RHAPSODIC PLATO? *ION*'s RE-PRESENTATION

Juvenilia on aesthetics - a common scholarly assessment - does not account Plato's investment in *Ion*[1]. The tensions bound up in Ion's relationship with Homer offer a commentary on Plato's own ambiguous relationship with the historical Socrates. Although the context of Ion's relationship with the texts of Homer is poetic and Plato's with Socrates philosophical, each disciple engages passively and actively with his precursor. Ion devotes his memory to reproduce the poems of Homer but also interprets the poems by his performance style (e.g., voice modulation and gesticulation), by his presentation of selections, and by some form of exegesis. Plato, as a 'rhapsodic philosopher', faces an analogous if more complicated process and is doubtlessly self-conscious of the paradox which confronts him. He possesses an attachment to Socrates similar to Ion's devotion to Homer and reenacts the historical events of Socrates' conversations. However, unlike the portrayed Ion, a figure whose own literacy is never referred to and who is clearly enmeshed in an oral tradition,

[1] Considerable critical assessment may be found on *Ion* (I use J. Burnet's 1903 Oxford edition; texts and translations for other dialogues, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Loebs). For a survey of some of the principal views, see H. Flashar, *Der Dialog 'Ion' als Zeugnis platonischer Philosophie* (Berlin 1958, 1-16), and, more recently, P. N. Campbell, *The 'Ion': Argument and Drama*, Res publica litterarum 9, 1986, 59-68, part. pp. 59-60. Those whose interest lies in the position of the dialogue in Plato's progression of thought have confronted an apparent paradox. The dialogue's seeming immaturity (e.g., poor artistic talent, light tone, and short-sighted argumentation) and early design (brevity, two dramatis personae, and aporetic closing) contrast a mature subject matter (e.g., the status of poetry as an epistemological medium and Socrates' 'inspired' willingness to provide answers). Two main viewpoints account for this disparity. (1) The dialogue is unworthy of Plato and was composed by someone familiar with his work - perhaps a student responding to *Phaedrus*: so J. Moreau, *Les thèmes platoniciens de l'Ion'*, REG 52, 1939, 419-28, and H. Diller, *Probleme des platonischen 'Ion'*, Hermes 83, 1955, 171-86. (Moreau claims even that the dialogue «pourrait disparaître de la collection platonicienne, que rien ne serait diminué de notre connaissance de Platon» [p. 419]). (2) *Ion* is an early but anticipatory dialogue. Its arrogant stance reflects the philosopher's heady youth (perhaps 494-91 B.C.), a period when he first realized the power of Socrates' challenge to the poetic tradition. This biographical theory is much supported (U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon*, 2 vols., Berlin 1920^2, I, 134; II, 32 f.) and continues to prevail (cf. Trevor J. Saunders' Introduction to the dialogue in the new Penguin translations, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, New York 1987, 46).

Plato employs the operations of literacy to subvert his master. If Ion must feature himself through the repetition of Homeric verse and largely limit interpretation to adornment, Plato can recast the historical Socrates in the guise of rhetorical strategy and force his reader to recapture the Socratic logos through ironic and writerly examinations of his texts[2].

The arguments I employ to examine this idea take two critical shapes - structural and ironic - and elaborate the diagram presented below. The dual perspective acknowledges the complexities of the subject matter and the sophistication of Plato's artistry. The diagram is used both metaphorically and as an organizational tool and my reader is invited to refer periodically back to it.

The structural argument occupies the bulk of the analysis. It successively applies a hermeneutic model of active/passive tensions, cut from the thematic material of the dialogue itself, to various relationships: Ion's with Homer, Homer's with Socrates, Ion's with Plato, and, finally, Plato's with Socrates. This 'gang of four' make, admittedly, odd bed-fellows. Homer embodies an oral tradition; Ion is probably fictional; Socrates is both historical and fictional; and Plato is historical and the writer of dialogues which feature Socrates and Ion and critique Homer. Nevertheless, the analogies are useful. Firstly, they provocatively reframe the question of Plato's views of poetry; although *Ion* has been subject to critical disparagement, the short dialogue localizes larger Platonic issues[3]. Secondly, the principles that emerge from the analysis shed light on Plato's own artistry and use of

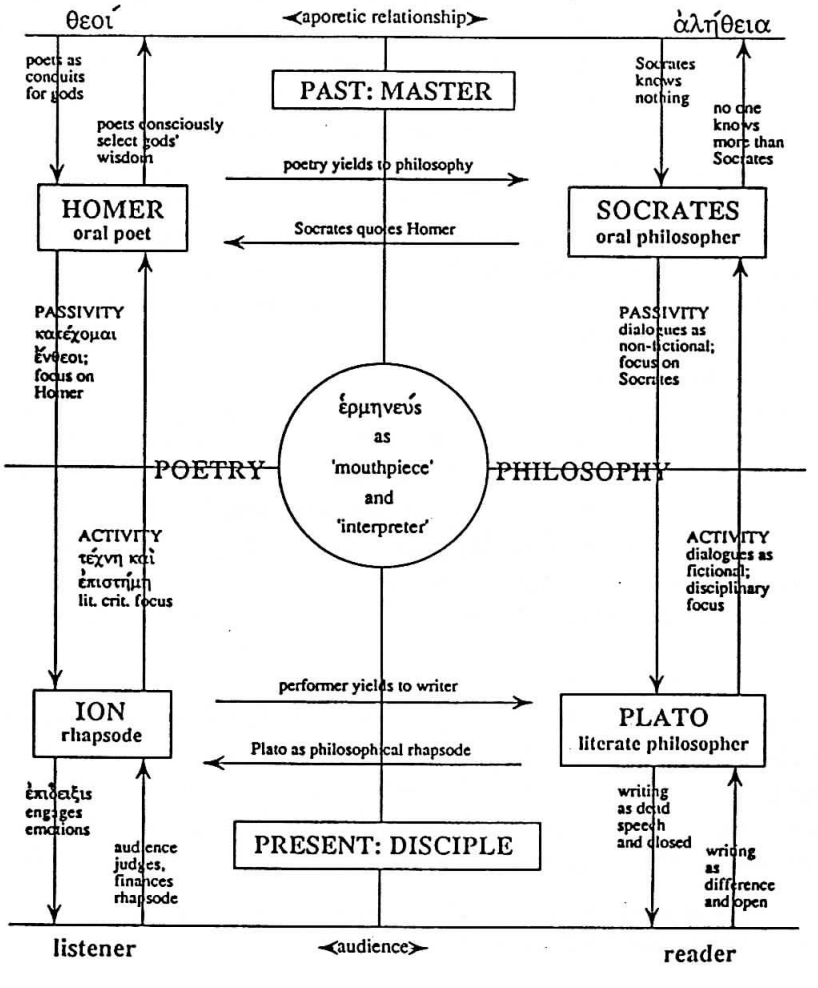
[2] Cf. H. Berger, Jr., *Levels of Discourse in Plato's Dialogues*, in *Literature and the Question of Philosophy*, ed. A.J. Cascardi, Baltimore 1987, 77-100, which discusses *Ion* at pp. 82-84.

[3] Although I employ more recent literary critical perspectives, my examination of *Ion* thus builds on (and profits by) studies of the dialogue which also position the dialogue at the heart of Platonic thought. See, particularly, Flashar (above, n. 1) and E. Wyller, *Platons 'Ion': Versuch einer Interpretation*, SO 38.1, 1958, 19-38. By contrast, W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge 1975, vol. 4, suggests that «... as in other early dialogues, Plato [in *Ion*] is beginning to feel his way beyond Socrates. [This] first full description of the poet's state of mind (or non-mind) is certainly different from the curt dismissal of the god-sent ignorance in the *Apology*, and a certain note of sympathy has crept in» (p. 211). To redefine this idea, the issue goes beyond a Plato who 'outgrows' his teacher by confessing harbored affection for poetry. The dialogue is itself *about* the idea of being independent from one's master, and Plato turns to the poet/rhapsode model as a way both to contemplate his own relationship with Socrates (or, more generally, any such tutelage) while also developing a dialectical critique of poetry.

poetic conventions.

In a final section, I propose that the relationship of 'reader and text' subverts the complementation of the structural analogies. *Ion* features an 'oral' hermeneutic model, one dependent upon the 'presence' of a charismatic speaker. As viewed, however, from a literate perspective - i.e., from the vantage point of *Ion*'s own textuality - the notion that an individual can authoritatively feature another's divine truths while simultaneously functioning as a self-interested user of words collapses under its own ironic density.

I present, first, the diagram and then proceed with a synopsis of its organization.



Description of the Diagram

The preceding diagram presents a rectangle quartered into the components of Homer (oral poet), Ion (rhapsode), Socrates (oral philosopher), and Plato (literate philosopher). The horizontal line in the center divides 'past: master' from 'present: disciple', titles written in the centered boxes towards the top and bottom. The vertical line in the center divides the provinces of 'poetry' and 'philosophy'; these words are written on the center, horizontal line to indicate that they overlap onto both vertical quarters. The diagram is thus multi-perspectival, for each quarter stands independently; partakes of a larger horizontal plane; and belongs to a larger vertical plane. At the center of the diagram a circle features the phrase «*hermêneus* as "mouthpiece" and "interpreter"». The central horizontal and vertical lines do not cross into this area, for the semantic tension which the circle symbolizes defines the operating principle for each of the illustrated relationships. Specifically, this hermeneutic concept pairs *enthousiasmos* (inspiration) with *technê* (technical skill). *Enthousiasmos* refers to the charismatic effect of a text, performance, divinity, or individual, while *technê* involves techniques of interpretation and the manipulation of charismatic forces[4]. The first offers the sublime and subordinates the self, the second invokes Prometheus and features selfhood.

Accordingly, each 'term' in the 'vertical models' (i.e., the Homer-Ion and Socrates-Plato axes) possesses both a passive and active involvement with the terms above and below it. In addition, the horizontal relationships of Homer-Socrates and Ion-Plato present analogous tensions: overlapping provinces of poetry and philosophy in the context of master-disciple bonds. So as to integrate better the schema in the dialogue's own terms, I turn to consider Ion's name as a metaphor.

History does not record Ion's personage. In the dialogue's dramatic context, the rhapsode's name suggests two punning distinctions. Firstly, it formally resembles - differing in accent (paroxytone for perispomenon) - the participle of *eîmi, iôn*: the name evokes «the man who comes and goes». Secondly, Ion is a professional rhapsode specializing in Homer who, appropriately, 'comes' from

[4] A detailed analysis of the meaning of these terms in the context of the dialogue has already been offered by Flashar (above n. 1) 36-96.

'Ionia' (specifically Ephesus), the region of Greece which produced Homer and the base of the Homeridae[5]. The issues of motion and locality are thus interconnected in Ion's name and the dialogue's opening and closing sections play upon them. Socrates begins the dialogue by asking Ion if he has taken up residence in Athens or has arrived from his home in Ephesus. Ion states that, in fact, he is returning from the Asclepeia in Epidaurus fresh from a victory in Homeric rhapsody. Socrates' encouragement for a similar outcome at the Panatheneia presumes another journey from Ephesus to Athens. In a pun which I will take at more than face value, Socrates at the end of the dialogue comments on Ion's habit of «going around» (*periiôn*, 541b) as a rhapsode. The joke implies that Ion is a 'get-around'. The images of 'loops' featured in the cited Homeric passages reinforce this distinction: Nestor's advice to Antilochus about the chariot course (537b); the fishing line that will be retracted (538d); the return of phantoms to the dark west (539a); and the eagle which lifts and drops a snake (539b-c). As mocked by Socrates in *Republic*, epic poets live lives of ceaseless, circular itinerancy - «being get-arounds so as to rhapsodize» (*rhapsôidein an periiontas eiôn*, 600d).

The themes joined to Ion's name support the dialogue's concern with knowledge in 'relay' communication. The figure of Socrates also participates in this concept, for his dramatic characterizations oppose, and hence highlight, Ion's own. Ion is Ephesian/Ionian, peripatetic, immersed in Homeric sensibilities, and confident in his talents. Socrates, by contrast, is Athenian, renowned for being stationary and rarely leaving his polis[6], focuses on philosophical questions, and

[5] Wyller (above, n. 3), who produces four illustrative models of his own for the dialogue, contrasts «der feminine, prunkhafte, umherziehende Rhapsode Ion aus der ionischen Hauptstadt Ephesos» with «der maskuline, nüchterne, ansässige Philosoph Sokrates aus Athen» (p. 28).

[6] The motif of the 'stationary Socrates' is pervasive and extends metaphorically to the theory of eternally stable forms. Socrates rarely leaves Athens (*Crito* 52b, *Phaedo* 230c-d), will not attempt an escape from jail (*Crito* 51d-e), remains dutifully at his military posts (*Apol.* 28d-e; cf. *Crito* 51b), and, unlike some of his interlocutors, is willing to remain present in a discussion until its goal is attained (cf. *Euthyph.* 15e). The connection between his proclivity to be stationary and for philosophy is made at *Symp.* 220c-d: during a campaign at Potidea, Socrates stood in one spot for twenty-four hours lost in thought. By contrast, the interlocutors construct arguments like Daedalus' self-automated robots (*Euthyph.* 11b-c) and change shapes like Proteus (*Ion* 241e). Cf. Flashar (above, n. 1) 18. At *Theaet.* 160d, Socrates names Homer and such Ionian philosophers as Heraclitus as supporters of the notion that «all things are in motion» (*kineisthai ta panta*).

advertises his humility. The contrast of a mobile Ion and an immobile Socrates suggests an 'oral hermeneutic model' metaphorically partaking of both figure's attributes. Socrates engages in three 'rounds' of discussion (in the dialogue's three panels), each revolving around the question of Ion's authority as a rhapsode; the debate over whether he possesses *technê* or *enthousiasmos* might proceed interminably. On the other hand, Socrates' renaming of Ion as Get-Around redirects the rhapsode's momentum into a closed loop, a stationary circle of motion.

This idea of stationary circularity operates on several thematic and philosophic levels. In thematic terms, Ion becomes a kind of Antilochus figure whose advice from a Socratic Nestor enters him into a never-ending chariot race. This notion is borne out in a political/historical dimension by the ironic reversal of two poles of Ion's travels, Ephesus and Athens. Ephesus, the presumed goal of his current round-trip journey, is rendered Athenian by Socrates' remark about the Athenian origins of the Ephesian stock (541d) and by the current control Athens specifically holds over Ephesus (541c) and generally wields over Ionia[7]. Athens, on the other hand, is the city where Socrates guesses that Ion now makes his home and in which Ion, given his familiarity with Socrates, spends considerable time.

Philosophically, the image of a reversible loop to characterize Ion extends to the hermeneutic models presented in the diagram. The circle of the *hermêneus* in the center defines the essential dynamic not only of each of the larger models on the left and right (gods-Homer-Ion-listener and truth-Socrates-Plato-reader) but the nature of interaction between each of the individual 'terms' of the models (e.g., Homer-Ion). The arrows which descend represent the force of tradition and divinity, while the arrows which ascend signify individualism and subversion. This complementation is present, therefore, for both the larger models as coherent units and for the individual tensions contained within them. Thus the rectangular shape of the models, both in whole and in part, conceptually adheres to the circularity of *hermêneia*.

[7] The arguments of J.D. Moore, *The Dating of Plato's 'Ion'*, GRBS 15, 1974, 421-39, are compelling. Plato seems to locate the setting of Ion "at a time during the war between Athens and Sparta, before the Ionian revolt [of 412]" (p. 432).

The Homer-Ion Model

Ion's first section critiques the rhapsode's singular interest in Homer. Socrates hastily argues that «things poetic are a whole» (532c) and draws analogies with medicine, painting, etc. The second section follows Ion's insistence upon a sole interest in Homer. Here, Socrates abandons the elenchus in favor of an 'inspired' monologue - a significant shift in locution in that his theme addresses an auditor's passivity to poetic discourse. Socrates likens the transmission of poetry to a dangling chain of iron rings which a magnet at its top holds together. As the magnet empowers the iron rings below to serve as magnets in turn, so a poem, which belongs to a god, travels inspirationally through poet and rhapsode to audience. In contrast to traditional notions of the poetic process which recognize the artist's skill, poets and rhapsodes are unflatteringly characterized as mere passive conduits who literally lose their minds - like Corybants or Bacchae seized by a divine force[8]. Divinities 'possess' (*katechontai*) their mortal 'servants' and make their bodies 'engodded' (*entheoi*). The channeling of divine spirit from *theos* to listener is superconductive and inculcates cultural orthodoxy[9].

[8] Socrates' claim is outlandish, even if he repeats it elsewhere (*Apol.* 22b-c, *Laws* 719c [which calls it 'an ancient story']) and whether or not it is borrowed from Democritus (DK 68.17-18). P. Murray, *Poetic Inspiration in Early Greece*, JHS 101, 1981, 87-100 concludes that «[i]t was Plato who, so far as we know, first opposed the concepts of poetic inspiration and technique.... In fact, throughout early Greek poetry there seems to be an equal emphasis on craft of inspiration» (pp. 99-100). See, similarly, E.N. Tigerstedt, *Furor Poeticus: Poetic Inspiration in Greek Literature before Democritus and Plato*, JHI 31.2, 1970, 163-78. E.A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, Cambridge Mass. 1963, suggests that the prosaic philosophers toward the end of the fifth century «were driven to regulate the poetic experience to a category which was non-conceptual and therefore non-reflective. Thus was invented the notion that poetry must be simply a product of ecstatic possession ...» (p. 156). But too much emphasis may be paid to whether or not Plato himself believed in such an idea. E.N. Tigerstedt, *Plato's Idea of Poetical Inspiration*, Helsinki 1969, demonstrates that while Plato is consistent in his view of poets as passively possessed by the Muse, he employs this theme in *Ion*, *Apology*, *Meno*, and *Phaedrus* in differing contexts (p. 53). The dialogues' presentations of this topos (and, for that matter, the motif of the virtue of self-possession [cf. *R.* 441-42, *Phaedr.* 246 f.]) should be interpreted locally, as an element of his literary and rhetorical design.

[9] Cf. J.D. Moore, *Limitation and Design in Plato's 'Ion'*, PCC 8, 1973, 45-51, who argues for an emphatically anti-ironic view of Ion's trait of inspiration: «he is the perfect rhapsode, an incarnation of Homer's verses, a kind of talking book». For Platonic notions of inspiration, obsession, and daemonism, see J.G. Warry, *Greek*

The dialogue's presentation of a countering dynamic principle, as other critics have already suggested, reverses the hierarchy and roots power in the chain's lower terms[10]. To develop first the audience's relationship with the rhapsode, Ion's response to the question of a performer's sanity during an *epideixis* (display) reveals a trait of self-centered calculation and compromises his adherence to the image of the naive and 'holy' (534ab) poet presented in the magnet analogy. Ignoring the principle of divine dispensation (*theia moira*), Ion presents financial considerations (535e). Like a clever street musician pandering to his audience's inclinations, the rhapsode features such purple passages as Odysseus' stand on the threshold, Achilles' chase of Hector, or the distress of Andromache (535b). The *epideixeis* must also be crowd pleasers if he is to capture a first place in the contest. Ion's desire for both types of rewards (money and fame) would, therefore, prompt him to ignore the type of technical and dry passages in which Socrates holds an interest. e.g., the moribund question of how goat cheese and onion relish heal battle wounds (538c)[11]. Therefore, the audience's influence over the rhapsode counters the rhapsode's influence over the audience.

To pass on to the Ion-Homer relationship, Plato's *Ion* is the first extant treatise to pose literary interpretation as an independent discipline[12]. The 'Promethean' term *technê*, used initially to refer to

Aesthetic Theory, New York 1962, 78-79.

[10] A. Bloom, *An Interpretation of Plato's 'Ion'*, Interpretation 1, 1970, 43-62, at p. 53, and H. Berger, Jr., *The Origins of Bucolic Representation: Disenchantment and Revision in Theocritus' Seventh Idyll.*, CA 3.1, 1984, 1-39, at pp. 1-2. The view of the active/passive relationship as 'reversible' results from my own structural framework.

[11] So J. Farness, *Text and Tradition in Plato's 'Ion'*, PQ 64, 1985, 155-74, at p. 164. Socrates ridicules this last Homeric passage at *R.* 406a.

[12] Socrates states that «*poiêtikê gar pou estin to holon*» (For I expect that the matter of poetry [i.e., that of good quality and bad] is a whole, 532c), a passage connecting with the suggestion at *Symp.* 232d that a dramatist could compose tragedy and comedy. Cf. *Phaed.* 264c and *Gorg.* 503c. C. Ladrière, *The Problem of Plato's 'Ion'*, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 10, 1951-52), 26-34, argues that *Ion* features literary criticism, but (wrongly, in my opinion) insists that it is unconcerned with the 'problems' of the process and recitation of poetry. J.W.A. Adkins, *The Attack of Poetry: Plato*, in *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, Cambridge 1934, vol. I, presents a romantic but balanced contrast between the philosopher who stands against «the utter unreliability of all poetic pronouncements» and «sheer fancy» of allegorical readings of early interpreters and «the father of literary criticism» whose analytical discussions reveal a complex and perceptive comprehension of literary strategies. For an assessment of Plato as one who first

Ion's Homeric displays, becomes quickly incorporated into the idea of exegesis[13]. Although we require evidence to know how and when a rhapsode conducted his analysis, the procedure of breaking from the recitation of memorized text transfers power from the term above to the term below[14]. Ion's description of his interpretive process is telling. His insistence to Socrates that it is «worthwhile to hear ... how I have adorned (*kekosmêka*) Homer» echoes the verb *kosmeô* used just earlier to refer to Ion's use of costumes (530b), a practice that formed a part of his role as an 'actor' (*hupokritês*, 536a). Thus, as in the sophistic context of *Hippias Minor*, interpretation becomes equated with costuming, i.e., conspicuous adornment[15]. Later, Socrates posits his own version of literary discussion (and, hence, breaking off of godly inspiration) by assigning the interpreter role to professional specialists.

Plato's concern with rhapsody steers the dialogue's focus away from the poet's relationship with the gods (but note the references to Hesiod's *Theogony* at 531c and cf. *Euthyph.* 6a-c). Nevertheless, the complementing of identification with alienation extends to this hierarchical bond, too[16]. Greek poets are often self-conscious about

maturely articulates the fictive nature of literary artifacts, see Hermann Funke, «'...müssen aus underem [sic] Staate verbannt werden': Zur Entstehung des Literaturbegriffs bei den Griechen», in *Forms of Control and Subordination in Antiquity*, ed. T. Yuge and M. Doi, Leiden and Tokyo 1988, 500-06.

13 The subject of *technê* in Plato is, of course, a complex one. What is important in this context is that the term involves 'activity', an application of mind upon a field of inquiry (*skepsis*). J. Wild, *Plato's Theory of Technê: A Phenomenological Interpretation*, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, I 255-93, describes «[a]ll *technê* [as] rationally guided action *on* some individual stuff to 'transform' it into a certain order or structure, apprehended by reason» (p. 258). Accordingly, «[a]ll art is a kind of forethought. Hence the arts are the gift of Prometheus ...» (p. 261). The interpreter's *technê* is also Promethean, but, like that of the seer, paradoxically so: see, for a further comparison of the poet and seer in this context, Bloom (above, n. 10) 51, 57, and J. Klein, *Plato's 'Ion'*, Claremont Journal of Public Affairs 2, 1973, 23-37, at p. 25.

14 The dual function of the rhapsode as both performer and exegete is discussed by Wyller (above, n. 3) 34 f., and Campbell (above, n. 1) 61-62.

15 See Flashar (above, n. 1) 27-8.

16 For the paradox of a mortal poet being a vessel for a divine muse, cf. W.H. Verdenius, *L''Ion' de Platon*, Mnemosyne ser. 3 vol. 11, 1943, 232-62, at pp. 258-59, and Flashar (above, n. 1) 136-37.

truths derived from Muses and about the degree to which they hold the power to inform, bewitch, and enchant audiences[17]. Xenophanes of Colophon, who seems originally to have been a rhapsode, ridicules the anthropomorphism of epic poets. Xenophanes thus presents a historical example of how rhapsody could lead to critical distance[18].

Plato's paradoxical use of the term *hermêneus* to signify both passive 'mouthpiece' and active 'interpreter' reinforces this notion[19]. Socrates appropriately employs the meaning of mouthpiece during his magnetic chain analogy to present his example of Tynnichus the Chalcidean. The god inspired Tynnichus only once in order to demonstrate that good poems are not 'human and of humans' but 'divine and of divinities': accordingly, «the poets are nothing other than *hermênês* (mouthpieces[20]) of the gods, being possessed by whatever (god) each one is possessed» (534d-e). In subsequent discussion (535a), the word (in the form of a noun or verb) is used similarly. At the end of the discussion, Ion admits that rhapsodes function as «mouthpieces of mouthpieces» (*hermêneôn hermênês*).

The translation of *hermêneus* as mouthpiece develops from the

[17] Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 1-35 and the discussion of Murray (above, n. 8) 96-97. G. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment: Early Greek Views of the Nature and Function of Poetry*, Chapel Hill 1984, finds a division reaching back to Homer between poetry which «seems unearthly, the product of a divine skill that binds the singer to the gods and exempts him from the forgetfulness of the partiality of men» (p. 16) and the poetry of «selective, pointed truth, which seems inevitably disturbing» (p. 20).

[18] See R. Pfeiffer, *Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age*, Oxford 1968, 9. Campbell (above, n. 1), who discusses Pfeiffer's analysis of Xenophanes, emphasizes how the rhapsodic contribution to the birth of criticism was anticipated by poetic contests in the earlier age (p. 65); thus the tension between presentation and exegesis is inherent from the beginning. Plato, in effect, conflates the figure of the exegetical rhapsode with the image of the intellectually barren rhapsode presented by Xenophon at *Symp.* 3.6 and *Mem.* 4.2.10. (For an assessment of Xenophon's possible borrowing from *Ion*, see Diller [above, n. 1] 176.)

[19] Others who have noted this conflation include Campbell (above, n. 1) 62, Moreau (above, n. 1) 426, and K. Dorter, *The 'Ion': Plato's Characterization of Art*, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 32, 1973, 65-78. Wyller (above, n. 3) puts the issue in a nutshell: «Mit der Hermeneia-Frage ist daher nicht nur das hauptthema des 'Ion', sondern ein Hauptthema des platonischen Denkens überhaupt gestellt worden. Der kleine 'Ion' gibt eine erste Klärung des Problemgebiets» (p. 35).

[20] For the necessary translation 'mouthpiece', see Guthrie (above, n. 3) 203, n. 1. Flashar (above, n. 1) comments that the term is related to the 'Zwischenreich' of poets, oracles, etc., evokes the *Symposium* and is divorced fom the application of *'technê'* (p. 33).

dialogue's earlier use of it to signify interpreter. There, Socrates relates that «a rhapsode should be the *hermêneus* (interpreter) of the poet's thought (*dianoia*) for his listeners» (530c). The use of this term in this context - interpretation - marks a new usage; its meanings in the past century had been largely limited to denote translation and announcement[21]. At *Cratylus* 407e-408d, Socrates posits the etymology of Hermes' name in the yoking of *eirein* (to speak) to the Homeric word *emêsato* (contrived); the pun acknowledges Hermes' overlapping speech functions of interpreter (*hêrmêneus*), messenger, thievish liar, and orator. *Ion* also presents the ambiguity of hermeneutics, specifically the problem of how re-presentation of another's discourse combines authenticity with personal motivation. Ion steadfastly devotes himself to Homer while demonstrating personal interest in presenting crafted selections of the epics, while taking pride in rhapsodic victories, while describing his own talents in superlative terms, while claiming to be worthy of the Homeridae's golden crown (530d), and while asserting his skills for generalship (540d-f). Thus the rhapsode simultaneously erases himself in the cult of another and engages in self-aggrandizement[22].

A second ambiguity of diction is found in the word *deinos*. The term is used repeatedly to indicate Ion's ability to be 'clever' or 'skillful' in his interpretations of Homeric passages. However, Ion uses the adjective adverbially to describe how his histrionics cause his audience to become passively overcome with emotion: he looks down from the platform to spectators «who are crying and have terrified expressions (*deinon emblepontas*)» (535e). In sum, Socrates tries to expose Ion as an imposter, but the rhapsode clings to the role of a *deinos* (i.e., doubled[23], terrible/terrific) *hermêneus*. Although Socrates asks Ion to clarify whether the rhapsode advertises himself as one who (unjustifiably) possesses expertise or as a simple-minded conduit of the gods, the staff-bearing, circulating Ion, like Hermes himself, opts for both distinctions[24].

[21] See G. Most, *Pindar, O.* 2.83-90, CQ 36, 1986, 304-16, at pp. 308-11.

[22] Bloom (above, n. 10) describes Ion's personality as «pious vanity» (p. 43).

[23] For the etymological link between the IE stems *duei* and *duô(u)*, see Émile Benveniste, *Origines de la formation de noms en Indo-Européen*, Paris 1935, 10, 254 f. Perhaps a link is found in *deidô* (fear). For a discussion of the ambiguities of the word *deinon* in Sophocles, see P. Friedländer, *Polla Ta Deina*, Hermes 69, 1934, 56-63.

[24] So Wyller (above, n. 3) 35, n. 1.

The mapping of the Ion-Homer model onto Plato's relationship with Socrates presents, I believe, a natural, conceptual extension. The idea that the dialogues are both 'magnetically charged' with the historical Socrates' presence, on the one hand, and the product of a self-determined inventor of a philosophical school, on the other, speaks to their general, scholarly assessment as representative but also authentic oral encounters. I first address Socrates' overlap with Homer and Plato's with Ion (the two horizontal axes of the diagram) and then turn to the Socrates-Plato relationship.

The Homer-Socrates and Ion-Plato Models

Socrates' engagement with Ion concerns rhapsodic presentation of epic and not the nature of the Homeric tradition per se. Nevertheless, the *Ion* does feature Homer through the recitation and discussion of passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and by Ion's devotion to the poet. Furthermore, the critique of rhapsody at least implies a critique of poetry, an implication that Socrates' analogy of the magnetic chain renders explicit[25]. *Ion*, therefore, belongs to Plato's interest in challenging the poetic tradition and its supporters. Elenchus is pitted against paradigmatic recitation as the best method for verifying truth[26]. But Plato's much-noted antagonism toward poetry presents only part of the story. A tension exists in the dialogues between their abuse *and* use of poetic conventions. For example, Plato commonly portrays a Socrates who invokes Homer and identifies with his heroes, and recent scholarship has appreciated the dependence of Socrates' portrayals upon epic and tragic conventions[27]. Socrates, moreover, demonstrates substantial knowledge of poetry, even if his own

[25] See the discussion of Guthrie (above, n. 3) on the problem of whether *Ion* critiques only Ion, all rhapsodes, or all rhapsodes and poets (p. 207 with n. 1). The most emphatic argument that the dialogue critiques art is that of Dorter (above, n. 19).

[26] See, in particular, Verdenius (above, n. 16), who emphasizes the cultural stakes in Plato's contest with rhapsodes, sophists, and allegorists over how to interpret Homer (pp. 246 f.). The question of whether or not *Ion* partakes of «the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry» (*R.* 607b) is much debated.

[27] Cf. T.H. Irwin, *Socrates and the Tragic Hero*, in *Language and the Tragic Hero: Essays ... in Honor of Gordon M. Kirkwood*, Atlanta 1988, 55-83.

interpretations of poetic passages, such as his analysis of some Simonidean lines at *Protagoras* 338e-348a, result in strong readings[28]. As is sometimes observed, Plato presents a Socrates who blends rationality with emotionality as a means of joining human to god[29]. In short, the image of Socrates overlaps the opposition between poetry and philosophy[30].

In contrast to the critical attention frequently paid to the Socrates-Homer relationship, the notion that Plato can be analogously compared with his fictional creation, Ion, has not been considered. The two figures, of course, differ from one another by Ion's status as an itinerant, performing rhapsode trained in the techniques of memory and acting and by Plato's historical identity as an aristocratic Athenian, a writer of dialogues, and founder of the Academy. Ion, furthermore, performs outdoors to the public for personal profit, while Plato retreated indoors, worked with selected students, and was financially secure. But these differences are matched by similarities. Each figure is 'belated' and purports to defer authority to a particular master. Although living in the present, they resurrect the past of the dead[31]. Furthermore, although the fashion may differ, Ion and Plato both can be viewed as maintaining belief in symbolic orders of unity

[28] See N. Pappas, *Socrates' Charitable Treatment of Poetry*, P&L 13.2, 1989, 248-61. Another recent piece of Pappas, *Plato's 'Ion': The Problem of the Author*, Philosophy 64, 1989, 381-89, discusses Plato's objections to poetry as a presentation of particulars and authorial idiosyncrasies.

[29] Cf. W.C. Greene, *Plato's View of Poetry*, HSCP 19, 1918, 1-75, at p. 14.

[30] There is much debate over what appears to be a double perspective of poetry in Plato. The dialogues define poetic activity as both *mimêsis* (a removed and inferior version of truth) and *enthousiasmos* (the direct and authentic word of a god) - theories connected only at *Tim.* 71a-72b and *Laws* 719c-d. (For the role of *Ion* in this matter, see Flashar [above, n. 1] 106-12). Havelock (above, n. 30) relegates both this paradox and the connected one of Plato's use of the vocabulary of sight to characterize his theory of forms to a superfluous inheritance of his culture's heritage of oral discourse: even Plato «could not quite wield the power to make us not 'sight-seers'» (p. 271). But Havelock (who does not consider *Ion*) ignores the topic of Plato's artistic representations of Socrates. His portrait of a 'scientific' Plato is but a component of the author Plato's more complex project of transforming traditional artistic practices. Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Plato and the Poets*, in *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutic Studies on Plato*, tr. with an introduction by P.Chr. Smith, New Haven 1980, 39-72, at p. 58.

[31] For a 'cultic' presentation of Socrates' coterie, see *Phaedo*. Echecrates was a Pythagorean and several others present at the death scene started their own schools.

and wholeness: Ion adheres to heroic myth while Plato philosophically revises it[32].

On the other hand, if the author, Plato, is a philosophical rhapsode, given to the cult of another, then also like Ion he possesses his own ambitions, motivations, talents, and desires. Like Ion, Plato utilizes dramatic conventions and possesses a lively style in his own (prosaic) performances. Although Plato perhaps restricted his teachings to seminars in the Academy, his dialogues - like the touring Ion himself - circulated in a public domain of readers. Plato competed with other philosophers, as we know from his attacks upon sophists[33]. His project of presenting Socrates as an authentic seeker of truth and philosophical martyr yielded the dividends of validating his own philosophical commitment, of broadening his reputation, and of attracting desirable students.

Plato, moreover, did not share Socrates' penchant for remaining in Athens. He visited Megara after Socrates' death and possibly travelled to Egypt (D.L. 3.5-6). His three trips to Syracuse may - here - be boldly compared to Ion's own west-to-east journeys to seek prestige and profit. Given the extensive power and riches Dionysus had amassed (Syracuse was then the most powerful polis in the Greek world), Plato's association with the tyrant - however altruistic in intention - must have contributed to his personal reputation. Moreover, since his personal financial resources could not have fully supported the Academy and because he seems not to have charged tuition (D.L. 4.2), the tradition that his patronage of the Syracusan court was repaid by honoraria or endowment funds (cf. D.L. 3.9) may command some truth[34]. The *Thirteenth Letter* (whose authorship is unfortunately not secure) portrays a fiscal-minded speaker trying to direct Dionysus' patronage of his philosophical circle. Plato's tendencies toward self-aggrandizement may have been less powerful than the drives Ion is portrayed to possess, but the position of prominence given to philo-

32 For the 'unity of concern' which spans Homer and Plato, see Ch. Segal, *'The Myth Was Saved': Reflections on Homer and the Mythology of Plato's 'Republic'*, Hermes 106.2, 1978, 315-36.

33 Cf. the speculations of G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress*, Cambridge 1966, on the advertising function of *Phaedrus* (p. 262). The idea of the self-serving teacher, who, like Ion with his audience, caters to the whims of his students is expressed at *R.* 493.

34 See Ryle (above, n. 33) 66-68.

sophers like himself in *Republic* (cf. 473 f. and *Phaedrus* 248d) at least raises the comparison[35]. Ion's pretensions about being a capable but unused general echo the topos of the worthy but neglected philosopher.

The Socrates-Plato Model

The idea that the relationship of Socrates and Plato analogously adheres to the Homer-Ion model presupposes an abstracted idea of both historical figures. Furthermore, it disregards such important differences as how a mentorship replaces a poet-rhapsode dynamic, the way a search for truth displaces interest in poetic beauty, and the fact that large festival audiences give way to intimate groups of readers. Nevertheless, the structural application - even if taken as a bounded construct - provocatively frames a complex subject.

In turning again to the diagram, the Platonic Socrates embodies a famous paradox. Although he himself claims to know nothing, he appears to know more than anyone else. Socrates' characterization thus possesses a passive and active aspect. Socrates embodies, moreover, both the honorable sage who is martyred and the devious manipulator of language[36]. In regard to his passive relationship to truth, Socrates, like Ion, is magnetically charged from above. Socrates possesses a *daimôn* (*Apol.* 31d, 40b, *Phaedr.* 242b-c, *Rep.* 496c, and *Cratyl.* 396e) and in *Symposium* enjoys several divine connections[37]. His exuberant depiction of the winged soul in *Phaedrus* resonates with his portrayal of the sacred bee-poet in his magnetic chain analogy (*Ion* 534a-b). Like the inspired artist, the philosopher functions as a midwife for divine truths (*Theat.* 150c-151a) and is subject to irrational, erotic, and enthusiastic rapture[38]. Indeed, although Ion is

[35] K.R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Princeton 1963, vol. I, plays up this notion, suspecting Plato for his 'ambition', 'secret dreams', and unrealized 'quest for power' (p. 155).

[36] See P.W. Gooch, *Socrates: Devious or Divine?*, G&R 32.1, 1985, 32-41. Gooch argues that «[b]y preserving his ironic Socrates Plato becomes the source of later suspicions about Socrates' insincerity, while providing materials for Socrates' sanctification» (p. 41).

[37] See Gooch (above, n. 36) 35-36. Flashar (above, n. 1) also examines the relevant passages of *Symposium* and,in specific comparison with *Ion*, employs some verbal parallels to conclude that Socrates is specifically portrayed as an Ion-like link on a divine chain (pp. 128-32).

[38] Tigerstedt/1969 (above, n. 8) warns that only in *Phaedrus* and at *Cratyl.* 396d «...

subject to a harsh Socratic elenchus, the rhapsode's focus on beauty corresponds to Socrates'own visions of the beautiful Plato presents elsewhere[39].

Socrates' divine inspiration and self-proclaimed lack of knowledge complement his obvious erudition - a form of preeminent knowledge validated by the Delphic Oracle (*Apol.* 21a). To use as a metaphor Alcibiades' remark that Socrates has never been seen drunk (*Symp.* 220a), the crafty Socrates retains control. His questioning of those claiming possession of knowledge inevitably reveals their ignorance. His strategy of asking incessant questions deflects interlocutors' rhetorical and poetic displays - practices whose effects could be spell-binding and hypnotic[40]. Socrates' refusal to allow Ion to present a poetic or exegetical *epideixis* (cf. 530d, 536d) demonstrates that *Ion* is no exception to this formula. Socrates focuses on claims of 'truth' (*alêthê* 535a, 535d, 541e) and Ion's possession of *epistêmê*. Socrates' disclaimer that he 'speaks nothing other than truth [*t'alêthê*]' (532d-e) captures the forcefulness of his seeming passivity. In the following discussion he appears to make claims of basic common

does Socrates describe the philosopher and himself as being divinely possessed... Philosophy belongs to the realm of the Logos. Not for it the raptures of inspiration, but the calm analysis of dialectic!» (p. 56). If Tigerstedt is not being ironic (note exclamation point), he stands in contradiction to other passages in the dialogues which connect philosophy with *enthousiasmos*. In *Republic*, Socrates describes his «reckless enthusiasm» for a city to take up philosophy (497e), hopes that «true love for true philosophy falls from divine inspiration into some reigning king or regent or into one of his sons» (499c), and refers to the «muse of philosophy» (499d). At *Phaedo* 69c-d, philosophers are compared to the «true *Bacchoi* who carry the thyrsus» and the *Seventh Letter* relates that a true course of philosophy involves «a path of enchantment» (340c). Cf. also *Euthyph.* 3d and *Crito* 54d. For a detailed discussion of philosophical enthusiasm, see Flashar (above, n. 1) 121 f., who connects it (in the context of *Phaedrus* and *Meno*) with anamnesis. Cf. also M.H. Partee, *Inspiration in the Aesthetics of Plato*, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 30, 1971, 87-95.

[39] See Bloom (above, n. 10) 50, Dorter (above, n. 19) 74-76, and Warry (above, n. 9) 78. For the idea that philosophy is a form of love's madness for beauty, see *Phaedr.* 250d. The connection between *enthousiasmos* and *kallos* is found in Democritus (DK 18). Flashar (above, n. 1), who discusses the relationship between *enthousiasmos* and *erôs* in the context of *Symposium* (pp. 128 f.), discusses, too, the question of 'truth' in poetic vs. philosophical apprehensions of beauty (pp. 135-36).

[40] See R.J. Connors, *Greek Rhetoric and the Transition from Orality*, P&R 19.1, 1986, 38-65, at p. 52. Cf. *Meno* 99c-d.

sense, but he also presents several arguments that force Ion to concede his illogicality (533c)[41]. Although the task of responding to Socrates' arrogant tone and manipulative strategies is left, in *Ion*, to the reader, other dialogues self-consciously make reference to these tendencies (cf. *Rep.* 338d, 340d, 341a-b).

Finally, the degree to which Socrates differs from a sophist is sometimes debated. The figured philosopher can appear sly, insincere, excessively ironic, and generally immoral and impious[42]. His method of instilling virtue proved, historically, a disaster with some of his more powerful associates (e.g., Critias and Alcibiades). As presented by Aristophanes, Socrates adheres to the newfangled and relativist intellectualism adopted, for example, by Euripides[43]. As one reader has recently suggested, his methods of verbal manipulation present «the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric»[44].

Socrates' ambiguous status as conduit and manipulator allows us to presume a similar status for Plato's own relationship with Socrates. To focus first on his role as passive mouthpiece, biographical perspectives of Platonic study commonly distinguish Socratic from Platonic dialogues. Although the many depicters of the personage of Socrates (Aristophanes, Xenophon, Antisthenes, Aeschines Socraticus, and Polycrates) blatantly vary in their presentations and allegiances, the belief that Plato held a unique and sanctimonious bond with his mentor is often taken for granted[45]. In the terms of *Ion*, Plato would thus resemble Socrates' portrayal of the 'light, winged, and sacred' poet (534b), an artist who is magnetically charged from

[41] For a discussion of the dialogue's argumentation, see R.K. Sprague, *Plato's Philosopher-King*, Columbia SC 1976, 1-14. J. Ranta, *The Drama of Plato's* 'Ion', Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 26, 1967, 219-29, notes that Socrates seems to direct «the course of the dialectic, in spite of his own seeming ignorance and Ion's impossible answers» in the direction of 'Truth' (p. 224).

[42] Cf. Gooch (above, n. 36): «He is not the sincere seeker of truth... Although Socrates castigates the sophists of his day for being more concerned with success in argument than with truth, he ends up using the same tricks as they do - except that he refused to come clean about his tactics» (p. 37).

[43] Ion's reference to Socrates as one of the *sophoi* (532d) suggests that he does not distinguish the philosophic from the sophistic Socrates.

[44] Livio Rossetti, *The Rhetoric of Socrates*, Ph&Rh 22.4, 1989, 225-38.

[45] As noted by C.H. Kahn, *Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?*, CQ 31.2, 1981, 305-20, the biographical view of the early dialogues begins with Aristotle (p. 13, n. 13). For the subsequent tradition of sanctifying Socrates - often along Christian terms - see Gooch (above, n. 36) 32-37.

above and 'serves' (534c) a divinity. *Ion*, indeed, presents the notion of a charismatic Socrates by means of his 'enchanted' monologues and by Ion's response to the first of them («somehow you grasp my soul with your words, Socrates,» (535a)[46]; in what follows, Ion's continued agreement with Socrates suggests that the sage's language becomes incantatory. Socrates, therefore, seems to spell-bind his interlocutors as effectively as the rhapsode mesmerizes his audience - a practice that presumably extended to his mentorship of Plato.

In contrast to the Plato who is the inspired servant of Socrates is found another Plato, the writer of technical diatribes presented in the later dialogues. Once again, *Ion* itself provides terms for the complementing argument in its rehearsal of the 'craft analogy'. Socrates interrogates and challenges his interlocutor over the latter's possession of technical skill and professional knowledge (*technê kai epistêmê*). By this argumentation, Socrates thus distinguishes disciplinary from comprehensive views of the world - a theme adumbrating the general rise of fourth-century professionalism[47]. Might we speculate the existence of an analogous problem in Plato's understanding of Socrates' 'teachings'? His mentor imparted to him both comprehensive and mythical visions of the cosmos and 'Aristotelian' problems requiring specialized technical arguments from diverse fields of speculation[48].

To complete the discussion of Plato's active engagement with his mentor, at the end of his second long monologue Socrates describes Ion as a 'skillful praiser [*deinos... epainetês*]' of Homer (536d). The subtle paradox of this phrase applies also to Plato's relationship with

[46] Cf. Klein (above, n. 13), who questions Socrates' own Muse-like authority to have precise knowledge of how the gods employ poets (p. 28). Thus the self-advertised 'lay man' (*idiôtên anthrôpon*, 532e), Socrates, changes places with the sophisticated Ion. For the motif of the spell-binding Socrates, see *Meno* 80a-b, *Theat.* 150d-151a, and *Theag.* 129e-f.

[47] Bloom (above, n. 10) notes: «The choice seems to be between men who talk about the whole but are both incompetent and unaware of their incompetence, and men who deal with insignificant parts of the whole competently but are as a consequence oblivious of the whole. Socrates adopts a moderate position; he is open to the whole but knows that he does not know the answers although he knows the answers» (p. 47).

[48] Cf. Dorter (above, n. 19), who plays with the notion that Ion might, in rebuttal to Socrates' questioning of his technical proficiency, ask similar questions about the philosopher's specialized training (p. 71).

Socrates. The Plato who eulogizes his mentor is also a skillful, creative artist. A such, Socrates becomes but a fictional character in all of Plato's dialogues, i.e., one member of the *dramatis personae* occupying what C.H. Kahn has termed Plato's 'simulacrum' of an earlier world[49].

Reader and Text

The status of Plato's dialogues as literary creations raises the final relationship illustrated in the diagram: reader and text. Here, the profound differences between listening and reading - the participation in oral and literate discourses - ironize the hermeneutic structure.

To term the application ironic may appear puzzling. For many, the dialogues adhere to the oral model of interpretation. Although it can be debated to what degree which of the dialogues contain more Socratic or Platonic notions, the texts are nevertheless 'charged' with the presence of these two historical figures. Consequently, given the right frame of mind, training or understanding, readers can themselves be 'deputized' as disciples and participate in the orality of the dialectic encounters[50]. The impediment of having to *read* conversations does not short-circuit the superconductive magnetism. The careful, cultic reader stays linked to the chain.

For other readers, however, the dialogues do not offer 'living' speech perpetually reenacted by charismatic figures. Rather, they belong to what the prolific and comfortably literary Plato, at *Phaedrus* 274c f., describes as the silent, bastard, and orphaned discourse of writing. Plato's commitment of the dead Socrates to a literate form of prosaic drama - to a sign - thus orphans his master and reconstitutes his dialectical logos. The dialogues present an ironic Socrates, a

[49] Kahn (above, n. 45) 312. That Plato self-consciously re-presented Socrates in rhetorical terms is suggested by his correspondence with Dion's friends in *Letter VIII* - providing the document is authentic. There, Plato refers to himself as the *hermêneus* of the respected and philosophically inclined Dion - who, like Socrates, had been murdered - and ventriloquises his words (355a f.). In essence, Plato provides an example of how his addressees might copy his own success in appropriating Socrates in the cause of the dialogues and the Academy.

[50] Cf., recently, Connors (above, n. 40), who adheres to the traditional separation of Plato and Socrates and believes that Socrates is accurately represented in the early dialogues (p. 63, n. 40). Connors identifies two independent movements in the late fifth and early fourth centuries - Socratic dialectic, the object of Plato's struggles, and writing, which he viewed as «part of the problem as was any discourse that would not respond to questioning» (p. 55).

Socrates present in disparity[51]. In short, the hopes of writing attend the failure of Socratic encounter. Plato's presentation of oral dialectic in disillusioned form empowers the reader to maintain ironic distance from the dramatized encounter in order to scrutinize the argumentative dynamics.

Given that the *Ion* has received recent rhetorical attention[52] and that there is little space, here, to develop further detailed argumentation, I restrict my analysis of the dialogue's ironic presentation of hearing-based hermeneutics to one example.

The conversation in *Ion* is markedly agonistic in tone. In contrast to the view that this feature betrays Plato's «arrogant youth»[53] the dialogue as such dramatizes a failure of literary critical discussion. As shown by Walter Ong, verbal performances in an oral context often tend toward intellectual challenging, vituperation and name-calling[54]. The dynamic of agonistic discourse is, of course, featured by Aristophanes (cf. *Knights*), but it also finds its way into Plato via his critique of sophistry. Although we, as readers, may wish to side with an *eiron* Socrates to defeat an *alazôn* Ion[55], we witness too the deterioration of philosophical inquiry into verbal sparring. Ion's pretensions and flush of victory allow Socrates the opportunity to parody an 'agonistic philosopher' who favors aggressive attack over dispassionate logical analysis. Socrates, who is unsubtly described by

[51] See Berger (above, n. 10), who defines Plato's tension with Socrates in a comparison with Theocritus: «the works of both in some sense 'hear', are haunted by, the voices of their models or precursors. And yet both respond as *writers* who resist and reconceive those powerful originary presences, who bury and resurrect themp by re-presenting them in a different medium, the medium of difference, that is, of signs rather than bodies and voices... It is the process of *revisionary filiation*, that is, the establishment of identity by the creative misreading of one's sources» (p. 2). For the impossibility of ever «regulating the exchanges between these two possibilities» of «whether Plato is Socrates' mouthpiece or Socrates is Plato's mouthpiece», see J. Farness, *Missing Socrates: Socratic Rhetoric in a Platonic Text*, Ph&Rh 20.1, 1987, 41-59, at p. 54.

[52] Farness (above, n. 11).

[53] See above, n. 1.

[54] W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, New York 1982, 43-5.

[55] See, for this Cornford structure, Ranta (above, n. 41). *Ion* is frequently called one of Plato's 'comic' dialogues. As suggested by Flashar (above, n. 1), Ion's initial gesture of trying to make Socrates envious of him adheres to «des Bild des Rhapsoden» (p. 21).

Ion as one of the *sophoi* (532d), retaliates with the term 'servant' to describe the rhapsodes' dependence upon the gods. Later, Socrates compounds his insult by relegating Ion to a status inferior to a servant. In a blatantly hostile argument, he forces Ion to admit that sometimes even a slave woman possesses more interpretive authority than Ion himself does (540c). Similarly, Socrates' following example of an interpretive expert, the general, sets Ion up for the taunting reminders that Ephesus is currently under Athenian control (541c) and that the Ephesians are mere descendents of Athenians (541d). Socrates also competes with Ion over Homeric recitation (537a).

Socrates and Ion's petty verbal sparring does not, however, integrate the reader. In fact, we mercifully stand clear of it. More importantly, the realization of this independence clarifies how 'being up close' in this fashion limits and impairs critical discourse. Firstly, the fact that neither Ion or Socrates possesses a text of Homer's poems, unlike our own convenient possession of *Ion*, introduces the problem of whose memorized text is authentic: indeed, three of the four poetic passages misquote Homer. Furthermore, after the qestion of who will cite which version of which passage is finally settled, the auditory text which emerges from the recitation flits immediately away and thus thwarts detailed analysis.

Secondly, Socrates' rehearsal of agonism with Ion results in ineffective poetic exegesis. If Socrates were to allow Ion to engage in an interpretive display (and hence relax his hostile censorship of the rhapsode), the results of the analysis would probably not consist of much more than plot summary and recapitulation[56]. However, what Socrates has to offer in place of it proves little better. His three central arguments - Ion's devotion to Homer is illogical, Ion possesses only inspiration and no skill, and only technical experts can interpret Homeric subject matter - have impressed few subsequent critics and insulted a bevy of creative artists[57]. Indeed, it is my own view that the three principles articulate increasing levels of exegetical absurdity. The obvious inadequacy of the arguments thus invites further scrutiny

[56] See Verdenius (above, n. 16) 261-62.

[57] Cf. M. Delcourt, *Socrate, Ion et la poésie: la structure dialectique de l'Ion' de Platon*, BAGB (April, 1937) 4-14. Wilamowitz (above, n. 1) argues that Plato took seriously neither *enthousiasmos* nor *technê* as a viable context for interpretation (pp. 44-45). The charge that Ion is hostile to artists begins at least with Herodicus of Babylon (*Athen.* 506a).

of their purposes. In short, the agonistic philosopher employs them because they also present increasing levels of hostility against his self-satisfied opponent. The reader of *Ion* is presented with a contest in which Socratic aggression bests Ionic dilettantism.

Finally, Socrates 'yielding' to irritation further ironizes the oral hermeneutic model. Socrates' behavior mocks Ion's own doubled distinction as the faithful mouthpiece of Homer (i.e., the 'holy bee poet') and the self-serving controller of the audience's emotions. Seemingly on behalf of what he early on calls the «best and most godly of poets» (530b), Socrates attempts an emotional manipulation of Ion. Thus for each of the two dramatis personae, and, for that matter, for each of the structural relationships diagrammed above, the process of re-presenting another surfaces not from the 'complementation' of *enthousiasmos* with *technê*, but from their 'contamination' - exploitation's always already corruption of devotion[58].

In sum, Plato's *Ion* presents a model of oral hermeneutics. In the poetic context, divinity passes magnetically down from god to listener, a process thus ensuring 'authority'. At the same time, individuals on the magnetic chain also possess personal ambition and technological designs. This model is analogously applicable to Plato's relationship with Socrates, for the dialogues appear to present a Socrates who possesses both functions and reflect back a Plato who may be similarly characterized. The reader-text relationship, however, ironizes the model.The dialogue's textuality enforces a distinction between the fictionalized oral drama and our own writerly engagement with that drama. In consequence, the analogy of 'gods' as 'truth' also undergoes ironic revision, in that truths have become much less tangible than before, more open to revision, and more affected by the process and form of engagement. Plato's sharp, rhetorical ironies and floating Socratic sign free the reader, just as he freed himself of Ion's *and* Socrates' liabilities of orality, from the burden of codified and pre-digested knowledge. This first work of literary theory, in its own ironic

[58] Jacques Derrida's reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*, "*Plato's Pharmacy*," in *Dissemination*, tr. Barbara Johnson, Chicago 1981, 63-171, discusses more fully such problems of Platonic re-presentation; see, for example, his analysis of the hermêneus-Hermes figure, Thoth (pp. 88-89).

denial of itself as a reversible loop of magnetism, ushers in the age of textual *hermêneia*[59].

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