

Reading *Phaedrus* Like A Girl Misfires and Rhizomes in Reading Performances

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Following Derrida's reading of *Phaedrus* in "Plato's Pharmacy," poststructuralist critique of Platonism has focused on Plato's condemnation of writing as "orphan," irresponsible and pernicious to memory. In this essay I want to extend Derrida's deconstructive reading to the first part of the dialogue. Bracketing Socrates' distinction between memory as the locus of true learning, and writing as the parasitic use of external hypomnemata, I read the dialogue as a machine of writing and desire. I focus on the production and deterritorialization of desire through the dramatic exchanges between Socrates and Phaedrus, *Phaedrus* and reader. I argue that the dialogue works as a closet drama where gestures of desire and speech are enabled by the indebtedness and affectivity of the participants. Gestures and desire are performances of listening that condition subjectivity and at the same time permeate its boundaries. Borrowing Deleuze's notions of the rhizome and the machine, I argue that the relation between body and speech, desire and philosophy is not a metaphor but rather a becoming. Reading *Phaedrus* like a girl means exactly this: the deterritorialization and degeneralization of reading, writing, and desire; the boundaries between speaker and listener becoming imperceptible; the speaker or the reader engaging in the discourse only through his or her indebtedness to, and affectivity by, what remains heterogeneously other.

RE-THINKING THE FEMALE READER

Socrates: Where is that boy I was talking to? He must listen to me once more and not rush off, to yield to his nonlover before he hears what I have to say.

Phaedrus: Here he is, quite close beside you, whenever you want him. ¹

Martha Nussbaum comments on these lines as being probably among the most passionate ever exchanged between lovers. Socrates, about to deliver his second speech on eros, apostrophizes Phaedrus, makes sure he is there, listening to him, listening with his ears and body open. Despite the directness of the apostrophe, the address/call lingers behind, playing with a yet-to-come boy rather than summoning Phaedrus. The immediacy of the call is disrupted and its object displaced though the paradox of a third person apostrophe. Socrates does not apostrophize the actual Phaedrus, the student here at-hand, but rather Phaedrus the boy, Phaedrus on his way to eros and philosophy. Socrates' passionate voice and dithyrambic verse will enter the ears of the same youth that at the beginning of the dialogue seduces Socrates outside the walls of the city, draws him forth "like those who wave before hungry creatures a leafy branch or a piece of fruit." "You can begin, sweet friend," Socrates' invocation goes, "by showing what it is you have in your left hand underneath your cloak."² What is it that Phaedrus hides underneath his cloak and draws Socrates forth? Lysias' written discourse or his own nude beauty? Throughout the dialogue both the subject and the object of desire lose their proper place and identity as bodily desire and desire for discourse, erotic mania and philosophical inquiry, continuously displace, anticipate, affect and multiply each other.

Socrates displaces the empirical Phaedrus by apostrophizing Phaedrus *as* a boy, the boy already described in Lysias' discourse. The binaries here/there, present/absent fail to represent the addressee of Socrates' erotic and philosophical invocation. We are in need of a third term to describe Phaedrus on his way to becoming "something else." The performativity of the address transforms Phaedrus, but at the same time, the address is a performative that is constantly affected, rendered "ill" or "unhappy" through its indebtedness to the addressee, the listener, the beloved, or the reader. At the beginning of his Second Lecture in *How to Do Things With Words*, Austin considers cases and senses "in which to say something is to do something; or in which by saying or in saying something we are doing something."³ Socrates' address of the boy fits this third way. In addressing someone, the address is actually creating that addressee, an effect rather than a systematically achieved aim. In addressing his interlocutor as a "boy," Socrates' utterance renders Phaedrus receptive *as* a boy, and anticipates, in his face, the addressee of the male homoerotic desire that his second speech will put forth: desire as receptivity, growth, affectivity, possibility for multiple connections: "Here he is, quite close beside you, whenever you want him."

Socrates' address positions an imaginary boy (Phaedrus) as the recipient of Socrates' call at the discursive level of the dialogue. The "boy listener" is also a fictional character in Socrates' first speech on eros: "Once upon a time there was a very handsome boy, or rather, young man, who had a host of lovers, and one of them was wily, and...." Socrates will re-invocate the "boy" as the beloved of his second speech, as the ideal addressee of the erotic mania that elevates and frees the soul, but also as an ideal addressee of his own speech. Thus the addressing of Phaedrus as "the boy," as a performative, breaks from its context, from dialogue to fiction, from fiction to the reader. For example, Socrates' address to Phaedrus anticipates and constructs the ideal reader of his second speech or the ideal addressee of the lover described there. At first this appears to confirm Eco's notion that the reader is part of the generative strategy employed by the author. He writes in his introduction to *The Role of the Reader*: "An open text cannot be described as a communicative strategy if the role of its addressee (the reader, in the case of verbal texts) has not been envisaged at the moment of its generation qua text. An open text is a paramount instance of a syntactic-semantic-pragmatic devise whose foreseen interpretation is part of its generative process."⁴ But while Eco conditions the cooperation of the reader upon the textualization of the reader, thus purifying the signifying game from "extratextual elements," here I will question the totality and purity of the text as a self-referential signifying game by showing how reading and writing grow rhizomatically between different planes of meaning and desire, textual and extratextual. Socrates' apostrophizing of the boy and his speech that follows will be incurably in need of an addressee that cannot be contained within the semiotic universe of the dialogue, an addressee that is not constructed by the second speech but rather conditions the mortality and passion of the speech, an addressee that will force us to reconsider the liminal space between "misfire" and "happy performative," as well as the liminal space between and beyond genders.

Let us attempt to dissimulate the webs of this semantico-pragmatic game, even though Derrida warns against the effects of such a reading.⁵ Why the urgency of the address? Why the distancing effect of an apostrophe that names its object (Phaedrus) at the same time it displaces it (as “the boy”)? Socrates’ first speech on eros reiterates Lysias’ speech as the latter is passed to him (“put into [his] lips”) by Phaedrus. The argument of this “first” speech is that a youth should surrender himself to the nonlover rather than to the lover. Phaedrus follows Socrates’ reiteration — admires, listens. As soon as Socrates delivers his first speech, he turns against it to declare it as irreverent, shameful, and blasphemous towards Eros, son of Aphrodite, God of love. *What if Phaedrus had listened, listened too much to a speech that demonized eros and the lover?* Socrates desires to give a second speech on eros (or, to Eros) in the form of palinode (reincantation). Thus a pharmaceutical speech that will cure the ills of the first speech, a cathartic palinode that will purify Socrates, as the speaker, but also cure the “ill” effects of his first speech on the listeners, “wash the brine out of [the] ears with the water of a sweet discourse” (or the fresh water of the new discourse, the translation has to suffer this equivocality).⁶ In his second speech, Socrates advises Phaedrus that “favor should be accorded to the lover than the nonlover.” Thus it is urgent that Phaedrus does not adopt the calculative ethic the first speech puts forth, but rather listens to this second speech too, a speech that reinstates erotic and poetic madness (mania) as necessary conditions for a philosophical life. *But where is Phaedrus? What if he denies to be the “boy” Socrates calls forth?*

Does the performative gesture of this address — addressing the other as the “boy” — allow the female reader to enter the dialogue as an addressee? What place is allowed to “her” on this dialogue’s stage of erotic desire and philosophical growth if the cast of the play is named, called forth, and accused in terms of a male homoerotic desire and in the context of a male homosocial setting? In her reading of *Phaedrus*, Nussbaum points out how the lovers are presented as passive rather than active, receptive rather than sober, in contrast to the masculine image of separation and elevation that characterizes both eros and philosophizing in other Platonic dialogues such as *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*.⁷ Doesn’t the “feminization” of lovers though inverse gender identities without disrupting or confusing gender boundaries? Doesn’t feminization, as a metaphor for erotic mania, dissimulate masculine desire within the textual universe of *Phaedrus*, but nevertheless renders the female reader and her desire imperceptible at the pragmatic level of the address?

In the closing lines of the *Epistemology of the Closet* (a study of homophobic constructions of male homosexual identity in twentieth-century culture) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes:

I don’t assume (and I want to emphasize this) that for women to reach in and try to occupy with more of our own cognitive and desiring animation this cynosural space which we already occupy passively, fantasmatically but none the less oppressively (all around), would be a more innocuous process, either on the part of the female reader or on that of the Proustian text, than the dangerously energizing male directed reading relation we have been discussing.⁸

A permanent risk underlying attempts to theorize a female reader is to either slide into a realism of female experience that systematically blinds itself to its own

rhetoricity and genealogies, or to re-instate gender boundaries by epitomizing the specificity of the female reader in terms of gender. Both “reading against the grain” (Kate Millett’s critical studies)⁹ or defending the reader’s right to posit her own viewpoint in the text (Gilbert and Gubar’s argument in *The Madwoman in the Attic*) constitute such examples.

Criticisms of such essentializing moves can also become unproductive when they pathologize or aestheticize images of readers and writers which could have been read as transformations that do not necessarily revolve around subjectivity or gender definitional centers. Woolf, for example, reads behind Cavendish’s writing machine of hybridity, an untutored intelligence: Cavendish, obstructed from becoming poet or scientist, turns to madness and riot, “as if some giant cucumber had spread itself over roses and carnations.”¹⁰ Or, Toril Moi saves Virginia Woolf from Showalter’s Lukácsian essentialism of experience only to interpret her shifts, becomings, and changes of perspective as an “endless deferral of meaning” that constitutes the foundation of meaning. Moi rescues Woolf’s concept of androgyny from notions of “unbounded human nature” or a “union of masculinity and femininity” only to read in that “the deconstruction of the duality.”¹¹ The anti-humanist (deconstructive?) reading that Moi advocates in order to recover feminist progressive politics within Woolf’s aesthetics actually remains humanist in that it fails to address a certain monstrosity in Woolf’s writing: a monstrosity of the creative process uncontainable in textual aesthetics/politics, what Woolf has called the “abnormal effort to create a work of art,”¹² a monstrosity as the de-territorialization of desire with a shift from representations of the narcissistic desire to express one’s true self and true gender to an exploration of one’s life as a “dark continent.” While representation follows norms of analogy and criteria of truthfulness and sincerity, exploration suggests the possibility of a becoming through linkages irreducible to gender polarizations. Virginia Woolf writes about these becomings in the novel: “For a novel, after all, is a statement about a thousand different objects — human, natural, divine; it is an attempt to relate them to each other.”¹³

Reading *Phaedrus* like a girl is an attempt to subject the female reader to the effects of such of becomings through linkages that do not yield a definitional center for any gender: surmounting opposition and determination to be true to one’s “femininity,” linking to the heterogeneous, responding inappropriately to calls addressed to others, taking up and continuing incomplete gestures, following rhizomes and committing misfires, reading irresponsibly in order to read responsively. Reading like a girl involves two moves that will be explored in more detail in the next two sections:

(a) Transporting the force of the performative from enunciation to listening, from subjectivity to affect, from felicity/happy acts to indebtedness: The performative is always ill to infelicities, it has to be ill. Not only ill to infelicities that pertain to the speaker’s intentions, or the appropriateness of the context, but also incomplete and open, an assemblage across heterogeneous registers of meaning.

(b) Decentering the performative from the subject’s conditions of intentionality and sincerity, and abandoning the condition of an ideal speaker-listener allows misfires

to become parts of the performative, and change its nature rather than be aborted by a pivotal unity. In *Phaedrus*, performativity of address and desire works like an assemblage. An assemblage, as Deleuze defines it, “is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections.”¹⁴

Reading *Phaedrus* like a girl then, is less about maintaining a gender specific perspective throughout the reading, and more about the reader’s becoming part of these thousand different things of the dialogue. The specificity of her desire, in particular, is not realized through a resisting reading that preserves gender identity, but rather through the continuous production of desires through reading; a girl’s desires; desires that remain dependent on the performative gestures of writing, impossible to abstract from reading; desires that do not become sublimated in a “final reading”; desires that are too irresponsible and too frivolous to preserve any identity outside reading; desires like a short term memory; desires of thousand different objects in *Phaedrus*. But to the extent that we will be reading *Phaedrus* here like a dialogue and not like a novel, like an erotic drama, like philosophy’s closet drama, these thousand different things are not metaphors but *gestures*: invocations, flirtations, requests, addresses, warnings, caressings, blushings, hesitations, readings, a cloak covering the face, a blushing of the face. In following these gestures, I will be working *within* Austin’s definition of the performative, but also *past* his schema of infelicities. I will be reading mis-invocations and mis-listenings as the force of the performative: its flow, its possibility to break from context. Thus reading abuses as mutations rather than as unhappy performatives or “acts purported but void,” I will argue that performative gestures of invocation and address, listening and replying, promising, are always indirect. Not like beams touching the earth ground and “doing things” in the way of *logos* as the incarnating word, but rather like beams reaching us from the bottom of the sea, already “ill,” both filtered and refractory.

FROM MISFIRES TO RHIZOMES

Socrates: Ah, villain! How well you have found the way to catch the man with a foible for discourse, the way to make him speak!

Phaedrus: Why, then, keep twisting?¹⁵

The genealogy of Socrates’ first speech is more an adventure of redeeming ransom rather than the incubation and delivery of a new argument (the latter usually referred to as “maieutics”). Socrates as a speaker is positioned as a hostage rather than as a free subject. Phaedrus threatens that he will withdraw from the dialogue unless Socrates responds to Lysias’ discourse on eros, a discourse which Phaedrus has just read to him. Indebtedness and twisting will be the machines of dialogue that make the pursuit of an original intention a non-viable program of discourse.

Socrates promises to respond to Phaedrus’ reading. Yet he keeps twisting: “I am going to cloak my face while speaking, and to gallop through the discourse as fast as I can, for if I looked at you my embarrassment would get me confused.”¹⁶ Socrates will break the promise to cloak the face, and the promise to deliver a galloping discourse, as he will soon pause to restore physical contact with Phaedrus: “How now dear Phaedrus, do I seem to you possessed by a divine passion as it seems to

me?"¹⁷ Phaedrus confirms Socrates' passion and Socrates goes on, warning Phaedrus that his utterance will not be far from "dithyrambic" (the opposite of *logos*), but the responsibility for this will belong to Phaedrus.

Socrates had promised to speak. Let us bracket the indebtedness and affectivity of this promise to Phaedrus' warning to withdraw, an affectivity that already constitutes Socrates' speech a sin of insincerity that violates Austin's condition of truthfulness of intentions. Let us focus on the second condition, that, "The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely."¹⁸ An incomplete execution of the promise (which here also coincides with in-completion/irruption of the *logos* into dithyrambic) would render Socrates' act of speech purported, a misfire. For example, Austin points out, "my attempt ceremonially to open a library is abortive if I say 'I open this library' but the key snaps in the lock."¹⁹ Of course, Austin, aware of the "laxness in procedure" that ordinary life allows to performatives, is careful not to turn the question "what counts as completion" into another inquiry about criteria of truthfulness, and subsequently, further expose his program to the "disease" of philosophical oversimplification. I believe Austin's sensitivity to the laxness of everyday life is not just an anti-analytic mannerism, marginal to his critique of linguistics, but rather it is essential to his philosophy of the performative. *How to Do Things With Words* is not an effort to reinscribe and police analytic distinctions between misexecutions or misfires and "happy and smooth performatives." Rather it points that it is in the blurred boundaries between misfire and happy performative where the ethical force of the performative lies. Taking this reading of Austin further, I want to suggest that misfire is not external but rather intrinsic to the performative, a performative though that can no longer be defined in terms of identity, cohesion, and continuity, or bounded within conditions of felicity, because misfire *belongs* to the performative. The performative cannot abort a misfire because the latter is part of its mechanism as a rhizome.

Perhaps there is no better example of performative contradiction than trying to define rhizome. Or perhaps there is no better way to trace a rhizome than to follow contradictions to the degree they become insignificant and asignifiable. Rhizome is a block of heterogeneous things, a multiplicity: Socrates following Phaedrus like a hungry animal, a branch, and at the same time, picturing the dangerous lover as a hungry wolf. Rhizome is an antigenealogy: the lover following/affected by the beloved, thus sinning against Austin's condition of conventionality (it is the beloved who is usually presented as passive). Rhizome is "a collection of small holes and tiny ulcerations" enabling links: the body of the lover in Socrates' palinode. Rhizome is the impossibility of aborting an un-happy illocution because there is no ideal speaker/listener, because there is no central root, or "its tip has been destroyed as a flourishing multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development"²⁰: Plato's *logos* turning into a dithyramb, his concealing becoming indistinguishable from a desire to be seen by Phaedrus, to be seen "possessed."

Rhizome is Socrates' cloak destroying the tip of his desire for Phaedrus by blinding his gaze; it is the skin underneath blushing; it is his hand rebounding time and reversing desire, not by touching Phaedrus, but by withdrawing the cloak again

to reveal Socrates as possessed, exhibitionist rather than voyeur: “I will cover my head as I speak to you, for only then I could go through this speech fast, when avoiding looking at you shame (αἰσχυνῆ) would not make me hesitate.”²¹ *Hesitate: to stop because of indecision; pause or delay in acting, choosing or deciding because feeling unsure.*²² The subject remains upright even when language fails him (to play with Gadamer’s notion of language). “Hesitate” fails to carry the affectivity of the middle voice of the verb διαπορώμαι [*diaporomai*], meaning, to be dispersed [my translation], affected, afflicted with pores.

The shame that possesses Socrates and erupts his logos has little to do with a personal feeling, even less with effects of an unhappy performative. Socrates’ shame in Austin’s schema of infelicities would be read as the negative consequence of an abuse, the manifestation of a failure to carry the appropriate feeling. This would be true, though, only if a subject/object binary could be preserved within this plane of affectivity, which as I have already suggested, is impossible. In the table of infelicities, shame would betray a purported but void act, a failure to exhibit the appropriate feeling (friendship perhaps) toward the youth who begs Socrates “in the name of Filial Dias”²³ (Δίος Φιλίου) to *truly* speak his opinion of Lysias’ speech. Yet the projection of an inappropriate feeling finds us revolving around a notion of consummated and territorialized desire, a penetration perhaps. Socrates’ shame, however, could be read otherwise: as affect by the other rather than as an intrapsychic emotion, as the performativity of desire, rather than as a negative effect; desire that has no center or object; shame as the affect of the skin rebounding desire as affection for Phaedrus. Shame (blushing, stumbling, affected, displaced) is already a [happy] performative. A machine, to reiterate Deleuze’s rhizomatics, of desire-and-words: αἰσχυνῆς διαπορώμαι [*dia-por-omai*], meaning, becoming porous through shame. But at the same time, porous with and through words. *Pore*, a passage for a flow, flow of words *and* flow of desire. Thus shame becomes a machine of affectivity that connects the heterogeneous: desire, reading, listening. In the affectivity of shame, a distinction between the porosity of the skin and the porosity of the speaker’s discourse cannot be maintained.

Yet the machine of shame does not work like deconstruction, that is, by blurring boundaries, blinding inquiries, undoing hierarchies. The machine produces, does not simply dissimulate. Beside Phaedrus’ machine of shame, there is Plato’s machine of writing. Deleuze writes on writing:

Conjugate deterritorialized flows....Write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency. “Go first to your old plan and watch carefully the watercourse made by the rain. But now the rain must have carried the seeds far away. Watch the crevices made by the runoff, and from them determine the direction of the flow. Then find the plant that is growing at the farthest point from your plant. All the devil’s weed plants that are growing in between are yours.”²⁴

Isn’t Plato increasing the territory of both philosophy and writing through deterritorialization? Aren’t the crevices (hesitation) that desire (shame) opens in Socrates’ speech creating space for new plants? Isn’t the palinode, and within that a dithyramb, the devil’s plant that grows out of Socrates’ first speech, leading Plato to a new philosophical understanding of knowledge and eros? Furthermore, doesn’t

the image of Socrates becoming porous through shame, Socrates being affected by Phaedrus, anticipate changes in late Plato, particularly a new conception of erotic mania as opening the pores of the skin and letting feathers grow on the soul, feathers of a philosophical life?

VENTRILOQUISM OR AFFECTIVITY?

Phaedrus is less of a dialogue and more of a drama — philosophy's closet drama, where actors perform on each other's speech by repeating or anticipating, by being inflicted, poisoned, embarrassed, or cured by it: as *nosontes* (in need), as *pharmakeuthentes* (cured-or-poisoned), as *eromenoi* (lovers). In his first talk on eros, Socrates will be reiterating Lysias' talk aiming to show that the persuasiveness of this talk lies in its use of rhetorical tropes, tropes from which Socrates does not try to purify his talk, but rather puts into a more artful use. The double function of writing as "poison" and "cure" is already in place: While Socrates gives his first talk on eros to diagnose the illnesses of Lysias' talk as well as cure its possible effects on Phaedrus, he will find himself poisoned by Lysias' talk:

Socrates: Dreadful (Δεινόν), Phaedrus, dreadful was *the speech that you brought with you, and what you made me utter* was as wrong.

Phaedrus: How so?

Socrates: It was foolish; and it verged upon impiety. Could anything be more terrible than that?

Phaedrus: Nothing, if the speech in reality was as you say.

Socrates: Well, what do you believe? Is not Eros the son of Aphrodite, and a god?

Phaedrus: So men say.

Socrates: Yes, but it was not said by Lysias, nor yet *in that speech of yours that you drew from my lips bewitched by you*.²⁵

Impiety, in the form of an omission to praise Eros as a God, does not originate in Socrates' talk but rather starts with Lysias' talk, then becomes inherited in Phaedrus' reading, and from there is transported to Socrates' mouth, a mouth though that has already been "poisoned" (*pharmakeu-thentos*) by Phaedrus. The double function of "pharmakon" that Derrida recovers in his reading of the Platonic text, lies in its curing and poisoning at the same time. This poisoning though is quite different from the impiety of the speech: while "impiety" is a textual "fault" (construction), the poisoning of Socrates' speech by Phaedrus is a performative dissimulation of the boundaries between speaker and listener, subject and object.

As we have seen in the previous section, shame as affectivity (as a performative gesture) makes both the skin and the speech of Socrates discontinuous. Here the boundaries are further blurred as Phaedrus poisons Socrates' mouth, as Socrates speaks through the mouth of Phaedrus. Affectivity and bodily permeability, which we have seen de-territorializing while bringing together *speech* and *desire* in shame, here become the links to a third plane, that of *responsibility*: a mouth that has already been poisoned by the other cannot speak its own words but is still responsible, even more responsible. It is indebtedness that conditions one's speech. The shift of performative force from intention to affectivity, from speaking to listening, from originality to indebtedness, ear-becoming-speech than mouth-performing-speech has already been anticipated in Socrates' description of himself as a pitcher. Challenged by Phaedrus to offer a different and better speech than that of Lysias, Socrates claims to be only able to cite what others have said of eros:

And well I know that I have to say is not of my own invention, for I am conscious of my ignorance. So I am left to think that I have been filled through the ears, like a pitcher, from the fountain of another; whose, I don't know.²⁶

The body-pitcher is not a feminine metaphor but a becoming without gender centers: A body becoming ear becoming words. The same kind of becoming repeats on the body of the lover in Socrates' second speech: "[L]et the soul be gazing at the beauty of the youth; from thence there *hies a rush of particles*, which in consequence is called *desire* [*himeros*]. The soul, when it receives this, is thereby bathed in vital fluid, and is warmed."²⁷

As the dialogue goes on, one can speak only the other's words. Authorship, signature, intentionality collapse through a transportation of words, a poisoning of the mouth, a blinding of the eyes, a pollution of the ears. Ashamed of the disrespect that the first talk shows to the God — a shame that remains liminal between erotic desire and responsibility — Socrates feels that he has to "purify" himself (*καθηρασθαι αναγκη*) in the same way the poet Stesichorus purifies himself, coming up with a second therapeutic speech, the piety of which is secured with an apostrophe to the muse for inspiration.²⁸ Poisoned by the citationality of writing, sinning against God by trusting his lips to the written speech of an outsider, Socrates will paradoxically choose a way of purification (*καθαρμοσ*) that cannot lead him outside the game of rhetoric and reiteration. "I shall strive to make atonement to him by my Reincantation, bare-headed, and not to speak covered as before for shame," he promises.²⁹ Figurations of denuding and purity (barefoot and bare-headed) meet with tropes of remorse and shame: "[A]shamed, and because I am afraid of Love himself, desire to wash the brine out of my ears with the water of a sweet discourse."³⁰ But how could a palinode (*παλινωδια*), an impure loan from the poets, a manufactured rather than inspired *logos* be the "fresh water" that will clean the ears from the salty residue of Lysias' talk? "Know then, O lovely boy, that the former speech was the work of Phaedrus, son of Pythocles, from Myrrhinus, but the one I am about to give is the speech of Stesichorus, Euphemus's son from Himera."³¹ How can Socrates, who later on will condemn writing as an orphan child, trust and cite someone else's *logos* as the cathartic drug (*καθαρμαν*) that will purify his discourse? If writing is essentially an orphan that cannot speak in its own defence, how can the second *logos* be more trustworthy, even if it comes from a man of good fame, (etymological definition of Euphemus) rather than a man of persuasion (etymological definition of Pythocles)? The question is not whether Socrates *should* cite the other's speech but rather whether it is ever possible to speak in one's own words without sliding into cultural imperceptibility. To wash the salt of the other's speech from one's ears with fresh water would mean to remain silent as well.

If the cavity of a receptive ear is what makes both Socrates and Phaedrus vulnerable to the brine of Lysias' talk, and if the second speech is intended to be pharmaceutical, then it would make sense that the speech would not just clean that salty residue, but would also protect against such impure infiltrations by sealing the cavities. Yet the extratextual elements that constitute pollutants for Eco's program of semantics become essential in *Phaedrus*' poetics of desire, a poetics that expands beyond the semiotic self-enclosed universe to a pragmatic relation between reader

and text. A cathartic project, such as the second speech, fails to be pure from extratextual elements because it is inaugurated as a pharmaceutical palinode, as self-different, a speech that remains indebted towards both the past and the future, to the brine of Lysias' talk and the displaced reply of Phaedrus — a Phaedrus that may be lost on the detour from student (first speech) to boy (apostrophe) to beloved (second speech). The beloved of the second speech is described in terms of receptivity, exposure, an extreme bodily openness:

When it [soul] is alone, and is grown dry, then the mouths of the ducts whence the plumage shoots forth dry up and are sealed, so that the growth of the plumage is sealed Once it sees him [Eros]...the orifices that before were sealed are opened, the soul recovers breath.³²

Not only pores and cavities are not shielded against heterogeneous transports, but rather it is in their openness and responsiveness where the transformational power of erotic desire manifests itself, and it is this openness that enables philosophical inquiry. Opening the ears of the discursive addressee to the second speech anticipates the beloved's openness to desire, anticipates Phaedrus' openness to Plato, anticipates the reader's desire. It is the incompleteness of these gestures of addressing the other, it is in their temporal and spatial suspension and transport across different realms of reality, from discourse to fiction, from fiction to reader relations, where the transformative power of reading lies. This transportation would not be possible without a detour of infantilization, a detour that dissimulates both masculine desire and the gender specificity of the reader.

Washing out of the ears the brine of Lysias' speech involves both an alternative myth and a palinode that builds on the myth and fictionalizes different relations between eros and growth, desire and philosophical inquiry. But it also involves the performative gesture of addressing the beloved in the face (or ears) of the listener. A listener affective but also irresponsible, a listener who responds "here" while she has already linked to multiple other calls and orifices, too many to allow the locality of "here" to remain felicitous. A frivolous listener, frivolous like a girl: "Where is the boy I was talking to?" "Here [she] is, quite close beside you, whenever you want [her]."

1. Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackforth, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 243e. I will be also using two other translations of Phaedrus where I believe Hackforth's translation has not preserved the ambiguity and richness of the original: Lane Cooper's translation in *Phaedrus, Ion, Gorgias, and Symposium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1938) and a translation of *Phaedrus* to Modern Greek by Δημ. Α. Τσιλιβερδης, ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ η περι ερωτος (Αθηναι: Εκδοσεις ΚΑΚΤΟΣ, 1992).

2. *Phaedrus* 228e (Cooper).

3. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 12.

4. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 3.

5. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

6. *Phaedrus* 243d (Cooper).

7. Martha Nussbaum, "'This Story Isn't True': Madness, Reason and Recantation in *Phaedrus*," in *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

8. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 251.
9. Quoted in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985), 25.
10. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (San Diego: First Harvest/HBJ edition, 1989), 62.
11. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 14.
12. Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing* (London: The Women's Press, 1979), 45.
13. *Ibid.*, 48-49.
14. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8.
15. *Phaedrus* 236e (Cooper).
16. *Phaedrus* 237a (Cooper).
17. My translation.
18. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 15.
19. *Ibid.*, 37.
20. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 5.
21. My translation.
22. Webster's Dictionary.
23. Hackforth translates this "as friend to friend" and Cooper as "in the name of friendship."
24. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 11.
25. In the original, "λόγου, ὅς δια τοῦ ἐμοῦ στοματός καταφάρμακευθεντος ὑπο σοῦ ἐλεχθη," *Phaedrus* 242d-e (Cooper), emphasis added.
26. *Phaedrus* 235d (Cooper).
27. *Phaedrus* 251d (Cooper).
28. Stasichorus is punished with blindness for accusing Elene of betrayal in his poem and the only way to recover his vision is to write a second poem (παλινοιδίαν) where he denies the validity of his first narration. Interestingly, Socrates also removes the cloak that covers his face when he recites his palinode to Eros.
29. *Phaedrus* 243b
30. *Phaedrus*, 243d (Cooper). The translation of this verse (ἐπιθυμῶ ποτιμῶ λόγῳ ὅιον ἀλμυραν ἀκοήν ἀποκλεισασθαί) differs significantly both from the original and from one translation to another. Hackforth, for example, in the Hamilton edition, translates this as "I should like to wash the bitter taste out of my mouth with a draught of wholesome discourse." Cooper, on the other hand, translates this as "[I] desire to wash the brine out of my ears with the water of a sweet discourse." The two translations differ dramatically in how they construct the meaning of both the effect of the first speech, and the purpose of the second. By translating the effect of the first speech as a bitter taste that the second discourse can clean out, Hackforth's notion of poisoning and purification presupposes an autonomous speaking subject. In Cooper's translation, on the other hand, the poisoning of the discourse is realized as a heteronomous effect, the residue of the other's salt, which implicates the speaker in a responsibility beyond his agency and choice. Poisoning and blasphemy are both effects and conditions of listening, and the subject is constructed in terms of a heteronomous responsibility, suffering the other's residue, already exposed, the exposure of the ear. Socrates' second speech is indebted to and enabled by the residue at the same time it is intended to clean it.
31. *Phaedrus* 244a (Cooper).
32. *Phaedrus* 251b-d (Cooper).