

A Note on Plato, *Symp.* 223b-d

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Maria Broggiato

Sapienza Università di Roma

maria.broggiato@uniroma1.it

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0181-7018>

Plato's *Symposium* closes with a brief description of the last stages of the discussion between the participants, before the meeting breaks up and Socrates leaves for the Lyceum to spend his day as usual (223b-d). Aristodemus, the narrator, says that after the entrance of a second, large group of revellers (the first was the one led by Alcibiades), the meeting falls into disarray and everyone drinks large quantities of wine. At this point, Aristodemus continues, some of the participants start to leave, while he himself falls asleep. When he wakes up much later, he finds that the others are either asleep or have left. Only Agathon, Aristophanes and Socrates remain, still drinking and talking to each other. When morning comes, Socrates, the only one still awake, gets up and leaves for the Lyceum:

τὸν μὲν οὖν Ἑρμύμαχον καὶ τὸν Φαῖδρον καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς ἔφη ὁ Ἀριστόδημος οἴχεσθαι ἀπιόντας, ἔ δὲ ὕπνον λαβεῖν, (c) καὶ καταδαρθεῖν πάνυ πολὺ, ἅτε μακρῶν τῶν νυκτῶν οὐσῶν, ἐξεγρέσθαι δὲ πρὸς ἡμέραν ἤδη ἀλεκτρυόνων ἁδόντων, ἐξεγρόμενος δὲ ἰδεῖν τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους καθεύδοντας καὶ οἰχομένους, Ἀγάθωνα δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοφάνη καὶ Σωκράτη ἔτι μόνους ἐγρηγορέναι καὶ πίνειν ἐκ φιάλης μεγάλης ἐπὶ δεξιᾷ. τὸν οὖν Σωκράτη αὐτοῖς διαλέγεσθαι· καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ὁ (d) Ἀριστόδημος οὐκ ἔφη μεμνήσθαι τῶν λόγων – οὔτε γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραγενέσθαι ὑπонуστάζειν τε – τὸ μέντοι κεφάλαιον, ἔφη, προσαναγκάζειν τὸν Σωκράτη ὁμολογεῖν αὐτοὺς τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνδρὸς εἶναι κωμωδίαν καὶ τραγωδίαν ἐπίστασθαι ποιεῖν, καὶ τὸν τέχνη τραγωδοποιὸν ὄντα <καὶ> κωμωδοποιὸν εἶναι. ταῦτα δὲ ἀναγκαζομένους αὐτοὺς καὶ οὐ σφόδρα ἐπομένους νυστάζειν, καὶ πρότερον μὲν καταδαρθεῖν τὸν Ἀριστοφάνη, ἥδη δὲ ἡμέρας γιγνομένης τὸν Ἀγάθωνα. τὸν οὖν Σωκράτη, κατακοιμίσαντ' ἐκείνους, ἀναστάντα ἀπιέναι, καὶ <ἐ> ὥσπερ εἰώθει ἐπεσθαι, καὶ ἐλθόντα εἰς Λύκειον, ἀπονιψάμενον, ὥσπερ ἄλλοτε τὴν ἄλλην ἡμέραν διατρίβειν, καὶ οὕτω διατρίψαντα εἰς ἐσπέραν οἴκοι ἀναπαύεσθαι. (Pl. *Symp.* 223b-d, ed. Burnet)

Almost a century ago, in his commentary on the *Symposium*, R.G. Bury remarked that there was no need to dwell on this final section¹. Later scholars

¹ «Of the Epilogue or concluding scene [...] it is unnecessary to say much»: Bury 1932², p. xxiv.

have not devoted much space to this scene either². In this note, I would like to draw attention to a parallel text related to a genuine sympotic context, an elegy found in the *corpus Theognideum* (ll. 467-496), which contains a series of recommendations on proper behaviour at a symposium. It comprises 30 lines and is one of the so-called ‘long’ elegies of the *Theognidea*³. At the beginning, the poet addresses one Simonides⁴:

μηδένα τῶνδ’ ἀέκοντα μένειν κατέρυκε παρ’ ἡμῖν,
 μηδὲ θύραζε κέλευ’ οὐκ ἐθέλοντ’ ἵεναι,
 μηδ’ εὖδοντ’ ἐπέγειρε, Σιμωνίδη, ὄντιν’ ἂν ἡμῶν
 θωρηχθέντ’ οἶνφ’ μαλθακὸς ὕπνος ἔλῃ,
 μηδὲ τὸν ἀγρυπνέοντα κέλευ’ ἀέκοντα καθεύδειν·
 πᾶν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον χρῆμ’ ἀνιρπὸν ἔφω. (Theogn. 467-472, ed. West⁵)

In our lines, the poet offers advice on how to behave towards guests: we should not force to stay at a symposium those who want to go, nor should we send away those who want to stay. One should not wake a sleeping reveller and, conversely, one should not force someone to sleep who wants to stay awake. There follows the precept that all compulsion is annoying (πᾶν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον χρῆμ’ ἀνιρπὸν ἔφω, l. 472). As we can see, our final scene from the *Symposium* is clearly in line with the instructions we find in this passage⁵. In Plato, Eryximachus and Phaedrus, along with some of the other guests, leave, while Aristodemus falls asleep. When he wakes, he finds that everyone else has left or

² The only exception is the detail of the discussion between Socrates, Agathon and Aristophanes, in which Socrates leads them to admit that a poet is capable of writing both tragedy and comedy. As K. Dover notes, this argument is not found elsewhere in Plato, and is at odds with what Socrates says in the *Ion*, 531e - 534e (Dover 1980, p. 177); see also Rowe 1998, p. 214, with bibliography. An in-depth analysis of the wider philosophical meaning of this discussion among Socrates and the two poets, a tragediographer and a comedian, has been proposed by L.M. Segoloni (1994, pp. 197-227).

³ West considers line 467 as the opening verse, and makes the elegy conclude at l. 496. On the unity of our poem, see now the observations of F. Condello (2009); contrary to the opinion of most editors of the *Theognidea*, he thinks that the elegy consists of a number of different sympotic compositions, each of which picks up on the previous one, forming a so-called ‘sympotic chain’.

⁴ This is one of three compositions in the *corpus* addressed to ‘Simonides’ (the others are Theogn. 667-682 and 1345-1350). His identification has been much debated. Recently, C. Catenacci has convincingly defended the old suggestion that he must be the famous poet from Ceos. The author of our elegy does not have to be a contemporary of Simonides, nor is it necessary to assume that Simonides was present at the symposium – it could be a fictional allocation to a famous name of the past, made in a sympotic context: see Catenacci 2017, pp. 29-32, with a discussion of earlier bibliography.

⁵ The parallel between the final scene of the *Symposium* and our lines from the *corpus Theognideum* has not been missed by scholars of Plato: see already Hug 1884², p. xiii.

fallen asleep. Only Socrates, Agathon and Aristophanes are still talking. Eventually, the latter two also fall asleep, and Socrates gets up and leaves. This follows closely the precepts set out by Theognis: at a symposium, everyone should be free to stay or leave (μηδένα τῶνδ' ἀέκοντα μένειν κατέρυκε παρ' ἡμῖν, / μηδὲ θύραζε κέλευ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντ' ἵεναι, ll. 467 f.), and guests should be allowed to sleep at will (μηδ' εὔδοντ' ἐπέγειρε, l. 469).

But how close are the connections between the two texts? Admittedly, our elegiac passage has a traditional content. In the *Odyssey*, for example, we find the same rules for foreign guests that would later be applied to guests at a symposium: in the fifteenth book, Menelaus at Sparta tells Telemachus that both those who rush a guest who does not want to leave and those who hold him back are behaving badly⁶.

I would argue that the association between the *Symposium* and our elegiac couplets may be more significant than it meets the eye, and that the similarities between our two texts are intentional. First of all, towards the end of the fifth century our elegy must have been popular with an Athenian audience in connection with the symposium. The comedian Pherecrates, in a long fragment of his play *Chiron*, attacks the hosts who mistreat their guests in the hope that they will leave; in this parodic context Pherecrates quotes lines 467 and 469 of our elegy: μηδένα μήτ' ἀέκοντα μένειν κατέρυκε παρ' ἡμῖν / μήθ' εὔδοντ' ἐπέγειρε, Σιμωνίδη (Pherecr. fr. 162, lines 11-12 K.-A. = Athen. 8. 364a-c)⁷.

Moreover, we know from Plato's and Xenophon's testimony that Socrates and his followers knew and appreciated the sympotic elegies of Theognis: in the *Meno* he quotes and discusses two passages from the *Theognidea*; two of these lines are mentioned by Socrates in Xenophon's *Symposium* as well. In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian quotes lines 77-78 of the *corpus*⁸. Also, as G. Colesanti suggests, the lost works *On Theognis* by Xenophon and Antisthenes probably originated from the interest in the poet within the Socratic circle⁹.

But we can go even further. As is well known, the *corpus* ascribed to Theognis in medieval manuscripts includes elegies from different periods and

⁶ *Od.* 15. 72-74: ἴσόν τοι κακόν ἐσθ', ὅς τ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντα νέεσθαι / ξείνων ἐποτρύνει καὶ ὃς ἐσσύμενον κατερύκει. / χρὴ ξείνων παρεόντα φιλεῖν, ἐθέλοντα δὲ πέμπειν; see Bielohlawek 1940 = 1983, pp. 103 f.

⁷ There follows a reference to the symposium (lines 12 f.): οὐ γὰρ ἐπ' οἴνοις / τοιαυτὶ λέγομεν δειπνίζοντες φίλον ἄνδρα; see the discussion on this fragment in Colesanti 2011, p. 315 and note 235, with earlier bibliography.

⁸ See Pl. *Men.* 95c-e (Theogn. 33-36 and 434-438); Xen. *Symp.* 2. 4 (Theogn. 35-36); Pl. *Leg.* 1. 630a (Theogn. 77-78).

⁹ Xenophon: Stob. 4. 53; Antisthenes: Diog. Laert. 6. 16. On the *Theognidea* and the circle of Socrates, see the comprehensive discussion by G. Colesanti (2011, pp. 313-321).

by different authors, which have coalesced around a core associated with the name of Theognis, who was active in Megara around the middle of the 6th century BC. A number of poems in the Theognidean *corpus* are quoted from other sources and can be attributed with certainty to poets such as Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus and Solon.

This is also the case of our elegy (ll. 467-496): Aristotle and later Plutarch quote a line from it as the work of an 'Evenus'¹⁰. This author is usually identified with Evenus of Paros, a poet and sophist who lived in Athens around 400 BC; our elegy is included in West's edition of his scanty fragments¹¹. Moreover, two further elegies in the *corpus*, both addressed to one Simonides, have been assigned to Evenus by modern editors (Even. fr. *8b and *8c West²). The arguments in favour of attributing our lines to him have recently been reviewed and substantiated in the already mentioned article by C. Catenacci¹². Admittedly, this is by no means a universally accepted view: G. Colesanti, in his authoritative monograph on the *Theognidea*, argues that the citation of a single line is not sufficient to attribute our entire poem to Evenus¹³.

Ascribing lines 467-496 of the *Theognidea* to Evenus would open up important new perspectives, since he was a familiar figure in the Socratic circle and appears in a number of Platonic dialogues¹⁴. In the *Apology* (20a-c), Evenus is mentioned as the teacher of the sons of the wealthy Athenian Callias, while in the *Phaedo* (60c - 61b), on the day of Socrates' death, we learn that Evenus had urged Cebes to ask Socrates why he had decided to devote himself to poetry after being imprisoned¹⁵. Finally, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates praises Evenus as the

¹⁰ Theogn. 472, πᾶν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον χρῆμ' ἀνιρὸν ἔφν, quoted in Aristot. *Metaph.* 1015a; *Eth. Eud.* 1223a; Plut. *Non posse suav. viv.* 1102c (with the variant reading ὀδυνήρῳν). See also Aristot. *Rhet.* 1370a, who cites the line without the name of Evenus. Aristotle in all three cases quotes the line with the variant πρᾶγμ'(α).

¹¹ See Even. fr. *8a West². E. Bowie (2012), in an important contribution on this author, suggests that Evenus himself may have had a hand in compiling a collection of elegiac poems that was the ancestor of our *Theognidea*, including a number of poems of his own in both books. On the life and works of Evenus see now the extensive discussions by A. Capra (2016) and C. Catenacci (2017).

¹² See the discussion in Catenacci 2017, esp. pp. 21-25.

¹³ See the discussion in Colesanti 2011, pp. 102-107, with a comprehensive review of the previous bibliography on p. 103 n. 143. An important voice in the debate is that of M. Vetta, who, in his edition of the second book of the *Theognidea*, was sceptical but left the question open (1980, pp. 121-123). In a later contribution, he tended to rule out the presence of Evenus in the *Theognidea* (Vetta 2000, p. 129).

¹⁴ Pl. *Apol.* 20a-c; *Phaed.* 60d-61c; *Phdr.* 267a.

¹⁵ Socrates replies that he had been prompted to do so by a dream. On Socrates' poetic and musical activity, see the detailed discussion by L.M. Segoloni (2003).

inventor (πρῶτος ἤρην) of new rhetorical figures – veiled allusion, indirect praise and indirect blame (ὑποδήλωσις, παρέπαινος, παράγωγος, *Phdr.* 267a)¹⁶.

In addition to these passages where Evenus is explicitly mentioned, other points of contact between Plato's dialogues and the writings of Evenus have been identified. First of all, the *Symposium*. Of course, Plato does not mention Evenus in our dialogue, but, as L.M. Segoloni noted (1994, pp. 106 f.), he does use in the speeches the very techniques introduced by him, particularly indirect praise and indirect blame: the encomium of Eros is an indirect praise of Socrates, while Alcibiades' speech in praise of Socrates is an indirect blame of the disciple himself.

Scholars have recognised further similarities between Plato's works and the elegies attributed to Evenus. A famous passage in the sixth book of the *Republic*, with the image of the 'ship of state', has been compared to one of the long elegies in the first book of the *Theognidea* attributed to Evenus, with its extended description of a ship drifting in the sea at night, while the sailors pillage the cargo (Even. fr. *8b W.² = Theogn. 667-682)¹⁷. Another passage of the *corpus* that has been assigned tentatively to Evenus, the beginning of the second book with the motif of erotic madness and the apostrophe ὦ παῖ (Theogn. 1231-1236), can be easily compared to some sections of the speeches of Socrates in the *Phaedrus*¹⁸.

What, then, are my conclusions? I believe that the similarities between the end of Plato's *Symposium* and the elegy preserved in the *Theognidea* are not accidental. In the frame of his dialogue, Plato describes a contemporary Athenian philosophical symposium and takes care to mention all the *realia* that usually accompanied such gatherings: the arrival of invited and uninvited guests, the introductory ceremonies with the singing of a hymn and the offerings to the gods, the departure of the flute-player, the discussion about how much the participants should drink, the delivery of the speeches ἐπιδέξια, anti-clockwise, with each speaker picking up on the previous speech in the manner typical of sympotic songs, and finally the arrival of a *komos* led by Alcibiades¹⁹.

¹⁶ Later in the same passage (*Phaed.* 61b-c) Socrates leaves his friends a message for Evenus to follow his example and follow him in death – Simmias replies that, from what he had seen of him, he was unlikely to heed this advice.

¹⁷ Pl. *Resp.* 6. 488a - 489a. See Hunter 2012, pp. 68-73 and now Capra 2018, pp. 27 f.

¹⁸ On the attribution of some of the elegies in book 2 of the *Theognidea* see Bowie 2012. On the similarities between the beginning of book 2 of Theognis and the *Phaedrus* see Vetta 1980, p. 43, who mentions *Phdr.* 237b, 241c, 243e; A. Capra recently built on and reinforced Vetta's proposal (Capra 2018, pp. 28-31).

¹⁹ Pl. *Symp.* 174a-177e and 212c-214e. On *realia* and poetry in Greek symposia see, for example, Ercolani 2021, with earlier bibliography; on Attic symposia and the *Symposium* see Hunter 2004, pp. 3-15.

Accordingly, in the concluding scene of his *Symposium*, Plato follows the traditional prescriptions found in our sympotic poem. In his description of the symposium in the house of Agathon, Plato gives concrete form to the recommendations listed in our elegy, in a subtle play between a literary philosophical symposium and a metasymphotic poem. In this context, we can better understand the final scene of the dialogue, in which Plato intentionally follows the instructions of a poetic text for the conclusion of the most literary of his philosophical works. Of course, the question of the broader significance of our passage within the context of Plato's doctrine on poetry must remain open.

Moreover, as we have seen, there are indications that the elegy Plato appears to be alluding to could be the work of the sophist and poet Evenus of Paros. If this is indeed the case, the final scene of the *Symposium* can be added to the list of Platonic passages containing open references or allusions to the poems of this contemporary of Socrates²⁰.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Maria Broggiato: conceptualización, investigación, redacción-borrador original, redacción-revisión y edición

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