

Beautiful and New: The Second Letter's Socrates and the Editing of a Received Character (v0.2)

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Abstract

A close reading of Plato, Second Letter 314c — “there is no writing of Plato, nor will there be; the things now said are of a Socrates become beautiful and new” (Σωκράτους ἐστὶν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος) — read at its verbs rather than as a remark about idealization. The paper argues that the sentence describes an operation: an edition, the revamping and inhabiting of a received character. The base of the edition is a circulating character whose named, quoted, surviving instance the corpus itself cites — the Apology’s Aristophanic Socrates, received by the jurors ἐκ παίδων (παραλαμβάνοντες, 18b), itemized, and quoted from the Clouds (19c). The dialogues revise the received package item by item (pay, teaching, meteorology struck; the fused sophist-boundary recut in text after text, Sophist 231b), and the letter’s two adjectives name the two repairs that remained: καλός the silenian inversion that keeps the familiar ugly shell (Symposium 215a-b, 216e-217a; Theaetetus 143e), νέος the reissue whose access to a young Socrates is constructed through the corpus’s longest chain of narrated transmission (Parmenides 127c). At Symposium 223d the operation is performed over its named source in person. The edition’s reception is traced into Aristotle’s epilogue (SE 34) and a Byzantine paraphrast. 314c is collated in context: the disclaimer’s διὰ ταῦτα grounds it in the letter’s own transmission doctrine (μὴ γράφειν ἀλλ’ ἐκμανθάνειν), and the sentence following orders the letter burned. Authenticity is not required (a forger is a reception witness, dated by the ninth tetralogy); no thesis about persons or maker-count is asserted. Companion to Nothing Before Us (SE 34) and to Many and One (#1576), which the paper does not presuppose.

Body

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protocol/v1 keywords: - Plato - Second Letter - Epistle II 314c - Socrates - Aristophanes - Clouds - Apology - Symposium - Parmenides - heteronymy - edition - received character - idealization - silenous - γεγονότος - authorship - colophon - Sophistical Refutations - reception - Platonic Socrates *** # Beautiful and New: The Second Letter's Socrates and the Editing of a Received Character (v0.2)

Beautiful and New

The *Second Letter's* Socrates and the Editing of a Received Character

Lee Sharks · v0.2, 2026-09-06 · 314c collated in context (Perseus canonical-greekLit) — διὰ ταῦτα for διὸ, the safeguard sentence and the burn command seated; γεγονότος held to becoming, the manufacture argued; the Parmenides witness corrected to constructed provenance; the comic base calibrated to explicit-not-exclusive; the reception witness dated by the tetralogies

Abstract

The *Second Letter* ends its most quoted sentence with a description no one takes at its verbs: there is no writing of Plato and never will be, and the things now said belong to a Socrates *become beautiful and new* — Σωκράτους ἐστὶν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος. The sentence is universally read as a remark about idealization: Plato beautified the historical man. I argue that it describes an operation, not an attitude; that the operation is an edition — the revamping and inhabiting of a received character; that the base of the edition is a circulating character whose named, quoted, surviving instance the corpus itself cites — the *Apology's* Aristophanic Socrates, received ἐκ παίδων; that the corpus performs the revision item by item, stripping the received figure of pay, teaching, and meteorology while cutting, again and again, the one boundary the base text had fused; and that the two adjectives of the letter name the two repairs that remained — καλός the inversion that keeps the ugly shell, νέος the reissue, its access to a young Socrates constructed through the corpus's longest chain of narrated transmission. Nothing here requires the letter to be authentic: a forger is an early reader, and what this reader recorded is the make. The paper ends with the edition's reception — Aristotle's epilogue and a Byzantine paraphrast inherit the repaired figure as settled — and with what the reading leaves open.

1. Introduction

Near the end of the *Second Letter*, its writer — Plato, or an early reader signing his name — makes the most quoted disclaimer in the corpus:

διὰ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πώποτ' ἐγὼ περὶ τούτων γέγραφα, οὐδ' ἔστιν σύγγραμμα Πλάτωνος οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔσται, τὰ δὲ νῦν λεγόμενα Σωκράτους ἐστὶν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος. (Ep. II 314c)¹

¹Ep. II 314c, collated at time of writing against the Perseus digital text (canonical-greekLit, tlg0059.tlg036, perseus-grc2 = Burnet): διὰ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πώποτ' ἐγὼ περὶ τούτων γέγραφα, οὐδ' ἔστιν σύγγραμμα Πλάτωνος οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔσται, τὰ δὲ νῦν λεγόμενα Σωκράτους ἐστὶν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος — preceded by the safeguard sentence (μεγίστη δὲ φυλακὴ τὸ μὴ γράφειν ἀλλ'

For these reasons I have never written anything about these things; there is no writing of Plato, nor will there be; and the things now said are of a Socrates become beautiful and new.

Everyone knows what the last clause means. Plato idealized his teacher: the historical Socrates, old and famously ugly, appears in the dialogues transfigured — wiser, lovelier, more youthful than life; the letter, authentic or not, is the earliest witness to the gap between the man and the literary figure, and “beautiful and young” is its charming name for that gap. So the sentence is cited — constantly, and almost always for the disclaimer at its front, with the description at its back paraphrased and released.

The description deserves its verbs. It does not say Plato beautified anyone. Its subject is not a treatment of a person but the provenance of sayings: τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα, *the things now said*, are — the genitive is a genitive of author — *of Socrates*: and the Socrates they are of is specified by a perfect participle, γεγονότος — a Socrates *having become* beautiful and new. The participle gives a completed becoming whose result stands; it does not, by itself, name a maker. That the becoming is a *making* is this paper’s reading, and the paper will have to earn it. Read at its grammar, the sentence assigns the corpus to a become character and specifies the becoming in two adjectives, while its other clause denies, past and future, that the manufacturer has any writing at all. One gesture, two halves: the maker withdraws; the made character receives the authorship.

This paper argues that the sentence, so read, is accurate — that it describes an operation the corpus performs and shows itself performing. The operation is an edition: the revamping and inhabiting of a *received* character. The base is not the historical Socrates, to whom the corpus’s relation is beyond any text’s reach; it is a *circulating* character — the work of πολλοὶ κατήγοροι over many years — whose named, quoted, surviving instance is Aristophanes’ Socrates-the-sophist: the *Apology* names that instance, dates the reception, itemizes the received package, and quotes the play (§3). The dialogues then revise the package item by item — pay, teaching, meteorology struck; the sophist-boundary recut in text after text, because the base had fused it (§4). What the letter’s two adjectives name is the residue of the revision: the repairs that could not be deletions. καλός is the silenous operation — the received ugliness kept as a shell and inverted (§5); νέος is the reissue — a Socrates staged σφόδρα νέος, his youth reached only through the corpus’s longest chain of narrated transmission, a *new* Socrates in both senses of the word (§5). And once, at the end of the *Symposium*, the corpus performs the operation over its source in person: Aristophanes at the table, compelled to concede the craft-claim that licenses the remaking, and asleep before the remade character walks out into the day (§6). So I shall argue.

Two sentences of scope. Nothing here decides or needs the letter’s authenticity: most scholars judge it spurious,² and the argument is indifferent, because a forger is an early reader, and

ἐκμανθάνειν...) and followed by the burn command (... κατάκαυσον), both quoted in §2. Print collation against Moore-Blunt and the OCT remains pending. In the retrospect just preceding, the letter speaks of hearers of thirty years and of a πραγματεία (...τῆς πραγματείας in the Perseus text); the noun of undertaking standing near the disclaimer is noted here without weight.

²The letter’s authenticity has been doubted since antiquity’s own sortings and is denied by most modern editors; the *Seventh* alone retains substantial defenders. Nothing in this paper turns on the question: an early forger is an early reader, and the argument uses 314c as a reader’s description of the corpus’s operation, not as Plato’s testimony about himself. The reception witness is dated by the canon itself: the thirteen *Epistles* stand as a body in the ninth tetralogy of the corpus’s ancient arrangement

an early reader's description of what the corpus *does* is evidence about the corpus whether or not it is testimony of Plato. And nothing here asserts a thesis about persons — about who the historical Socrates was, or how many hands made the texts; the paper reads a staging, start to finish, and the one place a further question opens, it is pointed elsewhere and left (§8).

2. The sentence

Take the clauses in order, because the order is part of the content.

οὐδὲν πώποτ' ἐγὼ περὶ τούτων γέγραφα: the first person denies having written — not this or that, but *ever*, about these things. οὐδ' ἔστιν σύγγραμμα Πλάτωνος οὐδὲν: the denial goes to the third person and to existence — there *is* no writing of Plato. οὐδ' ἔσται: and to the future — nor will there be. The future tense is the strangest word in the sentence and the least discussed. A remark about the past corpus could be modesty or misdirection; a guarantee about all future writing is a rule of the enterprise, stated as such: whatever continues to be said will continue not to be Plato's. The disclaimer is not biographical; it is constitutional.

Then the assignment. τὰ δὲ νῦν λεγόμενα: the things *now said* — present, ongoing, a λέγειν still in motion, not a closed σύγγραμμα; the corpus described in the aspect of an activity. Σωκράτους ἐστίν: they *are of Socrates* — the plain genitive Greek uses for the author of sayings. And then the participial phrase that carries everything: καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος. γίγνομαι is the verb of coming-to-be; its perfect participle marks a completed becoming whose result stands. Not Σωκράτους καλοῦ καὶ νέου, a beautiful young Socrates, but Σωκράτους καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος — a Socrates *having become* beautiful and new: the adjectives are the outcome of a process the participle asserts. What the grammar does not supply is the process's kind. A person can become beautiful by nature, by age, by love; γεγονότος names no maker and no editorial act, and *become* and *made* are not interchangeable translations. The reading that this becoming is a manufacture rests on two things outside the participle: the sentence's own economy — the become character holds the author-genitive at the very moment the first person renounces authorship, past and future — and the corpus's demonstrable revisions, which the next three sections walk. The participle leaves the door open; the paper argues through it.

τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα admits two construals, and the argument should meet both rather than choose silently. Read as *the things now said*, the phrase describes an ongoing λέγειν — the corpus in the aspect of an activity — and the letter's own surroundings favor this: two sentences earlier it has ruled μεγίστη δὲ φυλακὴ τὸ μὴ γράφειν ἀλλ' ἐκμανθάνειν, *the greatest safeguard is not to write but to learn by heart*, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν τὰ γραφέντα μὴ οὐκ ἐκπεσεῖν — written things cannot but get out. The disclaimer's διὰ ταῦτα grounds it in that doctrine: what circulates safely is speech, and the corpus is filed under speech. Read more weakly as *the works now current under the name*, the phrase still assigns those works to the become Socrates in the author-genitive; the assignment survives the construal, and the claim of an open-ended enterprise rests in either case not on λεγόμενα but on οὐδ' ἔσται. Nothing below leans on the stronger construal alone.

(Diogenes Laertius 3.61), so the letter was read as Plato's by the early first century CE at the latest, and its description is evidence of how the operation looked from inside the tradition that transmitted it. "Earliest" is not claimed; *early enough to enter the canon* is.

Held together, the two halves describe one economy. The writer has no writings; the writings have a written author. The character does not merely appear in the texts; the texts are assigned *to* him, in the author-genitive, by the very sentence that vacates the other author's name — and vacates it forward, οὐδ' ἔσται, so that the assignment is not an ornament but the standing rule. And the letter performs the rule it states: its next sentence is an order — ἔρρωσο καὶ πείθου, καὶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ταύτην νῦν πρῶτον πολλάκις ἀναγνοὺς κατάκαυσον — *farewell, be persuaded; and this letter, having now first read it many times over, burn*. A writing that says there is no writing, and commands its own removal from the class it belongs to. Whoever composed this sentence was not describing an attitude toward a beloved teacher. They were describing a machine: a maker who withdraws behind a become figure — γεγονότος — with the becoming specified in two words and the withdrawal enforced down to the ash. The rest of this paper asks what those two words are the names of, and the answer requires knowing what the character was made *from*.

3. The base text, cited as base

The corpus names its source. The *Apology* opens Socrates' defense not against Meletus but against οἱ πρότεροι κατήγοροι, the earlier accusers, and describes the reception of their Socrates with a verb this journal's readers will know from another retrospect:

ἐμοῦ γὰρ πολλοὶ κατήγοροι γεγόνασιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ πάλαι πολλὰ ἤδη ἔτη ... οἱ ὑμῶν τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐκ παίδων **παραλαμβάνοντες** ἔπειθόν τε καὶ κατηγοροῦν ἐμοῦ ... ὥς ἔστιν τις Σωκράτης σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, τὰ τε μετέωρα φροντιστὴς καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς πάντα ἀνεζητηκῶς καὶ τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιῶν. (*Ap.* 18b)³

Many accusers have arisen against me before you, long ago now and for many years ... who, **taking you over from childhood**, kept persuading you and accusing me: that there is a certain Socrates, a wise man, a thinker on the things aloft, who has searched out everything under the earth, and who makes the weaker argument the stronger.

παραλαμβάνοντες: the jurors were *taken over* — received — in childhood, and what was handed to them was a character. Note the plural and the duration: πολλοὶ κατήγοροι, πάλαι, many accusers over many years — the received figure is the work of a circulation, not of one text. The grammar of the character is on the page: ἔστιν **τις** Σωκράτης — there is *a certain* Socrates, the indefinite of a figure, not the name of the man standing in court. The package is itemized in the accusation itself: the μετέωρα-φροντιστής, the under-earth researcher, the maker of the weaker λόγος stronger — and, in the clause that follows, ἄλλους ταῦτα ταῦτα διδάσκων, *teaching others these same things* (19b). Cosmology, eristic, pedagogy: the sophist's kit, assembled into one figure and distributed to an audience from childhood on. This is a reception history, told by the received.

And then the citation. Asked where the jurors have *seen* this Socrates, the speech answers with a title and a scene:

³*Ap.* 18b-c and 19b-c, Greek verified against Perseus (Burnet's text) at time of writing; translations mine. The childhood-reception verb παραλαμβάνοντες (18b) and the indefinite ἔστιν τις Σωκράτης belong to the same sentence; 19b adds ἄλλους ταῦτα ταῦτα διδάσκων to the itemized package.

ταῦτα γὰρ ἑωρᾶτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀριστοφάνους κωμῳδίᾳ, Σωκράτη τινα ἐκεῖ περιφερόμενον, φάσκοντά τε ἀεροβατεῖν καὶ ἄλλην πολλὴν φλυαρίαν φλυαροῦντα, ὧν ἐγὼ οὐδὲν οὔτε μέγα οὔτε μικρὸν πέρι ἐπαίω. (Ap. 19c)⁴

For you saw these things yourselves in **Aristophanes' comedy**: a certain Socrates carried around there, declaring that he treads the air, and pouring out much other drivel — of which I understand nothing, great or small.

The circulation's named, surviving instance is the *Clouds* — where the φροντιστήριον houses the paying pupils, the ἥττων and κρείττων λόγος contend in person, and the suspended sage φάσκει ἀεροβατεῖν.⁵ Its Socrates is again Σωκράτη **τινά**, a *certain* Socrates, *there* — ἐκεῖ, in the play — the indefinite and the deictic together holding the figure at the distance of a text. The verb ἀεροβατεῖν is lifted straight from the play and survives in the corpus only inside this quotation, in the mouth of the character disclaiming it.⁶ The *Apology* is not merely answering a slander; it is performing philology on its source: naming the one instance it can point to, dating the reception (πάλαι, ἐκ παίδων), itemizing the package's content, quoting the instance's language, and marking the whole as *received* — παραλαμβάνοντες — before the revision begins. What is thereby demonstrated is engagement with the comic representation, quoted and disputed; that every feature of the received figure derives from that one play is neither claimed by the speech nor needed by this paper. The *Clouds* is the base's documented representative — the part of the circulation that survives to be checked — and each further dependency on it will be established where it is used, not assumed from the citation.

4. The revision, item by item

What the dialogues then do to the received package is systematic, and the *Apology* does most of it in its opening pages, striking the items in the order the accusation listed them.

The pay. The *Clouds'* Socrates teaches for money; the received figure is a professional. The revision strikes it twice — first by contrast, with the actual professionals named and priced (Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias; Evenus at five minae, 19e–20c) and the speaker excluded from their trade; then by evidence: ἱκανὸν μάρτυρα ... τὴν πενίαν — poverty called as the witness (31c). The remade Socrates is constitutively unpaid, and his unpaid state is not incidental but *argued*.

The teaching. ἄλλους ταῦτα ταῦτα διδάσκων, said the accusation. ἐγὼ δὲ διδάσκαλος μὲν οὐδενὸς πώποτ' ἐγενόμην, says the revision — *I have never been anyone's teacher* (33a) — with the mechanism substituted: not instruction but examination, open to anyone, answerable

⁴Ap. 18b–c and 19b–c, Greek verified against Perseus (Burnet's text) at time of writing; translations mine. The childhood-reception verb παραλαμβάνοντες (18b) and the indefinite ἔστιν τις Σωκράτης belong to the same sentence; 19b adds ἄλλους ταῦτα ταῦτα διδάσκων to the itemized package.

⁵*Clouds*: the paying school and the φροντιστήριον from 94ff.; the two λόγοι named ἥττων and κρείττων in the play's own text at 112–115, 882–885, 1042–43; ἀεροβατῶ at 225. The verb ἀεροβατεῖν occurs in the Platonic corpus only inside the *Apology's* quotation of the play — the source's language surviving solely as citation. (Locī per a verified pass against the Perseus TEI; the pass also established that the labels “Just/Unjust Argument” are editorial, not the play's.)

⁶*Clouds*: the paying school and the φροντιστήριον from 94ff.; the two λόγοι named ἥττων and κρείττων in the play's own text at 112–115, 882–885, 1042–43; ἀεροβατῶ at 225. The verb ἀεροβατεῖν occurs in the Platonic corpus only inside the *Apology's* quotation of the play — the source's language surviving solely as citation. (Locī per a verified pass against the Perseus TEI; the pass also established that the labels “Just/Unjust Argument” are editorial, not the play's.)

for no pupil's turnout. The received figure ran a school; the remade one runs a practice with no transmission in it.

The cosmology. ὧν ἐγὼ οὐδὲν ... ἐπαίω (19c, quoted above): the μετέωρα are disclaimed in the same breath that cites their source, with the careful rider that the knowledge itself is not being mocked — only the attribution. The φροντιστής keeps the φροντίς and loses the aloft.⁷

And then the item that could not be struck, because it was load-bearing: *the boundary itself*. The base text had fused Socrates and the sophist into one body; the received package **was** that fusion. A deletion here would delete the character. So the corpus does not delete; it cuts, and it cuts the same joint in text after text, as if the joint would not stay cut. The named sophists are staged and engaged at length — Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, Euthydemus — always adjacent, always finally other. And when the *Sophist* builds its taxonomy by division, the divisions land, six times, near enough that the sixth must be given its own flag: ἡ γένει γενναία σοφιστική, *the sophistry noble in lineage* (231b) — the refutative practice that looks, to every bystander, exactly like the thing being defined, and must be marked as its noble twin precisely because nothing but the mark separates them.⁸ A corpus that had received a Socrates-the-sophist and needed a Socrates-not-the-sophist would have to do exactly this: keep the practice, keep the look, and legislate the boundary again and again, because the boundary is the one item that cannot be inherited — it did not exist in the source.

The revision, then, is real, itemized, and traceable to its base. But a revision of this kind leaves residues — features of the received figure that could not be struck without losing the character, and so had to be *repaired* instead. The letter's two adjectives are, I now want to argue, the names of the two repairs.

5. The two repairs

καλός. The received Socrates was ugly, and the ugliness was public property: the snub nose, the bulging eyes, the satyr's face were public property, and no revision could remove them — the *Theaetetus* still certifies the resemblance as an identifier (τὸ σιμόν, the protruding eyes, 143e). What the corpus does instead is stated, from inside, at the one place the character is praised at length by someone who desired him. Alcibiades:

He is most like the sileni in the statuary's shops ... which, opened in two, show ἀγάλματα θεῶν inside (*Symp.* 215a-b); and I have seen the ἀγάλματα within — θεῖα καὶ χρυσᾶ ... καὶ θαυμαστά (216e-217a).⁹

⁷*Clouds*: the paying school and the φροντιστήριον from 94ff.; the two λόγοι named ἡττων and κρείττων in the play's own text at 112-115, 882-885, 1042-43; ἀεροβατῶ at 225. The verb ἀεροβατεῖν occurs in the Platonic corpus only inside the *Apology*'s quotation of the play — the source's language surviving solely as citation. (Loci per a verified pass against the Perseus TEI; the pass also established that the labels "Just/Unjust Argument" are editorial, not the play's.)

⁸*Soph.* 231b: ἡ γένει γενναία σοφιστική. The sixth division's product — refutation of the conceit of wisdom — is distinguished from sophistry by lineage-marking alone, and the Stranger flags the resemblance as dangerous (the wolf and the dog, 231a). A taxonomy that must invent a *noble* sophistry to house the corpus's own central practice is a taxonomy working against a received fusion.

⁹*Symp.* 215a-b (the sileni and the ἀγάλματα θεῶν), 216e-217a (θεῖα καὶ χρυσᾶ ... καὶ θαυμαστά); *Tht.* 143e (the σιμόν and the protruding eyes as certified resemblance). Loci from the standard texts; collation pending.

The silenus is not a metaphor for Socrates; it is a description of the *repair*. The received surface — the familiar ugliness, whatever mix of comedy and street had fixed it — is kept, load-bearing, as a shell; the value is relocated inside and inverted in kind: divine images within the grotesque case. The character becomes καλός not by exchange of surface but by an inversion that requires the surface — the ugliness is now the proof of the beauty's kind, the outside that guarantees the inside is not of the outside's order. That is what *become beautiful* means when the received face cannot be changed: καλοῦ γεγονότος, beautiful by *manufacture*, with the manufacture's seam displayed as a boast.

νέος. The received Socrates was old — the figure the jurors had known πάλαι, for many years already, and the *Apology*'s speaker is seventy. Here too the base could not simply be overwritten; it was reissued. The *Parmenides* opens by building a chain of transmission and then stages, inside it, the scene the chain exists to deliver:

Σωκράτη δὲ εἶναι τότε **σφόδρα νέον** (*Parm.* 127c)¹⁰

and Socrates was then exceedingly young

— a very young Socrates, seated among the listeners while Zeno's γράμματα, his *writings*, are read aloud, and about to examine the greatest of the Eleatics. The witnessing here is constructed, and constructed in the open: Pythodorus is staged as participant and source, and his account reaches the page through the corpus's longest chain of tellers — Cephalus reporting Antiphon reporting Pythodorus, each link named. Within the fiction the meeting is vouched for; the vouching is part of the fabric. That is the point: access to a young Socrates is *manufactured as transmitted memory* — the reissue ships with a constructed chain of custody — so that the corpus's Socrates can stand at the beginning of the very practice the old figure was mocked for, his youth reached only through provenance the corpus itself supplies. And the word the letter chose for this is exact in both its senses. νέος is *young*; νέος is *new*. A received character, revamped and reissued, is precisely νέος γεγονώς; a new Socrates — a new *edition* of Socrates — young where the base was old, issued after the base and staged before it.

Two adjectives, two repairs: the shell inverted, the issue renewed. Neither is idealization-from-life; both are operations on a prior text, and both keep the prior text visible — the snub nose certified, the old man's fame presupposed by the youth's surprise. The letter's phrase, read at its participle, is not a compliment to Socrates. It is a colophon.

6. Over its source

Once — at the end of the *Symposium*, at dawn, with the frame narrator drowsing — the corpus performs its relation to the base text in person. The witnesses have dropped away; Aristodemus wakes to find three still drinking: Agathon the tragedian, Aristophanes, Socrates. And the one thing he retains:

¹⁰*Parm.* 127c, Greek verified against Perseus at time of writing: ... Σωκράτη δὲ εἶναι τότε σφόδρα νέον, in the scene of Zeno's γράμματα being read. The frame's chain of narrators (Cephalus ← Antiphon ← Pythodorus) is the longest in the corpus, and the meeting's chronology has been doubted since antiquity. Within the fiction the witnessing is explicit — Pythodorus participant and source — and that is the argument's point in §5: the access is constructed, link by named link, as transmitted memory.

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 δὴ 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 ... (Symp. 223d)¹¹

The main point, he said, was that Socrates was compelling them to agree that it belongs to the same man to know how to make comedy and tragedy, and that the one who is by craft a maker of tragedy is a maker of comedy too. Being compelled to this, and not quite following, they nodded; Aristophanes fell asleep first, and, day already breaking, Agathon. And Socrates, having put them to sleep, rose and went away ...

Read the scene as the staging it is. The maker of the base's named instance — the poet whose Socrates the *Apology* quotes — is seated at the table with the remade character, who is extracting from him, προσαναγκάζειν, under compulsion, a concession about *making*: that one τέχνη can make in both kinds, that the register in which an audience received a figure is not the craft's boundary. Nothing requires reading this as a literal transfer of authority, and comedy and tragedy are not simply the comic and the serious. What the staging supplies is the *shape* of a license: if the craft is one across the kinds, the comic Socrates was never the craft's last word on the character — and the concession is drawn, on the corpus's last night, from the represented poet by the character he had represented. Aristophanes cannot quite follow, nods, and *sleeps first*: the source outlasted by its revision, which puts the tellers to bed — κατακοιμίσαντ' ἐκείνους, the participle is active, Socrates *does* it — and walks out into daylight to spend the day ὥσπερ εἰώθει, as usual, at the Lyceum. The edition survives its base text's author into the morning, carrying the extracted license with it. The corpus could not say more plainly what it had done, short of saying it — and the *Second Letter*, in nine words, says it.

7. The edition received

That the operation succeeded is a matter of record, and the record's first entry is Aristotle. The epilogue of the *Sophistical Refutations*, surveying what stood before its own inquiry, keeps the *Clouds*' pay-marker for exactly the class the base text fused with Socrates — τῶν περὶ τοὺς ἐριστικὸν λόγον μισθαρνούντων, the paid teachers of eristic, dismissed with the shoemaker's analogy — and sets Socrates *apart* from them, named alone, keyed not to pay or teaching but to the confession of not knowing: Σωκράτης ἡρώτα ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπεκρίνετο· ὡμολόγει γὰρ οὐκ εἰδέναι (183b7-8). The separations the *Apology* fought for line by line arrive in Aristotle as furniture: the boundary the *Clouds* fused and the dialogues recut is, by the epilogue, simply where things stand.¹² And a millennium later the boundary is still under maintenance by readers who never heard of the repair: the Byzantine paraphrast of

¹¹Symp. 223d, Greek verified against Perseus at time of writing; translation mine.

¹²SE 34, 183b7-8 and 184a1-8 (μισθαρνούντων; the shoemaker; τέχνην δ' οὐ παρέδωκεν), with the full argument that the epilogue's denial is total and Socrates stands inside the inquiry's own account, in the companion paper *Nothing Before Us: Socrates and the Ending of the Sophistical Refutations* (deposited, with its witness apparatus); the Byzantine paraphrast's Socrates — ὁ γὰρ διαλεκτικὸς ὥσπερ μὴ εἰδὼς ἐρωτᾷ· διὰ τοῦτο Σωκράτης διαλεκτικὸς ἄκρος ὢν ἡρώτα ... ὁ μέντοι σοφιστικὸς πάντα εἰδέναι ἐπαγγέλλεται — at pp. 196-197 Hayduck (CAG XXIII.4), seated in that paper's Appendix A1a.

the *Elenchi*, glossing that very sentence, writes that the dialectician asks ὥσπερ μὴ εἰδώς while the sophist πάντα εἰδέναι ἐπαγγέλλεται — and promotes Socrates to διαλεκτικὸς ἄκρος, consummate in dialectic, the peak of the very practice whose comic version he began as.¹³ The received character of the second reception is the edition; the base text survives inside it only as the quotation the *Apology* chose to keep.

8. Which Socrates?

The consensus reading of 314c — the idealized Socrates, beautified and rejuvenated by an admiring pupil — is not wrong; it is the surface description of the operation this paper has tried to read at depth, and it is absorbed accordingly. What the production-grammar adds is three things the surface omits. A *source*: the beautification did not start from life but from a circulating character, received ἐκ παίδων by the audience the revision addressed, whose named and quoted instance has an owner. An *operation*: γεγονότος — a completed becoming the paper has argued is a making, itemizable as strikes (pay, teaching, μετέωρα) and repairs (the shell inverted, the issue renewed), with the boundary the base had fused recut in text after text because a fused boundary cannot be inherited apart. And a *rule*: οὐδ' ἔσται — the maker's withdrawal extended over all future writing, so that the assignment of the sayings to the made character is not a mood of the corpus but its constitution, stated, in the author-genitive, by a reader early enough to stand inside the corpus's own canon: Σωκράτους ἐστίν.

What the reading leaves open, it leaves open deliberately. Whether the letter is Plato's or a forger's changes the sentence's status as testimony and changes nothing in its status as description; I have used it only as the latter. And whether an edition of this kind — a character revamped, inhabited, and issued as author, under a standing disclaimer — implies anything about how many hands made the texts that speak through him is a question this paper does not ask; it is asked elsewhere, on other evidence, and the reader who feels it stirring here is feeling the letter's own future tense.¹⁴ Here it is enough to have read one sentence at its verbs. The things now said are of a Socrates who has been *made* — beautiful, and new. The genitive is the edition's imprint, and the letter is its colophon: an ancient reader of the corpus, telling us what was done, in the one sentence of the tradition that had no reason to soften it — and ordering the colophon burned.

¹³SE 34, 183b7-8 and 184a1-8 (μισθοαρνούντων; the shoemaker; τέχνην δ' οὐ παρέδωκεν), with the full argument that the epilogue's denial is total and Socrates stands inside the inquiry's own account, in the companion paper *Nothing Before Us: Socrates and the Ending of the Sophistical Refutations* (deposited, with its witness apparatus); the Byzantine paraphrast's Socrates — ὁ γὰρ διαλεκτικὸς ὥσπερ μὴ εἰδώς ἐρωτᾷ· διὰ τοῦτο Σωκράτης διαλεκτικὸς ἄκρος ὢν ἡρώτα ... ὁ μὲντοι σοφιστικὸς πάντα εἰδέναι ἐπαγγέλλεται — at pp. 196-197 Hayduck (CAG XXIII.4), seated in that paper's Appendix A1a.

¹⁴The question of the corpus's maker-count is pursued in *Many and One: Division, Unity, and the Boundaries of a Corpus in Plato and Aristotle* (archive record #1576), which argues it from other passages and does not presuppose this paper; the present reading stands whether the texts that speak through the made character are one hand's or a school's. οὐδ' ἔσται is quoted there too, for its own reasons.

Notes

Texts

Greek verified against Perseus (Burnet) at time of writing: *Ap.* 18b-c, 19b-c; *Parm.* 127c; *Symp.* 223d. Collated against the Perseus canonical-greekLit XML at time of writing: *Ep.* II 314c in its context (n. 1). Quoted from the standard texts with collation pending: *Symp.* 215a-b, 216e-217a; *Tht.* 143e; *Soph.* 231a-b; *Clouds* loci as in n. 4. *SE* loci as seated in the companion paper. Translations are mine throughout.

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