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Dramatic Allusions and the Grading of Speakers in Plato's *Symposium*

In *Symp.* 222 d Socrates compares the speech of Alcibiades to the satyr drama: "This satyric and indeed silenic drama of yours has become manifest." Although the immediate target of this remark is Alcibiades' comparison of Socrates with Silenus and the Satyrs, its metatextual status is obvious. I will argue that the analogy between Alcibiades' speech and the satyr drama helps us to see into Plato's view of the relationship between the speeches in the *Symposium* and perhaps also in other dialogues. Namely, if Alcibiades' speech relates to the rest of the dialogue in the same way as the satyr drama relates to the tragic trilogy, it would follow from this (a) that Alcibiades' speech should be taken as counterbalancing the other speeches and commenting on them in the same way as the satyr drama commented on the tragic trilogy, and (b) that the structure of the rest of the dialogue also lends itself to being analyzed in terms of tragic performance.

I will further argue that the structural model most suitable for such an analysis would be that of *cumulative repetition*. By "cumulative repetition" I mean a series of loosely connected units varying the same theme up to the closing unit, which is invariably treated as the culmination of the sequence. This model is best exemplified in the episodic plot as defined in Aristotle's *Poetics* and represented in several extant tragedies, notably *The Trojan Women* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. It can also be discerned in the arrangement of plays in the tragic trilogy as well as the arrangement of stanzas in the choral ode. It is possible to identify two main variants: (a) the units that precede the closing one are equal in their status and therefore mutually interchangeable (e.g. *Oedipus in Colonus* or a non-unified trilogy); (b) the units are arranged in the order of increasing significance and therefore are not mutually interchangeable (e.g. *The Trojan Women* or a unified trilogy). The interchangeability of the earlier speeches of the *Symposium*, made explicit in the Eryximachus and Aristophanes changing places with each other, suggests that this dialogue belongs to category (a), whereas Plato's metatextual remarks (see esp. 199a 6-7; 209e 5 - 210a 3) support the conclusion that the speech of Socrates, and especially the speech of Diotima with which it is concluded, were perceived by Plato as the culmination of the series.

Application of the same model to the *Phaedrus*, which also contains a series of competing speeches, shows that it may be helpful in interpreting this dialogue as well.