according to Phaedrus, "is a more divine thing than a beloved, for he has the god within him. This is the reason why they honored Achilles more than Alcestis and sent him to the Isles of the Blest"<sup>100</sup>. Having the god within them, lovers should always be directed towards virtue. The gods, expecting lovers to act virtuously and beloveds dishonorably, "confer benefits even more when the beloved has affection for the lover than when the lover has it for the beloved"<sup>101</sup>. For this reason, Alcestis, who Phaedrus describes as a lover, is rewarded, but rewarded less than the beloved Achilles.

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<sup>99</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid* 9.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid* 9.

As we can see, by the time Phaedrus gets around to telling Achilles' myth, he has ventured far from his initial argument. If Phaedrus is trying to prove that lovers are the only one's willing to die for the sake of another, then the first two stories made some sense: Alcestis, who Phaedrus characterizes as lover, dies on behalf of her partner, and is rewarded. Orpheus, a lover, fails to do this and is punished. The story of Orpheus, while not actually fulfilling Phaedrus's aim explicitly, functions as more of a proviso. Phaedrus is not denying that only lovers can die for the sake of another, but demonstrating that Orpheus, who could have died for the sake of his partner, did not. Thus, in telling Orpheus, Phaedrus lays out the consequences of failure. Orpheus's failure can be read as Phaedrus's way of saying that, first, a lover *must* die for the sake of his beloved, and second, that if a lover does not they will be punished.

But once we reach Phaedrus's treatment of Achilles, Phaedrus has shifted his focus completely from the lover to the beloved. Instead of laying out the rewards and consequences for a lover's actions, pushing Eryximachus to die on his behalf and refrain from acting shamefully, Phaedrus speaks solely to reward himself. Phaedrus uses the story of Achilles to demonstrate how beloveds are better and more important than lovers. It is used as evidence for why beloveds are rewarded even more for their acts of virtue. But were Achilles and Patroclus even engaged in a pederastic relationship?

We have not yet questioned Phaedrus's treatment of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers and beloveds. In Homer, where the story originated, there is no evidence of their relationship being sexual or pederastic. As scholar Celsiana Warwick notes, however, many classical Greek authors since Homer have treated Achilles and Patroclus as lovers and beloveds. She writes,

Achilles and Patroclus in the Iliad do not conform to this accepted pattern of homosexuality in a number of respects. Most importantly, Patroclus is older, but plays a subordinate role, acting as Achilles' servant and obeying his orders. He is also, like all the other Achaeans, less skilled in battle than Achilles. In order to depict Achilles and Patroclus as a pederastic couple, classical authors were compelled to alter significant aspects of the original Homeric representation of these two characters, either ignoring Patroclus' age to portray him as Achilles' *erômenos*, or ignoring his social and martial inferiority to depict him as Achilles' *erastês*.<sup>102</sup>

Notably, Aeschylus characterizes Achilles and Patroclus as lover and beloved. What we are left with, however, in the 21st century, is only a fragment. Achilles speaks, “σέβας δὲ μηρῶν ἄγνόν οὐ κατηδέσω / ὃ δυσχάριστε τῶν πυκνῶν φιλημάτων, ‘And you did not respect the chaste consecration of the thighs, oh ungrateful that you were for those countless kisses!’”<sup>103</sup>

Here, we are confronted with a scene of intimacy. The thighs, an erogenous zone, and the kisses, which are love gestures, both signal, at the very least, some sexual relationship between the two. It is most likely that, in Aeschylus's characterization of the two, Aeschylus characterizes Achilles as the lover and Patroclus as the beloved. We recall, lovers, in Ancient Greek, are referred to as *erastês*, or he who loves, and beloveds *erômenos*, or he who is loved. Greek scholar K.J. Dover says, “The *erastes* and *erômenos* stand facing one another; the *erastês* grasps the *erômenos* round the torso, bows his head on to or even below the shoulder of the *erômenos*, bends his knees and thrusts his penis between the *erômenos*' thighs”<sup>104</sup>. From this

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<sup>102</sup> Celsiana Warwick, *The Chaste Consecration of Thighs: Post-Homeric Representations of Achilles and Patroclus in Classical Greek Literature*, (Explorations: The Undergraduate Research Journal, 2002), 2.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid* 3.

<sup>104</sup> KJ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 98.

characterization, it is the erastês, or lover, who consecrates an erômenos', or beloved's thighs.

Thus we can conclude that Aeschylus treats Achilles as the lover.

Phaedrus seems to share the that Aeschylus portrays Achilles as the lover and Patroclus as the beloved. Phaedrus says, "Aeschylus talks nonsense in claiming that Achilles was in love with Patroclus (rather it was the other way around), for Achilles was more beautiful than not only Patroclus but all the other heroes as well; and besides, he was unbearded, and thirdly, far younger than Patroclus"<sup>105</sup>. Aeschylus clearly modifies the Iliad in such a way that Achilles is the lover and Patroclus the beloved, and in doing so Aeschylus probably neglects to include their age difference, made clear by Homer, where Achilles is younger and Patroclus is older. Due to this, Phaedrus takes issue with Aeschylus's version of the myth, insisting that, rather, Achilles must be the beloved and Patroclus the lover. Because their age in the Homeric text was specified, Phaedrus must be right.

Using Aeschylus allows Phaedrus to do two things. First, Phaedrus's usage of Aeschylus gives Phaedrus license to modify the original Homeric myth because Aeschylus does. Aeschylus was among the most respected authors in Ancient Greece, and to the members at the symposium, his works would be considered classic. So, ultimately, Phaedrus is able to say with authority that Achilles and Patroclus are engaged in a pederastic relationship even though the Homeric text indicates otherwise. Second, by using the Aeschylus's modified version as the reference point for his audience, Phaedrus is able to use Homer to derail Aeschylus's argument to provide an

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<sup>105</sup> Plato, *Plato's Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9.

account of the story that suits his own interests. 'No, Achilles could not have been the beloved because in Homer he was younger and more beautiful,' Phaedrus would say.

What we are left with are three stories that, in some way, Phaedrus manipulates. In the case of Alcestis and Orpheus, Phaedrus manipulates marital status to parallel their stories to lovers and beloveds. Also in Alcestis, Phaedrus tells the audience that the gods reanimate Alcestis on account of her virtue when actually Heracles does so for Admetus. In Orpheus's story, Phaedrus likely invents that Orpheus fails on account of his cowardice, and in Achilles's, Phaedrus modifies both the Homer's and Aeschylus's accounts, insisting that Achilles was Patroclus's lover and Patroclus Achilles's beloved. All of these modifications, rather than being used to prove why only lovers are willing to die for the sake of another, or even that sacrifices are virtuous, are used merely to benefit Phaedrus.

Ultimately, the good idea at the core of Phaedrus's speech is that loves makes people want to be better than they already are. By abstaining from shameful things and pursuing honorable ambition before another, a person does more virtuous things. The person, as a result, becomes a more virtuous person. Their partner, as a result, receives the fruits of their great and beautiful deeds. People help, and are helped. The danger to Phaedrus's idea comes in its application. For Phaedrus, first, the scope of his argument is not applied to people in general, but rather to lovers and beloveds. Phaedrus, we know, wants to reap the benefits of Eryximachus's love without contributing any himself, and structures his argument around pederastic dynamics to ensure this. We remember, in Ancient Greek, lovers were referred to as *erastês*, or he who loves, and beloveds *erômenos*, or he who is loved. Phaedrus, accordingly, requires lovers to be the only active participant in the relationship. These relationships, for Phaedrus, are about lovers

loving beloveds and beloveds being loved by lovers. Being loved, for Phaedrus, is sufficient for love in his relationship.

The obvious danger is that lovers are always at the mercy of the beloved. And this can lead to three problems for the lover. First, a lover risks hurting himself on account of the beloved. If a beloved wishes his lover to go to battle for him, a lover would be bound to do so. So, in loving, a lover risk his wellbeing. Second, not only does a lover risk his wellbeing, he risks it even at the expense of virtue. In the myth of Alcestis, we remember, Alcestis died for Admetus even when she should have not. Admetus was neither noble nor brave, and should have accepted his fate from Artemis. By dying for Admetus, not only does Alcestis condone Admetus cowardice, but she also allows Apollo's trickery to prevail. But, bound by her love for Admetus, Alcestis has no choice but to make the dishonorable decision and die for her beloved. And finally, in loving a beloved, a lover risks forgetting one's obligations to others other than the beloved. In dying for Admetus, Alcestis neglects her obligations to her parents. In dying for Patroclus, Achilles neglects his obligations to the men he killed.

While set around pederastic relationships, these problems pose themselves in all love relationships, not just those between lovers and beloveds. If we restrict our definition of love, understanding it simply as abstaining from shameful things and pursuing honorable ambition before a partner, then clearly all partners face the issue of being at the mercy of their other. Even without the requirement to obey, one risks hurting themselves, virtue, or others inasmuch as they are compelled by their partner to do such actions. Of course, not bound by their other as lovers are to beloveds, partners can choose to not perform acts their partner wishes and they do not.

Still, the danger lurks in these relationships that a partner abuse the other partner's love, guaranteeing rewards for themselves while they compel the other to harm.

And really, this danger, being at the mercy of the other, is what makes Phaedrus want his relationship with Eryximachus. Phaedrus wants Eryximachus to love him even to the point of a dishonor and death. Thus, disinterested in truly depicting virtue and love, Phaedrus manipulates the stories he tells to ensure Eryximachus's entrapment within the relationship. This leaves us to ask, 'Is loving virtuous?'. It seems that, yes, love directs people towards virtue by making people want to become better. People perform great and beautiful deeds, and often, these deeds do seem virtuous and love does seem good. Love's virtue becomes questionable, however, in circumstances where a partner pursues honorable ambition and does something for their partner, but that something hurts themselves, others, or virtue at large. Love certainly directs people towards great and beautiful deeds, but it remains questionable whether those deeds are always virtuous or good.

## Chapter 4: Interpreting Plato in Translation

As a native English speaker with no experience in Ancient Greek, naturally, I had to use an English translation upon which to base my interpretation. In translating, a translator, of course, alters an original text by rewriting it in another language. This rewriting, in turn, acts as an active interpreting of the source text. In deciding to translate certain phrases certain ways, a translator interprets the original language's sounds, meanings, rhythms, and implications. Of course, what this ultimately results in is different translations of the same materials. Some translators feel it more faithful to translate passages in some ways, and others find it more faithful to translate differently.

Without knowledge of Ancient Greek, a reader of Plato's texts is forced to use the aid of translation. This aid, while helpful, constrains readers by forcing them to trust the translator's decisions. Perhaps, if I knew Ancient Greek, I would have translated Phaedrus's speech in fundamentally different ways than Seth Benardete. Perhaps Benardete takes too many interpretive liberties and his account even lacks resemblance to the *Symposium* written by Plato in Ancient Greek. Without the ability to read Ancient Greek, however, I have no way to know how faithful his translation is to the original text. In this respect, when I use quotes from Seth Benardete's translation, more than I am interpreting the *Symposium*, explicitly, I am interpreting Seth Benardete's interpretation of the *Symposium*.

By using a single translation of *Symposium*, one gives the translator more credence than the writer. This, of course, is problematic for an English speaking scholar writing about an Ancient Greek text. The product the writer delivers to a reader relies not just on the writer's assumptions, but also those of the translator, those which, with more information, the writer



might fundamentally disagree with. From a reader's perspective, it would make more sense to read interpretations of the *Symposium* written by Ancient Greek readers, interpretations which justify their points using the actual language of the text. Choosing to read an interpretation by somebody like me, in a sense, only further distances a reader from the text. To address this dilemma, I propose to examine two other translations of the *Symposium*. I will identify the pieces of language I rely on most to shape my own argument, and demonstrate that, by showing the similarities between the translations, the interpretations I have provided are acceptable.

First, using Benardete's translation, we concluded it was Phaedrus's aim to say how Eros, because he is older, is the cause of the greatest goods, and that Eryximachus thus should perform the greatest goods for him. MC Howatan translates the passage, "So it is widely agreed that Love is the oldest of the gods, and he is also the source of our greatest blessings"<sup>106</sup>, and Benjamin Jowett "And not only is he the eldest, he is also the source of the greatest benefits to us"<sup>107</sup>. While Benardete uses the language 'greatest good', Howatan says 'greatest blessings' and Jewett says 'greatest benefits', all point to the same message. All three differ slightly; nonetheless, the meaning across these remains the same. Love is old, and causes great things; the implicit conclusion reached, of course, is that Eryximachus is old and is thus responsible for those things.

There is a quote I used earlier upon which these scholars disagree. Recall, in Benardete's translation Phaedrus says that he "can hardly point to a greater good for someone to have from

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<sup>106</sup> Plato, *Plato: The Symposium*, Trans. MC Howatson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>107</sup> Plato, *Plato: Symposium*, Trans. Benjamin Jowett, (London: Pearson, 1956), 8.

youth onward than a good lover, and for a lover, a beloved”<sup>108</sup>. I concluded that, because lover was modified by good and beloved nothing, a beloved must have a good lover and a lover a beloved of any quality. This fit my argument, that Phaedrus wants to benefit from Eryximachus’s deeds without having to do good deeds himself, because Phaedrus can act however he wishes if Eryximachus needs *any* beloved over a good one. Jowett likely shares this intuition and translates the passage much like Benardete: “For I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved youth”<sup>109</sup>. But Howatson translates the passage differently, showing instead that lovers do indeed need good beloveds. He writes, “For I certainly cannot say what greater blessing there can be for any man to have right from youth than a virtuous lover, or what can be better for a lover than a beloved boy who is himself virtuous”<sup>110</sup>.

Using Howatson’s translation, it is possible that I would have reached a different conclusion about Phaedrus’s argument. Perhaps Phaedrus creates a more level playing field, between lover and beloved, than it appears. It is also just as possible, however, that Howatson misjudges the meaning of the Greek and writes his translation to best depict what he felt it meant. In other words, Howatson could have included the word virtuous, not because it was there in the Greek, but because he better felt it depicted the text’s meaning. Nonetheless, using Howatson’s translation even, my argument would not change. In my second chapter, I argued

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<sup>108</sup> Plato, *Plato’s Symposium*, trans. Seth Benardete, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>109</sup> Plato, *Plato: Symposium*, Trans. Benjamin Jowett, (London: Pearson, 1956), 8.

<sup>110</sup> Plato, *Plato: The Symposium*, Trans. MC Howatson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9.

that Phaedrus had trouble neglecting his own responsibility to Eryximachus. While he clearly wanted Eryximachus to do great things for him without having to do them himself, Phaedrus conceded sometimes his own obligation. For such a reason, Phaedrus said that both men and women were willing to die for the sake of another, not just lovers. If indeed lovers need virtuous beloveds, then the line could be used as supporting evidence in my second chapter detailing Phaedrus's conciliation of responsibility.

We concluded in our second chapter that it was Phaedrus's goal to show that it is virtuous for all people to love. My third chapter demonstrated Phaedrus's deep running duplicity. While appearing to describe love's virtues, at all points of the way, Phaedrus really just pushes to receive spoils from his lover. Phaedrus likely even manipulates the old stories to better achieve his aims. The luxury, perhaps, of having to read Plato in translation, is you do not have to decide *exactly* what Plato means. Lacking context and language, a reader must be open to many possibilities. Still, having read and reread this eulogy for years, I still do not know which interpretation is 'better'. I do not know which Plato would have endorsed, or if he intended his speeches to carry with them interpretive ambiguity. A familiarity with the original language, of course, might help bring clarity. Nonetheless, having many interpretations opens one understanding of a text. It is likely that Plato did not mean one particular thing when including Phaedrus's eulogy. I hope, then, that my reading will help other readers of this text broaden their own understandings of the eulogy and its meanings.

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