

**DRINKS AT PLATO'S: CREATING A CONTEMPORARY
SYMPOSIUM
OR: "MY BIG FAT GREEK THESIS"**

by

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ABSTRACT

To the philosopher and the screenwriter, *The Symposium* is a masterwork. The philosopher admires Socrates' inspired thinking as he gives us a glimpse of the highest form of beauty. The screenwriter esteems the skill with which the characters are drawn and their sparkling dialogue. Both may feel that the event evoked in *The Symposium* is so real that, rather than having taken place over 2,400 years ago, it might have occurred last night, anywhere in the world. How does Plato transcend his *Volkergedanken* (Folk ideas) and touch the *Elementargedanken* (Elementary ideas)? What are his "mechanics of eternity?" Part One of the thesis is a theoretical essay examining the mythic landscape beneath *The Symposium*, revealing a "marriage" between *mythos* and *logos* that gives *Symposium* its transcendent quality. Part Two is a screenplay entitled *Drinks at Plato's*, set in Los Angeles and demonstrating how the *mythos-logos* marriage transcends time and place.

Keywords: *Mythos, logos, Elementargedanken, Volkergedanken, Socrates, Symposium, screenwriting.*

Subject Terms: Philosophy, screenwriting, Plato, Socrates, mythology

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to a female trinity and a male triumvirate that made it possible for me to write it at all.

First, I dedicate this work to Donatella Clignon, my wife, who has supported me, encouraged me and, when necessary, prodded me to complete this extraordinary journey through the Graduate Liberal Studies program in general and this final project in particular.

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GLOSSARY

NOTE: Script elements (such as types of shots and transitions) are in CAPS. Screenwriting elements definitions are in sentence case.

ANGLE ON

A type of shot. This usually occurs in scenes taking place in large settings. For example: if you're at a playground and little Billy is playing in the grass while his sister Jenny is playing on the structure. To get from a detail shot of Billy playing to Jenny playing you'd use "ANGLE ON STRUCTURE" to suggest a new shot featuring Jenny. You're still in the same location, but the director knows to point the camera a different direction.

Beat

Many scripts will use the parenthetical "(beat)" to interrupt a line of dialog. A "beat" suggests the actor should pause a moment, in silence, before continuing the scene. "Beats" are often interchangeable with ellipses "..."

Character

In a screenplay, the name appears in all caps the first time a character is introduced in the "Action." The character's name can then be written normally, in the action, the rest of the script. For example: The limo pulls up to the curb. DAISY, an elderly woman sits in the car as MORGAN, the driver, steps out and opens the door for her. Daisy is dressed in evening-wear, ready for an Opera. Character's names always appear in all CAPS when speaking. For proper margins, see the Format page.

For example:

DAISY

You've been a darling, Morgan. Here's twenty dollars.

CONTINUOUS

Sometimes, instead of DAY or NIGHT at the end of a SLUGLINE/Location Description, you'll see CONTINUOUS. Basically, continuous refers to action that moves from one location to another without any interruptions in time. For example, in an action movie, the hero may run from the airport terminal into a parking garage. The sequence may include cuts, but the audience would perceive the action as a continuous sequence of events from the terminal to the lobby to the street to the garage to the second floor to a car etc. CONTINUOUS is generally optional in writing and can be dropped altogether. For example...

INT. AIRPORT LOBBY - DAY

JANET looks over her shoulder. The MEN IN BLACK are still after her, toppling innocent passersby and sending luggage flying across the linoleum floor. Janet faces forward again and nearly runs smack into a nun. She apologizes wordlessly, glances back one last time before pushing through the glass doors.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Janet stumbles to the curb, stopping short of the honking traffic -- Los Angeles drivers. As a bus flies by, blasting her with wind, she steps out into traffic. A car SWERVES to avoid her! She GASPS, looks back. The men in black are there.

BACK TO SCENE

She shakes off the thought and hops up onto the curb opposite the

airport. She enters the parking garage.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

BANG! A shot RICOCHETS into the garage. Janet SHRIEKS, her steps faltering momentarily, but she recovers.

CROSSFADE

This is like a "Fade to black then Fade to next scene." In other words, as one scene fades out, a moment of black interrupts before the next scene fades in. It is not to be confused with DISSOLVE, since CROSSFADE always involves a black or blank screen. (Note: I'm not sure if this term is still in common use)

CUT TO:

The most simple and common transition. Since this transition is implied by a change of scene, it may be used sparingly to help intensify character changes and emotional shifts. The transition describes a change of scene over the course of one frame.

DISSOLVE TO:

A common transition. As one scene fades out, the next scene fades into place. This type of transition is generally used to convey some passage of time and is very commonly used in montages such as seen in *Bugsy*.

ESTABLISHING SHOT:

A shot, usually from a distance, that shows us where we are. A shot that suggests location. Often used at the beginning of a film to suggest where the story takes place. For example, if our story takes place in Toronto, we might use a shot of the Toronto skyline as an establishing shot.

EXT.

Exterior. This scene takes place out of doors. This is mostly for producers to figure out the probable cost of a film project.

FADE TO:

See also **DISSOLVE TO:**

This is commonly used as a DISSOLVE to a COLOR. Commonly, you'll see this as:

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE IN:

Feature Film

In the olden days of cinema, people watched a series of short films. Then, as films became longer, they would watch some short films and one long film. The long film became the main attraction, hence the term feature film. Today, feature films are generally defined as any film at least one hour long that people pay to see.

FREEZE FRAME:

The picture stops moving, becoming a still photograph, and holds for a period of time.

INT.

Interior. This scene takes place indoors. This is mostly for producers to figure out the probable cost of a film project.

Montage

In film, a series of images showing a theme, a contradiction, or the passage of time. This film style became common in Russia in the early years of cinema.

Russians were the first to truly use editing to tell a story. Some early examples of montage include City Symphony's and *Man With a Movie Camera*.

O.S. or O.C.

Off-screen or Off-camera. This is the abbreviation sometimes seen next to the CHARACTER'S name before certain bits of dialog. Basically, it means the writer specifically wants the voice to come from somewhere unseen.

Pan

Camera movement involving the camera turning on a stationary axis. Imagine standing in one spot on a cliff in Hawaii. You want to absorb the view so you, without moving your body or feet, turn your head from the left to the right. This is the same effect as a pan.

Parenthetical

If an actor should deliver his or her lines in a particular way, a screenplay will contain a description in parentheses to illustrate the point. Parentheticals should be used only in cases where a line of dialog should be read in some way contrary to logic. If used too often, actor's and director's egos get hurt, and things get messy. For example: JULIE (calmly) I hate you. I hate you. I hate you.

POV

Point of View. The camera replaces the eyes (sometimes the ears) of a character, monster, machine, surveillance camera, etc. As a result, we get to see the world through the sensory devices of some creature. This can be used to bring out the personal aspects of a scene, or it can be used to build horror and suspense. An example of horror and suspense in POV can be scene in the opening shot of *Halloween*.

REVERSE ANGLE

Often used to reveal things for comic or dramatic effect. Could be described as a counter POV shot. Basically, the script suggests the camera come around 180 degrees to get a shot from the "other side" of a scene. For example, in the *Something About Mary* script, Tucker is playing a joke on Mary in her office in one scene that the writers didn't want to reveal right away. They use a REVERSE ANGLE to show that he's got two tongue depressors in his upper lip to represent teeth. This reverse angle is used for comic effect.

Scene

An event that takes place entirely in one location or time. If we go outside from inside, it's a new scene. If we cut to five minutes later, it's a new scene. If both, it's a new scene. Scenes can range from one shot to infinity and are distinguished by **slug lines**.

Shooting Script

This is the truly final draft used on set by the production people, actors, and director to make the movie from the screenplay.

Shot

One image. If there's a cut, you've changed shots. Shots can range from split seconds, like in *Terminator 2*, to several minutes, such as in *Secrets and Lies* or the opening sequence of *Halloween*. Shots are generally chosen by the director although the writer can use capital letters to suggest where the camera should be. When a writer absolutely must have a certain shot at a certain moment in a film, he has a few options each described in detail elsewhere in this list: INSERT, ANGLE ON, and CLOSE ON.

For notes regarding how to format shot types, check the Format page.

Slug Line

The text in all CAPS at the beginning of a scene that briefly describes the location and time of day. For example:

INT. DAVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Note: sometimes sluglines are abbreviated to something as simple as "LATER" or "BEDROOM."

It's a bright and beautiful morning and kids wander the courtyard on their way to class or to meet friends. And the students discuss the end of this example.

The sudden shift from a dark forest to a bright schoolyard on the first stab would convey the distress of the murder without showing it. For another example of a smash cut, see the transition to L.A. in *Barton Fink*.

Note: this transition is often a director's choice. As a writer, use this sparingly if at all. Many script readers find this term unprofessional.

TIGHT ON

A close-up of a person or thing. Basically, like the space has been squeezed out of the area between camera and subject. Not in common use. Use only when necessary.

TIME CUT

When you want to cut to later in a scene, you have the option of writing TIME CUT as the transition. For example, if two people walk into a restaurant and their conversation is important at first then veers off into topics not important to your story, then you might want to time cut from the drinks to the main course and then again to paying the check.

Transition

These describe the style in which one scene becomes the next. Used appropriately, these can be used to convey shifts in character development

and emotion. In other words, a CUT TO: is not required at every scene change. Some major transitions include CUT TO:, DISSOLVE TO:, MATCH CUT TO:, JUMP CUT TO:, SMASH CUT TO:, WIPE TO:, and FADE TO:. Each term has its own entry in this list of terms. Occasionally a writer will make up his own transition. In these cases, the transition is usually self-defined (such as BRIGHT WHITE FLASH TO: suggests whiteness will fill the screen for a brief moment as we pass into the next scene).

V.O.

Voice Over. This is the abbreviation sometimes seen next to the CHARACTER'S name before certain bits of dialog. This means the character voices that dialog but his or her moving lips are not present in the scene. Voice over is generally used for narration, such as in the beginning of *The Mummy*. Or, as Austin Powers would say, a character's inner monolog. The inner thought processes of the character said out loud such that only the audience will hear it. An general example of Voice Over can be seen (heard, actually) in *Hannah and Her Sisters*.

ZOOM:

The image seems to close in on a person or object making the person or object appear larger (or smaller) on screen. Technically, the lens mechanically changes from wide angle to telephoto or vice versa. Notice and recognize the difference between a zoom and a push in (camera moves closer to subject). Use zoom only when necessary. For an example of zoom, see *Boogie Nights*.

Source: Telling It: Writing for Canadian Film and Television, Anne Frank, Editor, Doubleday Canada, 1996.

PART I INTRODUCTION

“The role of the artist is... to break windows through the walls of the culture to eternity.”

Joseph Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*

To both the philosopher and the screenwriter, *The Symposium* is a masterwork. The philosopher may admire Socrates' logic: his clear and inspired thinking as he engages his friends in an intellectual exercise designed to raise their consciousness and give them a glimpse of beauty in its highest form. The screenwriter may esteem the skilful manner in which the characters on the couches are drawn; their defining habits and traits, their distinctive ways of speaking. Both the philosopher and the screenwriter may also admire the exquisite way that Plato's dialogue evokes a particular time and place,¹ and yet is timeless and universal in its themes and insights into the nature of love. So real is the event evoked in *The Symposium* that both philosopher and screenwriter may feel that, rather than having taken place over 2,400 years ago, it might have occurred last week or even last night. Nor need it have taken place in Athens: it takes no great leap of imagination to conceive of a contemporary symposium taking place in North America, with its profusion of philosophical and cultural influences. What are the implications of changing the setting of this masterwork? Would the resulting arguments be substantially different if, for instance, our present-day Pausanias is a Buddhist? How would the conversation flow if Phaedrus were a conservative Christian? And how might *The Symposium* be different had Socrates been able to show actually Diotima delivering her wisdom so that we, the contemporary audience, could hear wisdom straight from the

¹Agathon's victory at the Lenaian festival would have occurred sometime during the month of Gamelion (January), 416 BCE.

oracles' mouth? More importantly, how does Plato transcend his *Volkergedanken* (Folk ideas) and touch the *Elementargedanken* (Elementary ideas)?² In short, what are his *mechanics of eternity*?

For the purposes of this project, I will play the role of both screenwriter and student of philosophy to the best of my abilities. In adapting *The Symposium* to the screen in the form of *Drinks at Plato's*, I found that I was engaged upon a task that involved the careful construction of two different but intimately related frameworks. One is the narrative framework that is needed for any print work to make the leap off the page and onto the screen. The second is the somewhat more complex theoretical framework which explains and supports the philosophical stances of our contemporary speakers, the choices made in terms of characterization and motivation, and the differences between the mythic imagery used in Plato's work as opposed to the more secular, scientific metaphors of the screenplay.

I will deal with the narrative framework in Chapter One, "The Screenwriters' Task." In this chapter, I will describe the task the screenwriter faces in writing a screenplay based on *The Symposium* and setting it in contemporary Los Angeles. This will primarily focus on explaining the adaptation process used to transform Plato's masterwork (or any book, play or print genre) into a written form intended for the screen. I will include a section on the Elements of Adaptation, which will detail the choices faced by a screenwriter during this process, how to capture the spirit of a given work, how to find key scenes and other crucial steps. I will discuss how to look for equivalent elements, settings, timing and characters, as well as how to "make the medium do the work" -- an essential difference between film and print.

² Joseph Campbell cites this concept, developed by Adolf Bastian in the 19th Century, in *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, pages xiii-xiv.

In addition, I will show some of the documents generated as a result of this process. The first is a rudimentary outline known in the industry as a "beat sheet," which records in sequence the essential action and theme of each scene in the film (the "beat" of each scene). Next is the treatment, or extended outline, which builds upon the barebones of the beat sheet. While it may contain snippets of dialogue and action, it is still not a full-fledged script. Finally, I will include preliminary character outlines, which detail the physical and emotional descriptions of the individuals in the film. All of these documents are essential building blocks of the screenplay. The screenplay itself will follow at the end of the theoretical framework.

In laying out this process and by showing the different stages the story must pass through in order to become a screenplay, I hope to show what is involved in assembling the narrative framework when translating a work from print to the screen. However, *The Symposium* isn't just any work. Special consideration must be given to the complex interplay between ideas, themes and images within Plato's work. Without careful attention to these elements, it would be impossible to fully realize the screenplay (to put thematic flesh on the narrative bones, so to speak). This is where the screenwriter must step back and listen to the student of philosophy.

The student of philosophy has his say in Chapter Two, "The Student's Task." This chapter contains the theoretical basis and context for the philosophical discussion within the screenplay. I will also attempt to show the mechanisms Plato employs to break through his particular folk ideas to reach the elementary or transcendent ideas using the theory of the 19th Century ethnologist Adolf Bastian, who first defined the terms *Elementargedanken* ("elementary ideas") and *Volkergedanken* ("folk ideas"). Further, I will demonstrate how Plato used the two most powerful transformative forces of his time to create a masterwork, namely, *mythos* and *logos*. Like the Greek male and female gods, *mythos* and *logos* were, at the time of *The Symposium*, were partners in an uneasy marriage,

each having a role in shaping and articulating the consciousness of Athenian citizens and other Greek-speaking peoples of the region. The Greek Pantheon reflected the struggle within Greek society between the ancient Mother Goddess culture that preceded the Hellenic invasions and the male-dominated "Thunderbolt Hurler" gods of the newcomers. The male and female deities of Olympus vied for supremacy one over the other, but somehow managed to keep the marriage functioning for hundreds of years.

So it was with *mythos* and *logos*. The *mythos* was the traditional, time-honoured way of explaining the workings of both the external world and the inner life of an individual. Karen Armstrong defines it as ritualized systems of belief found world-wide that "compels us to live more fully... a myth is essentially a guide; it tells us what we must do in order to live more richly."³ By the time of *The Symposium*, a new way of explaining the world, the *logos*, had emerged. Often seen as opposites in our contemporary society, I will show how the marriage of *mythos* and *logos*, each supporting the other rather than in conflict, gives Plato's work its transcendent quality. This will be achieved by a detailed mapping of the "Mythic Landscape" that is the foundation of the work, rich in metaphor and supporting a hidden narrative structure.

Not content with weaving an underlying network of supporting mythic allusions and images throughout the speeches of *The Symposium*, Plato has set his images and stories within the context of an internal narrative frame, namely the ritual structure of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The effect is very much like that of the figurines of Silenus described in the work, having one apparent form and structure on the outside and an inner narrative that illuminates the divinity within. This complex and beautiful structure allows Plato to achieve several objectives:

- It strengthens his central arguments about love

³ Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, Random House, Toronto, 2006, page 10.

- It gives us clues as to the speakers' attitudes towards one another
- Most importantly, it imbues Socrates with the power and authority that had been hitherto associated with the gods (or perhaps more accurately, the *daimons*)

The central myth used by Plato to unify this incredibly diverse landscape is that of Hecate-Demeter-Persephone, which is also at the core of the Great Eleusinian Mysteries. By making this myth the defining feature of the landscape, Plato gives his theory of love a recognizable and accepted, not to mention revered, narrative and metaphorical form, making it more acceptable and understandable to an audience of his contemporaries. Using *logos*, Plato lifts these elementary ideas one step beyond *mythos*, replacing the secrecy of the mysteries' sacred shrines and halls with the streets and homes of Athens. The result is a powerful synthesis reinforcing the central revelation of the Axial Age: the essential unity of humanity, shattering the illusion of the distinction of "lover" and "beloved."⁴ In doing so, Plato weaves a golden thread that brings together the opposites.

Having discovered this golden thread, I will follow its winding course through time and geography to establish the theoretical positions of the speakers in my contemporary symposium, *Drinks at Plato's*. I will attempt to show the evolution of the "Elementary Ideas" from the Greek Pantheon to the archetypal or universal forms we may recognize today from such disciplines as depth psychology. By looking at the characters through the archetypal lens provided by Richard Tarnas and his planetary archetypes, I will bring the screenplay's contemporary speakers into focus. Once this is accomplished, I will present a screenplay entitled *Drinks at Plato's* – the Socratic child of the screenwriter and the student of philosophy and with which I have been long pregnant.

⁴ "The Axial Age" was used by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers to describe the period between 800-200 BCE when new insights into spirituality were developed that proved pivotal in human development. Great religious and philosophical traditions such as Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Greek rationalism and Middle Eastern Monotheism trace their roots to this period. All these movements have the same core elements: internalized reflection taking priority over externalized ritual; the emphasis on individual morality and conscience over the dictates of a priestly cast; moreover, the ethic of compassion and justice. "Henceforth, it would not be sufficient to perform the conventional rites meticulously; worshippers must also treat their fellow creatures with respect." See Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, pages 79-81.

CHAPTER ONE: THE SCREENWRITER'S TASK

The Art of Adaptation

“Like the priest, the artist is a master of metaphorical language... for the reality to which the artist and the mystic are exposed is, in fact, the same. It is of their own inmost truth brought to consciousness; by the mystic, in direct confrontation, and by the artist, through reflection in the master works of his art.”

Joseph Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*

As a screenwriter, I have been fortunate enough to have the experience of adapting one of my novels (*Mister Jinnah: Securities* – Dundurn, 2001, Toronto) into a television Movie of the Week (*Jinnah on Crime: White Knight, Black Widow* – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, broadcast 2002). As you can probably surmise simply by looking at the different titles for what is essentially the same story, the process of adapting a novel or play to the screen is a transformative one. Some of these transformations are necessary simply because of different narrative structures. Novels generally follow some kind of three-act composition, but the form is infinitely malleable and the story may be told in any number of ways with differing points of view and in widely varying lengths. The format of a television Movie of the Week, on the other hand, is rigid. It fills a precise, two-hour time-slot on a specified network. However unique or innovative a writer's approach to his or her story is in novel form, it must be made to adhere to the broadcaster's formula for station and commercial breaks. Adapting my novel to a screenplay to be shot and aired on CBC required taking a 300-page crime story and reshaping it to fit a 92-page script with a six-act structure. Each act ranged

from 10-15 pages in length and had to end in a progressively more compelling “cliff-hanger” (designed to ensure viewers didn’t change the channel during the commercial break). If the original story does not lend itself to a natural act break at a certain point in the narrative, then one must be invented. In the process, portions of the original work are often lost and new elements inserted – this was certainly the case with my book.

The demands placed on the screenwriter who adapts a book or play for the big screen (that is, a feature movie as opposed to a television production) are somewhat different, but no less stringent. Different genres of feature films have their different requirements. Thrillers require a plot structure that works on the “jolts per minute” formula of writing. Comedies tend to be shorter than dramas and usually follow the old convention of “boy meets girl” (Act One), “boy loses girl” (Act Two), “boy gets girl back/marriage” (Act Three). In contemporary North American filmmaking, the gender of the lovers can vary, but the structure is essentially the same. However, the process by which the lovers gain their happily-ever-after (and the comedic conventions to be found in each and every movie) varies from country to country. A North American comedy, for instance, is quite different from one filmed in the Indian “Bollywood” tradition. In this case, sometimes an adaptation must not only make the leap off the page and onto the screen, it must cross cultural lines.

A good example of a successful movie that achieves this difficult task is British filmmaker Gurinder Chadha’s adaptation of Jane Austen’s novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. Chadha somehow manages to make Austen’s early 19th Century tale set in rural England come alive in a contemporary setting using the Bollywood formula in *Bride and Prejudice* (Miramax Films, 2004). Chadha’s treatment of Austen’s novel is a good example for us to examine, since the challenges she faced are almost identical to the ones I find myself presented with. My task is to adapt what is essentially a short story in *The Symposium* to the screen, very

similar to adapting a novel⁵ (and in some ways, simpler and easier to do than adapting a novel). And both *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Symposium* are about love. Chadha also has to cross time and culture to tell her story to a contemporary audience while remaining true to Austen's text – exactly the same feat I must perform to bring Plato into the 21st Century. Chadha did not achieve this Herculean task by luck. She followed the rules of adaptation, even as I followed them to translate my novel to television. What follows is a condensed version of those rules.

However, before we begin, a note about some of the terms you are about to encounter: please brace yourself. You will find what appear to be cavalier references to phrases common in screenwriter parlance such as "Which of your children do you prefer to murder?" and "Choose the hill you're willing to die on." These may seem grim, brutal pronouncements, but they reflect two realities of screenwriting. One is that screenwriters tend to be somewhat melodramatic by nature and to put things in life-or-death terms, even if it's something as simple as who is going to get the coffee. The second is the very nature of playing god with the storyline. Depending on what you're writing, you can be dealing with death, destruction and mayhem on a routine basis (even writing something as "cozy" as *Jinnah*, I found myself arguing quite abstractly with my co-writers what the "body count" in a particular mystery should be and the merits of having certain characters meet a gruesome -- but perfectly timed-- end, usually for the sake of having a cliff-hanger of an act break before a commercial. So don't be too shocked: like a movie, it is all an elaborate illusion.

⁵ In adapting a novel, by necessity, subplots, characters, wonderful scenes (sometimes the author's favourites) must be cut to keep the movie focussed and to a reasonable length. Adapting a short story, however, often means expanding upon the core story. I was fortunate enough to have this experience as well while writing the first *Jinnah on Crime* *MOW, Pizza 911*. It is a far more positive experience to invent and expand than it is to chop and contract.

Elements of Adaptation: Murder, Media and Myth

A. Choices -- What to leave in, what to leave out, or “Which one of your children would you like to murder first?” It is a fundamental fact in the adaptation process that you simply cannot include every character, subplot and scene from a novel in a screenplay. Cutting a favourite scene deemed non-essential to the movie is known in the industry as “murdering your children.” This is, in a sense, a Socratic saying from the screenwriting trade. It may seem somewhat horrific until you consider that every character and scene in a screenplay is a “child” of the screenwriter. Frequently, the screenwriter is quite attached to that which he or she has given birth to from the mind. Sadly, many producers do not always see these Socratic children as having been given birth to in beauty, and for often-ugly reasons (such as budgetary or time constraints), they meet a tragic end. Thus, a screenwriter must decide what aspect of the story to go with and stick with it. This requires identifying the essence of the book, the core messages, and presenting them in a manner consistent with the original work, yet still suitable to the conventions of the screen genre you’re adapting it to. This becomes your guiding principle and informs your choices. For instance, in *Bride and Prejudice*, Chadha chooses to leave out all but one of the proposal scenes found in Austen’s original. Also, the dramatic reading of letters is replaced by email messages or telephone conversations. There is no elopement or forced marriage involving Lydia. But Chadha retains the core of the love story, the clash of values and the interpersonal miscommunication essential to the plot and message of *Pride and Prejudice* (which is in itself a rather interesting commentary on modern telecommunications).

B. Capture the spirit: A successful adaptation must identify and communicate the intention of the artist (or more precisely, the screenwriter’s interpretation of that intent). To do this, a screenwriter must:

1. **Find the enduring virtues:** Times and manners change, but virtues don't. Virtues are those modes of behaviour between individuals and between the individual and society at large that remain constant over time. In *Bride and Prejudice*, Lakhi (i.e. Lydia) runs off with Wickham. The enduring virtue is respect for innocence, the duty of adults not to prey on children or youth – a duty Wickham ignores. But manners differ: in “Bride and Prejudice,” it's not necessary for Lakhi to marry Wickham; instead, she's rescued in a fashion appropriate both to the time and Bollywood conventions. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's forced marriage between Lydia and Wickham is a solution appropriate to the manner and values of her time.
2. **Look for equivalents:** This involves finding the contemporary equivalent of key elements in the novel when changing time periods. Often, this revolves around the characters: their professions, their national or ethnic background, sometimes their religious beliefs. Take for example the pool of suitors in each work. Soldiers lack the sex appeal and romance they had in the 1800s, so soldiers become surfers (like Wickham) in *Bride and Prejudice*. Brighton is replaced by Goa (both seaside playgrounds), Meryton by Amritsar (both agricultural communities). Darcy as an ultra-rich American is the modern equivalent of the English landed gentry in terms of social status and wealth.

C. Make the medium do the work. Visuals convey more information faster than print. Setting, background and action compress pages of dialogue and description. This is especially true in *Bride and Prejudice*, where the musical numbers convey the inner monologue of the heroine and illuminate interaction

between characters. Detailed descriptions of blood flows and blushes are replaced by the expression on the actors' faces; instead of describing of Lydia's flirtatious behaviour, we see short scenes of Lahki flirting (and text messaging) boys. Real movement, real colours, sounds and expressions within the artifice of the film save time and keep the picture moving. The trade-off is, the screenwriter must lose all those beautiful descriptions and all the wonderful prose that makes the original a masterwork in the first place.

D. Find and keep key scenes, or “Choose the hill you’re willing to die on.”

In any adaptation, these scenes have to be identified and then hammered into a feature movie's three-act structure, which is usually no more than 90-100 minutes long. The writer and/or director must decide what scenes are the most crucial to their vision – what is it that absolutely *must* stay in? Very often, this involves conflict with the executive producer, who has an eye on the bottom line – the budget. Fewer and less elaborate scenes means coming in on budget. So a screenwriter (and even a director) has to be flexible. Some scenes will never be shot, some scenes that are shot end up on the cutting room floor. But the key scenes are the ones you go to the wall to (i.e. The hill you're willing to die upon). Key scenes in *Pride and Prejudice* include the proposals by Collins and Darcy, the reading of Darcy's letters, the impression Darcy's estate makes on Elizabeth, her confrontation with Lady De Bourgh and the shock of Lydia's elopement with Willoughby.

In *Bride and Prejudice*, Chadha keeps some key scenes and modifies others. The Collins/Kholi proposal scene stays because it's plausible in a modern context. But there's no proposal scene between Lalita and Darcy. The showdown between Darcy's aunt and Elizabeth Bennet is transformed into a polite (but pointed) exchange between Darcy's mother and Lalita. And there is no forced marriage between Wickham and Lakhi. Instead, we have a fight over Lakhi between Willoughby and Darcy (which also fits the Bollywood tradition of giving the villain a damned good thrashing). Wickham's transgression is not economic;

rather, it is sexual misconduct with Darcy's sister, Georgie (the cad has gotten her pregnant and fled). In all cases, these changes and inclusions are faithful to the original in spirit, but consistent with contemporary mores and behaviour.

E. Don't forget the Mythic Elements: A novel operates on two levels: the public and the private. The writer uses a series of common symbols accessible to a broad audience (the public level) and idiosyncratic, personal symbols (the private level), which may range from simple "in-jokes" to profound subtexts (such as Austen's views on morality, manners, religion, etc.). Once published, the public bring their individual understanding to the work to create innumerable unique aesthetic experiences.

Adapting a novel for the screen results in a compromise version of this dynamic. It is not the screenwriter alone who is responsible for the final product. Rather, the writer is part of a "creative team" (including the producer, director, executive producer and studio executives) who interpret the book. The actors also bring new insights and interpretation to the whole. In the process, both public and private symbols are modified, added, or cut.

An adaptation succeeds or fails in part on the basis of how well the film straddles the fence in representing the public and private symbols. If the creative team has identified and included those elements which transcend the time and place of the individual writer, the adaptation will have resonance with the audience. This is the same dynamic described by Joseph Campbell in the interplay of mythology in a culture: "The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth."⁶ Public/private symbols connect us with the mysteries within the human psyche.

The mythic or transcendent element Chadha has included in her adaptation is one of the oldest (and certainly the most marketable): the transforming power of love to cut across class and culture and validate the essential equality of

⁶ Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, page 48.

humanity. Further, this expression of love is reflective of harmony within the community. Austen saw love and marriage, for all its trials and faults, as a stabilizing force in society. Chadha goes further: in her love story, marriage serves as a global stabilizing force. It is not just Amritsar that is ecstatic about Lalita and Darcy's "sacred union," but individuals and communities all over the world, from Hollywood to London and beyond that are receptive to this particular set of symbols. East meets West, and both are enriched by the experience.

Transforming *The Symposium* into *Drinks at Plato's*

Using the preceding rules, I set about the task of taking *The Symposium* from Plato's dialogue form to a contemporary screenplay, *Drinks at Plato's*. Although a complex and involved process, it was made somewhat easier because of the unique nature of *The Symposium* as compared to Plato's other works. Indeed, in some regards, *Symposium* already resembles a screenplay and all that is missing from it are the camera directions and scene headings.⁷ But what genre are we dealing with here? A comedy, tragedy or farce? If we search for a classical definition, we inevitably turn to Aristotle's *Poetics*, written about 65 years after the events described by Plato took place. *The Symposium* satisfies many of Aristotle's definitions for a good tragedy, which is "an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end."⁸ *Symposium* is complete, whole, and of a certain magnitude. It has unity of theme and the action does "confine itself to a single revolution of the sun." And yet in other respects it is clearly lacking: it does not evoke either fear or pity; it does not contain the essential tragic elements of "emotional interest in Tragedy-Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and

⁷ This quality of *The Symposium* is discussed by Christopher Gill in the introduction to his translation of the work, where he states that "Plato's overall aim is to construct out of historical materials a kind of drama... a type of fiction, or what the American writer Norman Mailer called 'faction'." See *The Symposium*, Plato (author), Christopher Gill (Introduction, translator), Penguin Classics, London, 2003).

⁸ Humphry House, *Aristotle's Poetics*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1964, page 49.

Recognition scenes,” ingredients that Aristotle termed “the most powerful elements of tragedy.”⁹

So *The Symposium* is neither fish nor fowl: not exactly *Antheus* and yet not precisely *Thesmophoriazusae* either.¹⁰ In a modern context, however, our choice is somewhat clearer. A model that might work is the “philosophic film” or “art film.” An example of this is *My Dinner With Andre* (New Yorker Films, 1981), a highly acclaimed art film that consisted of two old friends sitting down and talking about life over dinner at a fancy restaurant. Tempting as it is to give Plato’s work the art film treatment, I felt it didn’t quite work. *The Symposium* is about love and sex, and in our era, that should make it a comedy (albeit one with serious overtones) because it is about an all-male party talking about love and sex (where nobody dies and there is a great, drunken comic entrance for a finale). *The Symposium* fits the modern, Hollywood formula for a comedy: it is more like *Bachelor Party*, for instance, than *Interiors*. Even today, this classical masterwork is hard to categorize, but it may best be described as a “dramedy:” that is, a dramatic work with comic moments. With this question settled, I started to employ the rules of adaptation on my subject. The following section details how many of Plato’s children had to be sacrificed to the god of modernity. I think you’ll agree that he got off extremely lightly.

Elements of Adaptation Take Two

Murder, Media and Myth, or “And the award goes to...”

A. Choices -- What to leave in, what to leave out, or “Which one of your children would you like to murder first?” In terms of plot and narrative structure, I found surprisingly little had to be left out of *The Symposium* in order to adapt it to the contemporary screen. In keeping with modern sensibilities of

⁹ Ibid, page 96.

¹⁰ *Antheus* is a tragedy written by Agathon and referenced in *Poetics*. *Thesmophoriazusae* is a play by Aristophanes that parodies Agathon’s works.

storytelling, which demands entering a movie *medias in res* (and with an eye to keeping the executive producer happy), I decided to cut the initial narrative frame of the discussion between Apollodorus and his unnamed Companion. This allowed me to get Socrates and Aristodemus to the party swiftly and focus on the core of *Symposium*: the question of love and attaining the good forever. The need to concentrate on the speeches of the guests and the mysteries of Diotima as revealed by Socrates and present them in a believable modern context informed the rest of my choices in the adaptation process.

B. Capturing the spirit: Identify and communicate the intention of the artist (or my interpretation of that intent).

1. **Finding the enduring virtues:** Finding the virtues in *The Symposium* is not difficult, given that all of what Socrates concerns himself with (whether quoting Diotima or not) are virtues. Those virtues, like pursuing the good, giving birth to beauty and the ideal of the forms are fairly straightforward to identify and need not be described in any detail in this section. What I found more problematic was manners: how to treat the detailed discussion on the proper Athenian etiquette for adult males to court male adolescents or boys. The sexual mores of the contemporary American power elite (at least publicly) are not what they were in Socrates' time. However, no matter what any particular social elite's practices might have been in any given time or culture, one enduring virtue is constant: the power relationship between the Lover and the Beloved. Both Austen and Chadha identified the core virtue of the respect for innocence and the duty of adults not to prey on children or youth. In *Symposium*, Plato has Socrates (through Diotima) emphasize the philosophical, non-sexual relationship as

ideal. Even the attraction to "just one body"¹¹ ought to be part of the ascent up the ladder to the ideal form of beauty and lead by degrees away from the purely physical to the transcendent/spiritual. This is the principle I have used to guide my treatment of the attitudes expressed in *Symposium* regarding the "right relationship" between the lover and the beloved, regardless of gender.

2. **Looking for equivalents:** Finding the contemporary equivalent of key elements in *The Symposium* was a comparatively easy task (and indicative of how, in some ways, human nature has not changed much in the last 2,600 years). Bearing in mind that we live in a globalized society with a mixture of cultures and ethnicity that was impossible in Socrates' time, I still found enough common ground in the 21st Century.
3. **Setting:** I decided that the setting of a gentlemen's club would be roughly equivalent to the home of any wealthy, aristocratic male in Classical Athens. Given that Athens was a dominant cultural and military power at the time, engaged in a seemingly endless war (that, within two years was to go disastrously wrong), it felt logical to choose the United States (the current dominant political and military power) and Los Angeles (its dominant cultural and media center) as the contemporary location.
4. **Timing:** If Agathon was to remain a writer who had just scored a triumph, transforming him into a screenwriter who had just won an Academy Award had a nice consistency.

¹¹ *The Symposium*, page 48.

Indeed, the timing of the Academy Awards and the Lenaian festival are almost an exact match. So “Drinks at Plato’s” takes place in late February, 2010.

5. **Characters:** One of the most remarkable things about *The Symposium* is how fresh and alive the characters drawn by Plato feel after 2,600 years. There is no need to change the professions of Eryximachus, Alcibades or Agathon – only their names. The other characters were given professions that seemed to fit with the nature of their speeches; thus Phaedrus (which emphasizes the antiquity of Eros and has a sort of “God of Our Fathers” tone to it) becomes a fundamentalist/televangelist; Pausanias a high-powered gay-rights lawyer, and so on. Detailed character descriptions can be found in “The Student's Task, Part Two.”

One other note of significance must be made: I found it necessary to invent a subplot connecting all these men of disparate backgrounds and professions (and indeed, residences), one which would substitute for the sort of bond that would have been enjoyed by the relatively small, elite group of Athenian males who would all have belonged to what amounted to an “old boy’s network” of power and influence. For our contemporary speakers, a modern college fraternity at an Ivy League school substitutes for the common schooling, military service and other milestones in an Athenian male’s life.

C. Making the medium do the work. Suffice it to say that by following the rule “show, don’t tell,” a great deal of the action in the work (such as it is) is reduced to single-line action descriptions. For example, in *Symposium*, the description of Aristophanes’ attack of hiccups immediately preceding the speech of

Eryximachus takes nearly half a page. In the screenplay *Drinks at Plato's*, it's dispensed with in a single line of action and another of dialogue.

The other advantage of a screenplay is it allows the writer to cut away from the speaker and show the reaction of the other characters to what's being said. In this way, we get a feel for what the interpersonal dynamics in the room are. Who admires who? Which characters dislike (even despise) each other? In some cases, these tensions are my invention (albeit based on remarks made by the characters in *Symposium*). In some cases, however, I feel I'm being absolutely faithful to Plato's text. For example, I am quite sure that Eryximachus dislikes his host Agathon. I base this on a section in his speech where he deals with the heavenly and common muses and will provide further details in Chapter Two.

D. Finding and keeping key scenes, or “Choosing the hill I’m willing to die on.” We have to stretch our definition of what constitutes a “scene” when dealing with *The Symposium*. In strict screenwriting terms, there are only five scenes in the entire work: Appollodorus is waylaid by his unnamed Companion; Aristodemus is invited to Agathon's symposium by Socrates; Socrates and Aristodemus arrive at Agathon's; the Symposium (ie. the speeches, including the arrival of Alcibades, etc.); the morning after. It's more a question of keeping key moments, key lines and key concepts from the speeches. Contemporary feature films are not big on long speeches by a single character. So the eulogies have to be reduced and that involves losing a lot of the rhetoric, boiling it down to its core. In addition, VOICE OVERS will be used during the speeches, giving the viewers insight into Socrates' inner thoughts.

One hill I know I am willing to die on, however, is breaking Aristotle's rules regarding unity of time and place. As a way of making *Drinks at Plato's* less static and more visually interesting, I decided to use the cinematic convention of the flashback to show a young Socrates in conversation with Diotima. This takes the view out of the room literally, and is consistent with what Socrates is attempting

to do with the guests in *Symposium*, at least within the realm of the imagination. I also believe that this effect will give Diotima's mysteries more weight. Flashbacks are a signal to the audience that something important is happening – they automatically grab the audience's attention and make them more mindful of the action.

E. About those Mythic Elements: Mapping *The Symposium's* mythic landscape poses a tremendous challenge to a screenwriter. The sheer volume of mythic imagery is almost overwhelming in and of itself. Trying to find contemporary equivalents to these mythic images is even more difficult. However, while many mythic symbols and metaphors from the Classical Era may have faded and lost their resonance over time, many of the images of gods evoked in Plato have retained at least some hold on the contemporary Western imagination. Love, it seems, is indeed the most ancient god in this regard and expressions of this divine force like Eros and Venus are still intelligible as public symbols and require little explanation to today's audience. However, if we probe deeper and map out the mythic landscape in this work, we gain invaluable insights into the characters and their arguments. I have therefore included an entire section on *The Symposium's mythos* in Chapter Two. As a general rule, I have tried to stay away from private symbols and focused on those elements that transcend the time and place.

Screenplay Building Blocks: Character Outlines, Beat Sheet and Treatment

Going through the Rules of Adaptation is just the first step on the screenwriter's journey of transforming the original work into a screenplay. The next step is to flesh out the characters and provide Character Outlines. This helps the screenwriter get a better sense of how any given character will act, speak or react. It also gives the producers and network executives an idea of what actors

might be suitable for which roles. Detailed character descriptions, developed near the end of the adaptation process, are included in Chapter Two, "The Student's Task." For a glimpse at the initial character descriptions generated early on in the adaptation process (before I went through the exercise of mapping the mythic landscape beneath *The Symposium*), please see Appendix A. They are by their nature somewhat sketchy, but provide an insight as to how far a description can evolve between drafts.

The next step for the screenwriter is to develop a "Beat Sheet." This is a short, concise document where the screenwriter "beats out the story" by writing an outline based on the essential points (or beats) of each scene. A Beat Sheet is a great tool for determining whether your structure is sound, fits into a network's or a studio's act structure and length, and if there are any beats missing.

Parenthetically, the term "beat" is used in a slightly different fashion in most screenplays. It is used to denote a brief, sometimes almost imperceptible pause between lines or actions in a script. Legend has it that the iconic Constantine Stanislavski, who in teaching his famous "method acting," always emphasized the importance of small but significant pauses in lines and/or action, created this term. He is supposed to have been asked, "How long should I pause?" His answer? "Just a bit." But because of his thick Russian accent, it came out as "Just a beat." The term stuck and is now in common usage, generally justified as being the length of time it takes for your heart to beat once.

The Beat Sheet, therefore, is brief and to the point. For example, in *Drinks at Plato's*, the Beat Sheet for Scene One reads thus:

Scene One: Los Angeles, night. ARISTODEMUS and SOCRATES approach the door of Plato's Exclusive Gentleman's Club. They briefly discuss Cole Goodman's Academy Award. They are going to Goodman's victory party. Everyone who is anyone is going to be there. After a tense moment at the door, the BOUNCER lets them in.

Just the essential information is conveyed: the scene number, location, time, dialogue and action. By screenwriting convention, the names of characters are capitalized at first reference a brief description, usually in parentheses, is included. The Beat Sheet for *Drinks at Plato's* can be found in Appendix B. The Beat Sheet is like a skeleton for what follows: the Treatment.

The Treatment is a detailed outline that gives each scene “the full treatment.” It may even include snippets of dialogue as well as scene action, scene headings and other screenplay elements.¹² This step allows the writer to work out the kinks structurally, helps to find the character’s voice and again gives the network or studio executives the true flavour of the final product. Let’s look at the Treatment for Scene One of *Drinks at Plato's*:

1. EXT. LOS ANGELES, OUTSIDE PLATO'S CLUB - NIGHT.
ARISTOTLE BEST (30s, dark-haired, intense) and SOCRATES (late 30s, handsome in a homely kind of way) approach the door of Plato's Exclusive Gentleman's Club. The neon lights of the club can be seen above their heads. Best cautions Socrates to be on his best behaviour: "Anyone who is anyone is going to be here." Socrates shrugs, unimpressed. Best sighs and drags him up to...

You will note the scene information is more specific, that description a bit more detailed. Also, the above example uses the standard format used by screenwriters in Canada and the United States: 12 point Courier. This is done because by using this font on a standard 8X10” letter-sized page, writers and producers can get a rough gauge of how long a movie a script will produce. The rule of thumb is one minute of screen-time per page. The Treatment for *Drinks at Plato's* is included in Appendix C.

¹² There are any number of books, DVDs, online courses and seminars that give more detailed information on all these essential elements of screenwriting. For a Canadian perspective on the craft, I recommend *Telling It: Writing For Canadian Film and Television* (Anne Frank, Editor. Doubleday Canada – Toronto, 1996).

These basic building blocks guide the screenwriter as he/she fleshes out a script. I will present these as they would normally appear and without commentary in the Appendices. If you find any of the headings or terms puzzling, please refer to the glossary of terms.

Conclusion

As we can see, the screenwriter's task in adapting any novel or play to the screen is a complex one, even if it involves the most straightforward source material. But *The Symposium* is no ordinary work. With almost any other original, the writer would be ready to start writing. With this work, however, an additional step is necessary. Because so much of *The Symposium* must in some way be abbreviated, condensed or simply left out in the transition to *Drinks at Plato's*, it's essential to explain the theoretical basis and context for the philosophical discussion within the screenplay. I will deal with this fully in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: THE STUDENT'S TASK (I)

"The experience of eternity is right here, right now, in all things, whether thought of as good or as evil, is the function of life."

Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*

Whether you're a student of philosophy or a screenwriter, you have to ask yourself one very basic question about *The Symposium*.

How does he do it?

How can Plato have created a work that is so idiosyncratic, so evocative of a particular time and place and at the same time so universal and feels so contemporary? How can an all-male drinking party held 2,400 years ago possibly speak to a contemporary audience with such power? What sort of tools does he use to achieve this feat? In short, what are the mechanics of eternity at work here? A close analysis of the work reveals Plato's genius in using a combination of the two most powerful transformative forces of his age: *mythos* and *logos*. These forces are complimented by the *Volkergedanken* (folk ideas) and the *Elementargedanken* (elementary ideas) inherent in those forces. Herein lies one of Plato's "keys to eternity," enabling this masterpiece to transcend its particular time and place (its *Volkergedanken*) to the universal (the *Elementargedanken*). Further, if we look closely at the myths used in the eulogies given by the speakers in *The Symposium*, we find a hidden dynamic used by Plato to underscore the image of Socrates as the exemplar of human behaviour. We also discover one of the single most important aspects of the work: the manner in which Plato skilfully appropriates feminine wisdom and combines it with

masculine mythic metaphors as well as with a third "androgynous" force into the speeches.

What do we mean when we say *mythos*? By the time of *The Symposium*, *mythos* had become a somewhat adaptable term. Aristotle used it in his *Poetics* as a term to define plot or story. Humphrey House explains in his *Aristotle's Poetics*:

There is no doubt that the term *mythos* had been used in Greek writing earlier than Aristotle to mean such various things as a word; speech; a myth in the sense of a legend; a story, especially a fictitious story; and so on. Equally, there seems to me no doubt that, by the exact way that Aristotle describes that for which he is using the word in the *Poetics*, he is re-defining the word for his own purposes within the context of his treatise, and making of it a technical term of an exact kind.¹³

In a somewhat larger context, Karen Armstrong defines it as ritualized systems of belief found world-wide that "compels us to live more fully... a myth is essentially a guide; it tells us what we must do in order to live more richly." Joseph Campbell emphasizes that *mythos* is grounded in human psychology and the rituals and practices surrounding any particular mythic structure were designed to enable the individual to live an authentic life: "When psyche and metaphysics meet, you have a real myth. And when that happens the sociological and cosmological aspects of your life have to be re-visioned in terms of these realizations."¹⁴ *Mythos* is a way of explaining the human experience in the field and space-time by use of metaphors. The job of *mythos*, according to Campbell, is to simultaneously link the individual into the cosmos in general and to his or her particular society:

¹³ House, Humphrey, page 17, *Aristotle's Poetics*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London 1964.

¹⁴ Page 22, *Joseph Campbell: An Open Life*, edited by John M. Maher and Dennie Briggs, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1989.

In other words, there are two totally different orders of mythology. There is a mythology that relates you to your nature and the natural world, of which you're a part. And there is the mythology that is strictly sociological, linking you to a particular society.¹⁵

These two different orders of mythology are driven by two different sets of ideas. One set governs mythic motifs that are common to humanity around the globe. The other is the local expression of these universal ideas or archetypes within a particular culture. These were defined by the 19th Century ethnologist Adolf Bastian as *Elementargedanken* or "elementary ideas and *Volkergedanken*, or "folk ideas."¹⁶ *Volkergedanken* are of prime interest to the historian or anthropologist. *Elementargedanken* are studied by both the philosopher and the psychologist. Indeed, the elementary ideas are the Ariadnes' Thread that runs through the *mythos* of the entire planet. Campbell argued that the same forces found in Bastian's 19th Century construct were in fact the basis of modern psychology:

The same mythic motifs that Bastian had termed 'elementary ideas' Jung called 'archetypes of the collective unconscious,' transferring emphasis, thereby, from the mental sphere of rational ideation to the obscure subliminal abyss out of which dreams arise. For myths and dreams, in this view, are motivated from a single psychophysiological source -- namely, the human imagination moved by the conflicting urgencies of the organs (including the brain) of the human body, of which the anatomy has remained pretty much the same since 40,000 B.C. Accordingly, as the imagery of a dream is metaphorical of the psychology of its dreamer, that of mythology is metaphorical of the psychological posture of the people to who it pertains.¹⁷

¹⁵ Campbell, Joseph, page 28, *The Power of Myth*, Doubleday, New York, 1988.

¹⁶ Campbell, Joseph, page xiii, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, New World Library, Novato, California, 2002.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, page xiv.

So the link between the individual and society and the individual and the cosmos may be expressed thus: "The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth."¹⁸

But in Plato's time, there was a powerful new transformative force developing in the Western consciousness: the *logos* of reason. Translated variously as "the word" or "reason," *logos* was first used as a philosophical term by Heraclitus in the Sixth Century BCE. In keeping with the *mythos*, Heraclitus articulates (as far as we can gather from the fragments of his work that survive) a *logos* that works both on an individual and a cosmic basis. That is to say, the reason that guides and shapes the individual human being and a divine intelligence or principle that guides and shapes things in the heavens and on earth. This pre-Socratic philosopher appears to have been annoyed that this larger truth that he promulgated was ignored by most people, who appeared to be uninterested in discovering, as he had "the true nature of things, even when helped by a *logos* (or revelation) such as Heraclitus' own."¹⁹ This interpretation of the *logos* as defined by Heraclitus is put forward by a trio of Cambridge scholars:

The great majority fail to recognize this truth, which is 'common' -- that is, both valid for all things and accessible to all men, if only they use their observation and their understanding and do not fabricate a private and deceptive intelligence. What they should recognize is the *Logos*, which is perhaps to be interpreted as the unifying formula or proportionate method of arrangement of things, what might be almost termed their structural plan both individual and in the sum.²⁰

¹⁸ Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, page 48.

¹⁹ G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven and M. Schofield, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1957, page 184.

²⁰ Ibid, page 187.

Initially not antithetical concepts, *mythos* and *logos* slowly drifted apart -- a rift that accelerated after Plato and Aristotle. Karen Armstrong explains the difference between *mythos* and *logos* that led to this division thus:

In Greece, the Axial Age was fuelled by *logos* (reason), which operated at a different level of the mind from myth. Where myth requires either emotional participation or some kind of ritual mimesis to make any sense at all, *logos* tries to establish the truth by means of careful inquiry in a way that appeals only to the critical intelligence.²¹

(To some extent, then, we may rather simplistically define *logos* as "reason" and *mythos* as "passion," which is fitting, given the central theme of the Graduate Liberal Studies program, especially in the first two semesters, is the relationship between the two. Students are encouraged to think in terms of the limits and capacities of both, with *reason* no longer associated with the divine and *mythos* cast as an unreasoning ally of passion. In examining the Western Canon, beginning with the Greeks, we can see how far *mythos* and *logos* have drifted apart and been beggared in the process, with the word "myth" now synonymous with "lie" and *logos*/reason stripped of its rich associations and reduced to secularized cognitive functions.)

This is not to say, however, that *mythos* didn't have an important role in Plato's ethos. As Armstrong reminds us, myth in Classical Athens fulfilled the same function as it does for millions of people around the globe today: providing a foundation on which to explore and explain that which is beyond the measurable or provable. "For all his impatience with myth," writes Armstrong, "Plato allowed it an important role in the exploration of ideas that lie *beyond* the scope of philosophical language. We cannot speak of the Good in terms of *logos*, because it is not a being but the source of both Being and Knowledge."²²

²¹ Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, page 97.

²² Ibid, page 102.

Both *mythos* and *logos* are at work in *The Symposium*. Making full use of the *mythos* of his era, Plato takes the transcendent wisdom of ages (those elementary ideas) and tells them in a manner consistent with his time and place (the folk ideas). He does this by weaving an underlying network of supporting mythic allusions and images throughout the speeches of *The Symposium*. But Plato is not content with this: he sets his images and stories within the context of an internal narrative frame, namely the ritual structure of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The effect is very like that of the figurines of Silenus described in the work, having one apparent form and structure on the outside and an inner narrative that illuminates the divinity within. This complex and beautiful structure allows Plato to achieve several objectives:

- It strengthens his central arguments about love
- It gives us clues as to the speakers' attitudes towards one another
- Most importantly, it imbues Socrates with the power and authority that had been hitherto associated with the gods (or perhaps more accurately, the *daimons*)

The central myth used by Plato to unify this incredibly diverse landscape is that of Hecate-Demeter-Persephone, which is also at the core of the Great Eleusinian Mysteries. By making this myth the defining feature of the landscape, Plato gives his theory of love a recognizable and accepted (not to mention, revered) narrative and metaphorical form, making it more acceptable and understandable to an audience of his contemporaries.

Using *logos*, Plato lifts these elementary ideas one step beyond *mythos*, replacing the secrecy of the mysteries' sacred shrines and halls with the streets and homes of Athens. The result is a powerful synthesis reinforcing the central revelation of the Axial Age: the essential unity of humanity and shattering of the

illusion of the distinction of "lover" and "beloved." In doing so, Plato weaves a golden thread that brings together the opposites.

How then to proceed? In screenwriting, there is a general rule where, in the first act, the world the hero inhabits has to be shown as it is just before the inciting incident -- the first in a string of conflicts/confrontations/complications that challenge both hero and his world. So it is with *The Symposium*, for before we look at the specific mythic landscape that Plato created for his masterwork, we must look at the context wherein it is set. Let us for our prologue look at the mythic landscape of Athens as Plato knew it.

The Mythic Landscape: The Marriage of Zeus and Hera

The victory of the patriarchal deities over the earlier matriarchal ones was not as decisive in the Greco-Roman sphere as in the myths of the Old Testament... for in Greece the patriarchal gods did not exterminate, but married, the goddesses of the land, and these succeeded ultimately in regaining influence, whereas in biblical mythology all the goddesses were exterminated -- or, at least, were supposed to have been.²³

Joseph Campbell

It began with a dance.

Eurynome, Goddess of All Things, rose naked from Chaos, but finding nothing for her feet to rest on, divided the sea from the sky and danced upon the waves. Lonely in her dance, her southward steps created the great serpent Ophion from the north wind. Eurynome's dance grew wilder and wilder until Ophion grew lustful and coiled about her. Their coupling would produce the Universal Egg, out

²³ Joseph Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, pages 28-29

of which all things would tumble: the sun, moon, earth, planets, stars and all living things.²⁴

The ancient inhabitants of Greece, the Pelasgians, all creation was in some manner the children of Eurynome, the "Wide Wandering" goddess personified by the moon. This primal myth contains an ancient archetypical image of the complete human spirit mirrored in the moment of cosmic creation. The feminine power personified by Eurynome, and the masculine by the serpent Ophion. And there is a third force from which they both rose: Chaos, "first of all,"²⁵ neither male nor female, but something in-between. Above all, the Pelasgians worshipped the Mother Goddess in many forms, whether She manifested as Eurynome, Aphrodite or Demeter. Theirs was a "religious system (where) there were, as yet, neither gods nor priests, but only a universal goddess and her priestesses, woman being the dominant sex."²⁶

All this changes early in the second millennium BCE with the Hellenic invasion of Greece. The newcomers were not worshippers of The Goddess, but nomadic herders whose male deities are thunder-bolt hurlers like Zeus (kin to Yaweh and Indra). As stated by Campbell above, the invaders decided on a system of accommodation with their Pelasgian subjects rather than annihilation. Thus, "a large part of Greek myth is politico-religious history."²⁷ Instead of slaying The Mother Goddess like Marduk of Babylon, the invaders' gods became her children.

The Hellenic invasions of the early second millennium B.C., usually called the Aeolian and Ionian, seem to have been less destructive than the Achaean and Dorian ones, which they preceded. Small bands of herdsmen, worshipping the Aryan trinity of gods -- Indra, Mitra, and

²⁴ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths, Vol. One*, Penguin, London, 1955, page 27.

²⁵ See Hesiod, *Theogony*, page 27.

²⁶ Graves, *The Greek Myths, Vol. One*, page 28.

²⁷ *Ibid*, page 18.

Varuna -- crossed the natural barrier of Mount Othrys, and attached themselves peacefully enough to the pre-Hellenic settlements in Thessaly and Central Greece. They were accepted as children of the local goddess, and provided her with sacred kings. Thus a male military aristocracy became reconciled to female theocracy.²⁸

Later invasions were not as peaceful and the power of The Goddess was seriously challenged. A new accommodation had to be reached. By the thirteenth century BCE, there was a new system born of this new military marriage.

The familiar Olympian system was then agreed upon as a compromise between Hellenic and pre-Hellenic views: a divine family of six gods and six goddesses, headed by the co-sovereigns Zeus and Hera and forming a Council of Gods in Babylonian style. But after a rebellion of the pre-Hellenic population, described in the *Iliad* as a conspiracy against Zeus, Hera became subservient to him, Athene avowed herself 'all for the father' and, in the end, Dionysus assured male preponderance in the Council by displacing Hestia. Yet the goddesses, though left in a minority, were never altogether ousted -- as they were in Jerusalem.²⁹

The process of the complete subjugation/repression of feminine wisdom by the patriarchy would not be complete until the Greco-Roman tradition was forcibly married to the Christian ethos in the Fourth Century C.E. But the male appropriation of feminine wisdom and power was still a fairly equal struggle at the time of *The Symposium*. For all his power, Zeus could not stop Eurynome's dance. And there is perhaps no better example of the dynamic between the masculine and feminine in Plato's time than the core myth of both *The Symposium* and the Eleusinian Mysteries: that of Hecate-Demeter-Persephone.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Hecate-Demeter-Persephone form a female trinity predating the patriarchal Hellenes' invasion of Greece. Their rites were shrouded in secrecy, but their stories were celebrated by poets over the millennia, especially in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. Here is a much-abbreviated version of the myth, wherein Demeter is the grain mother, protectress of the earth's fruitfulness, and Persephone is known also as "Kore," or "the girl."³⁰

Persephone, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, was playing with the Ocean nymphs, gathering flowers on the Nysian Plain, when she spotted a plant of surpassing beauty: "One hundred blossom grew from the root of it, it had the sweetest odors." Moving away from her fellow nymphs to pluck this vision of beauty, Persephone is surprised when, all at once, the earth opens up and Hades, Lord of the Underworld, emerges driving his chariot. Hades abducts the nymph and is gone before anyone notices.

Demeter heard her daughter's cries from afar and searched frantically for her, bearing a torch: "For nine days then all over the earth mighty Deo/Roamed about with bright torches in her hands."³¹ But neither gods nor goddesses will tell her what has happened. They dare not, for Zeus himself is complicit in the abduction, having agreed to give his daughter Persephone to his brother Hades beforehand. Only Hecate, goddess of the moon, can bear to tell Demeter the truth of what has happened to her daughter. She has heard Persephone's cries and knows she has been taken against her will, but she has not seen who the culprit is. Demeter finally learns who the abductor is from Helios, who has seen everything from his vantage in the sky. Helios also tells Demeter that Zeus himself has sanctioned the act.

³⁰ From *The Homeric Hymns*, Aspotolos N. Athanassakis, Translator, The John Hopkins University Press, 1976.

³¹ Ibid, page 3.

Demeter, in her grief, quit Olympus and, in disguise, fled to Eleusis. There beside the Well of the Maidens near the house of Keleos, king of Eleusis, she is comforted by the daughters of Keleos. Demeter tells them her name is Doso and the daughters take her to their father's house, where she serves as a nurse. During her stay, she is amused by "careful lambe," a woman of the household who is more imp than servant. During her self-imposed exile, the earth withers, no seed sprouts. Mere mortals are starving and Zeus, fearful that humanity will be wiped out, begs Demeter to return. The goddess agrees, provided that her daughter is returned to her.

This places Zeus in a very awkward position. Nevertheless, he sends Hermes to the Underworld to tell his brother Hades that the deal is off: he must surrender Persephone. Hades agrees, but tricks Persephone by giving her some pomegranate seeds as a farewell snack. In a compromise in keeping with the marriage of Zeus and Hera, it's agreed that Persephone will spend six months in the Underworld with Hades and six months with her mother in the land of the living. The earth is restored to fruitfulness and Demeter heaps honours on the head of the House of Keleos.

This is a barebones account of a psychologically complex myth. As Armstrong argues, this is not a straightforward agricultural myth to explain winter:

This is not a simple nature allegory... like the myth of Inanna, this is another story of a goddess who disappears and returns. It is a myth about death. In ancient Greece, Demeter, the grain goddess, is also Mistress of the Dead, and presides over the mystery cult at Eleusis, near Athens. These were secret rites but it seems they compelled the *mystai* ('initiates') to accept the inevitability of death as an essential part of life, and find that it had thereby lost its terror. The powerful rites impressed the meaning of the myth indelibly on the minds and hearts of those who went through this lengthy initiation. There is no possibility

of a final victory over death. Kore has to alternate perpetually between the upper and lower worlds. There can be no grain, no food and no life, without the symbolic death of the maiden.³²

How was this myth used? There was a considerable industry built around it – presumably a very profitable one – but its popularity argues its enduring allure and utility to the Greek-speaking populace from dawn of antiquity until the Mysteries were closed by the Emperor Theodosius I in 392 CE. To understand how important (and how elaborate) the rites of the Female Trinity were, let us take a walk with them along the dusty roads between Athens and Eleusis.

The rites held at Eleusis, some twenty kilometres from Athens, were incredibly ancient even in the time of Socrates and his contemporaries. As the center of the cult of Hecate-Demeter-Persephone, Eleusis was part of an even more antique web of mysteries and myths that reached back into the Neolithic Age.³³ It echoed similar Sumerian and Babylonian myths (Inanna and Ishtar, respectively), as well as myths and rites surrounding Egypt's Isis.³⁴ Some of what we do know is deduced from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, more to writings of early Christian authors eager to discredit the Mysteries. James Frazer, for instance, put great stock in the *Homeric Hymn* as a key to understanding these shadowy rites:

Among the rites as to which the poet thus drops significant hints are the preliminary fast of the candidates, the torchlight procession, the all-night vigil, the sitting of the candidates, veiled and in silence, on stools covered in sheepskins, the use of scurrilous language, the breaking of ribald jests, and the solemn communion with the divinity by participation in a draught of barley-water from a holy chalice.³⁵

³² Armstrong, *A Short history of Myth*, page 56.

³³ *Ibid*, page 46.

³⁴ *Ibid*, page 46.

³⁵ Frazer, James, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Penguin Books, 1996, London, page 475.

We cannot know exactly what took place, especially inside the sacred places of Athens and Eleusis, but we do have a general notion, enough to serve us on our own journey. What did it mean for Plato and his contemporaries to walk in the footsteps of the Female Trinity? What would have driven these patriarchal Greeks, just beginning to walk from their uneasy marital arrangement with the feminine gods, to hold so tight to the forms of their fathers and mothers? Let us look as closely as is possible through the lens of time clouded by both millennia and the secrecy in which these rites were held to set the context for the Socratic Mysteries of *The Symposium*.

The Mysteries of Eleusis were, rather like the Olympics, divided into greater and lesser Mysteries.³⁶ Indeed, the Lesser Mysteries were held during the month of *Anthesterion* (our February): almost exactly the same time as our modern Winter Olympics are staged. With no disrespect meant for the Winter Games, it is the summer/fall that provides the main feast here, and while *The Symposium* makes reference to both, it is the Greater Mysteries that we must concentrate on. However, let us take a look briefly at the Lesser Mysteries before we proceed to the Greater.

Known as *Myesis*, the Lesser Mysteries were at first held outside the Telesterion in Eleusis. But by Socrates' time, the *Myesis* had been combined with a similar festival celebrating Persephone observed on the banks of the Ilissos at Agrai, near Athens.³⁷ Initiates into the Mysteries of Eleusis had to attend the *Myesis* before they were allowed to undergo the Greater rites. Very little is known about the details of the Lesser Mysteries, but evidence suggests they were built around myths of Persephone that involved the Twelve Labours of Heracles and to stories of Dionysus. Of particular importance is the Twelfth and last labour, the story of Heracles abducting Cerberus, the Hound of Hell. This brings Heracles in direct

³⁶ Stein, Charles, *Persephone Unveiled: Seeing the Goddess and Freeing Your Soul*, North Atlantic Books, Berkley, 2006, page 59.

³⁷ *Ibid*, page 59.

contact with Persephone in her other aspect: that of the Queen of the Underworld.³⁸

While the subtext of the *Myesis* is interesting, they play a supporting role in *The Symposium*, for there is nothing lesser in the mysteries about to be revealed by Socrates. The real star of the show is the Greater Mysteries, for they are the mythic mirror held up to the powerful symbols that are a production of *logos*. The Greater Mysteries, known as the *Epopteia*, comprised a week-long series of events at Eleusis and Athens, including the Holy Night at Eleusis where the climatic *teletai* (the rites themselves) were performed. The elite of the Athenian aristocracy would have rubbed shoulders with commoners, women, people considered barely above barbarians, in this most democratic and unisex of rites. They took place during the month of *Boedromion*, roughly the days of our September and October that overlap the equinox.³⁹ While the Mysteries were a curious mix of public ceremony and cultic secrecy, one thing we do know is that they were surprisingly egalitarian.

The Mysteries were open to all, women, men, slave and free, Athenians and other Greeks. That is, unlike normal festivals, at which men and women had different roles, or which were limited to just one gender, the Eleusinian Mysteries did not discriminate by gender, freedom or nationality: the only formal rule was that the candidates for initiation should be pure and not of unintelligible speech. Women seem to have been initiated on the same basis as men, though we cannot tell in what numbers.⁴⁰

This spirit of egalitarianism can be seen in the lists of officials of the mysteries maintained by Athens over the centuries. Charles Stein gives us a wonderful,

³⁸ Ibid, pages 59-62.

³⁹ The following description of the Eleusinian Mysteries comes primarily from Stein. Other sources include Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Campbell's *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology and Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, by Simon Price.

⁴⁰ Simon Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, page 102.

concise portrait of these officials – male and female, boys and girls. A condensed version of these descriptions follows.⁴¹

The Priestess of Demeter. Held office for life. Events and inscriptions related to the Mysteries were dated by her name. She played the role of Demeter in the procession.

The *Hierophant*. The one who causes the holy things to appear. The highest official in the Mysteries. The Hierophant came from the Eumolpidae and held his position for life. He was supported financially by Athens. Only he could deny initiation to a person deemed by him unworthy. Only he could enter the *Anaktoron*. He was allowed to marry but remained chaste during the days of the celebration.

The *Dadouchos*. The torchbearer. He was the main official second in importance to the *Hierophant*, chosen from among the Kerykes. He held his position for life and was maintained financially by Athens. Had a house within the sanctuary. Mylonas thinks he might have been in charge of lighting effects in the ceremony.

The *Hierokeryx*. The Holy Herald. Drawn from the Kerykes family, he read the proclamation in the *Telesterion* at the beginning of the *teletai* (the rites themselves) that demanded silence of the initiates. He acted the *Mystagogos*, that is, as a sponsor and instructor of the initiates. In Roman times, he held this position for life and was often available for high office in Rome.

With its mix of male and female officials and with parts for both boys and girls, the mysteries were an amazingly family affair as far as ancient rites go. I believe this would have suited Plato in terms of an apt metaphor for the inclusiveness of the Socratic Mysteries and its exoteric nature.

⁴¹ See Stein, page 57.

The mysteries began on the 14th of *Boedromion* with an impressive procession from Eleusis to Athens that brought the sacred objects (the *Hiera*) from the *Anaktoron* to Athens. Exactly what the sacred objects were is not known, for they were carried inside vessels called *kistai* -- large baskets. But the priestesses who carried them during this sacred procession were garbed in impressive robes and led by Dionysus himself in the form of a wooden statue of *Iacchos* along the Sacred Way. It was a religious spectacle designed to impress and awe. The procession was met by youths from Athens who accompanied the priestesses and their attendants to the *Eleusinion*, a sanctuary dedicated to Demeter below the Acropolis.

On the 16th of *Boedromion*, there was a purification ritual for initiates by the sea near Piraeus, Athens port. Initiates (or *mystai*) brought a pig that they washed in the sea, ready for sacrifice the next day. They then proceeded back to Athens for two days of festivities. The 18th of *Boedromion* was dedicated to Asclepius, the semi-divine patron of all physicians. The grand procession of the priestesses, priests, officials, *hiera* and initiates back to Eleusis from Athens took place on the 19th or 20th of *Boedromion*. It was led by the wooden statue of *Iacchos* and started at the god's temple in Athens, the *Iaccheion*. In this way, the link between the Bacchanalian rites and those of Eleusis was recognized – especially the gods' role in the Lesser Mysteries. This march along the Sacred Way must have been a powerful procession. As they walked, the participants sang lively hymns until they reached the Rheitoi Lakes, which had formed the boundary between Eleusis and Athens in ancient times. Here, at dusk, an event known as the *Krokosis* took place, where saffron ribbons were tied around the arms and legs of the *mystai* to protect them from “dark spirits” of the region.⁴²

The *mystai* and the rest of the procession rested and then completed the journey to Eleusis by torchlight, re-enacting Demeter's desperate torch-lit search for

⁴² Compare the drunken Alcibiades tying ribbons on Agathon's hair in *The Symposium*, page 51.

Persephone. Shortly thereafter, they came to the bridge over the river Kephisos, which was believed to be haunted by powerful spirits. To help ward them off and to provide a bit of levity to the *mystai*, comic actors appeared making ribald and lewd jests. These “bridge jests” featured Baubo, a “portly, impish creature with a face painted on her belly who ran about lifting her skirts to show her naked parts and shouting lewd jokes. Baubo is usually thought to double for lambe... who amused Demeter at the palace of Keleos.”⁴³

Once at Eleusis, the procession made its way onto the temple grounds, passing the *Hekateion*, a small temple dedicated to Hecate, one of the key players in the myth. They would also have passed the *Ploutonion*, a shrine consecrated to Ploutos, god of wealth, identified with Hades. The shrine was placed by a cave in the cliff of the hillside on which the citadel of Eleusis had been built and was regarded as an entrance to the underworld. In other words, it was a place where Hades brought Persephone down to his dark kingdom and the exit where the nymph would have re-emerged into the living world. Here we have both the reality of death and the promise of resurrection personified in one spot.

The assembled *mystai* would have danced a choreographed, sacred dance then entered the temple, which had two layers. The outer temple, the *Telesterion*, was enlarged over the centuries to accommodate the ever-increasing number of initiates. The inner temple, the ancient *Anaktoran*, was not. Its dimensions did not change and the throne of the *Hierophant* (“he who makes the sacred objects appear,” the highest official of the rites) faced into this inner shrine. In a series of rites known as the *Epotheia* (“the things that have been seen”), the sacred objects were shown, other rituals performed, and then, the climax:

A sudden flash of light as the great fire goes up, the roof of the *Telesterion* opens to release the smoke and flame, and now the *Hierophant* calls or cries or intones or proclaims or conjures, in a high-

⁴³ Stein, page 74.

pitched voice, these words: 'The Mistress has given birth to a holy boy; Brimo has given birth to Brimos! the strong one to the strong one.'⁴⁴

This proclamation was accompanied by the ringing of the *echeion*, the great gong situated beside the *Hierophant*. This was followed by the final reveal of the most sacred object: the cut ear of grain (or sheaf of wheat or barley). A contemporary audience may be puzzled at how such a seemingly simple act could have such a profound spiritual and psychological impact. It certainly baffled early Christian critics who witnessed it.

In the widely-celebrated and extremely influential mysteries of Eleusis, where the *Kathados-and-Anodos* of the maiden Persephone was again the central theme... the culminating episode in the holy pageant performed in the 'hall of the mystics' at Eleusis, representing the sorrows of Demeter and the ultimate *Anodos* or return of the maiden, was the showing of an ear of grain; 'that great and marvellous mystery of perfect revelation, a cut stalk of grain,' as the early Christian bishop Hippolytus described it -- forgetting for the nonce, apparently, that the culminating revelation of his own holy mass was a lifted wafer of bread made of the same grain. What could have been the meaning of such a simple act as the lifting of a cut stalk of grain? What is the meaning of the elevated host of the mass?⁴⁵

While Hippolytus may have derided the climax of the Mysteries, Stein equates this act (which occurs only after a very lengthy series of rituals, songs and dances to prepare the mind of the initiate to receive it in the correct and most profound manner) with a similar one found in a completely different religious tradition:

⁴⁴ Stein, page 80.

⁴⁵ Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Theology*, pages 185-186.

The Buddha, sitting before the assembly of Bodhisattvas showed them a single flower and thereby produced a 'tipping point' to use the current jargon, and pummelled them instantaneously into the enlightened state; the *mystai*, affected by the *Hierophant's* solemn and simple gesture, would have been similarly initiated into the nature and indeed the presence of the Goddess.⁴⁶

What sort of preparation is needed for such a simple act to produce such a profound reaction? The very same process Socrates describes in his ascent up the ladder to the world of the forms:

The preparation would have included awareness of the multiple meanings of the grain symbol including what Kerényi calls 'supra-ordinate life' -- the existence of life beyond the individual with which the individual nevertheless might come to identify and thereby experience herself as blessed beyond the terrors of the grave.⁴⁷

The initiates have now become *epoptes*, "those who have seen," and there followed a series of revels to bring them down from their transcendental experience. As they say, after the ecstasy, the laundry... But what have they seen? How can the contemplation of a few holy objects account for what is seemingly a huge shift in consciousness? It takes the contemporary mind a bit of a leap, but this journey is perhaps best expressed by Campbell:

As in the play-logic or dream-logic, of any traditional religious pageant, the sacred object is to be identified, at least for the moment of the ceremony, with the god. The cut stalk is the returned Persephone, who was dead but now liveth, in the grain itself. A bronze gong was struck

⁴⁶ Stein, pages 82-83.

⁴⁷ Stein, page 83.

at this moment, a young priestess representing Kore herself appeared, and the pageant terminated with a paean of joy.⁴⁸

The whole purpose of the rites of the Mysteries of Eleusis was to transform the consciousness of the initiate and shift the identification of the ground of his or her being from the mortal to the immortal. Despite the seemingly-simple climax to the rites, there can be no doubt as to the profound nature of the initiates' experience:

The initiate, returning in contemplation to the goddess mother of the mysteries became detached reflectively from the fate of his mortal frame (symbolically, the son who dies), and identified with the principle that is ever reborn, the Being of all beings (the serpent father): whereupon, in the world where only sorrow and death had been seen, the rapture was recognized of an everlasting becoming.⁴⁹

This view is echoed by Armstrong who stresses that the initiates were fully aware that the myth they were participating in was a metaphor, not some historic re-enactment. Despite this, the psychological transformation of the *mystai* was quite genuine:

We know very little about the Eleusinian mysteries, but those who took part in these rites would have been puzzled if they had been asked whether they believed that Persephone really *had* descended into the earth, in the way that the myth described. The myth was true, because wherever you looked you saw that life and death were inseparable, and that the earth died and came to life again. Death was fearful, frightening and inevitable, but it was not the end. If you cut a plant, and threw away the dead branch, it gained a new sprout. Agriculture led to a new, if qualified, optimism... the initiation at Eleusis showed that the

⁴⁸ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 184.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, page 15.

confrontation with death led to spiritual regeneration, and was a form of human pruning. It could not bring immortality -- only the gods lived forever -- but it could enable you to live more fearlessly and therefore more fully here on earth, looking death calmly in the face.⁵⁰

Given this context, and keeping in mind the uneasy marriage between the forces of feminine-masculine/*mythos-logos*, let us examine the mythic landscape constructed by Plato in *The Symposium*, a bittersweet dance between two great powers before their final estrangement.

If the rocky marriage between Zeus and Hera was centuries old by Plato's time, the relationship between of *logos* and *mythos* was still in its first bloom. We can see this in *The Symposium* if we look at its mythic landscape through the lens of *mythos* and with the knowledge of the Eleusinian Mysteries sub-structure. Without, the landscape appears to be overwhelmingly masculine – most of the deities named are male; male-male relations are idealized; even the few female deities that are mentioned are evoked in their male aspect. On the surface, it's an exclusive man's club.

And yet, bearing the mythic context in mind, we can see many of these key elements of the Eleusinian Mysteries in *The Symposium*. Instead of a torchlight procession, Socrates and Aristodemus walk the streets of Athens to Agathon's house. The initiates are seated (albeit on couches, not sheepskin-covered stools). There are ribald jests and bawdy language is used (especially by Aristophanes). The revellers partake in a communal cup of wine (several, in fact). Moreover, that which is enacted in *The Symposium* is an exact parallel to the central myth, for what is the Demeter-Persephone story about if not the ascent (or *anodos*) of the maiden Kore from the depths of the Underworld to the heights of Olympus, restored to the company of the gods? This is precisely the vision

⁵⁰ Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, pages 56-57.

Socrates lays out for his initiates, showing them the means of ascent up his intellectual staircase to the final divine illumination of the ultimate form of beauty and a chance at immortality. The objects held up by the priestesses of Eleusis are mirrored in the things Socrates mentions in his speech, the children of the male birth in beauty from the head, like good laws and beautiful discourses. So now let us walk with the Socratic *mystai* as they journey along the road to revelation.

An initiate seeking enlightenment at the Eleusinian Mysteries took part in a number of processions, including a torchlight march from Athens to the shrine of Demeter in Eleusis, some twenty kilometers distance. In keeping with this tradition, Plato starts our initiation into the Socratic Mysteries with two processions of his own – one for each set of initiates. The very beginning of *The Symposium*, which sets up the frame dialogue, has Apollodorus recounting what happened during the party at Agathon's to Glaucon while walking from the port town of Phalerum to Athens⁵¹ (about ten kilometers distance). Apollodorus is hailed as “Hey, the man from Phalerum!”⁵² Phalerum is also known as Phaleron, and, as Gill notes, “is a port town just east of Peiraeus in Attica.”⁵³ This is precisely where on the 16th of the Athenian month of *Boedromion* the purification ritual for all those taking part in the Eleusinian Mysteries was held by the sea.⁵⁴ Apollodorus can be seen as an *epoptis* (one of “those who have seen,” or already initiated) who has just purified himself by the sea and is walking back to Athens for the start of the procession from the *Eleusinion* to Eleusis. Glaucon may be seen as an initiate and the entire narrative frame is in effect Apollodorus initiating his companion into the Socratic Mysteries.

Apollodorus then relates how Socrates and Aristodemus made their own procession to Agathon's house (an unknown but undoubtedly a comparatively

⁵¹ *The Symposium*, page 3.

⁵² *Ibid*, page 3

⁵³ *Ibid*, page 65

⁵⁴ Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 64.

short distance).⁵⁵ Significantly, the second of these twin processions takes us in the opposite direction of Eleusis and into the heart of Athens. This is appropriate, for while Plato may use the form of the Eleusinian rites for his narrative and the Hecate-Demeter-Persephone story as his mythic core, he is also taking a significant step away from the *mythos* towards the theory of the forms. Further, this direction is in keeping with the metaphor of the subject matter of *The Symposium*: the mysteries of the human heart. The city of Athens was the heart of the Delian League, the virtual empire the city ruled at the time of Socrates and there could be no other place for the High Priest of *logos* to reveal his mysteries.

Once the Eleusinian initiates had arrived at the sacred city, they were eventually led to the *Telesterion*, where the climatic *teletai* (the rites themselves) were performed on the Holy Night. In this case, the *Telesterion* is Agathon's house. Having arrived at Agathon's house, Aristodemus plays the part of the *Hierokeryx* ("Holy Herald"), whose task it was to read the proclamation in the *Telesterion* at the beginning of the *teletai*, which would normally have demanded silence of the initiates. But our *Hierokeryx* is in the ludicrous position of having left his *Hierophant* behind. Instead of silence, we get an illustration of Socrates being Socrates – a man who is above social niceties and also knows how to make an entrance. When Socrates finally does arrive, he finds his initiates are seated in keeping with the Mysteries (albeit on couches, not sheepskin-covered stools). They are veiled, not literally, but metaphorically by their ignorance of the Mysteries. With the *Hierophant* in place, the assembled *mystai* are finally ready for the next step: the call to order by the *Archon Basileus*.

The *Archon Basileus* as we have seen was responsible for bringing order to the boisterous crowd of *mystai* gathered in the *Telesterion*. This is the task that falls to our pompous physician, Eryximachus, with assistance from the underrated Phaedrus. Seen in mythic terms, they fulfill the role of Eros or Phanes who, in the Orphic creation myth, makes the earth, moon and sun, bringing order out of

⁵⁵ *The Symposium*, page 5.

chaos. They both help to impose coherent structure on the symposium itself and set the stage for Socrates' complex arguments about love and beauty. In keeping with the Eleusinian Mysteries, our Socratic *mystai* perform preliminary rituals such as partaking of a communal cup of wine and the singing of hymns.⁵⁶ The mythic atmosphere is established when Eryximachus calls for order and quotes from Euripides' *Melanippe the Wise*: "Not mine the story, but it comes from my mother."⁵⁷ I find it significant that the first mythical reference at the beginning of the symposium proper is a female reference. The more complete quote from this lost and fragmentary play reads:

Not mine the tale – I heard it from my mother –
that once heaven and earth showed one same form,
but when they then were parted from each other,
gave birth to all and brought them to the light,
trees, birds, beasts and what the brine produces,
and the race of mortals.⁵⁸

Melanippe was the heroine of two plays by Euripides: *Melanippe the Wise* (from which Eryximachus quotes) and *Melanippe the Captive*. According to the myth, she was the daughter of King Aeolus of Thessaly and Thea, a prophetess and daughter of the wise centaur Chiron. Aeolus gave Melanippe to a childless man, Desmontes, to raise. Even as her mother was "seduced" by Aeolus, Melanippe (also known as Arne) was in her turn ravished by Poseidon. Discovering that his young charge was with child, Desmontes blinded her, shut her into an empty tomb and, when Melanippe gave birth to twin sons, ordered the infants be left on Mount Pelion to die. But the twins (named Aeolus and Boetus) were rescued by an Icarian cowherd. Upon reaching manhood, the twins were ordered by Poseidon (who revealed to them their true parentage) to return and free their

⁵⁶ *The Symposium*, page 7.

⁵⁷ *The Symposium*, page 8.

⁵⁸ Murray, Gilbert, *Euripides: Translated into English rhyming verse*, George Allen, London, 1904, pages 327-328.

mother. The deed done, Poseidon restored Melanippe/Arne's sight, and she married the King of Icaria.⁵⁹

The story of Melanippe is related to that of our Eleusinian Trinity, Hecate-Demeter-Persephone. Instead of a nymph (full of unfulfilled fertile potential) taken to the underworld by a male deity, we have a wise and beautiful maiden seduced by Poseidon (who helps her realize her fertility – quite against her will) and imprisoned by a jealous foster-father in an empty tomb. She is liberated not by her mother but by her sons, her sight restored by the male deity who got her into the predicament in the first place. The details and the accent differ slightly, since this is a myth of male appropriation of feminine wisdom, but the themes of the unwilling descent into the Underworld and the triumphant return to the land of the living through divine agency is the same.

Nor is Melanippe's tale unique. Graves saw the story as one of a series of related myths involving heroines like Danae and Antiope, related to the Hellenes conquest of the PelgAsian horse-cult centers,⁶⁰ but with a direct connection to the Eleusinian Mysteries. In representations of these related myths, “a priestess of Mother Earth's is shown crouched in a *tholus* tomb, presenting the New Year twins to the shepherds, for revelation at her Mysteries; *tholus* tombs have their entrances always facing east, as if in promise of rebirth.”⁶¹ In the related (almost identical) tale of Antiope, the villain of the piece is the heroine's wicked aunt, Dirce. Again, the mother is liberated from an underground prison by her sons:

Antiope, emerging joyfully out of her dungeon and followed by the scowling Dirce recalls Core's annual reappearance in Hecate's company. She is called Antiope (‘confronting’) in this context, because her face is upturned to the sky, not bent towards the Underworld, and

⁵⁹ See Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. I, pages 158-162.

⁶⁰ Ibid, page 161

⁶¹ Ibid.

'Daughter of Night' -- Nycteis, not Nycteus -- because she emerges from the darkness.⁶²

By citing Euripides and invoking the myth of Melanippe, Eryximachus prepares the ground for Socrates to share the wisdom of Diotima with the partygoers. Melanippe is in herself a wise woman like Diotima and her story a variant of the Hecate-Demeter-Persephone myth at the heart of the Eleusinian Mystery. It is also a feminine image, setting the framework for the speeches to follow and as important in its way as the frame narrative set up between Apollodorus and his companion. The quote emphasizes the unity of the divine creative energy while setting the stage for the ideal forms. It is also entirely in keeping with the mythic images immediately thereafter, that creation is in effect the separation of the primal force of male, female and androgynous. Moreover, Melanippe's tale (involving as it does both "the Deep" of the ocean via Poseidon and the depths of the earth via its tomb imagery) is one that is in perfect harmony with Phaedrus' first mythic image from Hesiod.

Phaedrus's speech, in my opinion, is not given nearly enough credit. Some analysts (Christopher Gill among them) decry his eulogy as inadequate. But his speech prepares some of Socrates' key arguments. And seen in terms of the Eleusinian Mysteries, he symbolically carries out the sacrifices required on the 17th of *Boedromion*, where initiates sacrificed a washed pig to the goddesses.⁶³ Perhaps most importantly, he takes the first step towards transcendence by invoking mythic images of self-sacrifice and the identification with the other. For, as Campbell reminds us, the whole purpose of the rites of the Mysteries of Eleusis were to transform the consciousness of the initiate and shift the identification of the ground of his being from the mortal to the immortal.

⁶² Ibid, page 258.

⁶³ Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 64-65.

The initiate, returning in contemplation to the goddess mother of the mysteries became detached reflectively from the fate of his mortal frame (symbolically, the son who dies), and identified with the principle that is ever reborn, the Being of all beings (the serpent father): whereupon, in the world where only sorrow and death had been seen, the rapture was recognized of an everlasting becoming.⁶⁴

How does Phaedrus do this? The foundation of his argument is built upon both *mythos* and *logos*. In terms of *mythos*, he uses a partial quote from Hesiod's *Theogony* to establish the antiquity of love. He states fairly plainly that "the very first god she devised was love." It is worthwhile to look at the entirety of the quote from Hesiod:

Tell me these things, Olympian Muses, tell
From the beginning, which first came to be?
Chaos was first of all, but next appeared
Broad-bosomed Earth, sure standing place for all
The gods who live on snowy Olympus' peak,
And misty Tartarus, in a recess
Of broad-pathed earth, and Love, most beautiful
Of all the deathless gods. He makes men weak,
He overpowers the clever mind, and tames
The spirit in the breasts of men and gods.⁶⁵

What is significant about this mythic image is its simple, yet elegant statement of the forces required to create the universe. By extension, these are also the forces required to make up a complete human being, since myths speak not only to the universal, but the individual. Chaos is gender neutral, neither male nor female. "Broad-bosomed Earth" is the feminine and love here is shown in its

⁶⁴ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 15.

⁶⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, translated by Dorothea Wender, Penguin Books, London, 1973, pages 27-28.

masculine aspect. This theme of male-female-androgynous is one of Socrates' central arguments and is echoed in multiple forms via various myths and mythic allusions throughout the speeches that follow. Indeed, so persuasive and far-reaching is this principle that it may even be seen in the very first lines of the sacred scriptures of a people who tried desperately to repress the Mother Goddess in all Her forms and reduced here from the Creator to her elementary essence, *tehom*, or "the deep".⁶⁶

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form, and void;

And darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.⁶⁷

These opening verses from the Book of Genesis contain precisely the same balanced forces found in Hesiod. Chaos is represented through the words "without form, and void;" the feminine in "the Spirit of God" and the masculine in "God" Himself. But in keeping with his "giant step for mankind" method, Plato is not content to give Phaedrus nothing more than a mythic underpinning, powerful and widespread though it may have been. Phaedrus also quotes Parmenides, the father of Logos himself. (ref). By pairing Hesiod (mythic authority) with Parmenides (philosophic authority), Plato signals that we should pay heed to Phaedrus and take what he says seriously. Anyone who quotes a philosopher for which both Socrates and Plato had such a high regard (and accurately) must have a valid point. We can therefore assume that Love is indeed the most ancient god, and so he must be in order to be associated with (or supporting) the Form of Beauty. This is essential for Socrates' central argument regarding the

⁶⁶ The Hebrew word *tehom*, the Deep over which the Spirit of God (*Elohim*) moves over in Genesis, is etymologically related to the Babylonian Tiamat, the great Mother Goddess of the deep who is destroyed by the patriarchal god Marduk, hero of the epic *Enuma Elish*. Marduk slays the "dragon monster" Tiamat and cuts her in two, putting half of her as the heavenly roof above the lower half of the waves. So too does Elohim in Genesis, when he "made the firmament from those that were above the firmament." Indeed, as Joseph Campbell notes, "The Bible represents a later stage in the patriarchal development, wherein the female principle, represented in the earlier Bronze Age by the great goddess-mother of all things and in this epic by a monstrous demoness, is reduced to its elemental state, *tehom*, and the male deity creates out of himself, as the mother alone had created in the past." See *Masks of Eternity: Occidental Mythology*, pages 85-86.

⁶⁷ *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, Nelson and Sons, New York, 1952, Genesis 1:1-2, page 1.

Forms. If the Forms are timeless and unchanging, how can Love be a young god, as Agathon argues? And so the marriage of *mythos* and *logos* is established at the very beginning of *The Symposium*, as are the balance of forces required to make a complete human being. But Phaedrus is not finished – he has one more vital task to perform: the sacrifice.

Having established the antiquity of Love, Phaedrus follows good rhetorical form in relating Love's qualities. In keeping with his Eleusinian role, his main point is that Love is the one force that people are willing to sacrifice their own lives for: "It's only lovers who are willing to die for someone else."⁶⁸ Now, this depends on the definition of the term "lover." Consider the mythic examples used by Phaedrus to support his argument. His Classic literary references and his mythic examples all support the role of the beloved, not the lover, in the Greek sense, as the one willing to die for their lover.⁶⁹ "Neither family bonds nor public status nor wealth nor anything else is as effective as love in implanting something which gives lifelong guidance to those who live good lives," says Phaedrus.⁷⁰ This plants the idea of love being the enabler of the good life. It also lays the groundwork for obtaining "the good" forever.

In keeping with his establishing themes, Phaedrus, unlike his colleagues, doesn't exclude the feminine from his argument. Some women are just as willing to die for their lovers as men. He balances his examples: male loyalty is exemplified by Achilles and Patroclus. But he also cites Alcestis, willing to take her husband's place in Hades. He also cites Orpheus, willing to go to the Underworld to bring his wife Eurydice back from the dead. What is the difference between these two myths? Given the Greek propensity for emphasizing the masculine, it is interesting that, in this case, it is the female who fares better than the male. Alcestis was willing to make a genuine supreme sacrifice: Orpheus in effect tries

⁶⁸ *The Symposium*, page 11.

⁶⁹ This thread may be followed even to Christian thought. In this regard, God the Father is the Lover, who sends His Beloved, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for the sake of the world's sins. Seen another way, Christ is the lover and the world (at least, the human world) is the beloved.

⁷⁰ *The Symposium*, page 10.

to trick death. The true or authentic sacrifice is honoured and Alcestis is restored to life. Orpheus gets his just reward for his trickery: his presumption loses him his wife and wins him a horrible death (at the hands of women). The moral here is you can't get something for nothing out of absolute forces.

This is not to say that Phaedrus is a model of sexual equality. He is, after all, a man of his time (as is Plato and, of course, all men at all times, including our contemporary characters in *Drinks at Plato's*), and there is a very important caveat to his paean to lovers and beloved:

A lover is more god-like than a boyfriend because he is divinely inspired. That's why they gave higher honour to Achilles than to Alcestis, and sent him to the Isles of the Blessed.⁷¹

In raising Achilles over Alcestis, the superiority of the masculine over the feminine is asserted. Yet, in the typical Greek way, this is not to discount or negate the feminine. The marriage between *mythos* and *logos* is intact, as is the uneasy truce between the male and female gods on Olympus. What is more, Phaedrus softens the blow in his conclusion. "That is why I say Love is the most ancient of gods, the most honoured, and the most effective in enabling human beings to acquire happiness in both life and death." In other words, the good, forever. And note the use of the word "human beings" rather than "men." Love is capable of bestowing courage and happiness and both men and women – now and even in death. It's an important building block for Socrates to expand upon and restate the case as love being the pursuit of the good forever.

During the course of his eulogy, Phaedrus achieves the important mythic objective of blurring the line between the "lover" and the "beloved." As Gill puts it in his introduction to *The Symposium*, "his main examples are rather surprising because they consist of what are, in Greek terms, 'loved ones' (*eromenon*) rather

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 10.

than 'lover' (*erastai*)."⁷² This is also an important point to establish early on, for later Socrates will expand upon it to show how the distinction between the lover and the beloved dissolves in the light of the ideal form of Beauty. Gill sees Phaedrus' speech as "in many ways, the least adequate,"⁷³ but I see it as establishing the ground upon which Socrates will create his argument, akin to the separation of the heavens and the sea from Chaos on which Eurynome performed her dance of creation.

A crucial part of the Mysteries was the unveiling of the *hiera* or sacred objects to the *mystai*. The purpose of these objects, as has been noted, were to transform the consciousness of the initiate and shift the identification of the ground of his being from the mortal to the immortal. We do not know for certain what these objects were, with perhaps the possible exception of the cut stalk of grain that is generally thought to have functioned as the ultimate revelatory image.⁷⁴

However, it is plain that Plato has his own *hiera* for the Socratic Mysteries and one of his sacred objects is the phallus, symbolic of the male energy that plays a subordinate role in a mythic rite dominated by three goddesses. It is Pausanias that holds the phallus high and, in doing so, helps to set up a mythic landscape of polar opposites that Socrates must reconcile by using the Middle Path. He also provides us with an excellent example of *Volkergedanken* and *Elementargedanken* at work.

In his introduction to *The Symposium*, Gill argues that Plato is implicitly criticizing the "erotic educational" model of male-male relations in Classical Athens.⁷⁵ However, I don't find anything in what Socrates says (or indeed, the way he behaves) that directly criticizes this model per se. Indeed, in his description of the ascent up the ladder to the form of Beauty, he specifically states that the stages

⁷² Ibid, page xxi.

⁷³ Ibid, page xx.

⁷⁴ Phalli may have been among the *hiera* and would certainly have been in keeping with the Bacchanalian link with the Mysteries. See Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 63.

⁷⁵ *The Symposium*, page xxi.

include "loving boys in the correct way."⁷⁶ Rather, I believe the criticism lies in the extremity of Pausanias' position of masculine power as the *only* true reflection of Love and Beauty. The extreme nature of Pausanias' position becomes quite clear when his mythic imagery is scrutinized.

Charged with brandishing his phallic *hiera*, Pausanias does so with a vengeance and overstates his case -- which is perhaps appropriate since his case rests largely on a severed phallus. His central argument is that there are two types of love because there are two different Aphrodites: Heavenly Aphrodite (the older) and Common Aphrodite (the younger). Because antiquity is a virtue in a deity, he identifies Heavenly Aphrodite as the elder goddess, foam-born of Uranus' castrated genitals. The younger manifestation he identifies as the offspring of a sexual union between Dione (another manifestation of The Goddess) and Zeus. He emphasizes Uranian Aphrodite's "maleness" and antiquity in order to support his contention that the homo-erotic lover-beloved relationship is superior to any other relationship, provided it follows strict ethical rules. "The other love derives from the Heavenly Goddess, who has nothing of the female in her but only maleness; so this love is directed at boys," Pausanias declares, adding: "That's why those inspired with this love are drawn towards the male, feeling affection for what is naturally more vigorous and intelligent."⁷⁷

Pausanias assumes that Heavenly Aphrodite was the progeny of Uranus' castrated genitals with no feminine aspect at all -- in other words, a purely masculine deity in feminine form. It's an odd position, for it is no sterile sea or pond into which Kronos casts his father's testicles, but the feminine Deep, personified by the goddess Thalassa. Indeed, the Uranian aspect of Aphrodite is more commonly described as the daughter of Uranus and Thalassa. Moreover, Pausanias ignores the fact that Aphrodite, far from being some sort of male clone

⁷⁶ Ibid, page 49.

⁷⁷ Ibid, page 13.

deity, is also considered yet another manifestation of the Far-Roaming Goddess of creation. As Graves puts it:

Aphrodite ('foam born') is the same wide-ruling goddess who rose from Chaos and danced on the sea, and who was worshipped in Syria and Palestine as Ishtar, or Ashtaroth... her most famous centre of worship was Paphos, where the original aniconic image of the goddess is still shown in the ruins of a grandiose Roman temple; there every spring her priestess bathed in the sea, and rose again renewed.⁷⁸

It is doubtful that Pausanias (or even Plato) knew it, but even Uranus had his feminine side, having his roots in the Aryan male trinity of gods originally identified as Varuna, a pastoral god. But "his Greek name is a masculine form of *Ur-ana* ('queen of the mountains', 'queen of summer', 'queen of the winds', or 'queen of wild oxen') – the goddess in her orgiastic midsummer aspect. Uranus' marriage to Mother Earth records an early Hellenic invasion of Northern Greece, which allowed Varuna's people to claim that he had fathered the native tribes he found there, though acknowledging him to be Mother Earth's son."⁷⁹

However, Pausanias' attitude is typical for his time and reflective of the centuries-old struggle between the old gods and the new that still directly affected Classical Athens. Centuries earlier, the Hellenic invaders moving into Northern Greece and Asia Minor had attempted to supplant the Mother Goddess-worshipping, matriarchal Pelasgian inhabitants. This struggle for male dominance – and therefore rightful rule over Greece -- reshaped the mythic landscape of both the conquerors and the conquered. The Greeks attempted to make everything

⁷⁸ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. 1, page 49.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, page 32.

masculine, even their female deities. The extent of this struggle and reinvention can be seen in the origins of Uranus himself.⁸⁰

The deadly strife must refer to the clash between the patriarchal and matriarchal principles which the Hellenic invasions caused. Gyges ('earthborn') has another form, *gigas* ('giant'), and giants are associated in myth with the mountains of northern Greece.

Thus when Zeus and his Aryan thunderbolt hurling Olympians cast the Giants out of heaven, they represent the patriarchal Hellenes throwing the Mother Goddess worshipping inhabitants out of paradise. It is the start of a long process that will end in the complete triumph of patriarchy during the Christianization of the Roman Empire and, for Graves, spell the end of the power of the Greek *mythos*. "The institution of patriarchy ends the period of true myth; historical legend then begins and fades into the light of common history."⁸¹ Parenthetically, I find it a curious irony that the patriarchal society is born of a myth of castration – the act of separating the male sexual organs and tossing them upon the waves. For centuries later, this act results inevitably in the symbolic castration of the feminine, as the Mother Goddess is finally suppressed.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves: at the time of *The Symposium*, the marriage between the upstart patriarchal deities and the earlier matriarchal ones was still functioning. This is what makes the speech of Pausanias so radical. By taking a polarized, black-and-white position, Pausanias is not only appropriating feminine wisdom -- he's declaring a male monopoly on virtue. "So it's absolutely right to gratify a lover in the hope of gaining virtue. This is the heavenly love that

⁸⁰ The tale of Uranus-Kronos is found in many forms, but is remarkably consistent from people to people. According to Graves "the Hitites make Kumaarbi (Cronus) bite off the genitals of the Sky-god Anu (Uranus), swallow some of the seed, and spit out the rest on Mount Kansura where it grows into a goddess; the God of Love is thus conceived by him is cut from his side by Anu's brother Ea. These two births have been combined by the Greeks into a tale of how Aphrodite rose from a sea impregnated Uranus's severed genitals. Kumarbi is subsequently delivered of another child drawn from his thigh—as Dionysius was drawn from Zeus – who rides a storm-chariot drawn by a bull, and comes to Anu's help. The 'knife that separated the earth from the sky' occurs in the same story, as the weapon with which Kumarbi's son, the earth-born giant Ullikummi, is destroyed." Ibid, page 39.

⁸¹ Ibid, page 20.

belongs to the Heavenly goddess and is the source of great value to the city and individuals, because it forces the lover to pay attention to his own virtue and the boyfriend to do the same. All other forms of love derive from the other Love, the Common one.”⁸²

In mythic terms, Pausanias makes the masculine the ideal; an elite form of love only to be shared among free aristocratic males. And it is here we can see Bastian's of *Volkergedanken* and *Elementargedanken* at play. It is true that Pausanias derides “Common” Aphrodite and the union of male-female energy (sexual or otherwise) and overstates the case in terms of Uranian Aphrodite’s “maleness,” denying her as another manifestation of the Mother Goddess/Eurynome. Yet, he also introduces the very important ethical point of intent. Moreover, Pausanias is concerned that Common Love makes men attracted “to bodies rather than minds.”⁸³ To the extent that indiscriminate sexual behaviour without regard to its consequences or the effects on the other is unethical, Pausanias is on solid ground. Where his argument rings hollow is with regard to the relationship between the lover and the beloved. Pausanias identifies very strongly with the lover, not the beloved. His “rules governing the love of boys” and those “governing the love of wisdom and other kinds of virtue” are inextricably bound. In other words, wisdom is only for the favoured few, not the “common” folk. However, he does establish the link between appreciating the physical form of beauty and mental beauty. But again, he sees this from his own point of view. It is not until Pausanias can incorporate his “inner beloved,” so to speak, with himself that he will be able to start down the path to the Forms, for as Socrates puts it, it is only when the distinction between the two dissolves that you get a glimpse of pure, unadulterated love.

Seen in Bastian's terms, then, Pausanias' “rules governing the love of boys” is a local practice, a folk idea: *Volkergedanken*. But at its core there is enough for

⁸² *The Symposium*, page 17.

⁸³ *Ibid*, page 13.

Socrates to use as a link and a parallel to the greater and enduring elementary idea that transcends the particular custom. That is to say, the very idea of the "correct way" of loving boys mirrors the true lover's relationship with the spiritual guide teaching him/her the way of love, regardless of gender. The nature of the true lover is not just to love the body, but by experience through the physical acts of love (a tantric yogi would say through the energy generated by the root chakra) to transcend to the level of the heart and mind -- this is not to say that the physical or lower chakric energies are to be ignored or sublimated: they are to be embraced, harnessed and used in the ascent. It is all one energy, it simply manifests in different aspects depending on the energy center that the lover is dominated by/fixated upon. Socrates' relationship with Diotima, although apparently non-sexual, exactly mirrors this. And the nature of the beloved -- the aspects for which the lover loves him or her or it -- changes -- or rather, the perception of the lover changes as he experiences these aspects. And so from the physical to the heart and mind, until the lover reaches that highest chakra or mode of consciousness whereby all boundaries dissolve and the lover realizes that he and the beloved are one. The lover of knowledge becomes the beloved of his yogi and of the ideal form itself. That is the *Elementargedanken* that Plato expresses and is one of the features that gives *The Symposium* its timeless, eternal quality.

So it is not so much that Plato sees anything intrinsically wrong with Pausanias' position. But the phallus is just one of several key *hiera* that the *mystai* must see in order to transform and expand his or her consciousness -- a single piece of the puzzle, not to be content with. The initiates into the Socratic Mysteries have seen the symbol of male power. Now it is time for them to gaze upon a rod of a slightly different nature.

On the surface, Eryximachus's speech has the least amount of mythic imagery in the entire symposium. Our physician is the most scientific, the most rooted in *logos*, of all the speakers. But in the shadowy world of the Mysteries, such

appearances are often deceiving. For while he may prefer Heraclitus to Heracles, Eryximachus (because of his profession) is a living, breathing *hiera*: the rod of Asclepius. He claims this mythic figure as an ancestor and as a physician, would likely have been a member of the Guild of Asclepius, the legendary demi-god/hero and founder of medicine. This is entirely in keeping with the story framework of the Eleusinian Mysteries, since an entire day of the festivities was devoted to Asclepius during the Greater Mysteries. The 18th of Boedromion was dedicated to this son of Apollo and Asclepius was worshipped in the *Eleusinion* itself.⁸⁴

Asclepius is a potent mythic symbol. The stories of his birth vary, but in all cases, he is the son of Apollo, the sun god who is also (among other things) the patron of medicine and music.⁸⁵ His mother, a mortal woman named Coronis, was the daughter of Phlegyas, king of the Lapiths. In one version of the myth, Coronis is unfaithful to Apollo and is killed by the god's sister, Artemis. Even as Coronis' body is on the funeral pyre with Hermes ready to set it alight, Apollo suddenly decides to spare his unborn son and Asclepius is cut from his mother's womb just in time. Apollo takes the child to Cheiron, the wise centaur, who teaches him the art of medicine. As the son of a god, Asclepius is no ordinary physician. He obtains the favour of Athena, who gives him two vials of the gorgon Medusa's blood. With the blood drawn from Medusa's left side, he is able to raise the dead. The blood taken from the gorgon's right side destroys life instantly. Raising the dead, however, angers Hades, who complains to Zeus, who obligingly slays Asclepius with a thunderbolt. Zeus, however, after some reflection (and after enduring the wrath of Apollo) restores Asclepius to life and sets him in the heavens holding a healing serpent (an image very similar to that of Eurynome and her lusty partner Ophion -- and no accident).

⁸⁴ Stein, page 65.

⁸⁵ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. I, pages 173-175.

The myth of Asclepius is yet another example of the marriage between the Mother Goddess and thunderbolt-hurling male deities worshipped by the patriarchal Hellenes. It illustrates how even in mortals, when the divine forces from both the masculine (Apollo) and the feminine (Athena, Medusa) are combined in the correct balance, humans have the power to rise above death: indeed, are so powerful that they must be destroyed by the gods. And we may perhaps even add a third force that brings the opposites of male and female together -- an androgyny that is reflected in Asclepius himself, whose name means "unceasingly gentle."⁸⁶ Moreover, we can see Asclepius as a middle force (or *daimon*) standing between the opposites of life and death. His myth is one that points to the transcendent potential within every individual, and moreover, one that emphasizes the unity and harmony of the various forces within the human psyche as opposed to their polarization (as articulated by Pausanias).

Measured by the rod of Asclepius, Eryximachus falls very short indeed of his mythic counterpart. Rather than eulogize unity, he celebrates the polarity established by Pausanias.⁸⁷ This, however, is one of several important purposes his speech serves: and in doing so, he makes a veiled criticism of his host, Agathon. Another is to establish "how great and powerful Love is, and how his power extends to all aspects of human and divine life."⁸⁸ The latter is crucial to Socrates' Theory of Forms and his assertion that the ideal form of Beauty as the ever-eternal force governing life.

While Eryximachus may not use a great deal of mythic imagery, he starts his eulogy by using the Muses (significantly, another manifestation of feminine power) to pick up on and expand upon Pausanias' theme of duality. It's obvious that the physician doesn't like his host's lover, for he chides Pausanias right off the top, saying he has "started his speech well but did not carry it through to its

⁸⁶ Ibid, page 176.

⁸⁷ It may be noted that this recurring theme of "Heavenly" and "Common," or elite versus popular, is also an aspect of the Mysteries. People who have not been initiated would have been seen as common whereas the initiated, or "*Epopteia*" -- "those who have seen" -- were among the elite.

⁸⁸ *The Symposium*, page 18.

proper conclusion."⁸⁹ Eryximachus follows Pausanias' logic in declaring "Heavenly" Urania, the elder sister superior to the younger Polymnia, who is "common." Again we see the theme of "elder" or elite versus "common." This analogy can be seen as an insult to Agathon. Eryximachus praises those people who are inspired by Urania (which is consistent with Pausanias' position on the superior nature of those inspired by Uranian Venus) and diagnoses those under the influence of Polymnia (also known as Polyhymnia) as potentially unhealthy. This muses' inspiration must be used with caution lest the recipient become "self-indulgent."⁹⁰ This is a slap in the face to Agathon, for Polymnia was the muse that brought "distinction to writers whose works have won for them immortal fame."⁹¹ Has not Agathon just won immortal fame at the Linnean Festival? It is also as good as calling Agathon "common" to his face, thus betraying Eryximachus' attitude towards his host. The insult to Pausanias is direct, the barb aimed at Agathon is wrapped in a mythic cloak.⁹²

Eryximachus does not dwell at length on Urania and her attributes, nor does he need to. The Muse's virtues would have been well-known to Plato's audience. She is described by Diodorus as being inspirational in a far more spiritual manner than her younger sister Polymnia – less prone to stroke the self-indulgent artist's ego: "Urania, because men who have been instructed of her she raises aloft to heaven (*ouranos*), for it is a fact that imagination and the power of thought lift men's souls to heavenly heights." She acts as an illustration of Beauty in its highest Form.

⁸⁹ Ibid, page 18.

⁹⁰ Ibid, page 20.

⁹¹ *Diodorus Siculus, Library of History 4. 7. 1*, www.theoi.com/Text/DiodorusSiculus4B.html: "Hesiod even gives their [the Mousai] names when he writes: 'Kleio, Euterpe, and Thaleia, Melpomene, Terpsikhore and Erato, and Polymnia, Ourania, Kalliope too, of them all the most comely.' To each of the Mousai men assign her special aptitude for one of the branches of the liberal arts, such as poetry, song, pantomimic dancing, the round dance with music, the study of the stars, and the other liberal arts . . . For the name of each Mousa, they say, men have found a reason appropriate to her: . . . Polymnia, because by her great (*polle*) praises (*humnesis*) she brings distinction to writers whose works have won for them immortal fame." See also Hesiod, author, Dorothea Wender (translator), *Theogony and Works and Days*, Penguin Books, London, 1973, pages 25-26.

⁹² It's interesting that music, that most heavenly and divine of arts, has, like all the ancient expressions of divinity, been reduced to mathematics, monochromatic progressions and physics. Here is another key – not just in what Socrates is talking about but our current dilemma. The great composers of the Enlightenment, like Bach, saw their music as echoes of the divine, proof of God's design and purpose. Scientists like Newton shared this view. Here we see yet another fraction point between the *mythos* and *logos* that we are dealing with in our own time.

This then is the third and most crucial function of Eryximachus' argument, ham-fisted though it may be: laying the ground for Socrates' description of the ascent to the ideal form of beauty. In keeping with his assertion that Love is the governing force not just of humans, but of all life, the doctor's mythic imagery also expands the realm of feminine wisdom from the depths of the sea evoked by Pausanias to the stars themselves. Urania, significantly, is the muse of astrology and astronomy – heavenly sciences and the counterpart to the evocation of the feminine aspect of divinity being confined to the deep. Here we see Plato foreshadowing Socrates' description of the ascent to the ideal form of beauty from the lowest to the highest: the distinction between the immediate and physical versus that which is heavenly or transcendent.

Eryximachus succeeds despite mangling Heraclitus' argument about rhythm and harmony to further his analogy about the two types of love. What he's awkwardly trying to express is that gods (or *the* god, Eros) acts as an intermediate force, reconciling opposites. This is completely consistent with the underlying mythic message soon to be articulated by Aristophanes and, in a far more comprehensive manner, Socrates. His argument may be badly expressed, but by using a quote from Heraclitus (the father of *logos* and whose philosophy is dealt with by Plato in *Theaetetus*), Eryximachus comes closer than any of his fellow speakers to articulating the new marriage arrangement between *mythos* and *logos*. In Eryximachus' view, *logos* has become the *pater familias*, with greater authority than the *mythos*.⁹³

⁹³ Having said that, it must be noted that Hippocratic physicians, while rational and scientific in their approach to treating disease, were not essentially anti-religion. "Sanctuaries of Asklepios were later established throughout the Mediterranean world and attracted the sick, who sought miraculous healing from the god. Hippocratic medicine and temple-healing coexisted apparently without antagonism. Temple-healing by Asklepios was regarded as complementing secular medicine, particularly in chronic cases for which medicine could do little. Both secular and religious healing came from the same god, who assisted physicians as well as the sick. Asklepios was the patron of physicians. Galen called himself a servant of Asklepios, and in Athens physicians offered sacrifices to the god for themselves and their patients." From *Hippocrates from Encyclopedia of Religion*, Macmillan Reference USA, 2001-2006.

A further irony of Eryximachus' speech is his reference to Hippocrates' theory of "filling and emptying."⁹⁴ The doctor has just spent the last few minutes emphasizing the polarized nature of love. Yet Hippocrates "taught that one cannot understand the body without taking into account the whole."⁹⁵ Here in a Hippocratic nutshell is the problem with Eryximachus: he's got all the pieces but doesn't seem to know how to make them fit together in harmony. Socrates is the one who takes the body – and spirit – as a whole and gives us a lasting and vivid explanation of love as a universal principle. Eryximachus takes the same concept and cures hiccups with it.⁹⁶

Next is the speech of Aristophanes, which has puzzled readers for centuries. What is this comedic speech, so different in tone and approach from all the others, doing in *The Symposium*? What are we to make of his fantastic tale of super humans so powerful that the gods themselves split them apart? If we look through the lens of *mythos* and remember we are walking down the road to Plato's version of the Sacred Way, Aristophanes' contributions at once cease to seem bizarre and can be seen as invaluable. He is, in effect, the impish Baubo, the principle character that provided the *mystai* with some levity during the "bridge jests" portion of the torchlight procession to Eleusis. His speech is also a bridge between the preliminary arguments about love and the main event featuring Agathon and Socrates.

This is not to suggest that Aristophanes does nothing more than provide comic relief -- far from it. Further illumination as to his role can be gleaned from the mythic references in his speech. Very early on during his flight of fancy, he refers to Otus and Ephialtes, the *Aloeids* (or "Crushers").⁹⁷ Indeed, he goes so far as to say that the version of the Terrible Twins' tale told by Homer really refers to the

⁹⁴ *The Symposium*, page 19.

⁹⁵ *Hippocrates from Encyclopedia of Religion*. The quote goes on to describe how Hippocrates "he explained disease as the result of air that forms in the body during the process of digestion."

⁹⁶ Eryximachus' remedy for Aristophanes' hiccups is straight out of Hippocrates. 'Sneezing coming on, in the case of a person afflicted with hiccup, removes the hiccup.' (*Aphorisms*, Hippocrates, translated by Francis Adams. In the same treatise, Hippocrates warns us that "Hiccup in inflammation of the liver bad." Wise words for our hung-over revellers. Also: "If a dropsical patient be seized with hiccup the case is hopeless."

⁹⁷ *The Symposium*, page 23.

super-humans in his own story. The *Aloeids* were the sons of Poseidon and Iphimedeia, wife of the giant Aloeus. Like all children with a divine parent in Greek myth, Otus and Ephialtes are quite extraordinary. They "grew one cubit in breadth and one fathom in height every year and, when they were nine years old, being then nine cubits broad and nine fathoms high, declared war on Olympus."⁹⁸ A cubit is about eighteen inches and a fathom roughly six-feet, meaning Poseidon's precocious progeny were over thirteen feet wide and fifty-four feet tall when they took on Zeus' Pantheon. Further emboldened by a prophesy that neither men nor gods can kill them, Otus and Ephialtes make a platform for their assault on lofty Olympus by piling Mount Ossa on top of Mount Pelion. After defeating and tying up Hermes, they state their intentions of raping Hera, queen of the gods (and goddess of woman and childbirth) and Artemis, the virgin goddess of the moon and the hunt. They are defeated by the ingenuity of Artemis, who sends a message to the *Aloeids* to the effect that, if they raise their siege of Olympus, she will meet them on the island of Naxos and "there submit to Otus's embraces."⁹⁹ While Otus is overjoyed, Ephialtes is enraged, for he has not received a similar message from Hera. Once on Naxos, the *Aloeids* begin to quarrel. The giant-sized argument is at its height when Artemis appears in the form of a white doe and runs between the two giant brothers. In their frenzy to kill the doe, Otus and Ephialtes fatally spear each other. Thus the prophecy that neither man nor gods can kill them is fulfilled. The myth is an example of how wisdom (especially wisdom in its feminine aspect) can overcome even the most powerful (masculine) brute force, especially when that energy runs amok.

(Lest we think of the brothers as simple musclemen with more brawn than brains, it should be noted that the *Aloeids* are also credited with founding the cult of the Muses on Mount Helikon and even gave the Mousai their names: Mneme (Memory), Melete (Practice) and Aoide (Song).¹⁰⁰ It is to the Helikonian Muses

⁹⁸ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. One, p. 136.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, page 137.

¹⁰⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9. 29. 1, www.theoi.com/Text/Pausanias3A.html. "They say that Ephialtes and Otos were the first men to sacrifice to the Mousai on Helikon and to declare this mountain sacred to the Mousai: and the founded Askre too. Hegesinous wrote about this in his Atthis : `Askre and Poseidon who shakes the earth lay together:

that Hesiod, so often cited by the Symposium's speakers, calls upon in his work, *Theogony*. The dual nature of masculine energy is evident -- and perhaps it is a sly dig (or compliment) to Agathon, who, after all, must have called upon Aoide and her sisters when composing and performing his tragedy.)

In evoking the story of the *Aloeids*, Aristophanes counters Pausanias' argument that the masculine is superior to the feminine in a subtle and entertaining way -- one that gives no offence to his host's lover (unlike the speech of Eryximachus). The cautionary tale of the Terrible Twins is there to remind Plato's audience that male energy running out of control can have catastrophic consequences. It serves as a sort of mythic mirror to Aristophanes' own private myth of the nature of the original humans. In the great comedians' tale, male and female energy work together in harmony, which is in contrast to the two previous speakers. He also introduces the critical idea of a third gender, the androgynous, of the combination of both male and female.¹⁰¹ This third force is rather like the daimon Love described by Socrates in his speech, the essential element that is missing from the speeches of Pausanias and Eryximachus, one that can reconcile the perceived opposites of male and female. The three kinds of humans described by Aristophanes, taken together, are a metaphor for the complete person capable of the ascent to the ideal Form of Beauty. But such a person is also capable of channelling his or her energies in a destructive manner (so destructive that according to Aristophanes, Zeus cuts the original humans in half rather than destroying them, leaving their descendants roaming the earth looking for their other half).

Looked at in this light, the speech of Aristophanes can be seen as presaging Socrates' essential message of the power of a unified human psyche to challenge the gods themselves and attain a kind of immortality. Further,

the season circled and she bore his son--Oioikos; with the sons of Aloeus he built the foundations of Askre under the streaming feet of Helikon . . . The sons of Aloeus held that the Mousai were three in number, and gave them the names Melete (Practice), Mneme (Memory), and Aoide (Song)."

¹⁰¹ *The Symposium*, page 22.

Aristophanes shows the middle way through the polarities established by Pausanias and Eryximachus. There is no decrying "common" love here:

What I am saying applies to all men and all women too: our human race can only achieve happiness if love reaches its conclusion, and each of us finds his loved one and restores his original nature. If this is the ideal, under the present circumstances what comes closest to it must be the best; that is to find a loved one who naturally fits your own character. If we want to praise the god who is responsible for this, we should rightly praise Love... He also holds out to us the greatest hopes for the future: that if we show reverence towards the gods, he will restore us to our original nature, healing us and so giving us perfect happiness.¹⁰²

Aristophanes has played the role of Baubo to perfection. On the surface, he is just as lewd, impish and impious as his Eleusinian counterpart. Yet beneath the surface, he is also performing the same crucial function: expanding the minds of the assembled *mystai*. Charles Stein sees the Bridge Jests and Baubo's role as functioning "to further the process of opening the spirits of the celebrants to unanticipated energies... lest solemnity and awe become fixed attitudes."¹⁰³

Aristophanes puts us once again solidly on the Sacred Way. In the spirit of the mysteries of Eleusis, all are welcome on his path to Love: men and women, gay and straight and in-between. He has managed to perform his function as Baubo in a profound manner, using his comic and poetic genius. It is the highest point the symposium has reached so far. But what follows after Aristophanes is a low that will wipe the smile of the faces of the *mystai*.

¹⁰² Ibid, page 27.

¹⁰³ Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 74.

Every celebration of the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis featured the initiation of a special young Athenian male from an aristocratic family that had been specially selected for state sponsorship. The city paid for his induction into the Mysteries and to be so chosen was an honour. His title, *Pais aph' Hestias*, means "the boy who is initiated from the hearth of Athens."¹⁰⁴ His participation -- and the state's largess in paying his initiation fees -- was meant to ensure the Goddess' blessings upon the city. "From the hearth" is also a reference to Hestia, goddess of hearth and home. The *Pais aph' Hestias* would have travelled in procession down the Sacred Way with the rest of the officials and the *mystai* to the temple grounds. Before entering the *Telesterion*, he would have participated in the sacred dance outside. This done, he would have joined the crowd entering the temple, jostling and shouting in eager anticipation of having the Mysteries revealed.

Our host Agathon is ideally suited to play this part in the Socratic Mysteries. Young, aristocratic and accomplished, the honour of his win at the Linnean Festival a suitable metaphor for the honour of being chosen as the *Pais aph' Hestias*. But as we have seen before in Plato's rites (especially in the case of Eryximachus), not everyone is up to their role. Agathon is certainly not and, true to his character, goes one step further: he leads our Socratic *mystai* in a profane dance of sophistry, devoid of substance and, if embraced, ultimately harmful to the revelatory process already under way.

In mythic terms, Agathon's speech mistakes style for substance. He also twists the *logos* completely out of shape with wild, unsupported leaps. His very first assertion illustrates this clearly. He begins with the statement that Love is in fact the youngest of the gods.¹⁰⁵ He makes this statement without any authority or citation -- it has no mythic support whatever. Lacking these, he instead uses a clever argument based on Phaedrus' speech about the antiquity of love: how

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, page 58.

¹⁰⁵ *The Symposium*, page 29.

could have Chronos castrated his father, Uranus, if Love had been among the gods? Agathon ascribes their actions to the absence of the god and of the influence of Necessity upon them. Why does our *Pais aph' Hestias* begin his dance with such a mythic misstep? Because Agathon is more reminiscent of Narcissus than the boy of the hearth. He is completely self-centered and egotistical. The grand vision of Love as a universal and ancient power is not for him. The host of this symposium is the beloved and in his view, that is exactly what Love is limited to. He makes this clear which each further move he makes in the dance profane.

Narcissus/Agathon builds his case on a string of magnificent contradictions and inventions. His statement that there is “peace among the gods” and has been “since Love began to rule among the gods” is sheer sophistry: first, there is never peace among the Olympians: as manifestations of the competing drives within humanity and the cosmos, there can never be complete harmony. Further, it is Zeus and not love that rules Olympus. From the start, Agathon is on very shaky mythic ground -- a tenuous position that every contemporary of Plato’s would have recognized. Desperately in need of some kind of solid citation, he quotes Homer’s description of Delusion, using her as an example of how sensitive Love is. He uses this point to emphasize the exclusive nature of Love; he won’t find a home in an insensitive or “tough character,” but moves on to find a home in a person with “a soft character.” Significantly, Agathon does not finish this Homeric quote, which in its entirety reads:

Ate (Delusion) has skill to blind
and stealthy feet so soft they do not press
the earth when she treads, so she can enter hearts
confounding mortals one after another.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ *The Iliad*, Homer, Herbert Jordan, translator, page 361, University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.

Delusion uses those soft feet to deceive the hearts of men, and this is precisely what Agathon/Narcissus is doing here. Far from being Erymimachus' universal force acting upon all living things, Love is for the young and beautiful, no one else¹⁰⁷ (which would, of course, rule out Socrates as a lover). Even when he finds a solid myth to support his argument, Agathon/Narcissus twists it to suit his faulty premise. In his version of the Ares-Aphrodite affair (where the two lovers are caught in bed together by the jealous Hephaestus), it is Ares who was captured by Love (or more precisely his love of Aphrodite) rather than being ensnared by a suspicious husband. This is an absurd claim, mythologically speaking, and underscores the remarkably unsound nature of the playwright's speech. It is Orwellian in its direct contradiction of the facts, akin to "Freedom is Slavery" and "War is Peace."

But Agathon/Narcissus' real homerun in this "Big Lie" speech comes when he tries to make Apollo, Hephaestus, Athena and even Zeus Himself "pupils of love." Because they are pursuing Love in their endeavours, Love is superior to them. This would come as a surprise to just about anyone in Classic Athens. His summation tries to twist the mythological landscape into an unrecognizable, self-serving heap. There are many ways in which Agathon betrays his complete lack of understanding about love and his total identification with the beloved. His treatment of the mythological landscape amplifies the holes in Agathon's argument. It illustrates how delusional the self-centered, ego-driven mind is and how far out of touch with reality on any plane he is.

The entire problem with Agathon/Narcissus is that he is devoid of *Elementargedanken* on which to hang his *Volkergedanken*. There is no depth here, only a shallow self-centered view of Love, which would do Athens no credit with the Goddess. However, Agathon does suit the office of *Pais aph' Hestias* in one respect. The role is associated with Hestia, goddess of the hearth and home, originally one of the twelve Olympians. But this ancient goddess was replaced by

¹⁰⁷ *The Symposium*, page 30.

Dionysus, who took her spot on Olympus.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Agathon is knocked off his lofty perch by Socrates, who in the role of Dionysus, puts our errant youth in his place, for he is not ready (nor able) to grasp the transcendent mystery that has been revealed to him.

Socrates—The *Hierophant* and the *Epotheia*

In his celebration of love we may recognize the percolation upward of an earlier, pre-Hellenic wisdom, from the world of the serpent queens of Crete, of Circe also, and Calypso. But in the male womb of his brow the lore has been transmuted to accord with the inorganic perfume of the banquet. We can only guess what it might have been from Diotima herself. As it comes from Socrates, thus alone do we know it.¹⁰⁹

Socrates has the most difficult task of all the speakers in *The Symposium*. He is not there simply to eulogize love, but to present a grand, transcendent vision: something completely consistent with his role as the *Hierophant*, whose duty it is to make the sacred objects appear, not simply to show them.¹¹⁰ In order to do this, he has to show his initiates how hollow Agathon's fine-sounding speech really is, build upon the mythic groundwork laid by the previous speakers, and then show them the ladder of ascent to the true form of beauty. To achieve this, he assumes a number of mythic roles to serve his high office. Little wonder that Socrates speech is the finest example of the marriage between *mythos* and *logos* in the entire work. It is by using these two forces that Socrates makes the first of his sacred objects appear – a golden sword.

¹⁰⁸ Graves relates one version of the myth that has Hestia stepping down voluntarily "glad of any excuse to escape the jealous wranglings of her family." *The Greek Myths*, Vol. One, page 106.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 230.

¹¹⁰ This is an important distinction: to merely show a sacred object to an initiate is one thing: to cause them to appear is quite another order of mythic experience. See Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 79.

Socrates' first task is to show how Agathon's beautifully-constructed eulogy (for which the young tragedian has been lavishly praised) is not merely empty, self-serving rhetoric, but harmful to anyone hoping to make the ascent to the Form of Beauty. He uses his traditional method of dialogue, of course, but there is a strong mythic underpinning. It is no coincidence that Socrates starts his exchange with Agathon with an allusion to the gorgon, an obvious play on the Sophist orator Gorgias. Socrates speaks of Agathon using Gorgias' "Gorgon-like head" and how it would "turn me into speechless stone."¹¹¹ He even uses a Gorgian turn of phrase by claiming to have made a fool of himself by thinking he could equal Agathon's praise of Love (a feature of Gorgian rhetoric being extravagant claims based on flimsy reasoning).¹¹² Mythically speaking, Socrates' evocation of the Gorgons serves as another subtle (but potent) put-down of the orator from Leontini. For Medusa and her sisters were not simply monsters, but guardians of wisdom. Medusa had once been beautiful, but she made love with Poseidon in a temple dedicated to Athena. The enraged goddess turned Medusa into the snake-haired, brazen-clawed, tongue-lolling monster whose hideous looks turned all who dared to gaze upon her face directly into stone.¹¹³ Slain by Perseus (with the assistance of Athena, of course), the winged horse Pegasus and the "hero of the golden sword" Chrysaor sprang from her body.

It is Medusa's use, not her looks, that provide the veiled insult to Gorgias, however. For Medusa, the "cunning one" and sisters Stheino (Strong) and Euryale (Wide-roaming) are but another manifestation of the triple-faced Moon Goddess, whose mysteries (magic rites of the sacred horse that ensured good fishing and rain) were guarded zealously by priestesses wearing Gorgon masks.¹¹⁴ Gorgons had other, more mundane uses: according the Graves, "Greek bakers used to paint Gorgon masks on their ovens to discourage busybodies from opening the oven door, peeping in, and thus allowing a draught

¹¹¹ *The Symposium*, page 32.

¹¹² *Ibid*, page 75, Note 87.

¹¹³ See Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. One, page 127. It is curious how many times we run across this theme of non-Olympian females angering Athena by coupling with Poseidon.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, page 129.

to spoil the bread."¹¹⁵ Plato's attitude towards Gorgias is well-documented (especially in the dialogue that bears the orator's name). And here, by looking through the mythic lens, we see yet another criticism of the sophist: Gorgias is, like the Gorgon's head, an obstacle to those seeking to discover the wisdom of the esoteric mysteries. Gorgias' rhetoric (and by implication, that of his devotee, Agathon) turns the mind of the seeker of wisdom into stone, paralyzing him with empty but fine-sounding rhetoric. And like Perseus, Socrates proceeds to hold up the mirror of logic to Agathon (who acts in this instance as Gorgias-Gorgon's surrogate) and with his razor-sharp blade of reason (*logos*) acting as Chrysaor, dialectically decapitates the monster. It is important to note that this decapitation is not simply a triumph of *logos* – *mythos* plays a crucial role. As such, it is a perfect example of how powerful these two forces are when working in tandem.

On a historic level, Graves contends that the myth of Medusa's hideous transformation is an allegory of how the Hellenic invaders (Poseidon's sons) "forcibly married the moon-priestesses, disregarding their Gorgon masks, and took over the rain-making rights of the sacred horse cult."¹¹⁶ Campbell takes a slightly different view: he sees far more ancient echoes of the pre-Hellenic matriarchal system whereby the king was ritually sacrificed at the end of each Venus cycle of eight years. For him, the myth connotes more than just the usurpation of Moon priestesses' sacred rites, but the more general suppression of the ancient matriarchy by the patriarchal Greeks, with Perseus cast in the role of new, divinely-engendered warrior king, triumphant. "His violation of the neighbouring (Moon) goddess' grove must have marked the end of an ancient rite -- possibly of regicide-- there practiced. The myth of his (Perseus') miraculous birth from the golden shower of Zeus would then have been of great moment, in validating his in terms of a divine patriarchal order of belief that was now to supplant the old, of the mother-goddess in whom death is life."¹¹⁷ Thus, Socrates is very selective in his use of myths, for the story of Perseus is one of the male

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 155.

appropriation of feminine wisdom and is therefore one his audience can identify with.

Having demolished Agathon's arguments (and credibility as a font of wisdom), Socrates moves swiftly on to introduce his exemplar of feminine wisdom, Diotima. In his role as Hierophant, he is causing yet another sacred object to appear: the goddess in her Crone aspect, known to the Greeks as Hecate, one of the holy female trinity that also includes Demeter (Maiden) and Persephone (Nymph). Hecate is the eldest of the trinity and the dispenser of hidden knowledge (in the most immediate sense of the Mysteries, she is the one who reveals what has happened to Persephone to Demeter). It is curious, perhaps, given all the myths of male appropriation of feminine wisdom we have seen to this point, that Socrates should choose to use a woman as his primary authority and even defer to her as his teacher. But these are, after all, The Mysteries, and it should be noted that the Greek oracles such as Delphi, from which divine guidance and foretelling sprang, had almost without exception, female *khṛēsmoi*.

As a historic figure, we know little of Diotima. But we know much about the city she is associated with: Mantinea. The city played a crucial role in the campaigns of the Peloponnesian War that eventually led to Athens' defeat, humiliation and, subsequently, to the death of Socrates. All we know from *The Symposium* is her name, city of residence and Socrates' obscure reference to her delaying the plague for ten years. Gill discounts this, making reference to the literal plague that swept Athens shortly after the outbreak of the war. This is to look at the reference entirely through the lens of *logos*. But if we think metaphorically, and bear in mind Mantinea's strategic importance during the catastrophic war, we can perhaps make sense of this reference. The actual plague referred to by Gill struck the city in 430 BCE. A delay of a decade would put Diotima's intervention at 440 BCE. What's interesting about this timing is the train of events that eventually results in the Peloponnesian War is usually dated to 440 BCE, and involves a revolt by the Athenian ally city-state, of Miletus. Is it possible that this

is a metaphorical reference to the delay of the plague of the war, which ultimately ended with Athens' humiliation? Further, the largest land battle of the entire Peloponnesian War took place at Mantinea in 418 BCE and resulted in a crucial Spartan victory -- one that saved them from near-certain defeat. And significantly enough, the battle was the result of a grand plan suggested by none other than Alcibiades. So the reference to Mantinea is a powerful one, full of recent associations for Socrates' audience. On the one hand, it serves to establish friendship towards Athens. On the other, it is a potent reminder of crucial turning points in a life-and-death struggle. And that is exactly where we are in *The Symposium*: the turning point.

Socrates has his manifestation of Hecate deliver secret knowledge to the symposium's *mystai* using a fusion of *logos* (for Diotima's logic is immaculate) and *mythos*. Whereas *mythos* played the supporting role in decapitating Agathon, here *mythos* takes center stage. Diotima makes her first argument in this section (where Socrates redefines what love is) using a personal myth: Love as the child of Resource and Poverty (Socrates having been given permission to use a personal myth by Aristophanes, whose own speech was built upon his fantastic story of the original humans). Diotima-Socrates takes a bold step not just in redefining Love, but by changing his parents. All the previous speakers have, without exception, linked Love to some incarnation of Aphrodite (consistent with all myths, varying only in their degree and emphasis). But this invention by Socrates runs counter to the ancient view of Eros as having been "hatched from the world-egg"¹¹⁸ or Aphrodite's son by Hermes (or Ares, or even Zeus). He abandons this in favour of a contemporary allegory that redefines Eros from god to daimon. In doing so, Socrates reinvents the ancient myth of Aphrodite and her son, Eros, which are just one of many manifestations of the Mother Goddess and her ever-dying, ever-resurrected son. "The variety of myths about Eros' parentage point, without exception, to such a background," states Campbell.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ See *The Greek Myths, Vol. One*, page 58.

¹¹⁹ Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 235.

So even though it is an invention, a *Volkergedanken*, the *Elementargedanken* in the story is evident, tying it to the ancient, pre-Hellenic beliefs of the Mediterranean.

The parentage of Love is crucial to Socrates' argument and to the theme of the appropriation of feminine wisdom by the male. It also serves as a literal example of the relationship between *mythos* and *logos*. Diotima states that Eros' father is Resource, the son of Invention.¹²⁰ Invention is another name for Metis the Titaness, brother of Logos (Truth and Wisdom). Metis was "infinitely wise"¹²¹ and a shape-shifter. She escaped Zeus' embraces by constantly changing form until he finally managed to trick her and lay with her. Metis conceived, but Zeus, warned that a male offspring of the brilliant Titaness would overthrow him, swallowed Metis whole. Shortly thereafter, Zeus gave birth to Athena, goddess of wisdom, with Hermes acting as the midwife by splitting the male deity's head open with an axe (again we see the ever-reinvented pairing of another manifestation of mother goddess and her ever-dying son). But Metis was still there, alive inside the great Olympian: indeed, Zeus claimed that Metis continued to give him sage advice from inside his belly.¹²²

Socrates is performing much the same feat. He has taken the feminine wisdom of Diotima, standing in for Metis, and swallowed it whole. He is giving birth to it from his head, even as Zeus gave birth to the wise Athena, using the axe of logic already used to "behead" Agathon during their brief dialogue. Socrates swears often "by Zeus" when he is exclaiming. The setting of the seduction, "inside the garden of Zeus," is exact, for the appropriation of feminine wisdom through the male (an essential part of Greek mythology) is thereby complete: everything, one way or another, goes through Zeus). Furthermore, Eros is still the ever-dying, ever-resurrected son of the Mother Goddess, for even by Socrates' admission, he is "neither immortal nor mortal. Sometimes on a single day he shoots into life,

¹²⁰ *The Symposium*, page 39.

¹²¹ Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 151.

¹²² *Ibid*, page 152.

when he's successful, and then dies, and then (taking after his father) comes back to life again."¹²³ Here we see the marriage of *mythos* and *logos* writ large.

Penia, or Poverty, his mother, has no parents, but is a recognizable goddess/daimon herself, mentioned by such poets as Theognis and even Aristophanes (*Plutus*). This union breaks the mythic chain of god-mortal couplings that are the usual motif in such instances. This is important for both logical and mythological reasons. Logically, Love's new lineage takes him further from the untouchable, often-fickle Olympians and the all-too fallible mortals to somewhere in-between. Not only does it redefine Love as something in-between the god and mortals, it gives comfort that Love is, in some way, beyond the power of fate. After all, we have already seen what happens to the sons and daughters of divine-mortal couplings. From Heracles to Asclepius, they almost always end in tragedy.

In preparing his *mystai* for the ascent up the ladder to the ideal Form of Beauty, Socrates is very precise in his choice of mythic imagery. He chooses just the right manifestation to suit his needs with his reference to Beauty acting like the goddess Eileithyia, "she who comes to the aid of women in childbirth." She is not only the goddess of childbirth, but also (according to no less a source than Hesiod himself) the mother of Eros. Eileithyia is another name for Artemis, the mother of Eros partnered with Hermes.¹²⁴ Again, we see a female image of the goddess who helps the male to "give birth to beauty." Socrates also enlarges on Phaedrus' examples of devotion unto death, bringing in not just devotion to the individual (or lover), but the larger concept of the good of the community or kingdom and the desire for eternal fame. This raises the motivation from the immediate and particular to the universal and eternal -- one of the keys to eternity that makes *The Symposium* still feel fresh and alive today.

¹²³ *The Symposium*, page 40.

¹²⁴ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. One, page 58.

What then is Love? Some sort of personal construct alive only within the personal mythic landscape of Socrates? A sort of super-*Volkergedanken*? Not so: we see the *Elementargedanken* at work if we consider how close Socrates' description of daimons is to that of the angels in the Judea-Christian tradition.

They interpret and carry messages from humans to gods and from gods to humans. They convey prayers and sacrifices from humans, and commands and gifts from gods. Being intermediate between the other two, they fill the gap between them, and enable the universe to form an interconnected whole. They serve as the medium for all divination, for priestly expertise in sacrifice, ritual and spells, and for all prophecy and sorcery. Gods do not make direct contact with humans; they communicate and converse with humans (whether awake or asleep) entirely through the medium of spirits... there are many spirits, of very different types, and one of them is Love.¹²⁵

Compare this to another definition of angels:

Primarily in Western religions, any of numerous benevolent spiritual beings who mediate between heaven and earth. They often serve as messengers or servants of God or as guardians of an individual or nation. In Zoroastrianism the *amesha spenta* are arranged in a hierarchy of seven. Judaism and Christianity base their notion of angels on references in the Hebrew scriptures to divine servants and to the heavenly hosts. Two archangels (Michael and Gabriel) are mentioned in the Old Testament and two others (Raphael and Uriel) in the Apocrypha. Angels are mentioned throughout the Christian scriptures, and Christian tradition identifies nine orders of angels. Islam's hierarchy of angels descends from the four throne bearers of

¹²⁵ *The Symposium* page 39.

God to the cherubim who praise God, the four archangels, and lesser angels such as the *hafazah* (guardian angels).¹²⁶

Indeed, the very word *daimon* is also suggestive of "wisdom," and again we are reminded of Metis and the feminine, but once more transmuted into a masculine form more palatable to Socrates' all-male, patriarchal audience. At the same time, it still retains a core of feminine wisdom and incorporates something in-between: the daemon, which shows attributes of both. In this regard, they resemble the "androgynous" first humans described by Aristophanes.

It is worth noting that while this new Eros, the bare-foot, resourceful daemon, echoes Socrates as described later by Alcibiades, this is just one of several roles in which Plato portrays him. Socrates plays Zeus (giving birth to wisdom through his head), Perseus (slaying the Gorgon), the *Hierophant* (causing the sacred objects to appear) and, to some degree, is the male mirror-image of the female trinity of Demeter-Hecate-Persephone. By adding the androgynous daemon to the list, he now covers all genders and is a mythic landscape in and of himself. But he still has one last marvel to reveal as *Hierophant*: the ladder of ascent to the Form of Beauty.

In making the ultimate, the most sacred symbol of the Socratic Mysteries appear, *Hierophant* Socrates works with the foundation already laid by the previous speakers, who have provided him with much of the building materials he needs. The side pieces can be described as the opposing (but still very connected) forces of *mythos* and *logos*. But in this case, they are also the poles of opposites (male and female) furnished by Pausanias and, to some degree, Aristophanes. The rungs or steps upwards have been described by speaker like Eryximachus, Phaedrus and even Agathon. In a sense, all the previous speakers have been like the Six Wise Men trying to describe the elephant. This ancient tale, told and

¹²⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, Britannica.com.

retold in many traditions (including a version told by the Buddha¹²⁷) involves a king asking six blind men to describe the vast beast. Each man describes the part he can feel with his hands very well, but assumes that the one part they have represents the whole. They fall to quarrelling and refuse to listen to one another until the king intervenes.

In a sense, each of the speakers has a foot on a rung of the ladder already: where they are and how far they climb is only limited by their vision of the ladder itself and whether their mind is open to the possibilities of the ascent. Like the wise king in the tale, Socrates -- with the help of Diotima -- leads his blind *mystai* up the ladder on rungs they have never seen nor imagined, higher and higher, until they catch a glimpse, perhaps, of Beauty itself.

What then is this form? As described by Gill (who quotes Terence Irwin), it is the experience of unity with the ever-eternal source.¹²⁸ Socrates describes the form of beauty thus:

First, it always is, and it doesn't come into being or cease; it doesn't increase or diminish. Second, it's not beautiful in one respect but ugly in another, or beautiful at one time but not at another, or beautiful in relation to this but ugly in relation to that; nor beautiful here and ugly there because it is beautiful for some people but ugly for others. Nor will beauty appear to him in the form of a face or hands or any part of the body; or as a specific account or piece of knowledge; or as any being anywhere in something else. It will appear as in itself and by itself, always single in form; all other beautiful things share its character, but do so in such a way that, when other things come to be

¹²⁷ See *Amitabha, A Story of Buddhist Theology*, by Paul Carus, 1906, sacred-texts.com. It is important to remember that in most versions of this tale, the king does not judge or condemn the blind men: "Yet I would not say that they were either dishonest or hypocrites. They had investigated the truth to the best of their ability." They are counterparts to the people trapped in the Socratic Cave in *Republic*.

¹²⁸ *The Symposium*, Note 123, page 79-80.

or cease, it is not increased or decreased in any way, nor does it undergo any change.¹²⁹

This then is one of the great keys to eternity that Plato uses to unlock timelessness. For here we see Socrates himself articulate the *Elementargedanken* of love. No less a scholar than Joseph Campbell equated the Forms to Bastian's Elementary ideas.¹³⁰

That is to say, what is connoted by such metaphoric voyage is the possibility of a return of the mind in spirit, while still incarnate, to full knowledge of that transcendent source out of which mystery of a given life arises into this field of time and back into which it in time dissolves... that is the wonderland of myth. From the outer world the senses carry images to the mind, which do not become myth, however, until they are transformed by fusion with accordant insights, awakened as imagination from the inner world of the body. The Buddhists speak of Buddha Realms. These are planes and orders of consciousness that can be brought to mind through meditations on appropriately mythologized forms. Plato tells of universal ideas, the memory of which is lost at birth but through philosophy may be recalled. These correspond to Bastian's 'elementary ideas' and Jung's 'archetypes of the collective unconscious.'

This is the transcendent experience where the lover, the beloved and beauty become one. This is the absolute, ever-eternal, independent of human endeavor, all of the strivings of which are but pale reflections of this ultimate and unchangeable ideal. That such beauty could exist is not in itself revolutionary. But the notion that a mere mortal might obtain a glimpse of it by conscious choice is. Moreover, Socrates has in this final vision fulfilled the ultimate goal of the

¹²⁹ Ibid, page 48-49.

¹³⁰ Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, page 5.

Eleusinian Mysteries: the transformation of the consciousness of the initiate by shifting the identification of the ground of his or her being from the mortal to the immortal. He is no longer the lunar, ever-dying, ever resurrected son. He has become the serpent father and his dance is one with Eurynome and Ophion. As Campbell puts it:

The initiate, returning in contemplation to the goddess mother of the mysteries became detached reflectively from the fate of his mortal frame (symbolically, the son who dies), and identified with the principle that is ever reborn, the Being of all beings (the serpent father): whereupon, in the world where only sorrow and death had been seen, the rapture was recognized of an everlasting becoming.¹³¹

Let us remember that in the Eleusinian Mysteries, the culmination of the rites was the ultimate revelation of eternal life, symbolized by the simple lifting of a cut stalk of grain. The climax of this ritual involves the representation of Persephone's return, an allegory for rebirth and eternal life:

As in the play-logic or dream-logic, of any traditional religious pageant, the sacred object is to be identified, at least for the moment of the ceremony, with the god. The cut stalk is the returned Persephone, who was dead but now liveth, in the grain itself. A bronze gong was struck at this moment, a young priestess representing Kore herself appeared, and the pageant terminated with a paeon of joy.¹³²

And so it is in *The Symposium*. At the climax of Diotima's final mysteries, Socrates holds aloft his staircase to the Form of Beauty, the cut stalk of grain that is the goddess, or, in this case, the *daimon*. "It's someone who has given birth to true virtue and brought it up who has the chance of becoming loved by the gods,

¹³¹ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 15.

¹³² *Ibid*, page 186.

and immortal -- if any human being can be immortal," declares Diotima.¹³³ Following this, there is a clamour at the front door, precisely like the ringing of the bronze gong, and instead of a priestess, we have a priest in the form of Alcibiades, representing not just Dionysus, but the Daimon Love. The paeon of joy may be taken to be the praise of Socrates by Alcibiades coupled with the general celebration following it. And so Plato uses the form of the Mysteries to present his case, simultaneously lending it the weight and authority of these ancient rites and giving his audience the comfort that these new ideas are in fact rooted in sound, Hellenistic tradition.

The job of the *Hierophant* is done, a task made possible by the underlying mythic landscape on which Socrates has so artfully danced. But in keeping with the Mysteries, there is one more dancer left to take the stage: Alcibiades.

I had thought that the mythic landscape on which Alcibiades danced was a small, easily defined patch of ground, but as usual, Plato surprised me with the scope and complexity of mythic terrain covered in this final speech of *The Symposium*. The last act in the mystery rooted in the dance of Eurynome begins with the entrance of a character symbolizing another great Cosmic Dancer whose role in the Socratic Mysteries imitates one of the most important – and most mysterious – officials of Eleusis. Like Socrates, he plays several roles, in keeping with his stature. But the mythic landscape makes it very clear that Alcibiades is definitely the subordinate of Socrates; someone whose main job is to make his master look good. And Alcibiades does it as only he can.

In terms of the Mysteries, Alcibiades plays the role of the *Dadouchos*, or "Torchbearer," a male official who was considered second in importance only to the *Hierophant* and had a house within the Eleusinian sanctuary.¹³⁴ The torch he bore represented the fiery brand used by Demeter during her desperate search for

¹³³ *The Symposium*, page 50.

¹³⁴ Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 57.

Persephone (as well as the initiates' search for truth and enlightenment). But his actual function remains somewhat obscure: he may have been in charge of lighting effects during the ceremony. If so, then it is doubly fitting that Alcibiades is the *Dadouchos*, for he clearly still carries the torch for Socrates and he certainly provides the fireworks in this final act of the Socratic Mysteries. And in doing so, he illuminates Socrates as the exemplar of divine love.

In mythic terms, it is obvious that Plato has cast Alcibiades in the role of Dionysus. This is a deity whose power and role is largely misunderstood or downplayed in contemporary society. He's portrayed as a happy, harmless drunk by Disney in *Fantasia* and generally associated with wine and inebriation. It appears that, at least in North America, we have forgotten this god was a powerful deity and, fittingly enough for Alcibiades, a military leader. Dionysus' campaigns took him to India, Egypt and Ethiopia. Furthermore, this ferocious god is described as being "womanly," and is often portrayed as having a woman's figure as well as male sexual organs. According to one tradition, he was raised as a girl by nymphs on Mount Nysa.¹³⁵ As such, he is a perfect example of the mythic ideal described by Socrates, combining male, female and androgynous features. Further, he is the ideal deity to underscore the Greek subtext of the appropriation of feminine wisdom and power by the masculine. For Dionysus muscled his way into the Pantheon to become one of the Twelve Great Olympians by unseating Hestia, ancient goddess of the hearth.¹³⁶ Moreover, he is another manifestation of the ever-dying, ever-resurrected son of the Mother Goddess, the lord of the mysteries (as well as the patron of wine and beer). Dionysus is the Greek expression of that *Elementargedanken* of death and resurrection known to others as Dumuzi-Tammuz-Adonis, and, like Shiva, is revered as "the Cosmic Dancer."¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Graves, *The Greek Myths, Volume One*, page 104.

¹³⁶ Ibid, page 106. Graves recounts one version that has Hestia stepping down voluntarily "glad of any excuse to escape the jealous wranglings of her family."

¹³⁷ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 58.

The entrance of Alcibiades is in keeping with his role as Dionysus. He is drunk, but still able to dominate the room. The flute girl and attendants echo Dionysus' entourage of maenads and satyrs. Alcibiades is festooned with ivy, the other vine sacred to Dionysus. The warrior-god aspect of Dionysus is evoked by the act of pinning ribbons on Agathon's hair: an act that mimics the tying of ribbons on the Herms, phallic statuary representing Hermes. It also invokes the controversy that marred Alcibiades' expedition against Sicily, which started with the maiming of the Herms and ended with the disastrous loss of the Athenian fleet.¹³⁸

Dionysus is an essential figure of any rite hoping to emulate the Eleusinian Mysteries. The androgynous god of the vine was central to the Hecate-Demeter-Persephone drama. In some versions of the myth, Dionysus is the child of Demeter by Zeus; the god's image was carried in procession from Athens to Eleusis in the form of the *Iacchos*; Dionysus played a key role in the Lesser Mysteries, associated with Heracles; the *mystai* shouted out "Iacche!" (another name for Dionysus) on their procession from Athens to Eleusis and Dionysus is, moreover, the god of ecstatic, enlightened consciousness. There is also a lovely symmetry involving the role of Dionysus as the child of Demeter and the rescuer of his other mother, Semele. Perhaps more profoundly, Semele is also seen as Kore, the maiden Persephone herself, in some versions of the myth.¹³⁹

Persephone, in the alternative story of the birth of Dionysus, is thought to appear at the *Epotheia* with her infant as a 'phantasma,' a ghostly image, at the moment when the great fire blazes up from the *Anakton*; so the notion of *fiery birth* connects Dionysus to her child. The two stories of the god's birth were certainly superimposed on each other in the minds of the *mystai*, Persephone and Semele being two of the stories of Dionysus and Demeter/Persephone are combined in another way: as Demeter wanders over the earth and eventually

¹³⁸ *The Symposium*, note 135, page 81.

¹³⁹ Graves, *The Greek Myths, Volume One*, page 110.

settles at Eleusis in search of her daughter, Iacchos comes to Eleusis in quest of his mother, Semele. Under the tutelage of the *mystagogs*, if not from their own previous experience with these stories, the *mystai* would have all this in mind as they walked in the procession from Athens to Eleusis.¹⁴⁰

This helps establish Alcibiades as important, but definitely second-fiddle to Socrates. As *Dadouchosa*, he is necessarily subordinate to the *Hierophant*. As a deity, he is identified with the Lesser Mysteries more than the Greater Mysteries. This is underlined by Alcibiades' first utterance on realizing Socrates is on the same couch with him: he exclaims, "Oh, Heracles!"¹⁴¹ Why Heracles and not Zeus? A simple explanation would be that Heracles, a son of Zeus, is the ideal Greek hero, renowned for his strength and may be the modern equivalent of "give me strength!" On another level, it may foreshadow Alcibiades' eulogy of Socrates, where he lists the philosopher's Herculean virtues. Or perhaps it is meant to remind Plato's readers that Heracles and his Twelve Labours is a central figure in the Lesser Mysteries,¹⁴² reinforcing the idea that as attractive and seductive a figure Alcibiades is, he is still a poor second to Socrates.

While he may be second fiddle to Socrates, Alcibiades still plays a crucial role in terms of *mythos*: indeed, his speech and the imagery associated with the Socratic *Dadouchos* make his section of the richest and most complicated terrains of the mythic landscape. Something as simple as his exclamation of "by Poseidon!" when Socrates accuses him of blasphemy¹⁴³ is rich in association, given that god's role in so many of the myths invoked by the speakers.

The accusation of blasphemy is one that Alcibiades would soon be familiar with. In his note on Alcibiades in *The Symposium*, Gill simply states that the general-

¹⁴⁰ Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, pages 66-67.

¹⁴¹ *The Symposium*, page 51.

¹⁴² Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 59.

¹⁴³ *The Symposium*, page 53.

politician's plans to lead the ill-fated Sicilian Expedition went awry because he had allegedly "profaned the mysteries of Eleusis mutilated the Herms (phallic statues of Hermes) in Athens."¹⁴⁴ But the details behind this simple statement are extremely interesting and, I think, illuminating given the hidden structure of the Mysteries we have been examining. For the accusation against Alcibiades was nothing less than having staged a version of the secret, sacred rites in his own home in front of the uninitiated:

His impeachment is on record, and runs as follows: "Thessalus, son of Cimon, of the deme Laciadae, impeaches Alcibiades, son of Cleinias, of the deme Scambonidae, for committing crime against the goddesses of Eleusis, Demeter and Cora, by mimicking the mysteries and showing them forth to his companions in his own house, wearing a robe such as the High Priest wears when he shows forth the sacred secrets to the initiates, and calling himself High Priest, Pulytion Torch-bearer, and Theodorus, of the deme Phegaea, Herald, and hailing the rest of his companions as *Mystae* and *Epoptae*, contrary to the laws and institutions of the Eumolpidae, Heralds, and Priests of Eleusis."¹⁴⁵

Alcibiades had, therefore, either already staged the Eleusinian Mysteries himself just prior to the events portrayed in *The Symposium* or shortly thereafter. Perhaps this event inspired Plato's construction of the work. In any case, it gives us some insight into the role Alcibiades plays in the Socratic Mysteries and how seriously the secrecy around the Mysteries was taken. For Alcibiades, having fled Athens before his trial, was found guilty *in absentia*, his property was confiscated and it was "decreed that his name should be publicly cursed by all priests and priestesses."¹⁴⁶ But all that is in the future.¹⁴⁷ Let's return to the night in question and Agathon's *Telesterion*.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, page 81, note 135.

¹⁴⁵ Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives, Vol. IV*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library edition, Harvard University Press, 1916, pages 61-62)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, page 62.

The real set-piece for Alcibiades-Dionysus- *Dadouchos* is his satyr play: the comparison of Socrates with the satyrs Marsyas and Silenus.¹⁴⁸ There could not be more apt mythic figures with which to compare Socrates. Consider Marsyas: according to the myth, the unfortunate satyr picked up the double-flute discarded by Athena and proceeded to make amazing music with it, dazzling people wherever he played. The crowds declared Marsyas superior to Apollo -- something the satyr did not deny. The jealous Apollo challenged Marsyas to a contest, with the muses as the judges. Apollo tricked Marsyas and, when the Muses declared Apollo the winner, the god took an awful vengeance, flaying him alive and nailing his hide to a pine tree.

What Marsyas didn't know was that the flute had been cursed by Athena. She had made the instrument herself out of stag bones and played it at a banquet for the gods on Olympus. She played beautifully, but saw that Hera and Aphrodite were laughing at her behind their hands. Puzzled, she took the flute to into the woods and watched her reflection in a stream as she played. She realized at once the source of her rival goddesses' amusement: her face was blue and her cheeks puffed out. She threw the flute down and laid a curse on it, dooming any who dared play it to a terrible fate.¹⁴⁹ While it is true that flute playing is a key element in the rites of initiation into the mysteries, it is also curious that Alcibiades should choose Marsyas rather than Olympus or Pan, both of which are just as accomplished at playing the pipes, as his model. However, it does seem apt when you consider the fate of Socrates: for all his virtuosity in playing music of *mythos* and *logos* for his fellow citizens, he was finally condemned and

¹⁴⁷ According to Plutarch, Alcibiades had another, more positive association with the Mysteries of Eleusis. In the latter part of the war, after his return from exile, he found that with the Spartans holding the approaches to Eleusis, "the festal rite had been celebrated with no splendour at all, being conducted by sea. Sacrifices, choral dances, and many of the sacred ceremonies usually held on the road, when Iacchus is conducted forth from Athens to Eleusis, had of necessity been omitted." Alcibiades personally led a procession from Athens to Eleusis, guarding the Hierophant and his officials as well as the *mystai* with an advance guard of troops. So august and devout was the spectacle which, as general, he thus displayed, that he was hailed by those who were not unfriendly to him as High Priest, rather, and Mystagogue. No enemy dared to attack him, and he conducted the procession safely back to the city." See *The Parallel Lives, Vol. IV*, page 101.

¹⁴⁸ *The Symposium*, page 54.

¹⁴⁹ Graves, *The Greek Myths, Volume One*, page 77.

sentenced to death – and one might say that it was in part because, like flute-playing, Socrates had made Athens look bad.

If Marsyas is fitting, Silenus is a near-perfect comparison.¹⁵⁰ Silenus and his sons, the satyrs, were comic characters in Attic drama.¹⁵¹ Representations of this tutor of Dionysus show him to be short, fat, bald and squat-nosed – rather like Socrates himself. Silenus was said to have the power of prophecy and was famous for "the wisdom of Silenus," spoken to Midas. One tradition considers him the foster-father of Dionysus, raising the god-child after his birth from the thigh of Zeus.¹⁵² This is a delightful subtext to the obvious metaphor of Socrates being like one of the statues of Silenus – jovial and mocking on the outside, but as serious as the god on the inside. There is an additional inference that Socrates, like Silenus, is wise enough to teach the gods a thing or two (since Silenus was the tutor of Dionysus and Socrates has tried – albeit with limited success – to mentor Alcibiades).

The other aspect of the satyr metaphor, of course, is the role the satyr had in Attic tragedy. Socrates describes Alcibiades' whole speech as a kind of satyr play designed to warn off other potential lovers.¹⁵³ Structurally speaking, this too is an apt metaphor. Satyr plays were typically performed after sequence of three tragedies. Alcibiades has staged his own satiric performance at just the right time. Gill divides *The Symposium* into four distinct parts -- the first three speeches (First tragedy), the speeches of Aristophanes and Agathon (Second Tragedy) and Socrates (Third Tragedy). The fourth part is the speech of Alcibiades. Seen in this light, the satyr plays metaphor works both thematically in reinforcing the semi-divine wisdom of Socrates as well as structurally. But the

¹⁵⁰ *The Symposium*, page 55.

¹⁵¹ Graves, *The Greek Myths, Volume One*, page 67.

¹⁵² In this version of the tale, Dionysus' mother, Semele (daughter of Cadmus of Thebes) died after seeing Zeus in all his divine glory. Zeus rescued the unborn Dionysus and placed him in his thigh, a male womb, from which he was later born and then delivered into the care of Silenus. Although the date of this tradition is uncertain before Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it is suitable as yet another metaphor of the male appropriation of feminine wisdom: a phenomenon Freud described as "sublimation." See Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 152.

¹⁵³ *The Symposium*, page 62.

traditions of the Attic theatre are but one of the rich associations Plato has his Cosmic Dancer conjure up.

As if rewriting the Eleusinian Mysteries wasn't enough, Plato evokes elements of other mystery cults to underscore the importance of the transcendent vision placed before them but Socrates. Having shown how Socrates has spurned his physical love, Alcibiades reminds the Socratic *mystai* that they are privileged to have witnessed these sacred rites. He makes them co-conspirators in his own insights into Socrates' genius:

Up to this point, it would have been all right for anyone to hear what I have said. But from now on there are things you wouldn't have heard me say except that, as the saying goes, 'there's truth in wine when the slaves have left,' and when they haven't!¹⁵⁴

Alcibiades declares that all those at the symposium have "shared the madness and Bacchic frenzy of philosophy." He names the six speakers specifically, calling them initiates in an obvious allusion to the Mysteries. To put his own mythic spin on the proceedings, he describes the effect of Socrates speaking to him as equivalent to a Dionysian frenzy. Indeed, he goes further, calling it a "frenzy greater than the *Corybantes*," the crested dancers at the Winter Solstice festival (who were known as "the Children of Thalia the Muse," since she was the muse of music).¹⁵⁵ What is the purpose of this mythic reference? In ancient Crete, the dancer was a boy who reigned as king for a single day so he might take the place of Minos the Bull-King. He performed a dance "illustrative of the five seasons -- lion, goat, horse, serpent, and bull-calf -- and was then eaten raw."¹⁵⁶ Eventually, a bull-calf was substituted for the boy. The wild dance of the *Corybantes* imitated the steps of Shiva and of Dionysus, both of whom are linked to the moon-bull: symbol of the ever-dying, ever-resurrected son of the Mother

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, page 57.

¹⁵⁵ Graves, *The Greek Myths, Volume One*, page 81.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, page 119.

Goddess. A bull sacrifice, the *taurobolium*, was performed as part of the Hellenistic Mithric mystery rites.¹⁵⁷ The metaphor and language used by Alcibiades at this point reinforces Plato's premise that Socrates is the dispenser of the ancient, hidden wisdom, suggesting that those in attendance at the symposium prior to the drunken politician's arrival have heard something rare and extremely important. They are simultaneously evocative of the Eleusinian Mysteries and those of the Mithric mystery cult and pre-Hellenic wisdom and are therefore *Elementargedanken* transcending any local or folk expressions.

The Mithric rites are very apt as a mythic subtext in this instance for a number of reasons. They had as their premise seven degrees of initiation.¹⁵⁸ These stages were symbolic of the orbits of the seven known visible spheres beyond the earth: the moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Each of these heavenly bodies had an effect on an individual and represented a boundary to be crossed towards realization. In the first stage of the Mithric rites, the initiate wore a raven's mask, symbolic of death, and had to pass through the orbit of the moon, symbol of death and birth. The second level was Mercury's orbit, representing magic and the wisdom of rebirth. He would then pass beyond Mercury to Venus and its mystic sphere of desire and delusion. Next came the Sun, the realm of intellectual arrogance and power. Symbolically rejecting the symbols of these limitations (a sword and a crown), the initiate passed on (after a sacramental meal of bread and water mixed with wine), to the fifth zone, Mars. In this zone of daring audacity, he dons a Phrygian cap and the loose Persian garb of Mithras himself. Rituals were performed to quench the individual's audacity before passing on to level six, that of Jupiter (where the initiate was known as "Runner of the Sun"). Finally, at the seventh and final level, that of Saturn, he assumed the title "Pater" or Father. As in the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Mithric rites were designed to transform the consciousness of the initiate: "And in contemplation of the doctrine of the immanence of God, the mystic was led by

¹⁵⁷ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 260.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, page 254.

degrees to an experience, in his final stage, of the transcendent reality of his own being."¹⁵⁹

Now, it is a curious fact that there are seven speeches in *The Symposium*, and Socrates' slow reveal of the mysteries of Diotima has seven stages: (outlined by Gill in his introduction,¹⁶⁰ with the addition of the admonition by Socrates at the end serving as the seventh). These are seven degrees of initiation by Mithric rite. While supporting Socrates as the prophet of hitherto esoteric wisdom, it is but a subtext to the larger construct of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Happily, it agrees with the Eleusinian model in many respects, especially in the sequence of arrival, ceremonial drinking, the step-by-step process by which the truth of existence is revealed and the final revelation affirming "happiness in the future world, imparted formulas to be used by each soul on its passage to the future world, and forecast the resurrection and immortality of men."¹⁶¹

All of this drives home Plato's overarching theme of Socrates having access to the ultimate truth (a truth that incorporated both masculine and feminine wisdom and, in the Dionysian tradition, the androgynous). And yet, Plato has yet another mythic trick up his sleeve for Alcibiades. It is not enough for Socrates to be connected to Eleusis, Mithras, or all those gods identified as folk expressions of the *Elementargedanken* of wisdom and beauty. He must be identified with the Greek *Volkergedanken* of the male heroic tradition. And there is no one better qualified to help Alcibiades in his song than the greatest poet of that mythic age of Hellenist conquest: Homer.

The most striking thing about how Alcibiades portrays Socrates as a Homeric hero is how he combines just the right heroic images from the semi-mythic bard's works (such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) with recent events. Socrates' valour at Potidaea is compared with that of Ajax, one of the great heroes of the Trojan

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, page 256.

¹⁶⁰ *The Symposium*, page xxvii.

¹⁶¹ *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, page 93.

War, renowned for his invincibility to enemy weapons because of his great courage and his great shield. Ajax was considered the bravest Greek hero next to Achilles and serves here as an evocation of the heroic spirit which nicely sets up the next section on Socrates' courage during the retreat from Potidaea (to provide some context, the campaign around Potidaea was a long siege at the start of the Peloponnesian War which ultimately resulted in an Athenian victory). In rescuing Alcibiades without regard to his own safety, Socrates is putting himself in the role of the beloved willing to die for his lover in exactly the manner as described by Phaedrus in his speech. Not only does this establish Socrates' bona fides as someone willing to sacrifice his life for the other, it brings Phaedrus' argument out of the mythic to the contemporary—proof that the divine spirit of love is at work and lives in Socrates (and hence, all men and women) at that moment in time, not some ancient and idealized past.

The description of Socrates' behaviour during the Battle of Delium reinforces the philosopher's courage and is especially powerful, since the retreat Alcibiades describes was in fact a total rout. On another level, these two examples from the Peloponnesian War, one at the very beginning of the conflict, the second near the end of its first phase, show Socrates' courage both in the face of victory and defeat, a very important quality in the Greek heroic tradition. Alcibiades goes even further in conjuring up the deeds of such Homeric heroes as Achilles, Nestor and Antenor. But even these are inadequate to describe Socrates:

But what is most amazing about him is he is that he is like no other human being, either of the past or of the present... the best you can do is what I did, in fact, when I compared him, and his way of talking, not with human being but with Sileni and satyrs.¹⁶²

And so Alcibiades' Homeric hymn to Socrates goes on, a mirror image to the Homeric hymn to Demeter that is the source of so much that we know (or infer)

¹⁶² *The Symposium*, page 61.

of the Eleusinian Mysteries. He goes on to Socrates "god-like," using the word *daimonios*, "confirming the echoes of Socrates in the description the daimon, or 'spirit of love.' "¹⁶³ Alcibiades, in keeping with his role as Dionysus, is at pains to "swear by the gods and the goddesses,"¹⁶⁴ again, both masculine and feminine, with Socrates somewhere in the middle, the third "androgynous force" between these opposites.¹⁶⁵

In Alcibiades' speech, mythic allusion is piled on mythic allusion to reinforce the greatest power of the transcendent experience: contact with the "the ultimate truth." This is not, it must be noted, some visitation by an external divine force so much as a fundamental shift in consciousness with the individual that puts him/her in contact with the divine forces:

The referent (the 'God') of cults of the first type (*ie. Mithric or other mystery cults*) is never a personage somewhere else, to be known, loved, served, and some day beheld (which, in fact, is the notion to be dispelled), but a state of realization to be attained by way of the initiatory, knowledge-releasing imagery of the 'God,' as through a sign. The function of such signs is to effect a psychological change of immediate value in itself, while that of orthodox mythology is to fix the mind and will upon a state of soul to come.¹⁶⁶

Alcibiades' speech provides the exclamation point for the *Hierophant's* cry of "Brimo has given birth to Brimos!" Brimo is one of the names for Hecate, Brimos the male equivalent. At this point, the sacred fire flared up, symbolic of the illumination of Socrates' wisdom by his errant pupil. The *mystai* have now truly become *epoptes*: those who have seen. Here, at this moment, Plato has achieved

¹⁶³ Ibid, page 58.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, page 59.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, page 62. And yet, in keeping with his egocentric ways, Alcibiades bids Agathon make sure no one comes between him and the playwright – especially Socrates. And here we have the complete mythic set: Agathon as the ego, Alcibiades as the man of action and Socrates as the thinking man.

¹⁶⁶ Campbell, *Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, pages 254-255.

much. Yet there is still one more important mythic point to make before the Socratic *epopts* can go home.

The end of *The Symposium* is built on three images that act as the *exodos* for the comedy-tragedy we have just seen. All three are intended to reinforce the image of Socrates as the exemplar of love, endowed with a daimon's strength. The first of these images is the "musical couch" moment when Alcibiades and Agathon vie for pride of place.¹⁶⁷ During their playful struggle to see who lays beside whom, Socrates is referred to by Agathon as "resourceful," an allusion to the Socratic myth about Resource and Poverty. This infers that Socrates is the father of love.

The next image is set up by the arrival of a large group of revellers . Heavy drinking ensues and continues on into the night, long after Phaedrus and the other more responsible speakers have already left. Then, at cockcrow, Aristodemus sees Socrates convincing the two very drunken writers, Aristophanes and Agathon, that a comedian should be able to write tragedy and a tragedian should be able to write comedy.¹⁶⁸ Although a humorous moment, it is nonetheless a powerful image of Socrates as the Daimon Love, reconciling opposites. In mythic terms, Socrates recognizes that the human spirit needs both tragedy and comedy: a complete human should be able to "write" both in his or her life.

The third and final image is that of "Super Socrates," having drunk and talked the night away getting up, having a wash and going about his day, not fatigued at all. And here we see the inexhaustible power of love, capable of giving Socrates divine powers, gifts of wisdom and endurance beyond mortal men, just as Alcibiades described to the Socratic *epopts*.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, pages 62-63.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, page 63.

And so we come to the end of *The Symposium's* mythic landscape. During our walk with both the Eleusinian and Socratic *mystai*, we have witnessed identical same mechanics of the Mysteries at work. In both instances, guides have taken the initiates through a process where they cease to identify with their physical/temporal aspects of existence (although this experience is not denied or sublimated -- an important difference between Greek thought and the Judeo/Christian tradition of the denial of flesh and the fallen world) and realizes that the real ground of their being is in fact spiritual/immortal. The ascent to the world of the forms uses the same dynamic of the great mystery cult, and hence, its power. Instead of three goddesses (or the Mother Goddess in three aspects), we have a male *daimon*; instead of an actual stalk of grain held aloft to symbolize immortality, we have the idea of a staircase held up as the personification of obtain the good, forever. In the words of Joseph Campbell, "we have now ascended to such an Elysian height as to have transcended words."¹⁶⁹ Well, not quite -- there are a few concluding points to be made before we pass on to the next stage in our journey.

Conclusion

During our processions through Athens and Eleusis, we too have become *epopts*. In walking to Eleusis, we discovered the Hecate-Demeter-Persephone myth, the central elements of which inform and support Plato's core arguments. The theme of the unity and universal nature of human existence is seen in the three goddesses who take center stage during the Eleusinian rites. Hecate, goddess of the moon, represents the Crone or wise old woman; Demeter the maiden/mother -- woman in the prime of her life-giving fertility; Persephone the nymph, the young beauty who, like the seed, is so full of potential. This female trinity, found in cultures around the globe, is a metaphor not just for those divine and mysterious forces otherwise inexplicable and inexpressible in the Ancient world, but for the complete human life on the field of space-time. The nymph-

¹⁶⁹ Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, page 232.

maiden-crone trinity represents all the stages of a woman's life, both physically and spiritually. Knowledge of the rites of passage, and the power and the potential of each phase are essential for the individual to live a full and happy life (ie. possession of the good). It is significant that it is the nymph Persephone who is abducted and dragged to the Underworld, for the knowledge of the reality of death at this stage of life informs and enriches the other stages. Further, this knowledge makes the initiate understand the precious nature of life in the moment. The myth also presents a feminine perspective on those things which offer them their chance at eternity: women, as Socrates notes, give birth in reality, and this is one form of immortality that is exclusively female. But beneath this purely temporal view there is the mythic subtext that the individual is part of a larger reality and imbued with the universal life force that sustains the earth. Even as the grain is born, lives, dies and is reborn, so too does all life on the planet. The hope of rebirth or eternal life is not as an individual sitting on the right-hand side of the throne of some separate god. Rather, it is as part of an unending cycle of eternity -- the dance of Eurynome, of which we are all a part.

We also saw, if we were watching carefully, a precise parallel in story structure between the *The Symposium* and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, that mythic mirror in which we catch a fleeting glimpse of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Remember how we found the grief-stricken goddess in disguise as an old woman by the well at Eleusis, where the daughters of King Keleos Eleusinides took her to live with them in their father's great hall. After a series of incidents (which evoke the ancient myth of Isis and the divine child)¹⁷⁰ Demeter was finally, joyfully reunited with Persephone. Then the great goddess revealed her secrets to the mortals who gave her comfort:

And she (Demeter) went to the kings and who administer the laws,
Triptolemos and Diokles, smiter of horses, and mighty Eumolpos,

¹⁷⁰ Demeter, like Isis, seeks to make one of the royal children immortal by roasting him in the oven -- a magic spell that is broken by the unexpected arrival of the baby's mother. Isis, like Demeter, is identified as another manifestation of the Corn Goddess. See Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, page 460.

and Keleos, leader of the people, and showed them the celebration of holy rites, and explained to them all, to Triptolemos, to Polyxeinos and also to Diokles the awful mysteries, not to be transgressed, violated or divulged, because the tongue is restrained by reverence for the gods.

Whoever on this earth who has seen these is blessed, but he who has no part in the holy rites has another lot as he wastes away in dank darkness.¹⁷¹

It is Triptolemos above all who is honoured by Demeter, and it is to him that the fullness of the mysteries is revealed. The local king becomes the father of agriculture, raised up as a god after death and celebrated as the special intimate of the goddess. And here we have what is for me the most convincing proof that the Demeter-Persephone myth and their attendant mysteries are the overall frame for *The Symposium*. The core of Plato's work is the recounting of the wisdom of the path to enlightenment and eternal life to a young man by a wise woman. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the mysteries of Eleusis, we see exactly the same motif, where the great goddess reveals her mysteries to the young prince Triptolemos. In this regard, Diotima (whose name, after all, means "honoured by god") fulfills the role of Demeter and Socrates is Triptolemos, the beneficiary of divine revelation who, not content to keep the secret, spread it throughout Greece (and who was nearly killed for his trouble).¹⁷²

In walking from Piraeus to Athens and Agathon's *Telesterion*, we discovered *The Symposium's* rich mythic landscape and how its narrative structure is based on the mythic rites of Eleusis. This powerful framework is unseen by most contemporary readers, but would have been readily apparent to an audience of Classical Athenians who had been initiated in the Mysteries. Further, we found

¹⁷¹ Athanassakis, *The Homeric Hymns*, pages 14-15.

¹⁷² Again, we can see echoes of Eurynome's dance with Ophion in this relationship between goddess and mortal, for Triptolemos drives "a serpent-driven chariot." See Stein, *Persephone Unveiled*, page 36.

the core or foundation myth that Plato has used to construct his masterwork and, in doing so, discovered one of the "keys to eternity" which we sought. In the central message of Diotima as recounted by Socrates we see the powerful message of death-rebirth-ascent celebrated in the great hall of the mystics at Eleusis.

This mythical underpinning helped Plato state his case to his contemporary audience. It must have seemed to many Classical Athenians that, on the surface, what he was saying was fantastic, revolutionary -- and it was. But by using the *mythos* masterfully (using only those mythic stories and allusions that were exact parallels to his argument), Plato helped his audience understand and accept his case (and gave it added authority). This mythic framework supported and extends Plato's argument, providing firm ground for his audience to tread upon, an echo of Eurynome's primal dance of creation. It is a perfect example of the *logos* and the *mythos* working together in harmony to achieve illumination. For all great teaching of this kind relies on storytelling just as much as it relies on logic. This places Socrates in the camp of similar Avatars like Buddha and Jesus.

While we saw how Plato used *logos* and *mythos* to support each other, working together to produce a revolutionary illumination, we also saw significant steps in the separation of the two. Plato may have used the framework of the Mysteries and significant mythic imagery to support his arguments, but he also went beyond the *mythos*. Instead of a torchlight procession to the Eleusinian shrine along the Sacred Way, we have a simple walk to Agathon's house on the dusty roads of Athens. Instead of a priestess showing real objects to connote a mythic truth, we have a man talking about what a wise woman told him. And the final coda is not a satyr chorus, but the entourage of a drunken politician. Plato take the myth out of the shrine and temple and puts it into everyday life. Moreover, he uses the minimum of ritual, so essential to the *mythos*.

Campbell interprets this impending divide as the unique feature Greek mythology in general and of *The Symposium* in particular -- something he calls "The Greek Miracle." This is a watershed work in transforming mythology into what we now know as distinctly "European." This transformation is characterized by two dominant features in Greek thought expressed so vividly in Plato's work: the accent on the body and the idea of beauty everywhere.¹⁷³

We also witnessed the other essential element in the divergence of these two powerful forces in the male appropriation of feminine wisdom. In performing his Zeus-like feat of swallowing Diotima's wisdom whole and giving birth to it from his head, Socrates continued the process of male appropriation of the feminine which eventually resulted in its repression. In the end, the victory of *logos* meant not just defeat for *mythos*, but for Diotima herself. Plato foreshadowed the impending triumph of patriarchy, which rendered the Olympians irrelevant. With the ascendancy of *logos* comes the rise of literalism. In making what was *mythos* literally true (transforming it into *logos*), Western Christendom turned their scriptures into history, treating it as prose instead of poetry. "The institution of patriarchy ends the period of true myth; historical legend then begins and fades into the light of common history."¹⁷⁴ Here Graves touches on the heart of the challenge in restoring the *mythos-logos* marriage into a once-again healthy dynamic. How can the West -- especially the Christian West -- revive its *mythos* without killing *logos*?

The key is where it always has been in this dynamic: the human heart. Compassion or co-passion -- co-suffering -- is at the core of Christian thought. But somewhere along the line, the revolutionary message of Jesus and the New Testament was co-opted (we might say swallowed) by the patriarchy. The radical message of Jesus that transforms the thunderbolt hurtling Yaweh of the Old Testament to the kindly "Father in Heaven" of the New is compassion. Yaweh's

¹⁷³ Campbell, *Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, page 232-236.

¹⁷⁴ Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Volume One, page 20.

compassion is for His chosen, the in-group. But to the "other," they are to show no mercy: their cities are to be destroyed, their men slain, their women and children enslaved. But in the multi-cultural, urban and urbane Roman Empire, the Good News of Jesus is that there is no longer any "other" either in Heaven or on earth. "I and the Father are one," said Jesus (as did the Sufi mystic al-Hallaj, who, like Jesus, was killed by the Orthodox powers of his time for blasphemy), even as Diotima declares the lover and beloved to be one and the same. This revelation, the defining characteristic of the Axial Age, reflected in the messages delivered by Buddha, Jesus and others, celebrated the essential unity of humanity and the divine in a manner consistent with time and place in response to the enormous changes in civilization since the time of the Mother Goddess. But Zeus-like, the Roman Empire (taking, as ever, their cue from the Greeks), swallowed this wisdom whole and turned it to its own uses. The key message of universal compassion was lost and in its place, the old model on in-group/out-group was reinforced.

This revelation must be, to coin a Christian phrase, born-again in our age where borders have dissolved, the illusions of difference between nationalities and race have been dispelled by genetics (which, seen in this light, is the *logos* supporting the *mythos*) and the world seen as it once was: one village of incredible diversity and beauty, united by the knowledge of its underlying unity. For the *logos* has succeeded in proving what the *mythos* already knew: that there is no "other." The survival of the planet now depends on humanity embracing this ancient wisdom, whether in ecological terms of the interconnected web of life of which we are all a part or geo-political/military terms, where the destructive power of humanity has finally approached that of the gods like Shiva himself. This possession of the good, forever, is within the world's reach, if we have but wisdom and courage enough to grasp it. We may even get a glimpse of what such a world might look like -- but to do that, we must make one further procession, that from the past to the present, and bring *The Symposium* into a contemporary setting.

CHAPTER THREE: THE STUDENT'S TASK (II) -- BACK TO THE FUTURE

As we have seen in Part One, the mythic landscape on which the speakers in Plato's symposium danced was a rich and complex one, full of beauty and horror, harmony and conflict. What sort of landscape do our contemporary eulogists stand upon? In this section, I will look at the landscape from the point of view of our modern-day speakers in terms of the dynamics identified in the previous section: that is to say, I will identify what elementary idea they expressed in the time of Socrates and how their folk idea or motif has changed to suit our age. Further, I will place each speaker somewhere within the continuum between the seeming poles of *mythos* and *logos* as they are understood in the early 21st Millennium. Finally, having set the theoretical framework for the discussion, I will present the screenplay *Drinks at Plato's*.

In Part One, we identified the *Elementargedanken* and *Volkergedanken* at work in *The Symposium*. The elementary ideas are one of the "keys to eternity" that gives Plato's work its timeless quality, tying it to its contemporary setting of Classical Athens to the ancient wisdom of the past. Therefore, having identified the Ariadne's Thread that connects Plato back to the ancient *mythos* of the Mediterranean and the Near East, we need only follow this elementary strand forward through time to find how these ideas are expressed in our own age. In doing so, we will help to determine what philosophical stance of our speakers in *Drinks at Platos* and gain, perhaps, some insight into how the Western psyche has changed in the intervening 25 centuries.

From Forms to Freud: The *archai* in contemporary society

To many in the West, the idea of "god" or even "the gods" is problematic. In our age of scientific rationalism, the very notion of god as it was once understood a mere three hundred years ago seems to a large number of people antiquated, smacking of superstition. But if we step back from our current worldview of the measurable, demonstrable and scientifically-provable and look at this idea as a metaphor rather than an outdated notion from the past, we can, perhaps, see the gods that lurk in our String Theory and Depth Psychology.

Campbell, Richard Tarnas and others would argue that the gods or Forms or elementary ideas expressed by *mythos* throughout the ages are *archai*, unchanging in and of themselves, but expressed differently as the Western Mind evolved. The early expressions of these *archai* were as divine forces, understood through the lens of *mythos*. The next evolution in the understanding of these elementary ideas took place during the Axial Age and Plato was one of the avatars that helped the human psyche make that leap. Socrates' pupil, Plato, Tarnas argues, took these *archai* and transformed them into the archetypes of Form – that is, "absolute essences that transcend the empirical world yet give the world its form and meaning. They are timeless universals that serve as the fundamental reality informing every concrete particular."¹⁷⁵ The next step was taken by Aristotle, for whom the Forms existed primarily *in* things and not *above* or *beyond* them. They gave a thing its essence and potential. "For Aristotle as for Plato, form is the principle by which some things can be known, its essence recognized, its universal character distinguished within its particular embodiment."¹⁷⁶

Archetypal or universal forms retained their sustaining link to the divine through the late classical, medieval and Renaissance periods. The disengagement from

¹⁷⁵ Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche, Intimations of a New World View*, Viking, 2006, page 81.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

the divine was gradual, but inexorable, reflecting “the evolution of Western thought as the locus of intelligible reality gradually shifted from the transcendent to the immanent, from the universal to the particular, ultimately from the divinely given archetypal Form (*eidōs*) to the humanly constructed general name (*nomina*).”¹⁷⁷ But this way of interpreting reality virtually disappeared in the wake of Cartesian rationalism and empiricist science. Its reemergence at the beginning of the 20th Century with the development of Depth Psychology, however, saw the idea transformed from an inner-outer, universal dynamic inextricably linked to the cosmos to a purely internal construct of the human psyche.

The process of reconnecting archetypes with the divine began with Jung’s final works and continues to the present day. Tarnas quotes James Hillman at length, using his definition of archetypes as “the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world.”¹⁷⁸ For Hillman, their “emotional possessive effect, their bedazzlement of consciousness” makes them “comparable with a God. And Gods, religions sometimes say, are less accessible to the senses and to the intellect that they are to imaginative vision and emotion of the soul.”

Tarnas goes on in *Cosmos and Psyche* to articulate a comprehensive and very compelling theory of planetary archetypes, a cosmic superstructure above and beyond our earthly experience, putting the *archai* into a cosmological context. The key to understanding this relationship, he says, is that the myths associated with the planets were not merely projected upon the astrological bodies named after the gods by the human imagination. “Rather, a considerable body of evidence suggests that the movements of the planets named Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Mars and Mercury tend to coincide with patterns of human experience that closely resemble the character of those planet’s mythological counterparts... this empiricism is given context and meaning by a mythic, archetypal

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.82.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 83.

perspective, a perspective that the planetary correlations seem to support and illustrate with remarkable consistency. The nature of these correlations presents to the astrological researcher what appears to be an orchestrated synthesis combining the precision of mathematical astronomy with the psychological complexity of the archetypal imagination, a synthesis whose sources seemingly exist a priori within the fabric of the universe."¹⁷⁹

Tarnas identifies ten planetary archetypes, seven of which were known to the Ancients (including Classical Athens). The seven Classical planetary archetypes are:¹⁸⁰

The Sun: Represents the central principle of vital energy and conscious selfhood. Just as the Sun is the central entity in the solar system, so is the Sun the central entity in the individual psyche reflected in the birth chart. The Sun represents the center of personal identity, the conscious ego, the autonomous willing self, and is associated with one's sense of individual self-directedness and self-expression. In a sense, it is the cosmic expression of "Cogito ergo sum."

The Moon: Represents the feminine side of the psyche, the anima in Jungian terms. It is closely associated with the emotionally and instinctively responsive personality, with the psychosomatic basis of one's being, and with the early mother-child relationship.

Mercury: Represents the principle of mind, thinking, and the movement or exchange of ideas through speaking, writing, and other forms of communication. It governs the capacity to conceptualize and communicate, to articulate, to use words and language, to analyze and comprehend, to learn, to perceive, to mediate, transport, and connect. The Mercury archetype is associated with the Greek mythic figure of Hermes, the Roman Mercury, the messenger of the gods.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 85.

¹⁸⁰ See Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, pages 89-91.

Venus: Represents the principle of love and beauty. Venus is Eros, as Mercury is Logos. Venus rules the desire to be involved in romantic and social relations, to attract and be attracted to others, to engage in artistic activities, to seek harmony and aesthetic or sensuous pleasure.

Mars: The principle of energetic force. It symbolizes that part of the psyche which impels us to act, to assert ourselves, to struggle, to press forward and against, to be courageous and vigorous, to be competitive or combative. Mars is the archetypal warrior: it governs the capacity for aggressiveness, anger, and physical energy, as well as tendencies toward injury, violence, and impulsiveness.

Jupiter: Expansion and success. It governs the tendency to expand and grow, to elevate and uplift, to seek that which is better or higher, to improve and magnify, to incorporate that which is external, to make larger wholes. It also governs the tendency to experience success, honor, abundance, happiness, and good fortune, and is connected with the capacity for magnanimity, liberality, pride, and optimism.

Saturn: The principle of limit, structure, and necessity. It governs the material world, time, tradition, the past, aging, death, and the endings of things. Also associated with the superego and Chronos, "the stern father of the gods."

Tarnas' system of planetary archetypes, with its fusion of Jungian psychology and Classical astronomy, is an ideal and apt model to use in categorizing our contemporary speakers. And indeed, each one of the original speakers in *The Symposium* can be classified using this system. More on this in the New Character descriptions section below.

Folk ideas for the speakers

One of the joys of writing this screenplay has been to translate the folk ideas of the speakers to our contemporary times. The great thing is to look at the particular profession and philosophical stance of a particular speaker and try to set him within our contemporary age. Of course, this process must be true to the *Elementargedanken*, but in most cases, the actual profession of the speaker translates into our contemporary context. After all, the whole idea of folk ideas is how the elementary ideas are expressed within a particular time and place. I would argue that in no other time and place than in contemporary North America are people more closely connected to their jobs as identities. Further, for those speakers who have no apparent vocation, we can look to the *mythos* and *logos* for their probable current incarnation.

Mythos and Logos

In order to determine what our contemporary speakers' philosophical stance will be, we need to examine the relationship between *mythos* and *logos*, not just in our age, but from the first point of bloody contact between the civilizations of the Mother Goddess and the nomadic, patriarchal warrior cultures. Since their victory six millennia ago in the Near East and Europe, the sheep and cattle herders have made the entire world their pasture. They ushered in a new mythic age: the Sumero-Babylonian monad. Myths of sufficient power and resonance are dynamic cultural foundations. Defined as the sociological structure coordinate to the psychological posture of a people (which is in turn expressed by the metaphors and symbols used in that people's mythology), the great monads have shaped world history for thousands of years. Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West* identified eight such monads and postulated the formation of a ninth, a "Russian-Christian" construction, in our own time.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, page XIV. The following section on monads is from the Introduction and Chapter One, "Cosmology and the Mythic Imagination."

When the Sumero-Babylonian monad displaced the Mother Goddess paradigm, a critical psychological transformation took place. In the myths of the victors, this shift can be seen plainly: that of the change from identification with the Mother to that of her sons. The Male Principle is no longer seen as the ever-dying, ever-resurrecting god of the moon-bull, but rather as the full glorious sun, whose royal male offspring are the Sons of Light. Further, these kings are living incarnations of the sun who will soon appropriate the act of primal creation to their male deity. No longer content with merely defaming and devaluing the Mother Goddess, they eventually denied her existence completely by claiming the creation of the universe by a masculine god, unaided. At the core of this male mythos was duality: good-evil, life-death. Man was sinful and separate from god. Nature was fallen and identified with the sinful (and abominated) female. Instead of huge cycles of time lasting hundreds of thousands or millions of years, creation has a definitive beginning and an end. All are to be judged after the final battle between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.

Yet, while the patriarchs were in the ascendancy, the Mother Goddess was not forgotten. As the Sumero-Babylonian monad fell and the Greco-Roman monad rose, She was worshipped in new forms and manifestations, chiefly as the consort of the supreme male deity (as we have seen in the marriage of Zeus and Hera). Even early Christianity had to acknowledge her power. The mantle of Artemis and Isis was placed upon the shoulders of the Virgin Mary at the council of Ephesus in 431 CE, while outside the council chamber where the church fathers were meeting to decide her nature, the common people formed lines and chanted "The Goddess! The Goddess! Of course she's the Goddess!"¹⁸²

The Goddess ruled the imagination of The West through the Dark and Middle Ages that followed. The expression of her power and influence can be seen in the medieval cathedrals that soared into the sky above Europe, each one named

¹⁸² Campbell, , *The Power of Myth*, page 214.

for Our Lady. But with the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment, there was a dramatic change. Susan Bordo in her "Flight from the Feminine" has ably documented the final suppression of the Goddess during the Enlightenment.¹⁸³ In essence, the "Sons of Light" reinvented themselves as the "Sons of the Enlightenment." In terms of Spengler's analogy, the Magian (Persian-Arabian, Judeo-Christian) monad gave way in the West to the Faustian (Gothic-Christian to Modern European-American). The rest we know well: the illusory "March of progress," the triumph of the scientific method and the ruthless exploitation of an earth robbed of its sacred nature by a humanity alienated from its succor. This relentless assault was enabled by two great lies key to the cultural monad of the Sons of the Enlightenment. Rather than be seen as a mere local reflection of identical divinities found throughout the Western World, Yaweh claimed a monopoly on transcendent truth. Any group or person who denied this was defined as "other," and subjected to the wrath of the jealous god. Further this "truth" was not just metaphorically correct, it was considered historically accurate.

For thousands of years, these two lies supported numerous rulers who were Sons of Light or Sons of the Enlightenment. Today, we live in an age where these patriarchal worshippers of thunderbolt hurling deities have built their ziggurats upon every continent. Their ways of knowing the world have spread to every corner of the globe until all horizons have vanished and they have run out of "others" to demonize. Now, we live in an age where Yaweh and his kind are the deities laying fallen on the mythological field as faith in the male-dominated, historically-accurate, transcendent-monopolist world view falters in the face of global economies, the worldwide web and e-mail. The male warrior gods have been defeated by an invasion of another sort – one of saffron-robed monks and yogis in loincloths, wielding not the bronze sword, but the razor of the Inner Eye. With no cultural or geographic barriers remaining to divide the planet, collisions

¹⁸³ See Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought and the 17th Century Flight from the Feminine," Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, UK: Blackwell, 2003.

of thought and belief of tremendous force are taking place, forming a global *mythos*.

Which brings us to the present state of affairs, where the myths of the Sons of Light have suddenly lost their luminescence. At the same time, the rest of the world (the "at-West," so to speak) is busy embracing beliefs and values which ring hollow to many of us who were raised with them. What is happening now, especially in North America (where the most baroque examples of the excesses of patriarchal Cartesianism are to be found), is a quest for the antecedents of Judeo-Christian myth. Far from creating a new religion, North Americans are devouring Eastern, Asian, Indian and aboriginal myths and philosophies. Fifty years ago, meditation was an exotic and esoteric practice in Canada and the United States. Now, it's mainstream. Meditation and yoga are being adapted to fit with North American sensibilities and traditions. Kundalini and pranic yoga have been joined by chocolate yoga and other variations, so many, in fact, that the Indian government has been moved to issue a denunciation of what it views as bastardized practices. Furthermore, North America's increasingly diverse ethnic makeup has changed the spiritual landscape of our cities. In Vancouver, numerous Sikh and Hindu temples grace the skylines; in addition to Baptists, there are Baha'i congregations; non-denominational faith communities open to wisdom from all sources like the Aquarian Truth Centre, are numerous. And the Goddess herself is emerging from the shadows. No longer the deity of a handful of secret Wiccans and feminists, her cult and wisdom are openly discussed and practiced by many other faith traditions, even those from the Christian tradition, like Unitarianism.

The incredible explosion of spiritual exploration in North America and other parts of the globe heralds the end of the Age of Monads. For in this globalized world, where the psychological posture of a people is so infinitely complex and where the geographic boundaries and sense of "other" essential to the cohesion of a monad have vanished, they have outlived their usefulness. This end was in fact

prophesized by Black Elk, a Sioux medicine man, in the early part of the 20th Century:

I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all things as they must live together, like one being. And I saw that sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father... but anywhere is the center of the world.¹⁸⁴

The center is everywhere. All places sacred. With globalization comes the realization that all ways of touching the transcendent are valid and tied to individual conscience -- not the increasingly irrelevant nation-state or trading block. Every route to the life-sustaining power behind the particular manifestation being equally valid, no longer bounded by geography, a great kaleidoscope of belief is bursting out all over the world. The *mythos*, it seems, has come full circle and every possible expression of it is, in theory, open to the speakers of our contemporary symposium.

Of course, many still follow the path of the *logos*, which has itself undergone a strange transformation in the West. Plato's understanding of this rational principle was fused with Christianity during the late Roman Empire and, in an ultimate irony, was not only forcibly reunited with the *mythos*, it was considered to *be* the *mythos* itself. The *logos* or word was in fact god Himself. At the same council of Ephesus where Mary was declared the Mother of God, the orthodox church leaders confirmed that Jesus was the *Logos*:

In Christ, the place of the human soul was taken by the *Logos*, the Word made Flesh, but since the human spirit was created in the image of the *Logos* (Genesis 1:28), Christ was not the less, but more human

¹⁸⁴ Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, page 8.

for the difference. The *Logos* and man were not alien beings, but joined in their innermost nature, and, in a sense, each was incomplete without the other.¹⁸⁵

This fusion of reason and divinity was coupled with radical position taken by the Imperial Church: the historical accuracy of the scriptures and the literal truth of what had been heretofore understood as metaphors and analogies. When the Word became Flesh, the sacred writings of the Judeo-Christian canon (at least, those that were accepted into the new state-run version of the faith) ceased to be poetry and became prose. It would not be until The Enlightenment, when Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum" freed the *logos* from its divine burden, that its spirit of scientific enquiry enabled us to attain god-like powers over life and death: not just over humanity, but the entire world.

What sort of implications does this have for our contemporary speakers? I see in these characters the same dualistic split in the *logos*: that is to say, those who worship the Word itself as divine and those who live by it as a scientific and philosophical ethos, but one that is not essentially religious. And with that splendid contemporary contradiction, let us see where our characters stand in the dual continuums of *Elementargedanken-Volkergedanken* and *mythos-logos*.

CHARACTER OUTLINES FOR *DRINKS AT PLATO'S TAKE TWO*

Now that we have looked briefly at some of the larger philosophical shifts that affect our contemporary speakers, let us re-examine their characters and see what their stances (and idiosyncrasies) will be. Let us note also how much these descriptions have changed from their first iteration in Part One to the current moment.

Note: The name of the character in The Symposium (if different) is in brackets.

¹⁸⁵ Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, page 409.

Aristotle Best: Late 30s, a backroom political operator, Socrates' friend and former college roommate. "Arie" to his friends, Best is known as "WCS" to his fellow political insiders -- short for "Worst Case Scenario." A keen observer usually trusted to handle the media, he's also the guy who breaks the latest news (usually bad) to his bosses. His bluntness and his honesty are a double-edged sword. From fairly humble upper-middleclass origins, he feels slightly intimidated by his fellow Frat Brothers, even now.

Elementary-Folk ideas: Aristodemus acts as the *Hierokeryx* ("Holy Herald") of the Socratic Mysteries and is the faithful chronicler of the events at *The Symposium*. This places him in Jungian terms as archetype of insight and messenger of divine wisdom.¹⁸⁶ He is also the enduring principle of communication, of processing information and presenting it clearly.

Mythos-Logos position: Best/Aristodemus is that classic transitional character, Hermes, messenger of the gods who is both an archetypal expression from the *mythos* and symbolic of "the principle of *Logos*. As such, he is almost the perfect political middleman (his honesty being something of a handicap in the world of American politics).

About the name: Best comes from part of Aristodemus' name ("Best of the People") and I could not resist simply adding the "totle" to the remainder, evoking Plato's famous pupil (whose name coincidentally means "Best Purpose," which suits Best's character).

Rev. Leon Bright: Black, late 30s. A moderate televangelist (somewhere in-between Oral Roberts and Tom Harpur) and former conservative Christian minister. He feels uncomfortable in the presence of the gay couple of Goodman and Adams. Nevertheless, he is loyal to a fellow frat brother and in any case, his philosophy is: "Hate the sin, love the sinner." He defends "traditional family

¹⁸⁶ Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, page 73.

values” but manages to avoid any outright confrontation with his host. He is there to proclaim The Word: whether the guests listen or not between them and God.

Elementary-Folk ideas: That of love and sacrifice, of the essential unity of human experience, especially as experienced through romantic love. His mythic archetype may be expressed as Aphrodite (Classic) or, in terms of Platonic reference, as aspect of Eros and the Beautiful. In Jungian terms, the psychological tendency to desire, create or experience beauty.¹⁸⁷

Mythos-Logos position: Phaedrus' emphasis on sacrifice coupled with his imagery around the antiquity of love and the Genesis-like evocation of the deep bring to mind the fusion of *mythos* and *logos*, to wit, a character who sees the *Logos* as the divine soul. In our age, I think this combination is best expressed in fundamentalist Christianity, specifically those denominations belonging to the charismatic tradition, where the euphoric "speaking in tongues" (the gift of Pentecost) is a dominant feature of worship. Further, Phaedrus' association with the sacrifice carried out on the 17th of *Boedromion* makes his contemporary incarnation as a Televangelist even more appropriate. Another key facet of Christian fundamentalism is the idea of Jesus Christ as the supreme sacrifice, the "Lamb of God" that died with the sins of the world upon him. This is one Folk expression of these Elementary ideas, one that is suited to our contemporary setting not just for these reasons. It is also appropriate in terms of the location and characters of Plato's *Symposium*. It must not be forgotten that Plato set his masterwork not in a temple, but in the house of one of the intellectual and artistic elite of Athens. The initiates into his Socratic Mysteries were not just any *mystai*: they were the political, social and military leaders of the state. Anyone with any insight into contemporary American politics knows the political power of the Christian right, and as the Rev. Leon Bright, our present-day Phaedrus fits right in. This characterization is also fitting given Phaedrus' position regarding the relative values of male-female sacrifice. In *The Symposium*, Phaedrus asserts

¹⁸⁷ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, pages 86-87.

the superiority of the masculine over the feminine: “A lover is more god-like than a boyfriend because he is divinely inspired. That’s why they gave higher honour to Achilles than to Alcestis, and sent him to the Isles of the Blessed.”¹⁸⁸ This male superior attitude is reflected in his relationship with his wife, Demi Bright, who he treats as his “Eve.”

About the name: Bright comes from Phaedrus' name ("Bright"). I chose Leon because Leon Bright was the name of a star B.C. Lion's receiver in the 1970s that I fairly worshipped. Perhaps not the best reasoning, but sometimes a writer gives into one indulgence too many.

Paul Adams (Pausanias): High-powered lawyer and Goodman’s spouse, about 40. A brilliant legal expert, Adams has helped win several precedent-setting legal cases that resulted in same-sex marriages being legalized in California. He's an elitist, domineering control-freak. While he’s a details man, he also has a tendency to see the world in black and white: good-bad, right-wrong. A bit of a magus, he writes erotic tales under a pseudonym.

Elementary-Folk ideas: Adams/Pausanias is the archetypical male principle, the will to dominate and to achieve. Tarnas would class him in planetary terms as Mars in its negative aspect, especially regarding his willingness to "defend and offend."¹⁸⁹ This and his leaning towards *logos* make him the ideal lawyer, whose job in our times is to both offend and defend.

Mythos-Logos position: Paul Adams/Pausanias is definitely from Mars and considers women to be from Venus (but not from Uranian Aphrodite). His “rules governing the love of boys” and those “governing the love of wisdom and other kinds of virtue” put him squarely in the *logos* camp: indeed, he may be fairly said to worship the letter of the law (especially when he has had a hand in changing it).

¹⁸⁸ *The Symposium*, page 10.

¹⁸⁹ Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, page 90.

About the name: The original Greek meaning of the name is obscure, but may mean “without voice,” which would be ironic for a teacher of rhetoric. I was unable to extract a good modern derivative from the Greek, but what with Pausanias being such an alpha male (one might even say a primal one), I decided to fall back on that mainstay of all writers (and directors) when they're stuck: the Bible. Adams brings to mind Yaweh's perfect male creation of Adam (particularly before the creation of Eve). Paul is not only derived from the Classical Greek name: it brings to mind the Apostle Paul, whose views on women (for instance, his famous instruction to early gentile believers, "Let women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak" in 1st Corinthians 14:34) appear to have been somewhat similar.

Dr. Andy Belcher (Eryximachus): A physician, late 30s, a leading neurosurgeon, one who believes that “love” is merely a series of neurological responses based on external stimuli and governed by evolutionary forces of natural selection. In other words, our contemporary Eryximachus has reversed the position of the Classical Eryximachus (who claimed love "governs" medicine, gymnastics and astronomy, that its principle "regulates" hot and cold and wet and dry and that this results in health). Indeed, our modern doctor sees the human brain as regulating everything in a bio-mechanical manner. Spiritual beliefs are governed by the “God Gene,” love by the reproductive imperative. Of course, he is bitter, having just divorced (and having lost big-time on the prenuptial). He is currently living with Perry Corn, a very young college co-ed, who he tries to dominate intellectually. Insanely jealous of Socrates, he is especially cruel to the slam poet.

Elementary-Folk ideas: The human psyche's need to find/impose order on the cosmos: the eternal dynamic between physical health and spiritual well-being. Expressed symbolically by Plato as the physician Eryximachus in *The*

Symposium, we need but make our contemporary doctor a specialist in *Drinks at Plato's*. Thus, Belcher is a brain surgeon.

Mythos-Logos position: The most rooted in *logos* of all the speakers. In planetary archetypal terms, he is Saturn in negative aspect, the stern father of the gods, and takes this types' tendency to impose order to extremes. His god is in the neurons.

About the name: Proof positive that Plato was not above using a good pun. The original Greek meaning is literally "belch-fighter," which fits with the doctor's attempts to cure Aristophanes' hiccups (and is also appropriate, given he's portrayed as a pompous windbag).

Otis Crohn (Aristophanes): A screenwriter of romantic comedies. Has nothing but contempt for Socrates and is jealous of Goodman's success. He is fascinated by the curious nature of love – if evolution and natural selection are so damned important, then why do men fall in love with men, women with women? How do you explain the transgendered and "two-spirited?" Or bi-sexuality? Or loving relationships that cross age, race, and language? It's almost as if there was one single sexual being at the beginning of life. Maybe it was that amoeba or whatever single cell that first discovered sexual reproduction, and we're all just echoes of that. Just protoplasm going after whatever protoplasm strikes our fancy, recognizing it from the primordial ooze. And now, here we are, gene-splitting, cloning, genetically engineering – we'd better be careful, our scientific gods (a barb aimed at Dr. Belcher).

Elementary-Folk ideas: Eros and Beauty. Aristophanes/Crohn fits the Tarnas planetary archetype of Venus in its positive aspect to perfection. Creating beauty, pursuing love, artistic and aesthetic experience -- all these are embodied by our

comedian. So too is the Venus archetypical characteristic of "to seek and create harmony."¹⁹⁰

Mythos-Logos position: Aristophanes/Crohn sits midway between the *mythos* and the *logos* -- in a position that we may describe in chakric terms as the fourth chakra (*Anahata*), that of the heart, universally recognized in religion as a transformative centre.¹⁹¹ This is ideal for a comic writer, giving him a foot in both camps.

About the name: In keeping with Aristophanes' mythic subtext, I chose Otis in honour of the *Aloeids*. Crohn is derived from one of the interpretations of Baubo's name, that of "Crone" (which fits with the Hecate-Demeter-Persephone trinity). Of course, "Crohn" has other connotations, including the unpleasant digestive disorder, but it is also suggestive of another meaning of Baubo: belly. Otis Crohn, like his Athenian counterpart, is capable of eliciting belly laughs from his audiences.

Cole Goodman (Agathon): Well-heeled, well-born, a "serious" screenwriter, 30. Got his start in the industry by writing government service announcements (a gig he got with the help of his family ties) and working for Public Television (something he tries to live down). He has finally won the Academy award for the third in his great tragic love trilogy. The recognition has fuelled Goodman's pride, arrogance and extravagance – his ego is operating at full throttle. He looks down on his former college classmates, save for Adams, his older same-sex spouse.

Elementary-Folk ideas: The ego writ large, or in planetary terms, Jupiter in it negative aspect: the breadth of vision and artistic expression coupled with pride

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ The Indian yogic tradition describes seven "chakras" or circles of power, which ascend the spinal column. The lower three -- the anus, genitals and navel -- are known as the *muladhara*, or "root base." These are the primal urges which drive humanity and shape the world: the urge to feed, procreate and subdue. In order to rise above the level of other animals, the human will must emanate from the heart or Anahata chakra. Above the heart is the second triad of chakras: roughly speaking, the larynx (centre of speech), eye level (where the image of one's God is held) and covering the crown of the head, the *sahasrara*, or "the Thousand-Petalled Lotus," which shines "with the brightness of ten million suns." See Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, pages 36-37.

and arrogance, aggrandizement and extravagance. Agathon's incarnation as Goodman is ideally suited to the Los Angeles movie industry, where in terms of ego, size really does matter.

Mythos-Logos position: A reflection of Narcissus if there ever was one (no pun intended), Agathon/Goodman would like to think he is of the *logos*, but his brief dialectic with Socrates proves he is hopelessly stuck staring into the pool of *mythos* and seeing his own reflection.

About the name: This character's name was fairly easy (if ironic). His name is based on "Nicolas" – meaning "victory of the people," from the Greek root "nike" and "laus" – and the original Greek meaning of Agathon – good or virtuous. Thus we have Cole Goodman, which also evokes the memory of another famous over-the-top writer, Cole Porter.

Socrates: Known as "Socks" to his friends. Homely, but charming in a gruff way, somewhere between 30 and 100. Chucked his career, wife and children to become a slam poet after what his friends think was a fling with an Indian yogin (they call her his "Yogin Ono"). Socrates has dropped out. The ultimate social critic, he carefully maintains an image that is close to that of a street person. Aristotle Best likes to think he's "rescuing" his friend by dragging him along to every party where the rich and powerful gather. Truth is, Socrates moves easily in these circles and his ability to compose poetry on the spot, tell stories and lambaste his hosts using verbal gymnastics (not to mention his tales of esoteric Indian tantric practices) have made him much sought-after in social circles. These circles are high and include the crowd gathered to celebrate Cole Goodman's Academy award win. But Socrates is above these circles. He's trying to get the people in them (people like Goodman and Hardyman) to look outside their social circle to the larger wheel of life. He's winning converts, one at a time...

Elementary-Folk ideas: The embodiment of Eros, the mind's ability to transcend time and space, intuition, the unitive force of compassion. Socrates is in fact so unique that he does not easily fit any of the seven ancient planetary archetypes -- the closest he comes is to Mercury, messenger of the gods. He is in fact more akin to that of Neptune -- which was not physically discovered until 1846. But in the Tarnas model, Neptune is "associated with the transcendent, spiritual, ideal, symbolic and imaginative of life; with the subtle, formless, intangible and invisible; with the unitive, timeless, immaterial and infinite; with all that which transcends the limited, literal temporal and material world of concretely empirical reality; myth and religion, art and inspiration; ideals and aspirations; images and reflections; symbols and metaphors; dreams and visions; mysticism, religious devotion, universal compassion. It is associated with the impulse to surrender separate existence and egoic control, to dissolve boundaries and structures in favour of underlying unities and undifferentiated wholes... the archetypal principle linked to Neptune governs all non-ordinary states of consciousness and the oceanic depths of unconsciousness. Characteristic metaphors for its domain include the infinite sea of the imagination, the ocean of divine consciousness and the archetypal wellspring of life."¹⁹² In short, Socrates (whose name means "whole, unwounded, safe" and "power") is the cosmic dreamer and delver into the unconscious.

Mythos-Logos position: Socrates is the master of both, and as the exemplar of unity, he uses both to suit his purpose and for best effect. He is not closer to one or the other: in chakric terms, he is one who has reached the seventh and final circle, the Thousand-Petalled Lotus that shines with the brightness of ten million suns.

About the name: "Socrates" is the nickname our modern speaker was given in college. The short, affectionate form of this nickname is "Socks." His real name is

¹⁹² Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, pages 96-97.

never mentioned. The name and the character serve as our direct link to the original symposium of Plato.

Dayita “Daisy” Devi (Diotima): A yogin, an ageless 55, mysterious as the mystery she reveals to Young Socrates; exotic, of mixed European and Indian descent. A master teacher, she is also politically savvy -- think a combination of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mother Teresa. Although steeped in yogic wisdom, Darling's vision is as broad as Black Elk's. For her, all paths are sacred. Her mixed parentage puts her at the axis/nexus of East-West spiritual traditions.

Elementary-Folk ideas: We may join the women of Ephesus in shouting “The Goddess! The Goddess! Of course She is The Goddess!” Or, at the very least, she is, like Socrates, Mercury-Neptune, swimming in the ocean of divine consciousness and the archetypal wellspring of life. Diotima was a yogin-priestess in *The Symposium* and I see no need to change thing for *Drinks at Plato's* -- the old maxim being, “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.” I will observe, however, that the attitude towards Daisy in our contemporary setting will be markedly different and reflect the deep distrust of the male-dominated power elite of feminine wisdom (I sense no such skepticism among the initiates to the Socratic Mysteries.)

Mythos-Logos position: Like Socrates, Daisy Devi is the mistress of both *mythos* and *logos*, seeing no contradiction between them, only a unity.

About the name: I see Diotima/Gloria as the contemporary successor of Yasodhara, wife of the Buddha who joined her husband after his great awakening and who herself attained *arahantship* (enlightenment). The Sanskrit meaning of Yasodhara (from *yasas* "glory, splendor" and *dhara* "bearing" from the verbal root *dhri* "to bear, support") is *Bearer of glory*. Diotima's name means "honoured by God." Thus, Gloria (Glory for short), the Darling of the gods -- Gloria Darling. However, this name just didn't seem appropriate for such an

important. So I went back to the Sanskrit and came up with *Dayita* ("loved") and *Devi* (a word for god, feminine). Thus, Dayita Devi or to give her an English nickname, Daisy Devi. Which is a little more dignified, I think.

Al Hardyman (Alcibiades): A Republican Senator, a sort of GOP mirror-image of Bill Clinton. A presidential hopeful, he portrays himself as a conservative Christian to appeal to a crucial voting bloc in his state. But like most politicians, he is not above a little partying. He is also sexually ambiguous: he may espouse Christian values, but he is willing to meet with organizers of the Gay Pride parade. And you get the definite feeling that he is attracted to Socrates on a lower level of the chakras than just the heart. But Hardyman is willing to suppress his sexuality (and anything else, for that matter) for the sake of gaining power. Once he's president, he's perfectly willing to do "the right thing," whatever that is, but, as he is fond of reminding his handlers, "you gotta get into the Oval Office first before you do any redecorating."

Elementary-Folk ideas: Our cosmic dancer is the ever-dying, ever-resurrected son of the Mother Goddess: the sacrificial bull, Dumuzi-Tammuz-Adonis and Shiva, all rolled into one. In terms of a planetary archetype, Alcibiades/Hardyman, like Socrates, defies the seven ancient patterns of potentiality and best fits another relative newcomer: Uranus/Prometheus in negative aspect. Although the planet itself was unknown to humanity until 1781, Tarnas has no doubt its influence was at work here on earth. There can be little doubt of the Uranian archetype as described by Tarnas as suiting Alcibiades:

"Uranus is empirically associated with the principle of change, rebellion, freedom, liberation, reform and revolution, and the unexpected break up of structures: with sudden revelations and awakenings, lightning-like flashes of insight, the acceleration of thoughts and events... Uranus transits are linked to unpredictable and disruptive changes, hence, the planet is often referred to as the 'cosmic trickster'... With respect to personal character, Uranus is regarded as signifying

the rebel and the innovator, the awakener, the individualist, the dissident, the eccentric, the restless and the wayward."

The eccentric, rebellious trickster politician Alcibiades dreamed up the disastrous expedition against Sicily that lost Athens the Peloponnesian War and waywardly switched sides from the Athenian to the Spartan and Persian before returning to the fold. Our contemporary Alcibiades, Hardyman, is bucking the conventions of his party's policies, reaching out to interest groups like gays and lesbians who are traditionally Democratic supporters and advocating radical foreign policies like promoting peace and dialogue rather than strike forces and military retaliation. Where will he end up, post-symposium? Only time (and perhaps Barack Obama) know for sure.

Mythos-Logos position: Alcibiades/Hardyman yearns for the *mythos*, but knows what side his political bread is buttered on. Like all politicians, he lives by the *logos*, and even believes in the "Word made flesh" interpretation thereof. He is, however, capable on occasion of putting aside his political mask and speaking the truth. He knows a good thing when he sees one and that is why he praises Socrates. He gives a sort of, "There but for the curse of God go I" speech in eulogizing Socrates. But like Alcibiades, Hardyman will say one thing privately among friends and do another in public if it gets him closer to the White House...

About the name: The original Greek meaning of Alcibiades is "violent and generous" or "strong like a man." I simply took the first syllable from Alcibiades and chose a variant of "strong" to come up with Al Hardyman. Besides, "Al" is a great name for a populous politician: "Call me Al..."

New character outlines for the Female Trinity

In order to reflect the feminine wisdom underlying *The Symposium*, I have created three new characters which, while they may have not had speaking roles

in Plato's work, were certainly there in spirit. They represent the Female Trinity of Persephone-Demeter-Hecate central to the Eleusinian Mysteries and act as a sort of Greek Chorus, reacting to the theories of love espoused by the Frat Brothers during their closed-door session and countering them with their own insights.

Perry (Persephone) Corn: Young (19), Native American, the "nymph" of the contemporary trinity. Working her way through college (she's studying biology, specializing on grain genetics), she is currently employed at a funeral home. She figures another four months at this crappy job ("it's sheer hell") she'll be able to go back home to her mom in Colorado. She is Belcher's new partner and taking her to Goodman's party is supposedly a significant step in their relationship. Having left home to immerse herself in L.A.'s urban hyper-reality, she is now rediscovering her aboriginal roots and the mysteries of her people's traditional shamanistic beliefs.

Demi Bright: Early 30s, a powerful woman with a powerful personality. Met and married Rev. Leon Bright in college. Demi manages the televangelist's business affairs while having her own career as a music director for a gospel choir. She's raised five kids and is an avid gardener -- which draws her closer to Perry. She is less literally-minded than her husband and is quite liberal in some of her views. The trinity's maiden.

Kate Hecht-Crohn: Late 40s, a bit older than her husband Otis (his third wife), the "Crone" of the Trinity. As serious as her husband is silly, Kate is a community activist, chairing the neighbourhood Sustainability Committee, which works on climate change at the grassroots level. She is also a Wiccan, which brings her into a (mostly) good-natured conflict with Demi. Although she has known Crohn's frat-boy friends like Belcher and Goodman for a few years, she doesn't have the depth and past-experience with them that Demi has.

Conclusion

I found that my appreciation and understanding of the characters in both *The Symposium* and *Drinks at Plato's* changed considerably one I went through the exercise of looking at the mythic landscape underneath Plato's masterwork. It has also given me, I think, some insight into the current state of the relationship between our estranged lovers, *mythos* and *logos*. Before we leave the student's task and proceed to the screenplay, let me conclude with a few final thoughts.

Nearly 2,500 years after the drinking party in Agathon's house in Athens, we find ourselves living in the Global Village with a new appreciation for the fragility of the garden Gaia that supports us. But if we are to get back to the garden, we must carry a few new tools aside from our biblical pruning hooks. In the spirit of inclusiveness and an end to duality, the Emerging Global Mythos must find some accommodation with Cartesian philosophy and the scientific method. This will require a considerable act of forgiveness (as well as a leap of faith) on the part of many who see them as the greatest scourge afflicting the earth. To cling to this notion is to fall into the very dualism the New Mythos is leaving behind. For while it is true that the Sons of the Enlightenment left no part of the Mother Goddess's body in peace, forever probing and analyzing what they took to be a corpse, their morbid curiosity assisted the supposedly dead Mother of All Forms to give rise to everything from string theory to cloning. For all the excesses they have empowered, Cartesian philosophy and science have done great service to humanity not by producing the means whereby the Global Village will reduce hunger and disease and finds ways to cope with the problems it has created. Science has also reinforced the underlying unity of humanity. DNA research indicates that humans arose from a single subset of *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* in Africa. This knowledge is powerful, and is helping to make obsolete the notion of "other" and open the human capacity for compassion to all peoples and all life on the planet. All myths point to this underlying unity: now even Cartesian science, god bless it, has helped to reinforce the notion.

But perhaps the single biggest contribution of the scientific method has been its exposure of the historical inaccuracies of the Bible, thereby refocusing attention on their intended meaning: as metaphoric, sacred texts pointing the way to the transcendent plane, not history. As poetry, not prose. Such revelations are useful and point to the need to preserve this valuable tool.

The emerging global view of Cartesian philosophy and science are as tools created by humans with varying potentials for constructive or destructive uses. They are not *mythos* in and of themselves (despite a disturbing tendency by their more faithful adherents to treat them as a religion). This is a large step down from the pedestal of the guardian of truth, but the Cartesian scientists will eventually have to accept their limitations, summed up so eloquently (if somewhat dualistically) by R.D. Laing:

A few of the other modes of existence outside the investigative competence of natural science, besides value, are love and hate, joy and sorrow, misery and happiness, pleasure and pain, right and wrong, purpose, meaning, hope, courage, despair, God, heaven and hell, grace, sin, salvation, damnation, enlightenment, wisdom, compassion, evil, envy, malice, generosity, camaraderie and everything in fact, that makes life worth living. 193

The principle means by which all this will be accomplished -- is being accomplished -- is the restoration the feminine principle, now widely acknowledged as essential to the health of the planet and all life upon it. In mythic terms, it is the opening of the human heart to compassion on a global scale, not longer limited to the non-existent "in-group," nor even to just our species. It's important, however, to emphasize that this restoration is one of

¹⁹³ See R.D. Laing, "What's the Matter with Mind?" (Satish Kumar, *The Schumacher Lectures*, UK, Abacus, 1992).

balance, not a switch from patriarchal duality to matriarchal duality. Caroline Whitbeck makes this point forcefully:

The feminist ontology outlined here yields a distinctive, nonoppositional, and nondualistic conception of these subjects, as well as a new view of the person and of ethics. Furthermore, because the relation of self to other is not taken to be represented by gender difference, gender is neither taken to be, nor to be symbolic of, an important ontological difference.¹⁹⁴

Whitbeck's restoration of the feminine is one that accommodates both male and female aspects: polarity replacing the duality. Once again, we hear the echoes of the *Tao Te Ching*; of *Me* and *Maat* and *Dharma*. Thompson also conjures a wonderful vision of self-governing villages moving to the yogic rhythm of the Mother Goddess:

The Taoist vision takes us back to the prehistoric feminine and points to a posthistoric feminine we are only now beginning to appreciate. In this celebration of anarchic decentralization and dispersed villages, we glimpse the possibilities of a world that is an alternative to the giantism of transnational cyberpunk corporations and the monstrous cities such as Tokyo, Mexico, Los Angeles, and Sao Paulo.¹⁹⁵

And so we arrive back where we started some six thousand years ago. The long march of empires and bloated megalopoli ends with us back in our extended villages, each of us connected to our neighbors through the Emerging Global Mythos and with a better understanding of one another thanks to the *logos*. For as Socrates showed so many centuries ago, it is only by using all the tools at our command, the *mythos* and the *logos* reconciled and once more working in

¹⁹⁴Caroline Whitbeck, "A Different Reality: Feminist Ontology," *Women, Knowledge and Reality* (US: Routledge, 1989), page 51.

¹⁹⁵Thompson, *The Road Not Taken*, page 260.

harmony, that humanity has a chance to attain the good, forever. We will need to harness the energies and potentialities of both in order to realign ourselves with a cosmos we are only now beginning to reach out to in physical terms. To reach for the stars, we must find our way back to the cosmic consciousness of which we are a part:

Our *own* marvelously complex nature depends upon and is embedded in the universe. Must we not regard the interpretation of human and cosmic nature as fundamental, radical, ‘all the way down?’ It seems to me highly improbable that everything we identify ourselves as specifically human – the human imagination, human spirituality, the full range of human emotions, moral aspiration, aesthetic intelligence, the discernment and creation of narrative significance and meaningful coherence, the quest for beauty, truth, and the good – suddenly appeared *ex nihilo* in the human being as an accidental and more or less absurd ontological singularity in the cosmos. Is not this assumption, which in one way or another still implicitly pervades most modern and post-modern thought, nothing other than the unexamined residue of the Cartesian monotheistic ego?¹⁹⁶

One of my most vivid memories of the GLS program came in the second semester during the “Reason” foundation course. The readings included a comparative examination of *Genesis* and *Timaeus*, Descartes’ *Discourse on Method*, *A Room of One’s Own* by Virginia Woolf and other wonderful works. Throughout, I was fascinated by the tension between religious belief and scientific inquiry caused by the Western embrace of literally-interpreted Christianity: in other words, the shifting relationship between *mythos* and *logos*. Then I read Dickens’ *Hard Times*. Stephen Blackpool’s martyrdom prompted an epiphany for me. In the novel, Blackpool, the working-class Everyman, is literally

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, pages 491-492.

swallowed by the Satanic pits dug by the “melancholy elephants.” Yet, even in this man-made hell, he clings to his star of hope. As he dies, he tells his beloved, Rachel, how the star, gleaming in the sky above the pit, comforted him:

“Often as I coom to myselfn, and found it shinin on me down there in my trouble, I thowt it were the star as guided to Our Saviour’s home. I awmust think it be the very star...” They carried him very gently along the fields, and down the lanes, and over the wide landscape; Rachel always holding the hand in hers. Very few whispers broke the mournful silence. It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility and sorrow and forgiveness, he had had gone to his Redeemer’s rest.¹⁹⁷

I was deeply moved by this piece of Victorian sentimentality (Dickens being the master thereof), a scathing denunciation of Utilitarianism and simultaneously an evocation of the *mythos* rooted in the *logos* (the image is based on a passage from the *Book of Matthew* in the King James Version of the Bible¹⁹⁸). But after the rush of sentiment came an insight: I was instantly reminded of the image of the star in that wonderful, rational creation myth, Plato’s *Timaeus*. The God of Creation mixes the human soul in the great bowl and:

When he had compounded the whole, he divided it up into as many souls as there are stars, and allotted each soul to a star. And mounting them on their stars, as if on chariots, he showed them the nature of the universe, and told them the law of their destiny... and anyone who lived well for his appointed time would return home to his native star and live an appropriately happy life.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, Broadview Literary Texts, Toronto, 1985, page 293.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, page 293, footnote.

¹⁹⁹ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, translator Desmond Lee, Penguin Books, London, 1977, page 58.

Plato and Dickens were writing in a time before Einstein's Theory of Relativity and the Big Bang theory radically reshaped our view of the cosmos. These two great revelations of the 20th Century are regarded by many as triumphs of *logos* over the *mythos*: pure science and reason putting the gods and goddesses to rest for good and all. But in this view of a cosmos in explosion, what do we find? That our constituent molecules are billions of years old: carbon and other atoms thrown to the edge of the universe by birth and death of ancient suns and reshaped by forces we still cannot fully comprehend. Seen through the lens of *mythos*, does this not simply confirm what Plato and Dickens told us centuries ago? That we are of the stars, not separate from them? Moreover, could it be that avatars like Dickens, Plato and Einstein have all in their own way channeled the thoughts of the Cosmic Consciousness in their own way, expressing this great *Elementargedanken* in a manner appropriate to their time and place in the spirit of *Volkergedanken*? And if this is the case, can they not also be seen as Socrates' daimons, delivering messages from the gods? That the illusion of "the other" as it pertains to the universe itself must now be shattered for us to live an appropriately happy life? To quote Tarnas:

Is it not much more plausible that human nature, in all its creative multidimensional depths and heights, emerges from the very essence of the cosmos, and that the human spirit is *the spirit of the cosmos itself* as inflected through us and enacted by us? Is it not more likely that the human intelligence in all its creative brilliance is ultimately the cosmos's intelligence expressing *its* creative brilliance? And that the human imagination is ultimately grounded in the cosmic imagination? And, finally, that this larger spirit, intelligence and imagination all live within and act through the self-reflective human being who serves as a unique vessel and embodiment of the cosmos – creative, unpredictable, fallible, self-

transcending, unfolding the whole, integral to the whole, perhaps even essential to the whole?"²⁰⁰

Let us rediscover the daimons and divinities that helped guide us for tens of thousands of years, not at the expense of science and rationalism, but with a deeper understanding and appreciation of both. Now, bearing all of this in mind, please enjoy *Drinks at Plato's*.

²⁰⁰ *Cosmos and Psyche*, page 492.

APPENDIX A: ROUGH CHARACTER OUTLINES FOR “DRINKS AT PLATO”

Note: The name of the character in The Symposium (if different) is in brackets.

Socrates: A vagrant who used to be a somebody – a professional with a wife and children and a career. But he chucked it all for what his friends think was a fling with "some weird Indian woman posing as a mystic" (they call her his “Yoko Ono”). Socrates has dropped out and become close to a street person. But he’s been “rescued” by Aristodemus, who has tried to get him to straighten out. He’s taken him to several parties where Socrates’ abilities to tell stories and his verbal gymnastics (not to mention his tales of esoteric Indian tantric practices) have made him a curiosity in social circles. These circles are high – they are in fact going to one of the endless after-parties in the wake of their friend Cole Goodman’s Academy award win.

Aristodemus: A backroom political operator, Socrates’ friend and former college roommate. (BEST PEOPLE... or Best of the people)

Diotima: An *éminencegrise* of tremendous influence, she is a combination of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mother Teresa. She has both the political and humanitarian bona fides to crash Goodman’s party and have the final word on love.

Al Hardyman: (Alcibiades) A Republican Senator and presidential hopeful. He portrays himself as a fundamentalist, born-again Christian to appeal to a crucial voting bloc in his state. But like most politicians, he is not above a little partying.

Rev. Leon Bright: Black, late 30s. A moderate televangelist (somewhere in-between Oral Roberts and Tom Harpur) and former conservative Christian minister. He feels uncomfortable in the presence of the gay couple of Goodman and Pausanias. But the massive telecommunications corporation that owns his Christian cable station has also bankrolled Goodman's movie. There to show his company loyalty more than any sense of goodwill, Phaedrus defends "traditional family values" and clashes with his host on more than one occasion. (Bright...)

Dr. Andy Belcher (Eryximachus): A physician, a leading neurosurgeon, one who believes that "love" is merely a series of neurological responses based on external stimuli and governed by evolutionary forces of natural selection. In other words, our contemporary Eryximachus has reversed the position of the Classical Eryximachus (who claimed love "governs" medicine, gymnastics and astronomy, that its principle "regulates" hot and cold and wet and dry and that this results in health). Indeed, our modern doctor sees the human brain as regulating everything in a bio-mechanical manner. Of course, he is bitter, having just divorced (and having lost bigtime on the prenuptial).

Aristophanes: A screenwriter of romantic comedies. Has nothing but contempt for Socrates and is jealous of Agathon. He is fascinated by the curious nature of love – if evolution and natural selection are so damned important, then why do men fall in love with men, women with women? How do you explain the transgendered and "two-spirited?" Or bi-sexuality? Or loving relationships that cross age, race, and language? It's almost as if there was one single sexual being at the beginning of life. Maybe it was that amoeba or whatever single cell that first discovered sexual reproduction, and we're all just echoes of that. Just protoplasm going after whatever protoplasm strikes our fancy, recognizing it from the primordial ooze. And now, here we are, gene-splitting, cloning, genetically engineering – we'd better be careful, our scientific gods (a barb aimed at Dr. Belcher). (BEST APPEARING)

Cole Goodman: (Agathon) A “serious” screenwriter. The third in his great tragic love trilogy has won the Academy award. The recognition has fuelled Goodman’s pride, arrogance and extravagance – his ego is operating at full throttle. (NOTE: His name is based on “Nicolas” – meaning “victory of the people,” from the Greek root “nike” and “laus” – and the original Greek meaning of Agathon – good or virtuous). He looks down on his former college classmates, save for Pausanias, his same-sex spouse.

Pausanias: High-powered lawyer and Goodman’s spouse. A legal expert, Pausanias helped win several precedent-setting legal cases that resulted in same-sex marriages being legalized in California. Domineering and a control-freak, he’s a details man. A bit of a magus, he writes erotic tales under a pseudonym.

APPENDIX B: THE BEAT SHEET FOR “DRINKS AT PLATO’S”

Scene One: Los Angeles, night. ARISTODEMUS and SOCRATES approach the door of Plato’s Exclusive Gentleman’s Club. They briefly discuss Cole Goodman’s Academy Award. They are going to Goodman’s victory party. Everyone who is anyone is going to be there. After a tense moment at the door, the BOUNCER lets them in.

Scene Two: Plato’s, Foyer: Muscled BOUNCERS watch as gorgeous ATTENDANTS take Aristodemus and Socrates’ overcoats – and pat them down for weapons. Aristodemus cautions Socrates to be on his best behaviour – this could be his big break to get his career back on track. Socrates is non-committal. They are finally allowed to enter...

Scene Three: Plato’s, Main Showroom: ...a room full of gaudy lights, a wall of sound; three stages on which EXOTIC DANCERS perform. Aristodemus shouts to Plato over the noise to keep close and not get lost. They push their way through the crowd. Socrates looks totally fascinated by the spectacle as they weave through DANCERS, DRUNKS and SERVERS.

Scene Four: Plato’s, Main Showroom, Rear Entrance: Just as Aristodemus and Socrates reach the rear of the room, the doors burst open and a CELEBRITY comes through with a sizable ENTOURAGE (including his/her own SECURITY). In the resulting pushing and shoving, Aristodemus and Socrates become separated.

Scene Five: Plato's, Hallway, Private Rooms area: Aristodemus stalks the halls, frantic, looking for Socrates. No sign of him. He pauses by the door to a private room. He hears the sound of laughter and familiar voices. He opens the door to reveal...

Scene Five: Plato's, Goodman's Room: ...AL GOODMAN and his GUESTS, various Exotic Dancers, Servers and various HANGERS-ON. Lounging about on plush couches and chairs. A JAZZ QUARTET plays softly in the corner. In the center is a small table with the distinctive OSCAR statuette placed on it. Goodman welcomes Aristodemus but hey! Where's Socrates? Aristodemus hoped to find him here. Goodman dispatches a Hanger-On to go find Socrates...

ANOTHER ANGLE:

In a corner of the room, DR. ANDY BELCHER, REV. LEON BRIGHT and ARISTOPHANES are draped on a couple of couches. They can't see why Goodman would let a bum like Socrates crash his party – just because they all went to college together...

RETURN TO SCENE

Aristodemus is making excuses for Socrates to Goodman and his partner, PAUSANIAS. Goodman, in high spirits, laughs it off. Has a Server get Aristodemus some champagne. He's sure Socrates will show up...

Scene Six: Plato's, Main Showroom: The Hanger-on dispatched to find Socrates weaves through the gyrating mass of revellers. Finally spots Socrates...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...regaling a group of Exotic Dancers with some of his poetry. They're enjoying it. But the CUSTOMERS are getting annoyed...

Scene Seven: Plato's, Goodman's room – Belcher's couch: Aristodemus defends Socrates as Belcher and Aristophanes gloat over the poet's disastrous life -- used to be a somebody – wife and kids, a career. Chucked it all for some weird Indian woman. He's a street person, isn't he? Aristodemus protests Socrates has his act together again -- people are talking about him –

ANOTHER ANGLE

The door flies open. The Bouncer has Socrates by the collar. "Does this belong to you?" Goodman promises to keep an eye on Socrates and the Bouncer releases him.

RETURN TO SCENE

Belcher and Aristophanes laugh. Aristodemus is mortified. CUT TO:

Scene Eight: Plato's, Goodman's Room – moments later: The guests are lined up at a buffet. Socrates is beside Goodman, with little on his plate, while Goodman's heaping. Goodman wants Socrates to tell him all about his latest poems – maybe he can use some of them in his next film. Socrates quips he has no ambitions to win a "Best Supporting Poet" Oscar. The exchange is barbed, but friendly. Aristodemus arrives to steer Socrates to his seat.

Scene Nine: Goodman's Room – Dining Table -- Later: The table is sumptuously set for the feast. Lots of Servers pouring wine, etc. Goodman is in the middle, Pausanias at his right, Socrates and Aristodemus on his left. Clearly a formal affair. Bright, who is acting as the M.C., insists on saying grace. CUT TO:

SOCRATES' P.O.V

As Bright speaks, we see the guests from Socrate's vantage point. He goes around the table. Bright's voice fades under and we hear in VOICE OVER Socrates naming each frat brother one by one: Dr. Andy Belcher, recently divorced; Aristophanes, comedic screenwriter, never won an Academy award; two Unnamed Guests – can't place 'em... were they two years behind him? Aristodemus, his friend – how did he ever become a backroom boy? Pausanias, big-time legal expert and gay rights activist. Goodman, of course – finally got the prize he's always dreamed of. And Bright, of course – televangelist by day... how much Gerry Falwell has he got in him?

Finally finished, Bright remarks on how many frat brothers are at table and a mischievous Aristophanes leads them in a rendition of the fraternity's bawdy song. All join in – save Socrates, who seems lost in thought... CUT TO:

Scene Ten: Goodman's Room – Couches area – Later: It's cigars and brandy time. The well-fed guests look a little rough around the edges. Socrates is sitting beside Goodman. Socrates is explaining the spiritual aspects of the Indian school of Tantric sex. Goodman's not much interested in the spiritual part...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Belcher and Aristodemus are on one couch, beside them are Aristophanes and Pausanias. Discussing the rumour that Al Hardyman, a presidential hopeful, will make an appearance. A Server offers Aristophanes a drink. He refuses – feeling a bit fragile. Belcher lectures him on how bard drinking is for his health. Aristophanes looks around for someone to rescue him from this bore. His eye catches...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Rev. Bright, on the couch across from them. Talking to a beautiful Server. Aristophanes looks meaningfully at Bright, who excuses himself and stands. In his best televangelist voice, he proposes a toast to Goodman.

RETURN TO SCENE

Aristophanes eagerly jumps to his feet and seconds the motion, calling for champagne all around – much to Aristodemus' amusement. CUT TO:

Goodman's couch. Goodman rises. Tells them he's sick of being toasted. Why don't they toast to love – better yet, he has an idea: orders all the Servers, Hangers-on and anyone who isn't a frat brother out. This toast is just for Alumni. Everyone else out! CUT TO:

Scene 11—Goodman's room: In a wide shot, we see most of the Guests exit. Leaving just the frat brothers seated in their couches in a rough circle. In the middle of the circle is the table with the Oscar sitting on it. CUT TO:

CLOSE UP OF GOODMAN as he tells his frat brothers how in his acceptance speech, he had to thank the producers, the actors, the financiers, etc. and never got a chance to say what he really wanted to say: what his movie – what love – is really about. CUT TO:

POV GOODMAN

From Goodman's perspective, we see the frat brothers clamouring for Goodman give them the real speech. We see their faces: some eager, some happy, some bored. Goodman signals for silence. Walks over to the table. Picks up the Oscar: "Our golden idol." Proposes each one of them give their version of an acceptance

speech – rather like a eulogy. Everyone starts off with “I would like to thank the Academy.” After that, they can say anything about love they like. Let’s all have a go.

Beat. CUT TO:

Bright’s couch: The reverend rises. “You’ve all heard Brother Goodman’s motion. All in favour?”

ANOTHER ANGLE:

We see the brothers voice their agreement (with varying degrees of enthusiasm). Socrates insists that Rev. Bright go first. This he’s gotta see... Bright walks over to the table. Grabs the Oscar and returns to his couch. Remains standing as he starts his speech. CUT TO:

CLOSE UP OF BRIGHT

In his best televangelist style, Bright thanks the Academy, then launches into his speech...

360 DEGREE PAN SHOT

As Bright speaks, we see the reactions on the faces of the brothers, starting with the two unnamed BROTHERS on his right and moving to the left on past Pausanias, Aristodemus, etc. until we see Goodman and Socrates. Goodman looks amused. Socrates very serious, attentive. CUT TO:

Rev. Bright concludes his speech. Places the Oscar carefully back on the table. Much half-drunken applause. An UNNAMED GUEST to Bright’s right grabs the Oscar and starts his speech. CUT TO:

P.O.V. SOCRATES

Socrates stares at the UNNAMED GUEST, whose speech is boring, banal. In VOICE OVER, we hear Socrates' mentally trying to place who the Speaker is – obviously a frat brother – was he a year behind them or a year ahead of them? What was that Bright said about love? Only lovers being willing to die for each other? There's truth in that. Diotima would have died for me – or did I die for her?
CUT TO:

Scene 12: An ashram, day – FLASHBACK SEQUENCE – A much YOUNGER SOCRATES sits on a prayer rug across from DIOTIMA, a yogin. In VOICE OVER, we hear Socrates thinking of what Bright meant by death – he's an evangelical, so probably he meant it literally. Did Socrates die for Diotima, figuratively? He gave up his wife, his kids, his so-called career. That's a kind of death... VOICES are recalling Socrates to the present and we CUT TO:

Scene 13: Goodman's Room, Couch area – Later – SOCRATES' P.O.V.

Socrates snaps back to the present. Everyone is shouting for Pausanias to speak. The second UNNAMED GUEST hands Pausanias the Oscar. With mock reluctance, he begins his speech. "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking."

Big laughs. Pausanias, in best courtroom style, gives his speech. The camera slowly zooms in on the lawyer as he makes his case...

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Pausanias speaks, the camera slowly pans around, this time for right to left, showing the reactions of the Unnamed Guests, Bright, Socrates and finally, Goodman. The pan stops. The camera slowly zooms in on Goodman's face, capturing his every smile, nod and frown. Pausanias lays out the differences from state to state regarding same-sex marriage, federal law and societal attitudes.

After some heckling from Aristophanes and Rev. Bright, he defends a same-sex union as ideal and superior to traditional marriages.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The camera swings 180 degrees and we see Pausanias wrapping up. Goodman goes over to him and gives him a kiss. In the midst of the applause, Aristophanes is stricken with a fit of hiccups. Pausanias tries to give him the Oscar, but Aristophanes waves him away. CUT TO:

Scene 14: Goodman's Room – Socrates and Goodman's Couch:

Aristodemus takes the opportunity to have a quiet word with Socrates. Is he paying attention at all? Aristodemus is worried that Socrates seems to be totally out of it. Socrates says he's fine. If anyone needs help, it's Aristophanes – go save him from Belcher.

REVERSE ANGLE

Belcher is trying to help Aristophanes, but he signals to the doctor to speak in his place. Pausanias hands the Oscar to Belcher. Who begins to speak.

Belcher reduces love to electro-chemical responses in the brain triggered by certain stimuli. Everything is run not by love, but by DNA. Tries to use a musical metaphor and fails miserably. But it's all about science, mechanics – not love. Love is just hormonal imbalance.

Aristophanes gets up, takes the Oscar from Belcher. Gives his speech. A story of how we are all just protoplasm seeking our original partner protoplasm, etc. A barb at both Belcher and Goodman.

The Unnamed Guests call out for more champagne and Goodman calls in a Server. During the interval between speeches, Socrates and Goodman spar verbally – Socrates feigning nervousness about speaking, Goodman claiming he’s the one who’s nervous. “What? Nervous – you just gave a speech live on TV in front of millions.” Yeah, says Goodman, but this is a real audience – and a tough crowd.

Scene 15: Goodman’s Room – Bright’s Couch: A Blackberry buzzes.

Aristodemus pulls it out, reads the text message. Interrupts Bright’s conversation with Unnamed Guest – better move things along, Reverend – company’s coming.

Bright goes over to Socrates and Goodman. One of them had better start speaking – they can flip a coin or whatever. Goodman insists Socrates should be last and, to great applause, he walks to the table and picks up the Oscar...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Camera slowly zooms in on Goodman as he gives his speech. Which is about him, really. He identifies with the beloved. And he deserves to be beloved, damn it... beautiful, well-spoken, and somehow still vacuous...

Applause as Goodman goes over to Socrates and hands him the Oscar. Socrates takes it and replaces it on the table. “I’m gonna pull a Marlon Brando on you...”²⁰¹ Instead, he engages Goodman in a brief dialogue on how his central premise is flawed. After Goodman concedes (and a few catcalls from the Unnamed Guests and Aristophanes to “get on with it!”), Socrates...

²⁰¹ Brando caused a sensation in 1972 when he had Sacheen Littlefeather, a beautiful Native American woman dressed in buckskin and feathers, REFUSE his award for best actor, citing the misrepresentation of Native Americans by the Hollywood movie industry as his reason.

Launches into part one of his dialogue with Diotima. He describes meeting her and going to the commune in India...

Scene 16: Buddhist Commune, day – FLASHBACK SEQUENCE – Reprise. Again, much Younger Socrates sits across from Diotima. This time we hear Diotima speaking on her own. She and Socrates discuss the true nature of love from a Buddhist perspective. Right up to the definition of immortality. When...

Scene 17: Goodman's Room – Aristophanes' Couch: ... Aristophanes interrupts – immortality? The good? How can she be so sure about this stuff?

“Just look around the room, my sophist friend,” counters Socrates. “What do you see here? You guys would sell your mother for fame and fortune. For what? There's a better way to achieve immortality...”

Socrates carries on, launching into the Mysteries of Diotima...

Scene 18: Ashram, Night – FLASHBACK SEQUENCE – Much Younger Socrates sits across a fire from Diotima as she goes into the mysteries of being pregnant in mind and body. The ascent of the chakras. The ideal form of love. DISSOLVE TO:

Scene 17: Goodman's Room – FOCUS ON SOCRATES: Socrates concludes: So, you've all been wondering for years why I burnt my life to the ground and became a bum. Well, now you know. I did for love. Only it wasn't for love of one woman or even myself. It was something more than that. You can keep your awards. I don't want 'em.

Beat.

A general murmur of agreement, some scattered applause. Socrates goes to the far end of the room to use the washroom. In his absence, everyone is obviously deeply moved. Until...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...there's a loud noise behind the door – a scuffle, shouting and a familiar VOICE...

BACK TO SCENE

Aristodemus, Goodman and Pausanias burst out laughing. They know who's creating the disturbance...

...AL HARDYMAN bursts in through the door. Behind him we can see his ENTOURAGE (mixture of men and women, all of the "beautiful" in an L.A. kinda way). Hardyman demands to be allowed in to congratulate Goodman.

Goodman agrees on the condition that Hardyman leave his Entourage behind. Hardyman staggers in – drunk but not excessively drunk. The Frat Brothers stand and start humming "Hail to the Chief." Cheering and applause as Hardyman shakes Goodman's hand, then gives him a hug. Just as...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...Socrates comes out of the washroom. Sees Hardyman.

RETURN TO SCENE

And Hardyman sees Socrates. Hardyman rushes over to give him a hug. Most of the Frat Brothers are astounded – what could a man who might be the next president of the United States have to do with a nobody like Socrates?

Hardyman guides Socrates over to Goodman's couch and makes him sit down. Goes over to the table and grabs the Oscar. You wanna speech about love? I'll give you a speech about love – I love this guy! Even though he refused to get into bed with me (politically speaking)

Hardyman gives his speech about Socrates as exemplar. Using contemporary equivalents. He hands Socrates the Oscar. Much laughter and hilarity until...

ANOTHER ANGLE

The door bursts open. Both Goodman's and Hardyman's Entourages pour into the room. LOUD MUSIC. Champagne flows like a river. The party is getting started.

Socrates, Goodman and Hardyman are a small immovable island in the human stream. Just staring at each other. Bright, Belcher and the two Unnamed Guests come up to Socrates. Shake his hand and leave.

Aristophanes comes up with a tray of champagne. Asks them to toast love – real love, as defined by Socrates. A peace offering. The four men toast as the party swirls around them...

Aristodemus arrives. Advises Hardyman to split. His attendance here wouldn't look good in the media – not with the primaries and mid-term elections coming up. Hardyman brushes him off: "What happens in Plato's stays in Plato's." CUT TO:

ARISTODEMUS' P.O.V.

We see the four men talking, drinking and enjoying each other's company as the party around them gets progressively wilder. Aristodemus scans the room. Spots an empty couch in the corner. Makes for it, passing scenes of increasing debauchery. Sits down. Swivels to see the four frat brothers still at the center of the room, yacking. PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

The entire room – a swirling, pulsating party palace with a still center. DISSOLVE TO:

Scene 18: Goodman's Room – time lapse sequence: In a swift montage of images, we see the party reach its peak, start to fade, then break up. Everyone is gone, save Socrates, Hardyman, Goodman and Aristophanes. Still talking... CUT TO:

Scene 19: Goodman's Room – Aristodemus' couch – morning: Aristodemus is sound asleep. Awakes with a start. Looks groggily around. He sees...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Socrates. Trying to convince Goodman and Aristophanes that they ought to be able to write good comedies and good tragedies and vice versa. Hardyman is sound asleep on the couch beside them. Goodman passes out. Followed by Aristophanes.

Beat.

Socrates kisses the heads of his three sleeping friends. Turns to see Aristodemus rising with difficulty.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Socrates goes over to Aristodemus and grins. They do the fraternity secret handshake. “Come on – I’ll take you back to the Y,” says Aristodemus. Nope, says Socrates. I got a gig at UCLA at ten. You coming?”

Beat.

Aristodemus hands Socrates his keys. “You do have your license – right?”

Scene 20: Goodman’s Room – the door: Socrates and Aristodemus exit quietly. The Bouncer lets them out. He looks into the room to see...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Goodman, Hardyman and Aristophanes all snoring. Beside them in a wastepaper basket is...

... the Oscar. Surrounded by paper plates, plastic cups and confetti. But still gleaming.

Credits

FADE OUT

APPENDIX C: DRINKS AT PLATO'S: THE TREATMENT

1. EXT. LOS ANGELES, OUTSIDE PLATO'S CLUB - NIGHT.

ARISTOTLE BEST (30s, dark-haired, intense) and SOCRATES (late 30s, handsome in a homely kind of way) approach the door of Plato's Exclusive Gentleman's Club. The neon lights of the club can be seen above their heads. Best cautions Socrates to be on his best behaviour: "Anyone who is anyone is going to be here." Socrates shrugs, unimpressed. Best sighs and drags him up to...

2. EXT. PLATO'S, MAIN ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

... the main entrance of a very gaudy club on the Hollywood Strip. Looming large by the door is a muscular BOUNCER. They announce they're guests at Cole Goodman's after-party. The Bouncer who glares at them suspiciously, but after a tense moment, recognizes "Slam Poet Socrates." He lets them into...

3. INT. PLATO'S, FOYER -- CONSECUTIVE

... Plato's. Inside, muscled BOUNCERS watch as gorgeous ATTENDANTS take Best and Socrates' overcoats. The Bouncers move in, pat them down for weapons. Best reminds Socrates that he might get a job out of tonight's networking. Socrates is more interested in the security check: Do they do the full cavity search here? Finally allowed to enter...

4. INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM -- CONSECUTIVE

...a room full of gaudy lights, a wall of sound; three stages on which EXOTIC DANCERS perform. Best shouts to Plato over the noise to "keep close and don't get lost." They push their way through the crowd. Socrates looks totally fascinated by the spectacle as they weave through DANCERS, DRUNKS and SERVERS.

5. INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM, REAR ENTRANCE

Just as Best and Socrates reach the rear of the room, the doors burst open and a CELEBRITY comes through with a sizable ENTOURAGE (including his/her own SECURITY). Much pushing and shoving. Best and Socrates become separated. Great...

6. INT. PLATO'S, HALLWAY, PRIVATE ROOMS AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

Best stalks the halls, frantic, looking for Socrates. No sign of him. He pauses by the door to a private room. He hears the sound of laughter and familiar voices. He opens the door to reveal...

7. INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM -- CONSECUTIVE

... COLE GOODMAN and his GUESTS, various Exotic Dancers, Servers and various HANGERS-ON. Lounging about on plush couches and chairs. A JAZZ QUARTET plays softly in the corner. In the center is a small table with the distinctive OSCAR statuette placed on it. Goodman welcomes Best -- but where's Socrates? Goodman despatches a HANGER-ON to look for "the only guy in the showroom who won't be talking about sex."

The Hanger-on exits. Goodman motions to Best to find a seat. Best takes in the domestic terrain. In a corner of the room, Best sees DR. ANDY BELCHER, REV. LEON BRIGHT and OTIS CROHN draped on a couple of couches. They're discussing Socrates: "a hopeless soul." Best scowls. Where is that poet?

Best turns his back on Belcher et al and makes excuses for Socrates to Goodman and his partner, ADAMS. An ebullient Goodman tells Best not to worry -- have some champagne! It's a party! "I'm sure he'll show up eventually..."

8. INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The Hanger-on dispatched to find Socrates weaves through the gyrating mass of revellers. Finally spots Socrates regaling a group of Exotic Dancers with some of his poetry. They're enjoying it. But the CUSTOMERS are clearly getting annoyed, so the Hanger-on grabs Socrates by the elbow and

tries to steer him away. Socrates shakes him off and keeps slammin'.

9. INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM, BELCHER'S COUCH --
CONTINUOUS

Best sits beside Belcher and Crohn, sipping champagne and looking uncomfortable as his two companions gloat over the poet's disastrous life. "Socks" had it all -- career, trophy wife, kids -- then he threw it all away on some "weird Indian chick." They say he's a street person... Suddenly, the door flies open. The Bouncer has Socrates by the collar. The buzz in the room dies. "This belong to you?" the Bouncer asks Goodman, "'Cos he's being a nuisance." Goodman laughs, tips the Bouncer and welcomes Socks to the party. The buzz in the room starts to return to normal as Socrates adjusts his collar: "Man, everyone's a critic!"

Belcher and Crohn laugh. Best is mortified. But then, as Crohn admits: "Socks always did know how to make an entrance."

10. INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The guests are lined up at a buffet. Socrates is beside Goodman, with little on his plate. Goodman heaps his high. Goodman, somewhat patronizingly, insists he must use some of Socks' poems in his next film. Socrates bristles: "I got no ambition to win a 'Best supporting poet' Oscar." The exchange is barbed, but still friendly. Best arrives to steer Socrates to his seat.

11. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM DINING TABLE -- LATER

The table is sumptuously set for the feast. Lots of Servers pouring wine, etc. Goodman is in the middle, Adams at his right, Socrates and Best on his left. Clearly a formal affair. Bright, the M.C., rises and welcomes his "Fellow frat brothers of the honourable order of Delta Phi Kappa." He leads them in saying grace.

While most heads are bowed, Socrates has his eyes wide open. Looking at each guest in turn, trying to place

Bright, Crohn, Belcher, Adams, Goodman and two UNNAMED GUESTS he just can't place... and giving a little background on each.

12. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, COUCHES AREA -- LATER

It's cigars and brandy time. The well-fed guests look a little rough around the edges. Socrates sits beside Goodman.

Belcher and Best are on one couch, beside them are Crohn and Adams. Discussing the rumour that Al Hardyman, a presidential hopeful (and frat brother) will make an appearance. The conversation is getting strained as Belcher drones on about the perils of drinking too much. Best et al are rescued by...

...Rev. Bright, who, in his best televangelist voice, proposes a toast to Goodman. But Goodman protests he's "sick and tired of being toasted." He has a better idea. He clears everyone out of the room who isn't a Frat Brother...

13. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Goodman signals for silence. Walks over to the table. Picks up the Oscar: "Our golden idol." Proposes each one of them give their version of an acceptance speech - rather like a eulogy. Everyone starts off with "I would like to thank the Academy." After that, they can say anything about love they like. Let's all have a go."

First up is Bright. Gives it his best televangelist style. Tells the Frat Brothers the highest form of love is *agape*, or heavenly love. "This is the love that was made flesh, the Word incarnate, that came down from heaven to live among us and who died for us on the cross. For there is no greater sacrifice, no greater act of love than to die for your lover, or the other - strangers that you don't even know." Mirroring Phaedrus' speech about sacrifice. "I declare to you, brothers, that God is love, and that all of us --screen writers included -- would do well to remember that."

An UNNAMED GUEST to Bright's right grabs the Oscar and

starts his speech. CUT TO:

P.O.V. SOCRATES

Socrates stares at the UNNAMED GUEST, whose speech is boring, banal. In VOICE OVER, we hears Socrates' mentally trying to place who the Speaker is - obviously a frat brother - was he a year behind them or a year ahead of them? What was that Bright said about love? Only lovers being willing to die for each other? There's truth in that. Glory would have died for me - or did I die for her? CUT TO:

14. INT. COMMUNE, BODHGAYA, INDIA - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE -- DAY

A much YOUNGER SOCRATES sits on a prayer rug across from GLORY DARLING, an ageless 55, long, dark hair streaked with white; a *yogin*. She radiates serenity. He wonders about what Bright means by death: literal or metaphorical? The VOICES recall Socrates to the present...

15. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, COUCH AREA -- LATER

Socrates snaps back to the present. Everyone is shouting for Adams to speak. The second UNNAMED GUEST hands Adams the Oscar. With mock reluctance, he begins. "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking..." he begins. Big laughs. Adams, in best courtroom style, carries on. He makes his case for love not being bound by traditional morals regarding same-sex unions. And the inequities even within the United States regarding the laws governing those unions: "What does it say about California that Cole and I could get married in Iowa -- Iowa, for God's sake!" Adams sits down. Goodman leans over and gives him a kiss.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

In the midst of the applause, Crohn is stricken with a fit of hiccups. Adams tries to give him the Oscar, but Crohn waves him away. CUT TO:

16. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, SOCRATES AND GOODMAN'S COUCH - CONTINUOUS

Best takes the opportunity to have a quiet word with Socrates. Is he paying attention? He looks totally zoned out. Socrates protests he's fine -- if anyone needs help, it's poor Crohn.

REVERSE ANGLE

Belcher is trying to help Crohn, with little success. He tries giving him water. Succeeds in pouring it down his front. Crohn continues to hiccup violently. Signals to the doctor to speak in his place.

Belcher looks at the Oscar with undisguised contempt. The camera slowly zooms in as the doctor speaks. He reduces love to electro-chemical responses in the brain triggered by certain stimuli. "It's all genetics. It's not love that makes the world go 'round, gentlemen, it's DNA..."

Belcher's bitter eulogy ends in an uproar of laughter, catcalls and whistles. Crohn gets up, takes the Oscar from Belcher. Weaves a story about writing "the primal romantic comedy" about "Boy protoplasm meets girl protoplasm." Love is not just bio-mechanics, it's mystical. The end of Crohn's speech is lost in roars of laughter and waves of applause.

There is a general buzz in the room. Calls for more champagne. Goodman orders more, giving Best time to check his Blackberry. Where is Congressman Hardyman?

Socrates and Goodman argue over who speaks next. Both profess to be too nervous to speak. Neither of them are particularly convincing...

17. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, BRIGHT'S COUCH -- MOMENTS LATER
Best is next to Bright, who is in conversation with Unnamed Guest. Best's Blackberry buzzes. He pulls it out, reads the text message. Interrupts Bright. "Better move things along, Reverend -- we got company coming." Hardyman is on his way. Bright goes over to Socrates and Goodman. "One of you gentlemen had better start speaking now..."

Goodman looks at Socrates, who shrugs. He sizes up the crowd. Okay, Socrates can go last. To great applause, Goodman walks to the table and picks up the Oscar.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Camera slowly zooms in on Goodman as he gives his speech. Which is about him, really. His vision. His artistry. How youth and beauty are the exemplars of love. And how damned lucky those "geriatric, All-bran-eating assholes of the Academy" finally gave him the honour he deserved.

REVERSE ANGLE

Applause as Goodman finishes. Cheers and shouts as Goodman turns to Socrates and hands him the Oscar. Socrates takes it and replaces it on the table. "I'm gonna pull a Marlon Brando on you..."²⁰² Instead, he engages Goodman in a brief dialogue on how his central premise is flawed. After Goodman concedes (and a few catcalls from the Unnamed Guests and Crohn to "get on with it!"), Socrates launches into part one of his dialogue with Glory, "who taught me what it really is to love." Describes meeting her and going to the commune in India...

18. INT. COMMUNE, BODGAYA, INDIA - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - DAY
Reprise. Again, much Younger Socrates sits across from Glory Darling. Socrates narrates as the scene unfolds. Glory disabuses Socrates of the notion he knows what love it. Uses a tree in a foggy valley as an example. True love is possession of beauty and the good, forever --

19. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, CROHN' COUCH -- CONTINUOUS
Crohn interrupts. "The Good forever? Immortality? That's what love is all about? How can she know that?"
"Just look around the room, my sophist friend," counters Socrates. "What do you see here? You guys would sell your mother for fame and fortune. For what? There's a better way to achieve immortality..."

²⁰² Brando caused a sensation in 1972 when he had Sacheen Littlefeather, a beautiful Native American woman dressed in buckskin and feathers, REFUSE his award for best actor, citing the misrepresentation of Native Americans by the Hollywood movie industry as his reason.

Socrates carries on, launching into the Mysteries of Glory Darling...

20. EXT. COMMUNE, FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - NIGHT

Much Younger Socrates sits across a fire from Glory Darling as she goes into the mysteries, about the inexhaustible energy of love. They meditate, they work, they share. And Glory reveals the secrets of the chakras to Young Socrates, who slowly makes the ascent...

21. INT. YOUNG SOCRATES' VISION - MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

... right up to the radiant image of a thousand-petaled lotus, gleaming and glowing with ethereal light.

22. EXT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - MORNING

Young Socrates opens his eyes. It's dawn and the sun is rising in all its splendour. He looks at Glory, still seated across from him, eyes open. She merely nods. Young Socrates thanks Glory for showing him the path. "The path? It is just one of many. But it works for me..."

23. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Belcher's voice snaps the spell with a crass remark about celibacy. Socrates tells the Frat Brothers the idea isn't to conquer your carnal nature, but transform it: "it's all the same energy -- depends how you use it."

Beat.

Bright asks if "in order to know true love, we all have to become Buddhists?" Socrates insists Glory's path is just one of many. All paths are sacred paths. There is no "other" anymore for us to define ourselves against. We're all one. Children of the Mother Tree.

Beat. The Frat Brothers are silent, reflecting.

CLOSE UP ON SOCRATES:

Socrates concludes... a little more the Slam Poet now than the Philosopher King.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)

So, you've all been wondering for years why I burnt my life to the ground and became a bum. Well, now you know. I did it for love. Only it wasn't for love of one woman or even

myself. It was something more than that. You can keep your awards and put 'em on the shelf. It's okay if you want to strut and flaunt 'em - I don't want 'em.

Beat.

A general murmur of agreement, some scattered applause. Socrates goes to the far end of the room to use to washroom. In his absence, everyone is obviously deeply moved. Until...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...there's a loud noise behind the door a scuffle, shouting and a familiar VOICE roaring, and then...

...AL HARDYMAN (40, handsome, smoothest suit on the circuit) bursts in through the door. Behind him we can see his ENTOURAGE (mixture of men and women, all of the "beautiful" in an L.A. kinda way).

Goodman only allows Hardyman in. The Frat Brothers stand and start humming "Hail to the Chief." Cheering and applause as Hardyman shakes Goodman's hand, then gives him a hug. Just as...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...Socrates comes out of the washroom. Sees Hardyman.

RETURN TO SCENE

And Hardyman sees Socrates. Hardyman rushes over to give him a hug. Most of the Frat Brothers are astounded - what could a man who might be the next president of the United States have to do with a nobody like Socrates?

Hardyman guides Socrates over to Goodman's couch and makes him sit down. Goes over to the table and grabs the Oscar. You wanna speech about love? I'll give you a speech about love - I love this guy! Even though he refused to get into bed with me (politically speaking)

Hardyman gives his speech about Socrates as exemplar. Using contemporary equivalents. He hands Socrates the Oscar. Much laughter and hilarity until...

ANOTHER ANGLE

The door bursts open. Both Goodman's and Hardyman's

Entourages pour into the room. LOUD MUSIC. Champagne flows like a river. The party is getting started.

Socrates, Goodman and Hardyman are a small immovable island in the human stream. Just staring at each other. Bright, Belcher and the two Unnamed Guests come up to Socrates. Shake his hand and leave.

Crohn comes up with a tray of champagne. Asks them to toast love - real love, as defined by Socrates. A peace offering. The four men toast as the party swirls around them...

Best arrives. Advises Hardyman to split. His attendance here wouldn't look good in the media - not with the primaries and mid-term elections coming up. Hardyman brushes him off: "What happens in Plato's stays in Plato's." CUT TO:

BEST'S P.O.V.

We see the four men talking, drinking and enjoying each other's company as the party around them gets progressively wilder. Best scans the room. Spots an empty couch in the corner. Makes for it, passing scenes of increasing debauchery. Sits down. Swivels to see the four frat brothers still at the center of the room, yacking. PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

The entire room - a swirling, pulsating party palace with a still center. DISSOLVE TO:

24. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE

In a swift montage of images, we see the party reach its peak, start to fade, then break up. Everyone is gone, save Socrates, Hardyman, Goodman and Crohn. Still talking... CUT TO:

25. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - BEST'S COUCH- MORNING

Best sound asleep. Awakes with a start. Looks groggily around. He sees...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Socrates. Trying to convince Goodman and Crohn that they ought to be able to write good comedies and good tragedies and vice versa. Hardyman is sound asleep on the couch

beside them. Goodman passes out. Followed by Crohn.

Beat.

Socrates kisses the heads of his three sleeping friends.

Turns to see Best rising with difficulty.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Socrates goes over to Best and grins. They do the fraternity secret handshake. "Come on - I'll take you back to the Y," says Best. Nope, says Socrates. I got a gig at UCLA at ten. You coming?"

Beat.

Best hands Socrates his keys. "You do have your license - right?"

25. INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - THE DOOR -- CONTINUOUS

Socrates and Best exit quietly. The Bouncer lets them out. He looks into the room to see...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Goodman, Hardyman and Best all snoring. Beside them in a wastepaper basket is...

...the Oscar. Surrounded by paper plates, plastic cups and confetti. But still gleaming.

Credits

FADE OUT

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THE SCREENPLAY

PART II DRINKS AT PLATO'S

FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES, SIDE-STREET NEAR ALLEY - NIGHT

ARISTOTLE BEST (30s, dark-haired, intense) and SOCRATES (late 30s, handsome in a homely kind of way) walk along the damp, darkened, deserted street. Best has his hand clenched at the throat of his overcoat against the February chill. Socrates has his coat open, oblivious to the cold.

BEST

It's the party of the year--

SOCRATES

It's only February.

BEST

-- and anybody who is anyone is going to be there --

SOCRATES

So why we goin' in the back way?
(beat)
I thought the awards were last night.

BEST

Day Two of the after party.
Special for the frat brothers and partners.

SOCRATES

That's Goodman -- excess is best.

BEST

Just behave yourself.

SOCRATES

Like you, Arie, I am always on my *Best* behaviour.

BEST

C'mon...

Arie puts a hand on Socrates' back. Hustles him along.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES, SIDE-STREET, ALLEY ENTRANCE -
CONTINUOUS

At the entrance to one of those "Black Hole of Calcutta" alleyways are PENNY (could be 20, could be 60 -- dirt, disease, poverty obscure her real age) who is obviously pregnant, bulging white belly visible under her t-shirt. SOURCE (older, slightly cleaner, manic energy). A pile of empty wine bottles decorates the wheels of a dumpster just inside the alley. Penny sits cross-legged, ubiquitous ripped cardboard sign (reading "Please") propped up by her knees. A battered toque holds a few small coins. Source dumpster-dives, hauling out useful refuse. Penny chant/sings a refrain.

PENNY

Fuck Wall Street -- bail me out!
My last name's Chrysler too.
Seven trillion dollars to the
banks, zero to the poor. Fuck
Wall Street...

SOURCE

(muttering)
Lots of stuff here. Lots'a good
stuff here --

Penny looks down the alley and sees...

REVERSE ANGLE

... Best and Socrates coming up the street. She redoubles her volume, pointedly.

PENNY

Fuck Wall Street -- bail me out!
Seven trillion dollars to the
banks, zero to the poor.

Source gets the hint. Stuffs something into his grimy jacket. Approaches Best and Socrates as they come up.

SOURCE

Spare twenty bucks for my college
fund?

BEST

Whatever.

Best tries to blow by Source and down the alley. But Socrates stops. Stares at Source and Penny.

SOCRATES

Hungry ghosts.

(beat)
Which college?

BEST

C'mon, Socks!

But Source is dancing around Socrates with frenetic energy, practically bouncing off the walls.

SOURCE

UCLA. Actually, it's not my college
fund --

Penny starts singing -- loudly.

PENNY

"Now's the hour for your power, Rise up
and take it, you know you can make it -
- "

SOURCE

-- it's for the kid.
(looks at Penny)
Our kid.

Socrates takes another step, Source drops at his feet.

BEST

What the hell --

Source is now doing one-handed push-ups.

SOURCE

It's not for booze. Not for drugs.
Look at this! Picture'a health --

PENNY

(sings)
"If there will be poor always, Then
there'll be rich always, Standin' in
doorways and givin' in more ways --"

Best grabs Socrates by the arm. He shakes him off.
Goes over to Penny.

BEST

For gawd's sake! We'll be late!

Source scrambles over to Socrates and Penny.

SOURCE

Don't like college funds? Think of
'em as poverty carbon credits. Zero
emissions. Reduce your foot-print --

they're fat free and low cholesterol -
-

Socrates is unmoved. Just stares at Penny. Source
kneels down next to them.

SOURCE (CONT'D)
So you like music, eh?

Source tries to harmonize with Penny -- badly.

SOURCE/PENNY
"There will be poor always, There
will be wise always, There will be
fools always..."

Socrates kneels in front of them. Staring intensely.
Source falters and falls silent. Followed by Penny.
Silence.

Beat.

Socrates puts his hand on Penny's bulging belly.

SOCRATES
(to Penny)
How far along are you?

PENNY
(quietly)
Seven months.

SOCRATES
Sure it's his?

Penny nods. Source starts to say something. Penny
elbows him in the gut. He grunts, but shuts up.
Socrates grins.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)
So -- got Blue Cross?

Penny laughs at this.

SOURCE
Hah! We got better -- we got the
Holy Cross. Hospital for the poor
and wretched -- most of 'em birthed
by the Statue of Liberty -- got a bed
all lined up...

Another jab top the rins from Penny silences Source.
Socrates stands.

SOCRATES

Arie, give these guys the cash you
were gonna front me.

BEST

What? Are you nuts?

SOCRATES

Not everybody gives birth in beauty,
Arie...

Socrates walks down the alley. Leaving Best puzzled.
Beat.

BEST

Why do I... aw, shit!

Best pulls out a billfold. Peels off five C-notes.
Tosses it into Penny's hat.

BEST (CONT'D)

There. A late Valentine's Day
gift.

Penny and Source look at the bills, awed by their
enormity.

PENNY

But this -- thank you!

Source grabs the bills, eyes wide.

SOURCE

Oh, Penny, we dinin' in style
tonight!

PENNY

Fuck you, Source!

Penny snatches the money away from Source. Rises with
difficulty. James the bills into her jeans.

Best smiles at the couple, then starts after Socrates.
Penny calls after him.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Hey, thanks, man! Really, thank you!

Best turns, still walking.

BEST

Thank him. You sang one of his
poems.

Best turns and jogs to catch up with Socrates, now halfway down the alleyway.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S LOVE CLUB, BACK ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Best catches up with Socrates as they approach the back door of "Plato's Love Club." The back entrance is nondescript: a single door with a SECURITY CAMERA and an INTERCOM. The neon lights in front can be seen above their heads.

SOCRATES

A strip joint? A bit hetro for Brother Goodman, ain't it?

BEST

Caters to all orientations.

SOCRATES

Still, a "Love Club?" Curious choice.

BEST

His movie's about love. Besides, Cole thought he'd dodge the Moral Majority protesters that picketed the awards last night.

They reach the small, iron-grated door.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY MONITOR POV -- CONTINUOUS

In grainy BLACK AND WHITE monitor feed, we see Socrates and Best at the back door. Their voices have the tinny, low-quality video-microphone tone.

SOCRATES

Whaddaya mean, "thought?"

BEST

Why do you think we're going in the back way?

SOCRATES

You mean there's protesters out front?

BEST

Yeah, but --

Socrates bolts out of the frame.

BEST (CONT'D)

Socrates!

SOCRATES (O.S.)

(distant)

Screw the back door!

A moment's hesitation. Best looks straight into the camera, smiles apologetically and follows his friend around the front.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S, MAIN ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Best comes pelting around the corner to discover...

BEST'S P.O.V

...a total zoo. The front entrance on the Hollywood Strip is a tacky neo-Greek temple: Parthenon facade, lawn dotted by fake statuary and shrines. A "sacred river" forms a moat between the street and the entrance. It can only be crossed by a small bridge. The way across is barred by two large, scowling BOUNCERS and a SECURITY GUARD. They hold back...

...a substantial mob sign-waving, singing PROTESTERS. The mixed mob includes men, women and children. Many carry flashlights or glow sticks, giving the demo the look and feel of a torchlight parade...

BACK TO SCENE

Best anxiously scans the crowd. Finally spots...

BEST'S P.O.V

...Socrates. Surveying the pandemonium just a few meters away from the action. Looking like he's enjoying it.

BACK TO SCENE

Best adjusts his tie and collar, smoothes his hair and ambles as nonchalantly as he can towards his errant friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S, MAIN ENTRANCE NEAR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Socrates laps up every sound, every vibe. 'Cos there's many different groups here: a cross-section of American society.

SOCRATES

I live for these moments. Lookit all them door-post guardians.

BEST

Your average C.A.V.E. demo.

SOCRATES

CAVE?

BEST

Citizens Against Virtually Everything. Hoping the cameras show up. Quite the kaleidoscope here...

REVERSE ANGLE

The camera pans past various groups as Best names them...

BEST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You got your Moral Majority...

Camera tracks along a large group of very well-dressed, upper middle-class MORAL MAJORITY PROTESTERS, marching in a slow, righteous circle, carrying signs that read "Hate the sin, love the sinner," and "Jesus died for you, Cole Goodman" and "This Oscar's is straight!" They sing like a gospel choir:

MORAL MAJORITY PROTESTERS

"Stricken, smitten and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree; 'Tis the
Christ by man rejected; Yes, my
soul, 'tis He, 'tis He! Mark the
Sacrifice appointed, see who bears
the awful load! 'Tis the Word, 'tis
God's Anointed, Son of man and Son
of God."

The camera pans to a small but vocal group of WOMEN from the Erotic Entertainers Union, wearing placards that read: "The wages of sin are cheap!" And "Better benefits for dancers," and "Take the step: Join the EEU," etc. The UNION LEADER shouts above the singing:

UNION LEADER

Erotic entertainers deserve safe working conditions! This club is

not certified by the EEU. No love
at Plato's! Boycott this club!

BEST (V.O.)
...union types, demanding higher
wages, safer working conditions,
better benefits and so on...

The camera tracks on to the bridge itself. A plump
woman dressed as BAUBO (smiley face painted on stomach,
fright wig, etc.) makes antic gestures while shouting
lewd jokes.

BEST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...you got yer lunatic fringe...

BAUBO
Hey, homeboys! I just got out of a
garage!

The Bouncers frown, confused. Until Baubo pulls up her
skirt, flashes them.

BAUBO (CONT'D)
Like it? I just got it cervixed!

Baubo races off, laughing maniacally. The Bouncers
grin.

BEST (V.O.)
...and what demo would be complete
without a few Marxist Leninists?

The camera slowly pans off the Bouncers and onto a pair
of MARXIST LENINISTS, dressed in Mao jackets, waving
the red flag. Their COMMISSAR shouts through a
megaphone.

COMMISSAR
Power to the people! Workers of the
world unite against the corporate
greed-heads! ETC.

The camera continues to pan slowly, revealing a knot of
HARE KRISHNAS, drumming and dancing in their saffron
robes. Incongruously, a SALESMAN stands in front,
waving brochures.

SALESMAN
Time shares! Time shares! Get yer
Mexican time shares here!

At the edge of the madness stands a small crowd of ON-LOOKERS. A little farther along, Penny and Source arrive. They start working the crowd...

BACK TO SCENE

Best puts a hand on Socrates' elbow.

BEST
Time to go, Socks.

SOCRATES
Couldn't agree more.

Socrates plunges into the Crowd, headed for the Protesters.

BEST
Not that way! Shit!

Best follows Socrates, elbowing his way through the crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S, FRONT ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Best emerges from the crowd to discover...

...Socrates. In-between the Moral Majority and Erotic Entertainers Union protesters. Stirring things up. Arguing with a Moral Majority Protester (a tall man with a big sign, late 50s).

BEST
God's blood. Give me strength.

SOCRATES
You've never actually been in there
--

MM PROTESTER
I don't need to go in to know
what goes on in there!

SOCRATES
Then how do you know it violates your
"community standards?"

The Union Leader muscles into the debate...

UNION LEADER
It violates labour standards! No
breaks, no benefits --

Socrates whirls on the Union Leader.

SOCRATES
Have you been in there?

UNION LEADER
No, but some entertainers --

SOCRATES
So you've not actually seen, don't
know what goes on in there for sure?
It's a big mystery for both of you.

The MM Protester and the Union Leader overlap each other.

MM PROTESTER
It's immoral --

UNION LEADER
It's unethical --

SOCRATES
(to MM Protester)
S'matter? Afraid your eyes will pop?

MM PROTESTER
You degenerate --

The MM Protester looks like his veins are about to pop as Best grabs Socrates and hustles him away.

BEST
What do you think you're doing?

SOCRATES
Facilitating a dialogue.

BEST
Inciting a riot, more like. C'mon --

SOCRATES
Oh, no, Arie -- not the back way.

BEST
Socrates, don't do this to me --

But of course, Socrates won't listen. He links arms with Best. Marches him towards the bridge and the Bouncers.

SOCRATES
We go in the front or not at all.

Best sighs and allows Socrates to drag him to...

EXT. PLATO'S, MAIN ENTRANCE, THE BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

... the bridge. Their way is barred by the Bouncers and Security Guard, who glare at them suspiciously.

FIRST BOUNCER

You got an invite?

Best reaches into his coat - a tense moment as he pulls out an invite from his pocket. The FIRST Bouncer looks at it and sniffs. Shows it to the Second Bouncer, who shrugs. Staring at Socrates but speaking to Best:

FIRST BOUNCER (CONT'D)

That is your guest?

BEST

Ever heard of Slam Poet Socrates?

The Second Bouncer's professional scowl turns into a broad smile. He does a little dance as he sings.

SECOND BOUNCER

"Hell, yeah, hell yeah, you gotta be
loving the one most becomin' - "

BEST

(cutting in)

Well that's the man, here.

The Bouncers look at Socrates skeptically.

FIRST BOUNCER

You don't look like no brother.

SOCRATES

I just write 'em, man. I'm a poet not a rapper. Leave that to brothers like you.

A tense moment. Beat. The BOUNCERS relent.

SECOND BOUNCER

Keep rippin' them tunes, bro!

Best and Socrates move to cross the bridge. The Security Guard stops them.

SECURITY GUARD

Just a second...

The Security Guard gives Best and Socrates a brief pat-down. To the First Bouncer.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Okay, take 'em to the front door.

He motions them across. The First Bouncer tries to usher them over the bridge. But Socrates stops. Grins as he takes one last look at the Protesters.

SOCRATES
(sings)
Like a bridge over troubled waters --

BEST
Hoof it, Garfunkel.

Best steers Socrates across the bridge. Closely followed by the First Bouncer.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S LOVE CLUB, FRONT ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

First Bouncer, Best and Socrates stop in front of the large, elaborate front entrance, flanked by fake Ionian pillars, carved to look like temple doors (complete a fake frieze ala the Elgin Marbles). They are firmly shut. Beside them is a small intercom. Best buzzes.

BEST
Now Goodman's won an Oscar, he's reached a whole new level in attracting flush-bottoms --

SOCRATES
This some sort of toilet-based video-game or what?

BEST
Flush-bottom. Rich investors. So try to say nice things, okay?

INT. SECURITY MONITOR POV - CONTINUOUS

On the same grainy surveillance screen, we see Best and Socrates being scoped out by the security camera.

SOCRATES
Why start now?

BEST
To boost your so-called career.

In stark contrast to the tinny audio of Best and Socrates, we hear a low, menacing voice -- surprisingly close.

MANAGER (O.S.)
Let 'em in. But watch these guys.
They're going to be trouble.

A BUZZ as...

BACK TO SCENE

...the front doors slowly swing open. Socrates nips inside. Best scrambles after him, followed by the First Bouncer, who glares up at the security camera with a "Why me?" look.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, FOYER -- CONSECUTIVE

Gorgeous male and female ATTENDANTS take Best and Socrates' overcoats as the First Bouncer watches impatiently. The Attendants are dressed like Greek Dancers in revealing white tunics with blue borders. The First Bouncer moves in, patting Best and Socrates down. A much more thorough search than at the bridge. He also has a detection wand.

BEST
Just be cool and you could get a
major gig outta tonight.

SOCRATES
Do you do the full cavity search
here? Not that I'm complaining --

FIRST BOUNCER
Don't tempt me, man --

First Bouncer is obviously unimpressed. Finally finishes patting and wandling. Socrates and Best finally enter...

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM -- CONTINUOUS

...a room full of gaudy lights, a wall of sound; three stages on which EXOTIC DANCERS perform. One male, one female, the other is androgynous. Costumes are in the classic Greek style. Best shouts to Plato over the din.

BEST
The room's at the back --

But Socrates is not paying attention. He's riveted to one of the raised go-go stages, whereon dances...

... ROMY, tall, dark-haired, classic features. Dressed in a simple, white Grecian-style tunic. Like a figure off a Greek vase. She is dancing with what appears to be a live boa constrictor draped over her shoulders.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for
sacred serpent dancer Romy!

Wild applause as Romy continues her dance, whirling and writhing with the snake, faster and faster...

Best tries to prize Socrates away. He won't budge.

SOCRATES

Think that snake's alive or what?

BEST

Didn't see an animal rights
protesters out there, but maybe.
C'mon...

With difficulty, Best drags Socrates away as Romy continues to move in her increasingly sensuous, serpentine dance.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

Best and Socrates push their way through the crowd. Socrates looks totally fascinated by the spectacle as they weave through DANCERS, DRUNKS and SERVERS.

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM, REAR ENTRANCE

Just as Best and Socrates reach the rear of the room, the doors burst open and a CELEBRITY comes through with a sizable ENTOURAGE (including his/her own SECURITY).

ENTOURAGE SECURITY

Outta the way -- move it!

The ensuing pushing and shoving separates Best and Socrates.

BEST

Socks! Socks!

No answer. The human current sweeps them far apart.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, HALLWAY, PRIVATE ROOMS AREA -- MOMENTS
LATER

Best stalks the halls, frantic, looking for Socrates.
No sign of him.

BEST

At the back, I said. Stay close, I
said. Be cool, I said...

Best pauses by the door to a private room. He hears
the sound of laughter and familiar voices. He opens
the door. His senses are assaulted by...

INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM -- CONSECUTIVE

...a wave of sound and a riot of images in a room full
of male and female GUESTS, dwarfed by massive VIDEO
SCREENS, on which play clips from Goodman's Oscar-
winning movie and the acceptance speech of...

...COLE GOODMAN (30s, handsome, impeccably dressed and
groomed, dark beard trimmed in Greek style, hair
permed), towering over his guests, thanking the
Academy...

VIDEO GOODMAN (V.O.)

...and of course, I would also like
to thank the studio...

...competing with this multimedia maelstrom is a JAZZ
QUARTET playing in the corner. Scarcely heard above
the din made by the party-goers, the buzz of a thousand
Blackberries, etc.

The L.A.-beautiful crowd is being pampered by a host of
SERVERS. Again, they appear to be male, female, and
in-between. Their costumes are slightly-less risqué,
but still Greek. At the axis of action, Best catches a
glimpse of...

...a small table with the distinctive OSCAR statuette
placed on it. Like a shrine. Best is about to sneak
out when a BEAUTIFUL COUPLE step to the side,
revealing...

... COLE GOODMAN in the flesh, surrounded by guests and
various HANGERS-ON. Most are lounging about on plush
couches and chairs. Goodman is standing and spots
Best. Shouts above the cacophony.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
(loudly)

Arie Best! How nice to see you.
(beat: touch of ice)
Where's Socrates?

BEST

(at a momentary
loss)
He was right behind me...

Goodman's manner is still friendly as he approaches,
but there's a little steel in his tone as he chides his
pal.

GOODMAN

Arie, Arie, Arie -- I give you one
simple job to do -- make sure Slam
Poet Socrates makes it to the party -
-how does a high-flying handler like
you lose the handle on his guest?

The buzz in the room subsides. Even the String Quartet
stops playing. Arie recovers his *sangfroid*.

BEST

You try keeping a grip on the
slippery little raptivist,
doubledome.

Beat. Room holds its breath waiting to see how Goodman
takes this political-speak diss...

Goodman laughs.

GOODMAN

Big talk from the snollygoster-herder!
C'mon in, Arie.

BEST

I gotta find Socks --

GOODMAN

I got it covered.

Goodman turns to a HANGER-ON next to him as the buzz
slowly rises in the room.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

Go find Socrates.

HANGER-ON

What's he look like?

GOODMAN

Just look for a shit-disturber
causing an argument.

The Hanger-on nods and exits. Goodman motions to Best to find a seat. Best smiles an acknowledgement and turns to take in the domestic terrain...

ANOTHER ANGLE:

In a corner of the room, Best sees three couples standing around a drinks table with a massive floral bouquet centerpiece. Most of them are familiar. Best clocks...

Couple one: DR. ANDY BELCHER (late 30s, leading neurosurgeon, prissy, over-bearing). Former college buddy of Goodman's. His partner is PERRY CORN (19, Native American, college student). Belcher gestures with his champagne glass while pontificating. Perry plays with the flowers, rearranging them. Next to them are...

Couple Two: REV. LEON BRIGHT (late 30s, black, Christian televangelist and another Frat Brother) and his wife, Demi Bright (early 30s, powerful looking, radiates competence. Bright looks sincere, nods gravely as Belcher prates. Demi looks like she's nodding off. Their fellow sufferers are...

Couple Three: OTIS CROHN (about 40, rubbery-faced, a comedic screenwriter). Like Bright and Belcher, he's a friend from college days. Next to him is KATE HECHT-CROHN (late 40s, older and wiser than her husband, dressed in distinctly New Age chic and looking like she'd rather be at a neighborhood watch meeting than listen to this crap).

Best moves to just within ear-shot. And isn't surprised by the general topic of discussion.

BRIGHT

I don't mind hangin' in there with the rest of you frat brothers tryin' to save your souls, but Socrates is a hopeless case -- hopeless.

DEMI

No one is beyond hope, Leon.

BELCHER

You don't know Socks like we do, Demi.

KATE

Weren't you in college together,
Otis?

CROHN

We were in the same fraternity, if
that's what you mean. As for
actually attending classes...

PERRY

Isn't he a slam poet or something?

BELCHER

He used to be a CEO. Stop fiddling
with the flowers, darling!

Perry gives a guilty start.

PERRY

I was just --

BELCHER

(overbearing)

Allergic reactions to pollen can lead
to edema in the bronchial tract and
in severe cases can be fatal. You
don't want to die for the sake of a
pretty flower -- do you?

Perry self-consciously wipes her hands with a napkin.

PERRY

No, I -- but I don't --

KATE

Oh, for god's sake, Andrew!

CROHN

Don't take the Lord's name in vain,
dear -- Reverend Bright --

BRIGHT

(gallant)

Has heard far worse. Some of the more
recent blasphemies coming from the
lips of Slam Poet Socrates --

Crohn sees Best. Nudges Bright. Unnecessarily loud:

CROHN

But, uh -- a great guy for all that,
our man Socks. Isn't that right,
Reverend Bright?

Best glares at Bright. They give him a noncommittal wave as he turns away.

Beat.

BELCHER

Otis, you hypocrite.

CROHN

Never diss a high-flyer to his face, Doctor.

KATE

Who was that?

BRIGHT

Since when is Arie Best a high-flyer?

CROHN

Since Congressman Al Hardyman became his political meat sock last month.

DEMI

Another pledge to the most ancient and honourable fraternity of Delta Phi Kappa, Mrs. Crohn.

KATE

It's Hecht-Crohn. As you well know.

PERRY

What's a meat sock?

CROHN

A complimentary way of saying "politician."

Belcher is unimpressed.

BELCHER

Hardyman and Socrates in the same hand. And here I thought life had dealt me the Bottom Pair...

CUT TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, GOODMAN'S COUCH - MOMENTS LATER

Best is trying to reassure Goodman and his partner, PAUL ADAMS (mid-40s, greying, distinguished -- looking every inch the legal heavyweight he is).

BEST

Look Cole, he's in here somewhere --

GOODMAN

No worries, Arie. I'm used to
Socks' little slights --

Adams cuts in, plays peace-keeper.

ADAMS

Chill, Cole. Glass of champagne,
Mister Best?

At Adams' behest a Server arrives and pours Best some
champagne. Best keeps spinning.

BEST

He'll show. Eventually --

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The Hanger-on dispatched to find Socrates weaves
through the gyrating mass of revelers. Finally spots
Socrates...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...talking with group of female Dancers...

FIRST DANCER

...I mean, it's not bad, physically.
But I don't think he's really all
there when we're making it --

SECOND DANCER

You just can't get close to guys
like that --

FIRST DANCER

-- there's no intimacy, y'know?

... while First Bouncer looks on, increasingly
annoyed...

SECOND DANCER

You should never, ever date a
customer --

The First Dancer shoots a look at the First Bouncer.

FIRST DANCER

Never, ever date a fellow employee.

SOCRATES

There's protesters outside who think you're being exploited.

SECOND DANCER

Who? The Jesus Freaks?

SOCRATES

Naw, they think you're immoral. It's the union types think you're being exploited.

FIRST BOUNCER

Watch it with the union talk, man --

The bluetooth in First Bouncer's ear flashes. His hand flies to his ear. In hushed tones:

FIRST BOUNCER (CONT'D)

Unit Three. Go ahead...

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The camera pulls back to reveal a bank of video screens showing the activities in every room in the club, from the lap dancing lounge to Goodman's party room. Watching the screen displaying Socrates and his antics is...

...the MANAGER (male, late 20s, reeking of testosterone, power suit, shaved head). He's not amused by the discussion.

MANAGER

Unit Three, you need back up?

FIRST BOUNCER (V.O.)

Nothin' I can't handle.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

Socrates now has an even larger crowd of Dancers of all types.

SOCRATES

They pay, they pray, you put your beauty on display but it ain't love they're after -- that's good, 'cos that's not what you giving on this road to a disaster -- it's a living

--

The Dancers love it. But the CUSTOMERS are getting annoyed. The Hanger-on grabs Socrates by the elbow. Tries to steer him away.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)
Hey! I'm working here --

HANGER-ON
Mr. Goodman's waiting --

FIRST DANCER
Leave him alone!

Socrates shakes off the Hanger-on.

SOCRATES
Cole can wait.
(to the Dancers)
They come here to see your beauty,
But they not doing their duty to your
beauty --

SECOND DANCER
You tell 'em, bro!

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The Manager leans over the control console.

MANAGER
Unit Three? Start handling it.

FIRST BOUNCER (V.O.)
Acknowledged.

The Manager, satisfied, slumps into a padded leather chair. Glances at the monitors. Spots Goodman's party room. Smirks.

MANAGER
Coming to a theater near you.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM, BELCHER'S COUCH --
CONTINUOUS

Best stands in the middle of an uneven semicircle formed by Belcher-Perry on his left and Crohn-Kate, Bright-Demi on his right. Crohn and Belcher sip

champagne while rehashing Socrates' "disastrous" life for Perry's benefit.

PERRY

I'm confused: did he leave his family for another man or another woman?

BEST

Well, he --

BELCHER

(cuts him off)

Older woman. Some Indian mystic.

CROHN

About ten years ago. Socks chucked the trophy-wife and kids for some wizened dame from Delhi.

BEST

Come on --

KATE

(warning)

She would have been about my age, Otis.

A very brief, painfully awkward pause. Belcher jumps in.

BELCHER

Tons of tantric sex were involved.

BEST

Daisy Devi is Socrates' yogin --

CROHN

More like his Yogin Ono.

PERRY

A yogin? Cool --

BEST

There was nothing sexual about their relationship.

BELCHER

And Clinton didn't inhale.

DEMI

You don't believe a man and a woman can have a close relationship

without it being sexual, Doctor
Belcher?

BELCHER
(bitterly)
Don't ask me: I wouldn't know.

Perry takes Belcher's arm and strokes it comfortingly.

PERRY
Oh, Andy!

BRIGHT
She must have had some amazing
qualities for Socks to self-immolate
like that.

DEMI
Leon. Do remember what you were like
before we started going out? On the
highway to hell --

BRIGHT
I know, I know -- with no brakes!

BEST
(cuts in)
It's thanks to Daisy that Socks has
his act together again.

BELCHER
Being a slam poet is a step from the
CEO job he walked from?

KATE
Come on, Andy. Lots of CEOs are
walking from their jobs these days.
Only most of them are in handcuffs
and going to prison.

A SERVER comes up the group with two platters: one
heaped high with decadent-looking hors d'oeuvres, the
other with fruit. The Server offers both with style.

SERVER
Appetizer?

Perry sees a luscious-looking appetizer. Reaches for
one. But Belcher grabs her hand. Waves the platter
away.

BELCHER
That's an angioplasty on a cracker.
Fruit's much healthier. Here...

To the embarrassment of all, Belcher grabs a piece of fruit off the other platter and offers it to Perry.

BELCHER (CONT'D)
Here. Pomegranate. Lots of health benefits.

Perry awkwardly accepts the fruit.

KATE
(witheringly)
Yes. I hear it prevents Alzheimer's Disease, Doctor.

Best keeps spinning as Perry nibbles her pomegranate.

BEST
Socks is back in the game. People are talking about him --

BELCHER
Yeah. Saying he's a street person.

PERRY
(to herself)
This is full of seeds --

CROHN
Is he a street person, Arie?

Before Best can answer...

ANOTHER ANGLE

The door flies open. First Bouncer has Socrates by the collar. The buzz in the room dies.

BOUNCER
This belong to you?

SOCRATES
Is this the thanks I get for saving your love life?

BOUNCER
You watch your mouth!

GOODMAN
Ah! Been looking for that. Thanks.

BOUNCER
He's being a nuisance.

SOCRATES

Only to the guilty of conscience --

Hanger-on enters, panting. Looks apologetically at Goodman.

GOODMAN

I'll keep an eye on him, okay?

First Bouncer looks doubtful. Goodman glances at the Hanger-on, who catches the meaning. Pulls out a bill and hands it to First Bouncer, who reluctantly releases Socrates.

SOCRATES

Man, everyone's a critic.

Goodman laughs. The buzz in the room starts to return to normal as Socrates adjusts his collar.

RETURN TO SCENE

Belcher, Bright and Crohn laugh. Best is mortified. The reactions of Perry, Demi and Kate range from awed to amused.

CROHN

Socks always did know how to make an entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Most of the guests are lined up at a buffet. But in a quiet corner, Perry, Demi and Kate are having a chat.

KATE

You're from Arizona?

PERRY

Colorado. From Cortez, near the Four Corners.

DEMI

We know a lovely Navaho couple from Cortez. The Gambles?

Perry shakes her head. She doesn't know them.

Beat.

Kate broaches the topic on her mind slowly, carefully...

KATE
So, Perry... how did you meet
Andy?

Perry brightens.

PERRY
At the funeral home.

Kate and Demi are somewhat taken aback.

DEMI
Funeral home?

PERRY
Actually, in the alley behind the
funeral home. He was going through
the dumpster.

Demi and Kate exchange swift, questioning glances.
Doesn't sound like the Doctor Belcher they know.
Still...

KATE
What on earth for?

PERRY
Oh, he was looking for dead flowers.
To give to his ex-wife...

Ah! That's more like it...

PERRY (CONT'D)
I was tossing out a whole pile of
wreaths. I helped him pick out some
wilted lilies and we got talking and
well, he kinda swept me off my feet.

KATE
Sounds like love at first blight.

DEMI
Swept you off your feet?

PERRY
I'd never met a neurosurgeon before.
He has such a strong personality.

Another Demi-Kate glance. Perry seems to have a gift
for understatement. Demi's turn...

DEMI
That was how long ago?

PERRY

About six months. We've been living together for five. Have you known Andy for long?

Demi laughs. Kate has a long-suffering look.

DEMI

Oh, lord, yes! For ages.

KATE

(deadpan)

Practically forever.

Perry fiddles with her wineglass. Can't make eye-contact.

PERRY

So you know him really well?

KATE

Too well.

DEMI

Kate! Be nice!

PERRY

Then can I ask you something?

Demi and Kate brace themselves.

DEMI

Of course you can.

PERRY

Do you think he'd make a good father?

Nope. Weren't expecting that. Demi and Kate are gobsmacked.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Over at the buffet, Socrates stands beside Goodman, with little on his plate. Goodman heaps his high.

GOODMAN

I could use some of your poems in my next film, Socks. You do actually write these things down, right?

SOCRATES

Thanks, but I got no ambition to win
a "Best supporting poet" Oscar.

GOODMAN

I wouldn't worry too much about
that if I were you.

SOCRATES

Me, worry? Only about your
cholesterol levels.

The exchange is barbed, but friendly. Best arrives to
steer Socrates to his seat.

BEST

Right this way, my friend...

Socrates glances casually at Goodman's plate before
exiting.

Beat.

Scowling, Goodman reluctantly, self-consciously scrapes
a substantial portion of his meal back on the serving
platters.

REVERSE ANGLE

At the far end of the line, Perry is between Kate and
Demi as they carefully graze in the salad section.

KATE

I don't suppose Cole remembered to
tell the caterer hold the nitrates.

DEMI

(a little testy)

I'm pretty sure they're organic
greens, Kate.

KATE

You can't tell until it's too late.

DEMI

Why don't you consult your crystal
ball or Ouija board first?

KATE

I don't belittle your beliefs,
Demi --

DEMI

Oh no -- just every five minutes --

PERRY

Just drink some orange juice.

Demi and Kate look at Perry, surprised. Say what?

DEMI

Orange juice?

PERRY

The Vitamin C inhibits the conversion of nitrates into nitrosamines in your stomach.

(beat)

That's a cancer-causing chemical.

DEMI

Ah. Read that on the Internet?

PERRY

Took it in biology. I'm in second year at UCLA. My dad told me I should go to veterinarian school.

KATE

What about the funeral home?

PERRY

I'm working my way through college. Andy says he'll pay my way, but I don't want him to.

Kate and Demi eye Perry in a slightly different light.

DEMI

Come on -- there won't be a seat left in the room.

Demi moves swiftly down the line. Perry follows her. Kate takes a step, pauses. Spies the orange juice. Grabs a glass, takes a swig, then goes after them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM DINING TABLE -- LATER

The table is sumptuously set for the feast. Lots of Servers pouring wine, etc. As formal an affair as a buffet can be.

Goodman is in the place of honour in the middle, Adams at his right, Socrates and Best on his left. Perry, Demi and Kate are at the far left end. Bright, the

M.C., rises behind Goodman's chair and taps his glass with a fork.

BRIGHT

Ladies and gentlemen... Fellow frat
brothers of the ancient and
honourable order of Delta Phi
Kappa...

This prompts a fraternity chant from the Frat Brothers:

FRAT BROTHERS

Philosophia biou kybernetes!
Woo-woo-woo-woo --

ANOTHER ANGLE:

At the far end of the table, Perry is mystified.

PERRY

What are they saying?

DEMI

Their fraternity motto. It's
Greek.

KATE

It means "Love of learning is
the guide of life."

PERRY

And the woo-wooing?

KATE

That's a different kind of love...

BACK TO SCENE

Bright waits for the fraternal grunting to subside...

BRIGHT

Thank you. I believe it would
be fitting for us to now say
grace.

CROHN

(shouts)
Grace!

A collegiate titter runs along the table. Bright
smiles tolerantly. Goodman shoots Crohn a warning
glare.

GOODMAN

By all means, Reverend. We
have lots to be thankful for.

A dignified rumble of applause. Shouts of "Here, here!"
Bright carries on.

BRIGHT

Let us pray...

Most of the Guests bow their heads. But not Socrates.
He has his eyes wide open...

CUT TO:

SOCRATES' P.O.V

As Bright says grace, we see the Guests from Socrates'
P.O.V.

BRIGHT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the
abundance you have blessed us with
here tonight. We thank you for the
presence of friends and the spirit of
fellowship here tonight...

Bright's voice fades under and we hear in VOICE OVER
Socrates naming each Frat Brother in attendance one by
one as the camera pans around the table, starting with
Belcher.

SOCRATES (V.O.)

Dr. Andy Belcher, recently divorced.
Lost his polo shirt... seems to have
gained a co-ed...

Next, it's Crohn.

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Otis Crohn, comedic screenwriter.
Never won an Academy Award - a sore
point. Married to Kate Hecht-Crohn.
His second -- no, third -- wife.
She's trying to save the planet.
Obviously given up on Otis. Wise
choice...

The camera pans past Two UNNAMED GUESTS.

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Hmm... can't place those two.
Might have been two years behind
us. Friends of Cole's anyhow...

One of the Unnamed Guests looks straight at Socrates and smiles. Gives him a wink.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)

Jesus! I must know him -- did we...

Next to them is Aristotle Best.

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Aristotle Best. Most honest man on the planet. How the hell did he ever become a backroom boy?

Next to Best, Paul Adams, Goodman's partner.

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Paul Adams. Goodman's spouse. Big-time legal expert and gay rights activist. Known as the "Big Subpoena" down the courts...

Next to Adams, Goodman with the Oscar by his elbow...

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Cole Goodman, our honoured host. Finally got the Oscar he thinks he deserves. Should'a won biggest prima Dona. Still haven't seen his movie...

...next to Goodman, the Rev. Bright, still saying grace. The camera stops panning, stays locked on Bright's face...

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Reverend Leon Bright. Never thought he'd become a man of the cloth. Televangelist by day. How much Jimmy Baker has he got in him by night? Jesus, I remember the old days...

BRIGHT

...we thank you for all the beauty in the world, for the glory that shines out from Your countenance...

CUT TO:

INT. FLASHBACK: DELTA PHI KAPPA FRAT HOUSE, C. 1990 - NIGHT

A YOUNG BRIGHT, wearing a cheerleader's uniform, stands on a table in the middle of a drunken fraternity

debauch. Much laughter and raucous noise. Bright's voice rises above it.

BRIGHT

(sings)

Oh, I'm a Delt from O-Hi-O and
I don't give a damn...

PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

The rest of the YOUNG FRAT BROTHERS, arrayed in exactly the same order as they are at Goodman's party, in various degrees of intoxication, with quite a number of female CO-EDS mixed into the crowd. They join Bright's song with gusto.

ALL

I came to school to break the rules
and flunk in each exam. To hell, to
hell with the prexy, To hell with
the whole damn school, And if
you're not a Delta Phi, To hell, to
hell with you!

Laughter and cheers as the song ends. Howls as Bright dives into a pile of writhing collegiate bodies...

CUT TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM DINING TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Socrates snaps to. Whoa!

SOCRATES (V.O.)

Ow! Brown acid moment. Mrs. Bright --
Demi. Runs Leon's business and still
has time to conduct a gospel choir.
Wouldn't want to mess with her...

Socrates returns to the present moment. Bright finally wraps up.

BRIGHT

...in the name of the Father and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

There are a few muffled "amens." Bright switches seamlessly between Reverend back to M.C.

BRIGHT (CONT'D)

Ladies, gentlemen, I wish you all a
pleasant and digestible dinner.

Cheers and applause as Bright sits. Socrates looks at his plate. Shoves it away. To Goodman:

SOCRATES
What's for dessert?

Goodman hides his annoyance -- barely. Best looks pained.

CUT TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM COUCHES AREA -- LATER

It's "cigars and brandy" time. This being L.A., there's no smoking and the brandy is actually aquavit, but the ritual is much the same. The String Quartet plays in the BG. Some of the well-fed Guests look a little rough around the edges. Socrates sits beside Goodman.

SOCRATES
See, tantra is a spiritual quest for wisdom, transcendence --

GOODMAN
Yeah, yeah - what about the sex?

ANOTHER ANGLE

On a plush couch near the String Quartet, Demi and Kate try to answer Perry's questions about Belcher diplomatically...

PERRY
It must have been a really, really bad break-up.

DEMI
I think it hurt Andy more than it did his ex.

KATE
It's not as if you couldn't see it coming.

PERRY
Andy said he was totally shocked.

Even Demi can't let this slide.

DEMI
There were signs, dear.

PERRY

Signs?

KATE

I'd say it was over about the time
Barbara started introducing Andy as
her "first husband."

PERRY

But I thought he was her first
husband.

Kate and Demi stare at Perry: not without pity. The
penny finally drops.

PERRY (CONT'D)

Oh. Right.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

Belcher and Best are on one couch, opposite Crohn and
Adams. Discussing the rumour that Al Hardyman,
presidential hopeful (and frat brother) will make an
appearance.

ADAMS

Is Al gonna show or not, Arie?

BEST

*Congressman Hardyman hopes to make
an appearance, time permitting.*

CROHN

Spoken like a true polibot. Cut the
party line crap and give us odds.

BELCHER

Yeah. Can he sneak a quick visit
with us between quickies with his
poly-mistress?

BEST

Depends on whether they can sneak him
past the protesters, Doc.

CROHN

Al Hardyman not wanting to be
noticed?

BEST

Oh, use your grey-matter, Otis.

CROHN

Me thinks the laddie doth protest
too much.

BEST

I think I need another drink...

ANOTHER ANGLE:

Perry, Demi and Kate are experiencing a socially awkward silence. Filled partly by the String Quartet. Demi lights up when they begin Palestrina's Missa Papae Marcelli.

DEMI

Oh, how wonderful!

(sings)

"Krie, elEison; ChristE,
elEisonieK elEison,
ChristE..."

PERRY

That's beautiful.

DEMI

That's from Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli*. It's the K

PERRY

What's it mean?

KATE

"Christ have mercy on us." Rather appropriate, don't-cha think?

PERRY

You have a beautiful voice.

DEMI

Thank you, Perry. My choir's going to be performing it at the church this weekend. You're both welcome to come and listen.

KATE

I'm busy this weekend.

DEMI

Full moon already? Or is it some sorta voodoo sacred day?

KATE

The coven is celebrating Imbolc. The festival of the Maiden.

PENNY

Are you a Wiccan? I've been
studying shamanism.

Kate is warming to Perry.

KATE

Then you must know the Navajo
Corn Maiden ritual --

PERRY

Yes, of course --

KATE

Well, this is the Druidic
equivalent, only instead of corn it
involves lactation and fresh ewe's
milk --

PERRY

Oh, you must tell me about it...

Demi has to chuckle -- in a nice way.

DEMI

K`rie, elEison ChristE! Lord have
mercy on us.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

On the couch, Best is downing a glass of champagne. A
Server offers Crohn a drink. He waves her away.

CROHN

No thanks -- just water for me.

ADAMS

Hah! Feeling a bit delicate are we?

BELCHER

You drank way too much last night,
Otis. Do you know what sort of
damage you're doing to your liver?
Not to mention your brain. You
know, just one ounce of alcohol...

Crohn looks for rescue from this bore. His eye
catches...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Rev. Bright, on the couch across from them.
Talking to a beautiful Server.

BRIGHT
Veterinarian college. An excellent
career path, sister --

Crohn looks meaningfully at Bright. Calls out.

CROHN
Time for the after-dinner
speeches, ain't it, Rev?

Bright hops to it.

BRIGHT
Excuse me, sister - duty calls.

The Server smiles and drifts off. Bright stands: in
his best televangelist voice.

BRIGHT (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, we
are gathered here tonight to pay
tribute to a man who has just won an
award of the highest caliber --

Cheers and laughter as...

RETURN TO SCENE

...Crohn eagerly jumps to his feet.

CROHN
Champagne! Champagne all round!

Belcher glares at Crohn, who avoids the doctor's eye.

BRIGHT
And I believe it would be only
fitting for him to now give us an
after dinner speech!

ALL
Speech! Speech! C'mon Cole, ETC.

CUT TO:

Goodman's couch. Goodman rises.

GOODMAN
My friends, normally, I am not
at a loss for words --

Cries of disbelief and a few howls of laughter.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

Okay -- I've given quite a few speeches in the past twenty-four hours and to tell the truth, I'm sick of the sound of my own voice --

The cries/howls redouble in volume at this. Goodman beams, lapping it all up.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
No, really. Seriously.

Adams whispers something to Goodman.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
Hand on a sec...

Goodman leans down, whispers in Adams' ear. He nods, still looking very stern. Goodman straightens up, claps his hands.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
Okay, my legal adviser has an idea. How many Frat Brothers we got here tonight?

There is a moderate roar.

FRAT BROTHERS
Philosophia biou kybernetes! Woo-woo-woo-woo --

GOODMAN
That's just great. Now, I don't want to risk boring any of you uninitiated, so I will beg your indulgence for a few minutes --

ANOTHER ANGLE

Socrates, sitting next to Best, leans close to the handler.

BEST
What's Cole up to?

SOCRATES
Dunno. But he begs for indulgences like a per-Reformation pope.

RETURN TO SCENE

Goodman is in fine, officious form.

GOODMAN

The Frat Brothers are gonna have a short in-camera session in the side room. Members of Phi Beta Kappa join me over here to the left, please.

Goodman looks meaningfully at the Hangers-on. They get the hint and drift off to the right. The Frat Brothers, including Best, Crohn and Bright, are already gathering around Goodman.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
Anyone who is not a member of our esteemed fraternity, wait in the main room. This is a special toast for alumni only. Thanks...

A general buzz as the uninitiated exit. All save for...

ANOTHER ANGLE:

Perry, Demi and Kate, who stand, trying to make eye-contact with their partners.

KATE
(indignant)
He can't be serious!

DEMI
Does Cole ever joke?

PERRY
Who wants to listen to a bunch of frat-boy talk anyhow?

KATE
It's the principle of the thing!
Treating this like it was some sort of men's club!

DEMI
It is a men's club.

KATE
No, it's a love club.

Kate moves towards Goodman's knot of Frat Brothers.

DEMI
Where you going?

KATE
To share the love.

Kate moves out of frame. Leaving Perry and Demi to watch.

PERRY

Does Reverend Bright do this sort of thing to you all the time?

DEMI

You mean go to men's only affairs? Not since college. And Andy?

PERRY

Never. Except for poker nights -- that's one a week. And Monday Night Football. And sometimes when he's holding a party for his colleagues - - he says ordinary people would be bored by a group of brain specialists talking shop all evening long.

DEMI

Why doesn't the man just invest in a ceremonial lodge?

PERRY

We have a gazebo in the backyard.

Demi laughs. Spots something off screen.

DEMI

Hurricane Kate has just arrived.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate rounds on Goodman and Crohn while Socrates, Best and Adams watch.

KATE

It's an insult to your guests --

GOODMAN

I don't hear any of them complaining. Except for you, Kate -
-

KATE

It's an insult to every woman in the room.

GOODMAN

There are just as many men who
are uninitiated as women.

CROHN
For god's sake, Kate --

KATE
You're going along with this?

CROHN
It's just a few boring speeches and
some off-colour jokes --

KATE
Oh? Like one of your comedies,
Otis?

Ow! That stung. Goodman to the rescue.

GOODMAN
Well I suppose we could swear you in
as a frat brother, but I doubt you'd
survive the hazing --

KATE
I never took you for a chauvinist
pig, Cole.

GOODMAN
It's my party and I'll stay if I
want to.

Fuming, Kate whirls on Socrates.

KATE
Surely you, of all people, aren't
going to dignify this -- this --
frat house mentality?

SOCRATES
What can I say? I'm a slave to my Y
chromosome.

KATE
I have no idea why I expected better
of you -- from all of you. It's like
the Sixties and feminism and civil
rights movement never happened.

CROHN
Kate --

But Kate turns on her heel and is off. Leaving Crohn
grinning nervously at his Frat Brothers.

BELCHER

You're in the doghouse tonight,
Otis.

CROHN

Doghouse? More like the abattoir.

CUT TO:

P.O.V. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM, BIRD'S EYE VIEW -
CONTINUOUS

Looking down from the ceiling, we see most of the
Guests exit as Goodman and his Frat Brothers file into
the side room. Cutting across the room, scattering
Guests in her wake, is Kate.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate comes up to Perry and Demi. A woman with a
mission.

KATE

Right. Let's go.

DEMI

Where? Home?

KATE

No. We're gona get inside that
room.

DEMI

Oh, for crying out loud, Kate --

KATE

Demi, this is no different than the
Jonathan Club.

PERRY

The what?

DEMI

A men's-only club. One of the last
bastions of WASP power.

KATE

We picketed them in the 80s, sat in
during the 90s and sued 'em in 2001.
Damned if I am going to let Cole
Goodman pull a Jonathan on me.

Kate moves towards the door. Pauses.

KATE (CONT'D)
You coming? Or hoping for a
membership?

DEMI
We're coming.

PERRY
Where to?

KATE
The seat of power, Perry.

Kate leads Demi and Perry out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is decorated in trendy/tacky neo-Grecian style; lots of purple wall hangings, statuary, fake marble friezes, etc. Around the perimeter are several couches, arranged in a rough semicircle on which the Frat Brothers sit. In the middle of the room is a small table with the Oscar sitting on it. Goodman stands beside it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP On GOODMAN

GOODMAN
Gentlemen. Brothers. Before we
begin, we must take the Phi Beta
Kappa oath of secrecy.

All stand, save Socrates, and place their right hands on their hearts. Best gives Socrates a gentle slap on the back of the head. He rises unenthusiastically.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
Thank you. Brother Adams, will you
lead us in the oath?

ADAMS
Brothers, repeat after me: We gather
here tonight in fraternal friendship.

FRAT BROTHERS
We gather here tonight in fraternal
friendship...

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Several Dancers watch as Kate, Demi and Perry square off against the Bouncers and the Security Guard.

FIRST BOUNCER

Manager's busy. Come back tomorrow.

KATE

We want to see him now.

SECURITY GUARD

Look, lady, it's a private party. Mr. Goodman can invite or uninvite whoever he wants. There's no law against that.

DEMI

Segregation was the law. Didn't make it right.

SECURITY GUARD

Listen, Rosa Parks, this is L.A., not Alabama.

PERRY

Don't you talk to her like that!

SECOND BOUNCER

Keep it down or you're outta here.

KATE

Keep it up and you'll be out of a job.

SECURITY GUARD

(grinning)

Oh, yeah? How's that?

KATE

I will put this establishment on the inspection list of the Glendale Neighborhood Sustainability Watch Committee.

The Male Muscle Triad is a little confused/amused.

SECOND BOUNCER

The what?

SECURITY GUARD

I'm shakin', lady.

KATE

You ought to be. We monitor and record the carbon footprint of every business in Glendale. And we pass the data on to the city's Environmental Protection Office.

SECURITY GUARD

So?

KATE

You exceed the carbon footprint laid out in the neighborhood plan, you have to close down until you meet Green Standards.

Frowns. Is this serious.

FIRST BOUNCER

Hey, man -- we're green!

KATE

Really? How much energy do you think this little pleasure palace uses every night? What with the lights, music, air conditioning, disposable plates and... such?

SECURITY GUARD

(no grin now)

So what you sayin'?

DEMI

She's sayin' you make McDonald's look like the Sierra Club.

Beat. Doubt mounts in the male doorway guardians. Perry steps forward.

PERRY

Besides. There could be safety issues. Mr. Goodman might have more guests in the room than the fire Marshall would allow.

Kate and Demi exchange another knowing look. Why didn't they think of that one?

The First Bouncer's bluetooth buzzes. He grabs his ear.

FIRST BOUNCER

Unit Three.
(beat)

Okay. I'll tell him.

The First Bouncer grins at the Security Guard.

FIRST BOUNCER (CONT'D)
It's cool, man.

The Security Guard is less than happy.

SECURITY GUARD
Okay, okay -- I'll take you to
him. Ladies -- let's go
downstairs...

Perry, Demi and Kate follow the Security Guard out of
the main showroom.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is seated once again -- save Goodman. Still
holding center stage.

GOODMAN
Gentlemen. When I made my acceptance
speech, I had to thank the producers,
the actors, the financiers, the
studio --the usual crap. And they
give you like forty-five seconds,
right? I never did get a chance to
say what I really wanted to say. I
wanted to talk about my movie. I
wanted to tell people what love is
really about.

CUT TO:

POV GOODMAN

From Goodman's perspective, we see the frat brothers
clamouring for Goodman give them the real speech. We
see their faces: some eager, some happy, some bored.
Goodman signals for silence.

ALL
Speech! The real speech, ETC.

GOODMAN
Quiet down, quiet now...

Goodman picks up the Oscar. Looks at it lustfully.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

Our golden idol. This is not just my award - it belongs to all of you, my brothers who helped me get through college, helped mold me --

CROHN

That's right, Cole - blame us!

Much laughter. Goodman carries on, all seriousness.

GOODMAN

I wanna give you all a shot at giving an acceptance speech. One about love. I propose each of us holds up this golden beauty and starts off by saying, "I would like to thank the Academy." Then you can say what you really think of love. Let's all have a go. Whaddaya say?

A murmur of general agreement.

CUT TO:

Bright's couch: The Reverend rises.

BRIGHT

You've all heard Brother Goodman's motion. All those in favour?

ANOTHER ANGLE:

We see the brothers voice their agreement (with varying degrees of enthusiasm).

SOCRATES

I'll vote in favour on one condition
- Reverend Bright speaks first!

BEST

(mutters)

This I gotta see...

A hum of agreement. Bright shakes his head. But the frat brothers won't let him get away with it.

ALL

Bright! Bright! Bright! Bright!

Cheers as Bright walks over to the table, grabs the Oscar and returns to his couch. Pauses.

BRIGHT

If I'm gonna do this, I need
another glass of champagne!

GOODMAN

So get the Reverend a glass of
champagne!

Crohn fishes a chilled bottle of bubbly out of an ice bucket. With elaborate, exaggerated (and very funny, in a Charlie Chaplin sort of way) movements, he takes off the foil. Fumbles with the wire. And can't get the cork to pop until he puts the bottle to his temple...

BEST

(alarmed)
Jesus, Otis!

...pulls it back just as it POPS! Jets of fine wine shoot out. Laughter and applause as Crohn pours Bright a glass...

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Inside the dim confines of the subterranean centers, the club's nerve center, the Manager is being less than helpful.

MANAGER

There is no statute, no zoning regulation and no club policy that Mr. Goodman is in violation of, Mrs. Hecht-Crohn.

KATE

His behaviour is elitist, sexist and barbaric.

MANAGER

But not illegal.

DEMI

You're on very shaky moral ground, young man.

MANAGER

Mrs. Bright, this club is built on shaky moral ground --

PERRY

There must be something you can do for us.

The Manager is clearly taken with Perry. Very arch:

MANAGER

Well, I certainly would like to...
accommodate you --

Behind them, an inner office door opens. Blinding white light from within floods the dark center. A FIGURE IN SILHOUETTE is framed by the doorway.

VESTA

Is there a problem here?

The Manager, slightly taken aback, swivels swiftly to face the Figure. His manner is almost crawling.

MANAGER

No, ma'am. No problem at all.

The Figure steps out of the light to reveal...

...a woman (about 40, dark-haired, elegant, very expensive business suit). Her air of authority in this den of iniquity surprises Perry, Demi and Kate.

VESTA

Good. Now, get out.

MANAGER

(to Kate)
You heard the lady --

VESTA

Not them, you, moron.

MANAGER

Me? But I --

VESTA

Want the rest of the night off? I understand completely. Bye-bye.

Beat. Humiliated, the Manager slinks out, casting a parting, poisonous glance back at Kate and company.

A long beat. Perry, Kate and Demi size up their deliverer.

VESTA (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

KATE

Who are you?

VESTA

The owner.

The trio are absolutely still for a moment. Then they break in broad, bright smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bright drains his hard-won glass of champagne. Sets it down carefully, like a communion cup. Then, in fine televangelist form, launches into his speech.

BRIGHT

Brothers, I would like to thank the Academy...

DEGREE PAN SHOT

As Bright speaks, we see the reactions on the faces of the brothers, starting with the two Unnamed Guests on his right and moving to the left past Adams, Best, etc. until we see Goodman and Socrates. Goodman looks amused. Socrates very serious, attentive.

BRIGHT (CONT'D)

We are gathered here tonight to praise love. Now, it would seem in our society that there are many kinds of love - there is *Eros*, which we see everywhere; on our TVs, on the Internet and of course, on certain feature films that win Academy awards --

Laughter. A few catcalls.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Vesta sits in front of the video monitors. Behind her stand Perry, Demi and Kate. Watching her fiddle with the controls.

VESTA

I can't force Goodman to let you into the room, but I can do the next best thing...

As Vesta works the controls, the images on several of the screens flicker and change, moving in a fast sequence...

VESTA (CONT'D)

You see, for security reasons, every single room in Plato's has a security camera. For the safety of the staff.

DEMI

Very sensible.

KATE

Does the ACLU know about this?

PERRY

I hope the bathrooms are off limits.

VESTA

No, they're not. Neither is Goodman's private room. Here we go...

The screens fill up with the image of Rev. Bright. All save one, right beside the other screens, which still shows the view of the Back Entrance.

The tinny audio coming from Goodman's room isn't exactly stereo, but it's understandable.

BRIGHT (V.O.)

Without a doubt, Eros is big business.

FADE AND RETAIN BRIGHT UNDERNEATH.

VESTA

There. Better than the real thing.

KATE

This is great!

VESTA

Technology is great for levelling the playing field between the sexes. And by the way -- we're carbon neutral at Plato's.

OFF Kate: just a little chagrined. But not much...

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Unaware that he has boldly taken televangelism where no preacher has gone before (except perhaps Jimmy Swaggart), Best is hitting his stride.

BRIGHT

But there are other kinds of love.
There is *Phileo*, or brotherly love,
which our great city of Philadelphia
is named for --

Catcalls, a few jeers.

BRIGHT (CONT'D)

We can't all of us always live up to
our names, brothers. Then of course
there is, as Oscar Wilde put it, "the
love that dare not speak its name,"
although some here have spoken it
loud and clear in this state's
supreme court --

Bright is briefly drowned out by laughter and cheers as
everyone looks to Adams. Bright calls out above the
din...

BRIGHT (CONT'D)

But what I want to say about love,
brothers, is the highest form of love
is *agape*, or heavenly love. This is
the love that was made flesh, the
Word incarnate, that came down from
heaven to live among us and who died
for us on the cross. For there is no
greater sacrifice, no greater act of
love than to die for your lover, or
the other - strangers that you don't
even know. That is what the Word did
when he came down from heaven two
thousand years ago to redeem the
world. And so, while we here tonight
may be swept away by feelings that
excite our more basic instincts, I
will praise the highest form of love.
I will hold up to you Jesus, the
Logos, the Word made flesh, who so
loved the world that he died upon the
cross and rose again on the third
day. Now, I am aware that some of
you might not agree with me --

Low guffaws and comments.

BRIGHT (CONT'D)

-- and that's okay. Because I know
that the light of that divine love
illuminates all our lives. I know,
perhaps better than some here, what
role the physical manifestations of

love can play in preparing us for
more spiritual pursuits --

The next few lines are lost to the uproar of raucous
laughter.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The four women in the center are leaning close to the
screen. The conversation takes place without anyone
taking their eyes off the monitors.

KATE

What's that supposed to mean?

DEMI

Just what the man said. We have a
healthy sex life.

KATE

So is it a religious experience every
time with Leon?

DEMI

All I have to say to that is read
Matthew 26, verse forty-one.

Kate is puzzled. Perry bursts into laughter.

PERRY

I am sorry!

(off Kate)

"The spirit is willing, but the
flesh is weak." I went to missionary
school.

VESTA

Shhh! Just getting
interesting...

RETURN TO SCENE:

Bright's on a roll now...

BRIGHT

-- for we see the manifestations of
this divine love reflected in our
earthly relationships. Its light
illuminates those special bonds
between a man and a woman --

ADAMS

Leon!

BRIGHT

No offence to present company! But I gotta go by the Good Book. And the Word tells me the marriage between Christ and His church is the model of what marriage between a man and a woman should be. It gives us completeness, wholeness -- unity. Ever since Eve was fashioned out of Adam's rib and created as his helpmate...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Back at the security center, Hurricane Kate is ready to erupt.

KATE

Does he believe that horse-shit?

DEMI

I'd rather believe in the Bible than in lactating ewes, Kate.

KATE

At least Druids don't believe that a woman is an incomplete man.

DEMI

At least Christians don't perform human sacrifice.

KATE

Oh? And who's your saviour, Demi?

VESTA

I thought you wanted to hear what the men were saying.

Kate and Demi shut it. Stare straight ahead at the screen, pointedly avoiding eye contact, as Bright wraps up.

RETURN TO SCENE:

All jocularly gone, Bright looks sincere and earnest as he makes his big finish.

BRIGHT

I quote from the book of Genesis: "And the spirit of God moved over the deep; and God said: 'Let there be light,' and there was light." What more profound image could we have of our Lord's love for all life on this planet, for me, for you? I declare to you, brothers, that God is love, and that all of us --screen writers included -- would do well to remember that.

CUT TO:

Bright places the Oscar carefully back on the table. Much half-drunken applause. An UNNAMED GUEST to Bright's right grabs the Oscar and starts his speech.

UNNAMED GUEST

I would like to thank the Academy...

CUT TO:

P.O.V. SOCRATES

Socrates stares at the UNNAMED GUEST, who's speech is boring.

SOCRATES (V.O.)

Who is this guy? Maybe a year behind? Yeah, a year behind. What was that Bright said about love? Only lovers are willing to die for each other -- them and Jesus. He's right about that. Daisy would have died for me. I died for her -- sort of.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNE, BODHGAYA, INDIA - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE -- DAY

A much YOUNGER SOCRATES sits on a prayer rug across from DAISY DEVI, an ageless 55, long, dark hair streaked with white; a yogin. She radiates serenity.

SOCRATES (V.O.)

Depends on what you mean by death. Bright's an evangelical. Probably means it literally. What does he think of me? I walked away from a career, a family - that's a death...

VOICES are recalling Socrates to the present...

CUT TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, COUCH AREA -- LATER

SOCRATES' P.O.V.

Socrates snaps back to the present. The Unnamed Guest is still droning on. Socrates leans over to Best.

SOCRATES

(whispers)

Okay. I give up. Who is he?

BEST

Forget the name. But he majored in mortuary science.

SOCRATES

You mean he's an undertaker? No wonder he's boring us to death. Self-serving son-of-a-bitch.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Unnamed Guest's speech bores the women gazing at shadows. Kate and Demi are having a polite argument they've had many times before. Perry and Vesta listen to their sparring -- far more entertaining than what's going on in Goodman's room.

VESTA

I gotta say, for a frat-boy bash, this is awfully dull.

Demi addresses Vesta's comment but looks straight at Kate.

DEMI

It is a bit boring, isn't it?

KATE

Yes. But then most of the world is bored with patriarchy by now.

DEMI

Not to mention feminism.

KATE

Y'know, you run Leon's finances

--

DEMI

Here we go again --

KATE

-- manage his television show. Without you, he's just another former captain of the cheerleading squad working for commission. But do you get any credit? Or cash?

DEMI

I have my own life and interests, Kate. You know that.

KATE

But it's not valued. To listen to Leon, you and every other woman is supposed to walk around the house barefoot and pregnant and jump when he says jump.

Vesta and Perry exchange a glance. How's Demi gonna react to this? Well, with laughter...

DEMI

Oh, Kate! And you call me a literalist! Listen, there's the way things are supposed to be and the way things really are on the ground. One day, Leon's preaching is gonna catch up with reality.

KATE

So you think Realpolitik can beat Machtpolitik? You're dreaming --

DEMI

She's hauling out the big words now -- she must be losing --

KATE

Big words for simple concepts! The way Leon treats you is no different from Perry's dad bossing her around about college --

PERRY

My dad's dead.

The argument stops cold. Kate's hard expression softens.

KATE

I'm so sorry! I --

DEMI
Made an assumption.

PERRY
No, it's okay. It's been two years.
He died in beauty.

This has Demi and Vesta confused.

VESTA
(sincerely)
Is that outside of Cortez?

Perry laughs. She's not at all tearful. Very matter of fact: almost enthusiastic. The camera slowly ZOOMS IN on Perry as she speaks.

PERRY
I mean harmony and beauty. My father had cancer. So we brought in a crystal gazer shaman to see what could be done. She said what my father needed was a *Yeibichai* -- a Night Chant ceremony. For nine days, the singer sang the songs and three teams of *yei* dancers performed non-stop in the medicine hogan. I remember the sand paintings and the smell of the wood from the fires. The look on my dad's face. So horrible at first. Then, when the ceremony was over, so peaceful and relaxed. Shining in the firelight...

Perry trails off into silence. Beat.

DEMI
Did it work? Did he go into remission?

PERRY
Oh, no. The Night Chant doesn't cure you like that. It restores you to beauty and harmony so you can face death -- or anything. *Yeibichai*, Talking God, puts you on what we call the Pollen Path.

Vesta, Kate and Demi are all moved by this.

KATE
That's beautiful.

VESTA

We ought to have a camera on us.

DEMI

Leave that to Leon!

The women laugh. Beauty and harmony have been restored in the security center. But not so much in the side room...

RETURN TO SCENE

...where the Unnamed Guest has finally finished. Everyone is shouting for Adams to speak. The second Unnamed Guest hands Adams the Oscar. With mock reluctance, he begins.

ADAMS

Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking --

Big laughs. Adams, best courtroom style, carries on. The camera slowly zooms in on the lawyer as he makes his case.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

The Reverend Bright mentioned three kinds of love from the Bible, appropriately enough, in Greek. Fitting for a gathering of Delta Phi Kappa brothers.

BRIGHT

Amen!

ADAMS

Amen indeed. With all due respect to the Reverend, the law in this country doesn't recognize three kinds of love. It only recognizes one - or two, depending on what state you're in. As I'm sure you know, I was part of the legal team that challenged California law and made same-sex unions legal in this state. Only to have that law overturned by a bogus initiative in 2008.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Adams speaks, the camera slowly pans around, this time for right to left, showing the reactions of the Unnamed Guests, Bright, Socrates and finally, Goodman.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

What does it say about our attitude towards love if two consenting adults who love one another can't consecrate that relationship just because they happen to be the same sex? What does it say about California that Cole and I could get married in Iowa -- Iowa, for God's sake -

BEST

Hey - easy on Iowa!

ADAMS

There's a Hawkeye in the room. But you know what I mean. At every turn, gay and lesbian couples still face discrimination and persecution, a patch-work of laws that vary wildly from state to state.

The pan stops. The camera slowly zooms in on Goodman's face, capturing his every smile, nod and frown.

ADAMS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Why is it that in this country, which was founded on Enlightenment principles like equality and justice for all, we still discriminate on the basis of sexuality?

CROHN (V.O.)

Ask the Pilgrims!

ADAMS (V.O.)

I remind Brother Crohn that the state of Massachusetts legalized same-sex unions in 2003 after Goodridge versus the Department of Public Health.

BRIGHT (V.O.)

You know what they say about the law, Brother Adams.

General guffawing at this. Goodman frowns.

ADAMS (V.O.)

We're talking about love here, Reverend. Listen, you hetros may scoff, but look at the facts: same-sex relationships are superior to traditional marriage. Same-sex unions last longer. Incidents of

spousal abuse are far lower. There are no unwanted children.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Vesta appears to have lost interest. She's looking at the back entrance camera and fiddling with various views that show the alleyway. But Kate, Perry and Demi are interested in this...

KATE

How long have Paul and Cole been together again?

DEMI

About eight years.

KATE

Where does Socrates fit into the picture?

DEMI

Say what?

KATE

Oh, come on, Demi! You've only hinted that he swings both ways about a hundred times.

DEMI

I never meant that he -- he was --

PERRY

Two-spirited.

DEMI

Two what-ed?

PERRY

Two-spirited. Male and female spirit in one body. We call that *N·dleeht̃* in Navajo.

DEMI

Oh. I've never thought of Native Americans being... in that way.

KATE

Are they persecuted, these *N·dleeht̃*?

PERRY

Being *N·dleeht* is considered a great gift. They're often teachers, healers, prophets. Navajo honour them. Others don't.

DEMI

Well. I never knew.

ON DEMI: This has her thinking...

RETURN TO SCENE

In the side room, Adams is wrapping up.

ADAMS

The Reverend referred to "the love that dare not speak its name" in his speech. I pray for the day when we recognize that it's love, not sexual orientation, that counts when we come to speak at the altar.

Adams sits down. Goodman leans over and gives him a kiss.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE

In the midst of the applause, Crohn, laughing, drains his champagne glass and chokes. Hacks and coughs. Adams tries to give him the Oscar, but Crohn waves him away.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The pause in the proceedings prompts Vesta to stand.

VESTA

Would anyone like a drink? I have a bar in my office.

DEMI

I'd like a Coke, please. Diet.

KATE

Demi! Any scotch back there?

PERRY

I'm good, thanks.

VESTA

Lemme see what I can find.
Don't touch that dial...

Vesta disappears back into her office.

RETURN TO SCENE:

CUT TO:

INT. SIDE ROOM, SOCRATES AND GOODMAN'S COUCH -
CONTINUOUS

Best is having a quiet word with Socrates. Who is sitting on the couch, totally not there, with a small, secret smile on his face.

BEST
Hey, man, you paying attention here?

SOCRATES
(startled: grins)
Say what?

BEST
You seem totally out of it.

SOCRATES
(laughs)
Do you like surprises, Arie?

BEST
No. I like things to run according
to plan.
(beat)
Are you up to something?

SOCRATES
Me? Always.

Best looks searchingly at his friend. Concerned.

BEST
Do you, like -- need anything,
Socks?

SOCRATES
Me? I'm good. If anyone needs
something, it's Crohn. He needs to
be saved from Belcher.

CUT TO:

REVERSE ANGLE

Belcher's attempts to help Crohn cause more harm than good. He tries water. Succeeds in pouring it down Crohn's front.

CROHN

Je - cough! - sus! Gag!

BELCHER

Lemme try the Heimlich maneuver --

Crohn continues to cough violently as he shoves Belcher away. Signals to Adams to have Belcher speak in his place. Adams hands the Oscar to Belcher.

ADAMS

Your turn, Doctor.

Cheers, applause as Belcher stands, gawking at the Oscar.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Vesta has returned and the women are now sipping French champagne (a bottle of Veuve Clicquot sits in an ice bucket beside them) as they watch.

KATE

This oughtta be good.

DEMI

(warning)

Kate...

PERRY

Andy's a great speaker.

KATE

What does he think about love?

PERRY

Don't know. He never talks about it.

Perry sips her champagne to hide her embarrassment.

RETURN TO SCENE:

The cheers have died down. Belcher looks at the Oscar with undisguised contempt. The camera slowly zooms in as the doctor speaks.

BELCHER

Love. I've heard a lot of things said about that word tonight. That it's somehow this divine force, this godlike thing. Lemme tell you, as a neurosurgeon, my opinion is there are no cupids running around with bows out there. What's love? It's an electro-chemical response in the brain triggered by certain stimuli. It's all genetics. It's not love that makes the world go 'round, gentlemen, it's DNA...

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE:

Bright looks quizzically at Crohn. The playwright leans close and whispers into the reverend's ear.

BRIGHT
Just got divorced. Lost big time.

CROHN
Bad - cough! - pre-nup?

BRIGHT
No pre-nup. Cough!

CROHN
Ow! Cough!

BACK TO SCENE

Belcher continues 'dissing love.

BELCHER
It's like music. I mean real music, not this rap crap -- noise! Classical music is based on logic, mathematical progressions, the marriage of opposites like rhythm and harmony --

ADAMS
Surely you're not saying love is based on logic, Andy.

Gales of laughter. Belcher flushes red. Clutches the Oscar convulsively with both hands.

BELCHER
Scoff all you want, Paul, but I'm tellin' you -- love is about science,

bio-mechanics, hormonal imbalances.
It's science, not sacrifice, that
runs the universe, gentlemen...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Perry looks upset and confused. Kate and Demi have moved closer to her, trying to be comforting.

DEMI

That's his anger talking, honey. I'm sure he doesn't really feel like that about love --

PERRY

How can he say things like that?

KATE

It'll take him time to get over the divorce, but --

PERRY

I mean, I love rap!

Demi and Kate are thrown: what happened to the deep-thinking Corn Maiden?

RETURN TO SCENE

An increasingly voluble Belcher is in full rant mode now.

BELCHER

It's all hard-wired in. Everything, from procreation to religion. All in the genetic code --

BRIGHT

Even God, Andy?

BELCHER

Haven't you heard of the God Gene, Leon? We believe in some sort of god because we're genetically programmed to --

Some laughter mixed with a few jeers and cries of "Oh! Oh!" Etc. Belcher keeps going...

BELCHER (CONT'D)

-- just the same way we're
programmed to procreate. Take Perry
--

Howls of frat-boy laughter.

BELCHER (CONT'D)
Real mature. She's in her
reproductive prime right now and her
hormones and DNA are screaming at her
to pop a papoose like right now! But
she'll grow out of it -- at least, I
hope she'll grow out of it -- so she
can turn her brain back on again and
start thinking seriously. Maybe by
that time the God gene will have
settled down too and she'll give up
all this Native hocus-pocus she
believes in...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A shocked Perry is fighting back tears. Demi puts an
arm around her shoulders. After a moment's hesitation,
so does Kate. Vesta looks unmoved.

VESTA
I can change feeds if you want.

PERRY
No! I want to hear it all.

VESTA
Your choice.

Vesta fiddles with the fine tuning and zoom controls.
We see Belcher's face fill the screen.

RETURN TO SCENE

Belcher's tone has lowered from rant to pontificate as
he waxes on about procreation.

BELCHER
Women are hard-wired to propagate the
species. It's not their fault.
That's why men have it all over
women, in my opinion. They reach
menopause, bang! That's it. Me? I
can have a kid when I'm in my
seventies. But the world doesn't
need any more kids. What it needs is

for the people already on the planets
to get their shit together.

A drunken cheer at this pronouncement. Restored to his former arrogance, Belcher wraps up.

BELCHER (CONT'D)
Oh, and I forgot to thank the
Academy, although for what I have
no idea --

Belcher finishes. An uproar of laughter, catcalls, whistles.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Perry stares at the screen, stone-faced. No one says a word.

A long beat. Then...

...Vesta turns. Takes the champagne out of the ice bucket. Pours some into Perry's empty glass.

VESTA
Here. Have some more of Widow
Clicquot's finest.

PERRY
Widow Clicquot. Happy woman.

Vesta pours the rest of the bottle into Kate and Demi's glasses. All eyes are on Perry. Without a word, she raises her glass in silent toast. Kate and Demi do the same. They drain their glasses. Set them down on the control panel.

RETURN TO SCENE

Prompted by Bright, Crohn gets up, takes the Oscar from Belcher. Faces the Frat Brothers. His voice a little hoarse.

CROHN
If I ever get a chance to thank
the Academy --

Uproarious laughter at this.

REVERSE ANGLE

Socrates whispers to Goodman.

SOCRATES

Never won?

GOODMAN

(smugly)

Never been *nominated*.

RETURN TO SCENE

Crohn waits for the laughter to die down... almost...

CROHN

-- but before I thank the Academy,
I'd like to thank Doctor Belcher for
clearing my windpipe --

Enormous applause drowns Crohn out for a moment.

CROHN (CONT'D)

-- and in return, I am dedicating my
next screenplay to him and to
science.

BELCHER

Don't you mean *donating* it to
science?

CROHN

(plows ahead)

Now, this screenplay is certain to
win me an Academy Award because, like
Cole's picture, it's about love.
Unlike's Cole's, however, it is not
what you would call a contemporary
work. See, I asked myself, "What
does science have to tell us about
love?" Well, if you're gonna fall in
love you have to have someone -- or
something -- to fall in love with.
So who or what was the first being to
feel butterflies, hear birds singing
and do the head-over-heels routine?
As it turns out, thanks to science,
we can trace this right back to the
very beginnings of life on earth,
long before humans evolved, when
there was nothing but primal
protoplasm floating about in the
ancient seas. So what I'm writing
about is a classic comedy - the
primal comedy, you could say. Boy
protoplasm meets girl protoplasm --

Laughter and applause. Belcher looking annoyed.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A second bottle of Veuve has appeared in the ice bucket. Perry looks wrapped up in herself. Fuming quietly. Demi is enjoying Otis' speech.

DEMI

Insults both Cole and Andy at the same time while getting a laugh. Now that's an achievement. You must be proud, Kate.

KATE

I'll be proud when he actually writes another screenplay. Whether it's about protoplasm or not.

DEMI

Well I happen to think your husband is very clever.

RETURN TO SCENE

More laughs as Crohn continues.

CROHN

-- and of course, you need conflict, so our proto-lovers come from different proto-religions. But back then, there really wasn't a male or a female sex as such. So same-sex marriage, Paul, has some primal precedents you should maybe look up --

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Kate's turn to smile.

KATE

Still convinced of my husband's cleverness, Demi?

DEMI

At least he doesn't dis' the Lord like Andy.

PERRY

Did he really mean I can't think just because I'm fertile?

KATE

He seemed pretty sincere to me.

DEMI

Oh, I don't know --

KATE

Get off it, Demi!

DEMI

Hey, I've known Andy Belcher longer than you. All I'm saying is, when the boys get together, they start beating their puffed-out chests and comparing cojones and saying lots of things they don't really mean --

KATE

Like women being an extra rib?

DEMI

They just can't help themselves. Testosterone gets outta control. Before you know it, they're convinced they're the most handsome, best-hung stallions on the planet and every woman should swoon for them.

KATE

You think Cole's that way?

DEMI

So some studs prefer stallions to mares. The principle's the same, as you're so fond of saying.

PERRY

Well, I think he meant it.

DEMI

Hush. Otis is getting to the punch line.

KATE

Hope it's funnier than his last picture.

RETURN TO SCENE

More laughter and cheers as Crohn finishes.

CROHN

But really, protoplasm explains why we fall in love the way we do. It doesn't matter what sort of form or shape you're in during this physical incarnation -- if you come across your primal protoplasm partner, you'll fall in love with whoever it happens to be inside of --

BELCHER

What if it's inside a sheep?

CROHN

No animals! This is family movie --

Much hilarity.

GOODMAN

Gives new meaning to "Royal Jelly."

CROHN

That would explain a lot about Prince Charles' behaviour, yes.

Some chuckles. Beat. Crohn pauses before he wraps up.

CROHN (CONT'D)

So despite what the Doctor may say, we really are just looking for our other halves. 'Cos face it -- when do you feel most complete? When do you feel most alive? It's when you're with that certain, special --

UNNAMED GUEST

Protoplasm!

Scattered guffaws. Crohn carries on.

CROHN

-- someone. And here's where I agree with the Reverend: there's something magic, something divine in that which can't be explained by external stimuli or DNA. It's fate. And you don't mess with fate. Thanks once again to my worthless agent --

The end of Crohn's speech is lost in roars of laughter and waves of applause. There is a general buzz in the room.

UNNAMED GUEST

More champagne!

ALL
Champagne! Champagne!

GOODMAN
(shouts above the din)
We need more champagne in here --

A Server appears and consults with Goodman. The Server exits.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, there'll be a very short
break before the bubbly arrives and
the next speech is heard.

A general hum of conversation.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

With the break, Vesta has switched to the front
entrance view, where we can still see the PROTESTERS
out in full force.

DEMI
That's quite a crowd.

VESTA
Average. A bit bigger because
Goodman won the Academy Award, but
not much.

KATE
What's the largest you ever had?

VESTA
That would be when someone started a
rumour that Rush Limbaugh was
holding a Republican fund raiser in
here.

Demi and Kate shudder at the thought. Perry is still
self-absorbed. Out of the blue, to Kate:

PERRY
Were you able to think before you
hit menopause?

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the drinks arrive, Best thumbs through his Blackberry. Socrates and Goodman eye one another.

SOCRATES

So - you wanna speak next?

GOODMAN

Why don't you?

SOCRATES

Me? Too nervous.

GOODMAN

Hah! Pull the other one. If anyone's nervous, it's me.

SOCRATES

You? You just gave a speech live on TV in front of millions of viewers.

GOODMAN

Yeah, well, this is a tougher crowd.

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, BRIGHT'S COUCH -- MOMENTS LATER

Best is next to Bright, who is in conversation with Unnamed Guest. Best's Blackberry buzzes. He pulls it out, reads the text message. Interrupts Bright.

BEST

Better move things along, Reverend -- we got company coming.

BRIGHT

I see.
(to Unnamed Guest)
Excuse me, Brother...

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE:

As Servers dole out more champagne, Bright goes over to Socrates and Goodman. Leans close.

BRIGHT (CONT'D)

One of you had better start speaking if we're gonna keep this thing moving.

GOODMAN

We can't agree who should go first.

BRIGHT
Then flip a coin, man!

Goodman looks at Socrates, who shrugs. He sizes up the crowd.

GOODMAN
Okay. You win. I'll go next.

SOCRATES
And the first shall be last.

The last of the Servers leave. To great applause, Goodman walks over to the table...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The screen shows the side room. Vesta has supplied popcorn. It's like a private screening of a movie premiere.

VESTA
Sure you wanna hang in here? It's Ladies night over in the Sappho wing.

KATE
And miss the immortal words of Cole Goodman? What do you say, Perry?

PERRY
(softly)
I'm in no hurry to go home.

Kate gets the point. Grabs another handful of popcorn. So does Vesta.

RETURN TO SCENE

Goodman picks up the Oscar. Gives Adams a wink...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Camera slowly zooms in on Goodman as he gives his speech. Which is about him, really.

GOODMAN
I would like to thank the Academy... actually, no I wouldn't. They don't really deserve thanks. I won this award despite them. When I first started writing my love trilogy, they

said, "Cole, you're crazy -- it'll never get made. It's too controversial. Too personal." But I knew I had an inner vision of love that had to be shared. I believe that the Greeks got it right -- love is about youth and beauty. So all three films feature tragic love-triangles involving young, beautiful people. I believed that the human mind and the human spirit are best expressed in that bloom of youth when we are at our peak.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Kate is throwing popcorn at the screen, pelting Goodman's image with kernels.

KATE

You asshole!

DEMI

Kate! Language!

VESTA

Forget language. Easy in the monitor. That's buttered popcorn.

PERRY

The young are beautiful, aren't they?

Beat. Kate throws a single kernel of popped corn at Perry.

KATE

You have much to learn, Corn Maiden.

DEMI

Hush. It's gets even more sickening.

Reluctantly, Kate returns her attention to the screen.

RETURN TO SCENE

Goodman waxes eloquent about youth and beauty.

GOODMAN

The beauty of the young is an inspiration to us all - like the nectar of the gods, keeping us young in spirit. Like the poet said: beauty is truth; truth, beauty. I would add: Beauty is youth; youth, beauty.

DISSOLVE TO:

DEGREE PAN SHOT

As Goodman speaks, the camera slowly pans up, up, past his head to reveal...

...the ceiling, which, this being Plato's, is one, vast mirror. It appears that Goodman is talking to his own reflection as he delivers his speech.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

What could be more beautiful than a young man --

BEST (V.O.)

Or woman!

Some laughter.

GOODMAN

Point taken, Reverend. It's not about protoplasm -- although I admit love can sometimes reduce us to jelly. Love's about the lover - the personal, unique experience. Youth and beauty exemplify the kind of love that gives you the courage to do what needs to be done. Brings out the best in us. This is the kind of love that changes the world.

DISSOLVE TO:

DEGREE PAN SHOT

The camera pans back down so there is one, solid Goodman addressing an appreciative audience.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

And it's the only thing we have to hang onto in this world of nuclear annihilation delayed and global warming advancing. As long as we have the love inspired by youth and beauty, then we have hope. That's

what I tried to show with my film and that is why I want to thank the public who saw it, loved it, and forced those geriatric, All-bran-eating assholes of the Academy to give it the honour it deserved.

CUT TO:

REVERSE ANGLE

Applause as Goodman finishes. Some Guests leap to their feet (somewhat unsteadily).

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The female response is somewhat less enthusiastic...

VESTA

Woo. What was that?

KATE

Narcissism at its finest.

DEMI

At least he didn't scream: "You like me! You really, really like me!"

KATE

Cole takes that for granted --

PERRY

What I meant was, there is a sort of beauty you see in youth you don't see in age.

All whirl around to Perry. Who has obviously been thinking of the last exchange between her and Kate.

KATE

Look, Perry --

PERRY

I'm not saying that old people aren't beautiful -- they are! My grandmother is the most beautiful woman I know. But it's a different kind of beauty. Different kinds of possibility. So he's not all wrong. Just stuck.

KATE

I think you mean "fixated."

PERRY

Exactly! Can't grow up.

DEMI

That's Peter Pan syndrome. See? You can have hormones and still think.

VESTA

How do you think I made my money?

The women laugh together. Then notice what's happening nob the screen. Sit up in anticipation.

KATE

Hah! Show-time.

RETURN TO SCENE

Cheers and shouts as Goodman tries to hand Socrates the Oscar. But he has his arms crossed. Makes no move to accept it.

SOCRATES

Yeah, listen, Cole, before we get started I just wanna ask you something --

Groans and whistles from the Guests.

CROHN

Oh, Jesus! Here we go.

GOODMAN

No, no - it's okay. Shoot.

SOCRATES

Look, pretend I'm the studio exec and I say, "Cole, love your film --love it! I wanna shoot it. Just one catch -- I wanna cast Mother Teresa in the lead role." Do you make the picture?

Some laughter. Goodman is grinning.

GOODMAN

C'mon, Socks --

SOCRATES

Are you saying she's not beautiful?

GOODMAN

She's not beautiful *that* way --

SOCRATES

So she is beautiful, just not your type. She's loved, right? By millions - maybe billions, right?

GOODMAN

I'm not talking about that kind of love --

SOCRATES

And she inspires millions to be at their best - to show courage?

GOODMAN

I still wouldn't make the movie.

SOCRATES

So what does that say about your vision of love? How many states do you think it plays in?

CROHN

C'mon, Socks! Get on with it!

GOODMAN

Okay, I may have exaggerated my case a little --

Hoots and a few jeers.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Perry is indignant with Goodman.

PERRY

How can he say that about Mother Teresa? She'd be perfect!

DEMI

She is dead, dear.

KATE

Demi, the literalism thing...

DEMI

Yeah, yeah. Listen up.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A smiling Socrates finally accepts the Oscar from Goodman, who sits next to scowling Adams.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP ON SOCRATES

Socrates takes the statue and places it on the table in front of him. Does his best Marlon Brando imitation.

SOCRATES

Brothers, I'm gonna pull a Marlon Brando on you and refuse to accept this Oscar --

Shouts and a few boos. The Frat Brothers chant goes up:

FRAT BROTHERS

Philosophia biou kybernetes! Woo-woo-woo-woo --

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Socrates has Demi and Vesta confused, Perry and Kate excited.

DEMI

What's he on about?

KATE

Brando caused a sensation when he refused the Oscar for Best Actor in 1973 because of the way Hollywood depicted Native Americans. He sent an Apache woman --

PERRY

Sacheen Littlefeather. She refused it on his behalf.

VESTA

Hmm. Bit cowardly of Don Corleone.

DEMI

Shush!

BACK TO SCENE

Socrates shouts above the Frat Brothers' din.

SOCRATES

-- and appropriately enough, it's because of the Indians, but not the Native American kind. I wanna tell you a story about my *yogin* --

UNNAMED GUEST

(drunkenly)

You mean your *Yogin* Ono!

Laughter. Socrates tries to plow ahead.

SOCRATES

-- Dayita "Daisy" Devi, from India, who taught me what it really is to love --

BELCHER

Tantric sex! Tantric sex!

The Frat Boys (excepting Bright, Best and Goodman) take up the chant.

FRAT BROTHERS

Tantric sex! Tantric sex!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The women in the center are both amused and disgusted by the spectacle on the screen.

KATE

God. Do they have to be so stereotypical?

DEMI

At least Leon's behaving himself.

PERRY

Andy and I have tantric sex.

This cuts the commentary short.

KATE

Just hold that thought, okay?

RETURN TO SCENE

Socrates is unfazed -- he's handled uglier crowds before.

SOCRATES

You wanna hear about tantric
sex?

A drunken ROAR of approval.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)
Then shaddup and listen, you
sheeple!

The din subsides somewhat -- enough for Socrates to begin. But before he does, he looks at his watch and glances at the door. Just a flicker of anxiety. Then he begins...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMUNE, BODGAYA, INDIA - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - DAY

Reprise. Again, much Younger Socrates sits across from Daisy Devi. Socrates narrates as the scene unfolds.

SOCRATES (V.O.)
I never knew just how old Daisy was
-- she was agelessly beautiful --

CROHN (V.O.)
Let's hear it for older women!

GOODMAN (V.O.)
Otis, shut up.

SOCRATES (V.O.)
Her black hair streaked with white,
her face could have been lifted
right off of the Khajuraho temple's
walls. I arrived at her commune in
Bodgaya thinking I knew all about
love. She soon disabused me of that
notion...

BELCHER (V.O.)
Tell us how!

CROHN (V.O.)
We demand details!

SOCRATES
Stop drooling like a freshman,
Twinkie.

Cross-fade Socrates with Glory Darling. The sounds of the commune complex: birds singing, wind rustling through the trees, etc. can be heard in the background.

DAISY DEVI

To your way of thinking, there are many different kinds of love, yes?

YOUNG SOCRATES

It's obvious, isn't it?

DAISY DEVI

So physical love is a different kind of love from, say, the way a mother loves a son. Or you love a friend?

YOUNG SOCRATES

Of course.

DAISY DEVI

Then why do we call all these different emotions "love?"

YOUNG SOCRATES

Yeah, well... it's just a word --

DAISY DEVI

Far more than a word. Say you lived in the jungle, on a high hilltop, looking down into a valley always covered by fog. Through that fog you can see beautiful and brilliant fronds bursting through the gloom.

YOUNG SOCRATES

Okay.

DAISY DEVI

All slightly different, but similar. Now, if this fog never lifted, or you never bothered to go down into the valley, wouldn't you be tempted to name each of the individual and apparently separate plants you see manifesting out of the cloud?

YOUNG SOCRATES

I probably would, yes.

DAISY DEVI

You might call this one "Morning Light" and another one "Cat's Paw frond," right?

YOUNG SOCRATES

I'd come up with different names, but I take your point.

DAISY DEVI

Then imagine, my young friend, what would happen if, after many years and many names, a wind blew through the valley and cleared the fog away. To your astonishment, you see that all the plants you thought were separate are branches of the same mighty tree that has its roots deep in the earth. Do these branches have a separate life-force, or are they all fed by the one energy that feeds the tree?

YOUNG SOCRATES

All by the same tree, Devi.

DAISY DEVI

So you see that the energy that sustains and drives the many forms of love is one energy simply manifesting itself in different ways, not separate?

YOUNG SOCRATES

Okay, I'll buy that.

DAISY DEVI

You admit you were wrong?

Beat.

YOUNG SOCRATES

Yeah, I guess...

Glory gives Young Socrates a look.

YOUNG SOCRATES (CONT'D)

Okay, I was wrong.

DAISY DEVI

Good. Now, what would you think if I told you that you are just like this tree? That you have the energy in you to take you from the Jealous God Realm in which you live to a Realm of Bliss where you can spend eternity free of all your fears and attachments - you might say, like the Greeks, have possession of the Good, forever?

YOUNG SOCRATES

I'd say you were barking up the
wrong tree.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, CROHN' COUCH -- CONTINUOUS

Crohn interrupts.

CROHN

Enough of the foreplay -- when do we
get to the graphic depictions of
sexuality part?

BELCHER

What can a woman tell you about love?

GOODMAN

It would have saved a lot of time,
Andy, if you'd just found a woman who
hated you, bought her a house and
skipped the whole marriage thing.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

The popcorn and champagne are gone. No one moves to
replenish supplies. This is finally getting
interesting...

PERRY

Oh my god...

KATE

It's okay, Perry. Plenty of
neurosurgeons in the sea.

VESTA

I can set you up with a
otorhinolaryngologist in room seven.

DEMI

She needs uplifting, not face-
lifting.

KATE

Quiet, please. Otis is inserting his
foot in his mouth...

RETURN TO SCENE

The laughter at Belcher's expense dies down. Crohn
continues.

CROHN

What's this B.S. about "The Good forever? Immortality?" That's what love is all about?

SOCRATES

Love is everything, Otis. Are you telling me you wouldn't sell your own mother for fortune, fame - a shot at immortality? Maybe Cole's golden idol? Wouldn't we all?

The Frat Brothers guffaw and catcall. Score one for Socrates.

BEST

Gotcha, Otis.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

In the security center, Kate, Demi, Vesta and Perry nod gravely. Yup. Got 'im...

RETURN TO SCENE

Stung, Crohn subsides. The Frat Brothers are a little less raucous as Socrates carries on...

CUT
TO:

EXT. COMMUNE, FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - NIGHT

Much Younger Socrates sits across a fire from Daisy Devi as she goes into the mysteries...

DAISY DEVI

This energy is always there. It is inexhaustible. If we know how to harness it, it can take us to that place where beauty is not something of the body, or projections of the mind like art or law, but just beauty in and of itself and reflected in all things.

YOUNG SOCRATES

What about the hideously deformed?
What about the beauty of poverty?

DAISY DEVI

What is a lotus? You only see the beautiful flower. What about the mud and muck it springs from and floats above?

Beat.

YOUNG SOCRATES
How do we begin?

DAISY DEVI
First, you must enter the stream...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - KITCHEN

Daisy and Young Socrates are doing mountains of dirty dishes in the rudimentary commune kitchen. Young Socrates is stuck with a massive, badly-burned pot.

SOCRATES (V.O.)
I was there for months. She taught me how to meditate, focus my mind...

Young Socrates gives up and tosses the pot back in the sink. Daisy picks it up. Puts the pot scrubber back in his hand. Closing her own hand over his, she started scrubbing the pot with him. Slowly. Sensuously.

SOCRATES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...no matter what I was doing...

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE, BEACH - DAY

Daisy and Young Socrates are diving for shellfish together. Playfully. Too playfully...

SOCRATES (V.O.)
Not that I was a perfect student...

Young Socrates is getting a little too amorous. Daisy rebuffs his advances by showing a shellfish down his shorts and swimming away as nimbly as a dolphin. Leaving Young Socrates to try to recover both shellfish and composure.

EXT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE, BEACH HUT -- SUNSET

Daisy and Young Socrates finish eating with the rest of the commune's residents at a long, communal table. One

by one, everyone stops to just stare at the sunset: one of those "Thou art that" moments. Daisy gazes at Young Socrates with a questioning look. Is he ready?

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE, BEACH - NIGHT

Again, Daisy and Young Socrates on the sand across a fire from one another. Both in the lotus position, eyes closed. Daisy is serene; Young Socrates concentrates intensely.

SOCRATES (V.O.)

How to tap my energy. I have never worked so hard in my life, and yet it didn't feel like work...

Socrates' voice fades under the crackle of burning wood and the distant roar of the surf. Fade up Daisy's deep voice.

DAISY DEVI

This ascent upwards carries our energy up the chakras -- our energy centers. Feel your first chakra, the root we call *muladhara*. It is at the base of your spine. This is the chakra that governs your sexuality, your sense of security. Notice how it feels... next, the *svadisthana*, located at the genital level. Your will to procreate, to experience joy. Consider it a moment...

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE:

Close up on Young Socrates as he meditates on this center.

DAISY DEVI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

... and so up to the navel and the *manipura*, seat of your sense of power, anxiety, potential for growth. These are the lower three chakras. Now, we move up...

RETURN TO SCENE:

Daisy and Young Socrates sit, the fire glowing between them.

DAISY DEVI (CONT'D)

Feel the heart chakra, the *anahata*.
This is the transitional chakra. The
lower three deal with yourself. This
chakra opens the self up to
compassion, unconditional love, to
spiritual growth. Consider it... and
so upwards again to the *vishudda*, by
your throat. This is the fifth
chakra, governing thought,
communication, your voice. Listen to
your voice in silence now...

Young Socrates tries -- boy how he tries. A few
agonizing seconds of silence. Then...

YOUNG SOCRATES

Oh my god!

His eyes open. Daisy's remain closed.

DAISY DEVI

You heard something?

YOUNG SOCRATES

Yes. And saw something.

DAISY DEVI

What was the sound?

YOUNG SOCRATES

The "AUM." Classic.

DAISY DEVI

You are getting ahead of yourself.
You need to spend more time in the
vishudda before you go any higher.

Daisy opens her eyes, stands gracefully and walks over
to Young Socrates. She massages his shoulders. He
closes his eyes again. She bends down to whisper in
his ear.

DAISY DEVI (CONT'D)

Let's start over...

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - LATER

The fire is almost out: a collection of red, glowing
embers in the predawn light. As before, Daisy and
Young Socrates are in the lotus position, eyes closed.

But now the look on Young Socrates' face is more calm,
less strained.

DAISY DEVI

Slowly, slowly, we reach the *anja*,
your third eye, the brow chakra.
Listen to the *aum*. Ahh-ooh-uhm.
The sound of eternity. Here you
behold your image of God or Goddess.
Rest here. Rest before going to the
final level...

CLOSE UP ON YOUNG SOCRATES

The camera slowly zooms in on Young Socrates's serene
face.

Beat.

Then, slowly, slowly, his mouth starts to open. The
camera tracks up to the crown of his head.

Beat.

Then, suddenly...

CUT TO:

INT. YOUNG SOCRATES' VISION - MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

... we are right inside Young Socrates' head. There is
a brilliant burst of violet light, painful to look at,
gradually subsiding into...

DISSOLVE TO:

... the radiant image of a thousand-petaled lotus,
gleaming and glowing with ethereal light, which slowly
transforms into...

DISSOLVE TO:

... a web of gems, each shining brilliantly, reflecting
the light of all the others - a magnificent,
interconnected net, which slowly transforms into...

DISSOLVE TO:

... an image of Daisy Devi standing, arms outstretched,
bathed in violet light, smiling. Young Socrates hears
her voice in his head.

DAISY DEVI (V.O.)

Sahasrara, the crown chakra, the
Thousand-petaled lotus that blazes
with the brilliance of ten millions
suns... universal consciousness.
God beyond form or name...unity...
true being... purity...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMUNE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - MORNING

Young Socrates opens his eyes. It's dawn and the sun
is rising in all its splendor. He looks at Daisy,
still seated across from him, eyes open. She merely
nods.

YOUNG SOCRATES

Thank you for showing me the path.

DAISY DEVI

The path? It is just one of many.
But it works for me...

Daisy laughs. Young Socrates joins in.

PULL OUT:

The camera slowly pulls out, showing the two on the
beach, shadowy figures etched in white sand by the
morning sun.

SOCRATES (V.O.)

Once you've had an experience like that,
things like a career and fame seem pretty
insignificant. It's like waking up from
a long, bad dream. All you want to do
after that is to help others wake up.
Daisy Devi showed me one path. I will
always love her - truly love her - for
that.

CUT TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Frat Brothers listen intently. Belcher's voice
snaps the spell.

BELCHER

Guess you don't have sex anymore.

CROHN

We know you don't, Andy.

Some nervous, self-conscious laughter.

CUT TO;

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Perry tosses the last of the popcorn at the monitor.

PERRY

That does it!

VESTA

Mind the screen, dammit!

There's a KNOCK-KNOCK at the door. Vesta goes over to the door and opens it. It's the Manager. Looking worried.

MANAGER

Sorry to disturb you, Boss, but we have a Code 10-78 from R.P.H. regarding a Purple access request.

VESTA

Okay. Grab my gear stat and I'll meet you and the team at the back entrance in five. Got it?

MANAGER

Roger that!

VESTA

A simple "yes" will do.

Vesta closes the door. Turns to her trio of guests.

VESTA (CONT'D)

Ladies, there's a little issue upstairs I have to deal with. I won't be long.

KATE

Can't say as I blame you --

Vesta hands Demi a cell phone.

VESTA

One thing -- please keep an eye on the back entrance. If a woman shows up and wants in, call me on this. Just hit the send key.

DEMI

Sure thing.

Vesta turns to go. Stops. Turns.

VESTA

I'm sure I don't have to tell you,
please don't touch anything, okay?
And the monitor doesn't need any more
butter. Got it?

PERRY/KATE/DEMI

(together)

Got it!

Vesta smiles and exits. Leaving the trio alone.

KATE

(deadpan)

Gee. What does this red button does
--

DEMI

Kate!

KATE

Hah! Gotcha!

Perry giggles and, after a moment, Demi smiles.

RETURN TO SCENE

The heckling and catcalls are dying down. Most of the Frat Brothers (especially Goodman and Best) are still riveted to Socrates' tale. But Belcher is like a dog with a bone...

BELCHER

Seriously -- did you nail her or are
you a certified blue-baller now?

SOCRATES

You don't get it, Doc. It's not as
if you become a saint or anything.
You can't stay at the seventh chakra
all the time -- well, you can, but
it makes you a dull
conversationalist.

BELCHER

Pillow talk! Who needs it?

Socrates again glances at his watch. Belcher leaps on this.

BELCHER (CONT'D)

And why do you keep checking out the time? Got somewhere else better to be?

GOODMAN

Can it, Brother Belcher!

(to Socrates)

I thought the idea was to conquer the carnal self. Transcend the physical.

SOCRATES

Conquer, no. Transcend, yes. Daisy taught me was the energy is one and the chakras are all valid. You don't conquer the root chakra and never make love again. That's not what it's about. It's about being able to use that energy in the right way in the right circumstances.

CROHN

(sings)

"It's the right time of the night" -

-

UNNAMED GUEST

Shhh! Listen!

The Unnamed Guest unexpectedly shushes Crohn. The comedian is startled into silence. The mood of the room has changed.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S, FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The number of PROTESTERS and GROUPS has grown. And now, there are TV NEWS CREWS, PHOTOGRAPHERS and REPORTERS filming, photographing and recording everything. Encouraged by the media spotlight, every Group redoubles its volume and zeal.

On the bridge, the Security Guard and two Bouncers have been joined by several RENT-A-COPS. Their combined muscle barely keep the crowds at bay.

ANOTHER ANGLE:

A TV NEWS CREW is rolling as the Moral Majority Protester and the Union Leader scream at each other.

MM PROTESTER

It's a sleazy, immoral boil under the skin of our neighborhood!

UNION LEADER

It's an unsafe, sex workers' sweatshop that has every right to be here --

TV REPORTER

Is it true Cole Goodman's in there?

Before anyone can answer, there's a loud hail over a megaphone behind them. The TV Reporter spins about to see...

REVERSE ANGLE

...yet another protest group join the fray. About a half-dozen people dressed in ANIMAL COSTUMES (SEALS, WHALES). The logo on their signs looks vaguely like that of Greenpeace. Their SPOKESWOMAN has a hard-hat on her head and a black bandanna covering her lower face. Through the megaphone.

SPOKESWOMAN

Governor Schwarzenegger is in favour of the seal hunt! He is about to sign into law the first bill that allows whaling in Californian waters --

BACK TO SCENE

The TV Cameraman swivels about. The TV Reporter rushes off. Leaving the MM Protester and the Union Leader dejected.

MM PROTESTER

Great! The animal rights assholes have finally arrived!

UNION LEADER

Bastards.

REVERSE ANGLE

...but the Spokeswoman has good news for Protest-kind...

SPOKESWOMAN

-- and Governor Schwarzenegger is just three blocks from here at the Republican Party caucus meeting at the Hilton North --

The TV News Crew hurries up, breathless...

TV REPORTER
Governor Schwarzenegger?

SPOKESWOMAN
-- and if you want to let him know
how you feel about clubbing baby
seals and harpooning pregnant whales,
follow me!

The Spokeswoman starts marching down the street,
followed by her suited animal entourage. Close behind
are the media.

REVERSE ANGLE

The MM Protester and the Union Leader perk up.

MM PROTESTER
Arnie? Three blocks from here?

UNION LEADER
Let's blow this pop stand

MM PROTESTER
I'm with you, sister --

The Protesters are outta there, following the
Spokeswoman like the Pied Piper....

ANOTHER ANGLE:

...leaving the Security Guard et al on the bridge
gaping.

Beat.

As the last of the Protesters disperse, the Security
squad dissolves into laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In stark contrast to the cacophony outside, you can
hear a pin drop in the side room where Socrates has the
Frat Brothers full attention.

SOCRATES
You don't have to hide in some
monastery. Go ahead and boff as many
lovers as you like. But if you're
awake, you realize the whole reason

for this energy is to discover we're all one. When your lover and you feel like you're one and the same, that's a beautiful thing. I don't knock it. But there's more. You learn there's beauty and love in all the things we cherish, like creating art, even creating beautiful laws, Paul. There's beauty in science, Andy; hell there maybe even some beauty in politics, Arie. Then there's the beauty of the spirit the Rev talks about. And even above and beyond that, there is this ultimate beauty, this ultimate expression of love that just can't be put into words, except maybe to say that it's the greatest high you'll ever have.

Beat. Bright chimes in, half-serious, half-joking.

BRIGHT

So you're saying that to know true love, we have to become Buddhists?

SOCRATES

Not at all, Leon. Daisy taught me this was but one path - one that worked for her. It works for me too, but there are hundreds - thousands - of others. It's like that tree. There's one trunk but many different branches. Black Elk, a Sioux medicine man, had a vision that illustrates it. He was "seeing in a sacred manner" and saw that the sacred hoop of his people - a hoop that he had thought was everything, his be-all and end-all. But he saw it was just one hoop of many nations, and all these hoops joined together to make a single, sacred circle, "wide as daylight and starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father." But everywhere was the center of the world.

CROHN

Everywhere?

SOCRATES

Everywhere. All paths are sacred.
There is no "other" anymore for us to
define ourselves against. We're all
one. Children of the Mother Tree.
We have to find a way to live
together without a phony enemy.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Perry, Demi and Kate are moved by Socrates' speech.

KATE

Children of the Mother Tree. I like
that.

DEMI

The man makes sense -- except for
that "boff as many lovers as you
like" stuff.

KATE

Exactly how did you meet Leon, Demi?

Demi laughs, a little embarrassed -- but not much.

DEMI

It was the 1990s, for crying out
loud! Not the Middle Ages when you
went to college!

PERRY

Did I miss something?

KATE

The 1990s, mostly.

PERRY

I was born in 1991.

RETURN TO SCENE

Most of the Frat Brothers look thoughtful, but Belcher
isn't buying the Mother Tree concept.

BELCHER

What a load of crap --

BEST

Hey -- let the man finish his forty-
five seconds.

A general muttering of agreement.

SOCRATES

What's the matter, Andy? Pricked your soul a little too hard?

BELCHER

I must have done about a thousand autopsies and maybe twice that many operations and I have never come across anything that looked remotely like a "soul," Socks.

SOCRATES

There's lots you can't measure or detect with science, Doctor. Like love and hate, joy and sorrow, right and wrong, hope and despair. Like god, heaven, hell, sin, salvation, wisdom, compassion, evil, envy, malice, camaraderie -- just about everything that makes life worth living is outside your competence.

Whoa! Heavy talk. But Belcher ain't backing down...

BELCHER

Big talk from a man who walked out on his wife and three small kids.

Ow! That smarts. For a moment, Socrates looks vulnerable...

SOCRATES

Yeah, well... sometimes what looks like the wrong thing to do turns out to be the only thing to do, Andrew. Sorrow, misery, regret -- found any of them during your autopsies?

Silence holds the room a breathless hostage.

Beat.

Goodman asserts himself as host.

GOODMAN

Thanks, Brother Belcher. Lemme ask you this, Socks: to quote Tolstoy, "What then must we do?"

SOCRATES

One thing we must do is to give up the idea that any one path has a monopoly on truth -- that it is the

only path. It's a tall order, things being as they are.

Socrates looks pointedly at Bright. Pauses.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLATO'S LOVE CLUB, BACK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOU

The alleyway is quiet. Penny and Source walk slowly down the darkened alley towards their dumpster.

SOURCE

We should'a gone to the Hilton North.
Met with Arnie. Worked the well-
heeled crowd --

PENNY

I told you, I'm not feeling well --

The roar of a large LIMO racing down the alley startles them. They leap back against a filthy brick wall as the limo roars up to the club's back door and comes to a screeching halt.

SOURCE

Maniac! Vehicular homicide in
progress!

The passenger-side door of the limo opens and a DARK FIGURE in a black overcoat surrounded by PLAINCLOTHES GUARDS gets out. A buzz at the door and they're in. The limo zooms off, leaving Penny and Source alone once more.

PENNY

Jesus. Who was that?

SOURCE

Homo ex machina.

PENNY

Huh. Pretty serious entourage
for a male stripper.
(suddenly)

Oh!

SOURCE

What'sa matter, babe?

PENNY

Oh, baby, I feel funny...

Source looks Penny's huge eyes, sees her heavy breathing. Puts his hand on her belly.

SOURCE

Honey, there's nothin' funny about it.
Let's go!

Source puts his arms around Penny's waist and shoulders, supporting her as they head down the alleyway as fast as they can, Penny groaning all the way.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Perry, Demi and Kate are having a religious discussion while trying to listen to Socrates' build-up to a big finish.

DEMI

(to Kate)

So you don't believe in a soul?

KATE

Shush!

(beat)

I said I wasn't sure --

PERRY

I believe in a soul.

DEMI

How can anyone who has given birth to a child not? When you look at that little face and love just overwhelms you and you know you and your child are part of something that's way bigger than both of you -- bigger and older than time or the stars. That's the moment I discovered eternity. That's the moment I discovered the world was made of possibilities. All I ever wanted for my child was to live up to hers. And yes, I would die for her. What's death compared to a moment like that?

Beat. A long pause...

Perry looks at Kate with a gaze that could melt a Gorgon's heart.

PERRY

I don't have any children. Yet.

Kate is not unmoved by Demi's speech/Perry's one-liner.
But she's not ready to open up yet.

KATE

Well, I have, honey. And I have grand-kids too, if you can believe it at my age. Yes, I've had those eternal moments too, but life isn't all eternal moments and a sense of wonder. You know the old saying -- "After the ecstasy, the laundry."

DEMI

Y'know something, Kate? We've known each other for quite a while now and I think under all that pseudo-intellectual mumbo-jumbo you hide behind, there's a woman who is actually just as religious as I am -- maybe more so.

KATE

Oh, come on! Look, it's not as if I don't have those moments of wonder. It's not as if I too don't feel that sense of connectedness and part of being something larger. We're all of us dependent on the other in one way or another --

DEMI

(smiling)
Kate...

Kate is becoming more defensive, more apologetic.

KATE

I mean, look, just being born puts everyone on the planet in the same boat. Just look at Hannah Arendt's idea of natality --

PERRY

The Human condition. Great book.

Kate's been stopped dead in her rhetorical tracks.
Again, who knew? Perry's full of surprises.

DEMI

Hoist ion your own intellectual petard, professor.

KATE

It's not that, it's just --

PERRY

I think she believes in the soul.

DEMI

I think she does too -- what she's grappling with is her belief in God.

KATE

That's a different question.

DEMI

So it's all a big, cosmic accident? Everything that makes us human -- love, imagination, spirituality, beauty, the good - just suddenly appeared at random? We're all alone in space with nothing or no one out there?

KATE

That's what they taught in college. Or did you skip the 20th Century?

PERRY

I don't understand: you're a Wiccan. You go to all these ceremonies. Don't you believe in any of them?

KATE

I guess I just have trouble with the "God" word. I see this old man with a beard hurling thunderbolts. It just doesn't do it for me.

PERRY

That's just an image. It's like Black Elk: everywhere is the center. Don't look at the image of the sacred -- there's too many to hold in your head. What's important is the sacredness beneath the image. That's what my grandmother taught me.

DEMI

I can live with that.

KATE

(shocked)
You can?

DEMI

Of course. Unlike Leon, I took comparative theology. Now hush up -- I think they're finally bringing this thing to an end.

RETURN TO SCENE

The Frat Brothers are silent, reflecting.

CLOSE UP ON SOCRATES:

Socrates glances at his watch again. Looks agitated. So he concludes... a little more the Slam Poet now than the Philosopher King.

SOCRATES

So, you've all been wondering for years why I burnt my life to the ground and became a bum. Well, now you know. I did it for love. Only it wasn't for love of one woman or even myself. It was something more than that. That's why I refused to accept this award -- you can keep 'em and put 'em on the shelf. It's okay if you want to strut and flaunt 'em - I don't want 'em. All I want right now...

Beat. They're hanging on his every word now...

SOCRATES (CONT'D)

Is a place to pee. Champagne goes right through me --

Laughter releases the tension. A general murmur of agreement, some scattered applause. Some (including Belcher) obvious disagree. Socrates goes to the far end of the room to use the washroom. In his absence, everyone is talking about what Brother Socks had to say. Until...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...a loud noise behind the door, a scuffle, shouting and a familiar VOICE...

HARDYMAN (O.S.)

Where is he? Where is the self-centered little sod?

BACK TO SCENE

Best, Goodman and Adams laugh. They know that voice.

AL HARDYMAN (40, handsome, smoothest suit on the circuit) bursts in through the door. Behind is his ENTOURAGE (mixture of men and women, all "beautiful" in an L.A. kinda way). Best closes his eyes with a sort of "Sweet Mother of God! I hope there's no cameras in here" look on his face.

HARDYMAN (CONT'D)

As your elected representative I demand to be allowed in to congratulate my former college roomie.

GOODMAN

Certainly, Congressman Hardyman -- but you have to leave your entourage behind. This is a fraternity meeting.

Hardyman looks amused. Turns to face his noisy Entourage.

HARDYMAN

Any of you belong to Delta Phi Kappa?

A general, negative muttering from the Entourage.

HARDYMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry - this is an in-camera session.

Hardyman slams the door on his revelers. Staggeres in - drunk but not excessively so. The Frat Brothers stand and start humming "Hail to the Chief."

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PLATO'S, SECURITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Kate leaps to her feet.

KATE

That does it!

DEMI

What do you think you're doing?

KATE

With Hardyman there, this thing could last all night!

Kate moves towards the door.

PERRY

Where you going?

KATE

To get my third husband --

Kate yanks the door open. Gives a start! At the door is...

...the Spokeswoman. Still carrying her megaphone.

KATE (CONT'D)

Who are you and what do you want?

The Spokeswoman slowly takes off her bandanna to reveal...

...a grinning Vesta underneath.

VESTA

I am a genius and I have everything I need, thanks. How 'bout you?

Kate is momentarily flustered. She grabs the megaphone from Vesta and pushes past her. As she leaves:

KATE

Thanks for the champagne!

Vesta turns to Demi and Perry.

VESTA

Did I miss something?

RETURN TO SCENE

In the side room, much cheering and applause as Hardyman shakes Goodman's hand.

HARDYMAN

On behalf of the Congress of the United States of America --

GOODMAN

Oh, can it, Al!

Hardyman gives Goodman a hug. Just as...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...Socrates comes out of the washroom. Sees Hardyman.

RETURN TO SCENE

And Hardyman sees Socrates.

HANGER-ON

Son of a bitch!

Hardyman rushes over to Socrates and embraces him.

HARDYMAN

Socks! You goddamn gate-crasher!

Many Frat Brothers are surprised: does a man running for president of the United States really want to be associated with an anti-establishment *belligerati* like Socrates?

SOCRATES

Al. Didn't know you still cared.

HARDYMAN

Always a rotten liar.

SOCRATES

Which is why I never made it as a politician.

Hoots and some laughter from the Frat Brothers.

GOODMAN

Grab a seat and a drink, Congressman.
We're just about done with business.

Hardyman guides Socrates to Goodman's couch. Makes him sit.

HARDYMAN

(to Socrates)
Siddown!
(to Goodman)
Finished what?

Best tries to reassert some control over the proceedings.

BEST

Brother Goodman has been generous enough to let us all give our own Academy Award acceptance speech.

HARDYMAN

Izzat so?

BEST

It's the gospel, brother. But it's gotta be about love.

Hardyman goes to the table, grabs the Oscar, teeters slightly.

HARDYMAN

You wanna speech about love? I'll give you a speech about love. I love this guy! Even though he refused to get into bed with me --

Gales of laughter from all save Best, who looks very stoic.

HARDYMAN (CONT'D)

I mean politically-speaking --

CROHN

Oh, sure, Al...

HARDYMAN

(shouts Crohn down)

I offered this guy a place on my staff and he turned me down flat --

More laughter of a very juvenile nature.

GOODMAN

He probably had *elect-ile* dysfunction.

The laughter nears hysterics. Hardyman, with visible effort, pulls himself together. Straightens up. Sobers up. Seriously, now...

HARDYMAN

Real mature, Brothers. Look, I know what some of you here think about Socks. A shit-disturber. Class traitor. Panda-hugger, Bollywood Buddhist flake. But the truth is, that's all a front. I kid you not, he's like Superman. Mild-mannered Clark Kent on the outside, but under the dweeby suit he has the big "S" on his chest.

UNNAMED GUEST

(still drunk)

And I got a tattoo on my butt!

Again, this prompts a hail of abuse.

FRAT BROTHERS

Shaddup! Siddown, ETC.

Hardyman drives right through it.

HARDYMAN

I know, know. You're thinking: "How do you tell a politician is lying? His lips move." But I am going to tell you a truth here tonight, gentlemen. It's something I have never admitted in public before...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Best and Bright are looking at Hardyman with wonder and horror, respectively. Bright whispers to Best.

BRIGHT

He's not coming out of the closet, is he?

BEST

If only it were that simple.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate tries to push and shove her way through the unruly Crowd. She's swimming against the tide. The way to the back and Goodman's room is blocked. It's hopeless...

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Frat Brothers listen, rapt, as Hardyman reveals his deep, dark secret.

PAN SHOT

The camera slowly pans in on Hardyman's face as he speaks.

HARDYMAN

Remember how Socks and I joined the army?

UNNAMED GUEST

No!

HARDYMAN

No? Right after college. We were in Boot Camp together. If you don't remember that, then you probably won't remember a little incident involving a training exercise that went sideways --

GOODMAN

I remember it!

HARDYMAN

Thanks, Cole. A dozen of us were packed into this old Huey gunship on a search and rescue mission over the Hudson River. The chopper had flown over one too many rice paddies without a tune up. There was this bang! Next thing I know, we're in the water, sinking like a stone. Pilot's out cold. Everyone's panicking - including me. Contrary to the official story, it was Socks who kicked the side door open. Socks who pulled me to the surface, gasping and puking, just as this yacht pulls up to help. Socks hands me to the skipper, then dives back down. Got everyone out. All I did was pull guys out of the water after he'd dragged 'em to the surface. It was almost all over by the time the rescue boats and the news choppers arrived. What happened next, gentlemen?

Silence. Everyone's hanging on his words now.

HARDYMAN (CONT'D)

Socks sez, "One last look." Bullshit, I says, you'll never make it. But down he goes. And he's in trouble. Spent. I dive in and help haul him up, damn-near drowned. We break surface just as the cameras arrive. It's me who gets his picture on TV and the front page. And a Bronze Star. Not to mention a flying start to my political career. Why? Because Socks didn't want the credit or the attention. He quit the army then and there. Said he didn't mind marching but he objected to all the swimming an infantryman was expected to do. Told me to take what I could get out of it. So I used my military and political connections to take advantage of it. He has never, ever breathed a word about this to anyone.

BELCHER

How do you know, Al?

HARDYMAN

Believe me, if he had, some son-of-a-bitch reporter would have splashed it all over CNN by now. So I don't want to hear anymore bullshit about this guy not being like Superman.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

There is some polite applause and general murmur of agreement among the Frat brothers.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, MAIN SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate has made little progress. But she's not going to let a bunch of half-pickled party-goers get the best of her. She raises Vesta's megaphone to her mouth.

KATE

(mega-amplified)

Hey, hey, hey, people! Drinks at the bar are half-price -- no, free! For the next five minutes --

The Patrons stop in mid-surge. Free booze? The current instantly reverses as most of the thirsty party-goers race towards the bar. The way in front of Kate is clearing and she hurries straight towards the back and...

... the Two Bouncers. Who are majorly pissed...

FIRST BOUNCER

All right, lady, gimme the horn --

Kate dodges left. The Bouncers are about to grab her when...

...a knot of Patrons etc. engulf them. Swept away by a human tide, the Bouncers disappear. Leaving Kate a clear path.

KATE

Maybe there is a goddess after all...

Kate races to the back of the club just as...

REVERSE ANGLE

...the door to the basement flies open. Perry and Demi step out. A bit dazzled by the light and sound of the showroom.

PERRY

Wow -- that's better. It was like a tomb down there.

DEMI

C'mon, girlfriend.

Demi takes Perry by the arm. Guides her fast across the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hardyman loosens his tie. He's well and truly launched now.

HARDYMAN

You wanna know about courage? I offered Socks a job - a top job - in Washington. Wasn't interested. Instead he did something I admired. Something I never had the guts to do. He went out and found himself. He didn't throw it all away. He went out and got himself an authentic life, gentlemen. An honest existence. I have run into Socks once or twice in the last few years. He has never begged me for a favour or money. He has never threatened to blackmail me over the Huey incident. He has begged me to quit politics and do something worthwhile with my life.

Much laughter. But Hardyman's not amused.

HARDYMAN (CONT'D)

You laugh. But there are times when I am in the cesspool that is our political system, sitting in a meeting with some contractor who wants to give me a small token of his appreciation in return for my vote on some contract; or being politely and lovingly threatened by some interest group or other that I won't get their votes unless I vote against a piece of legislation that they find an abomination - or across the desk from the Caucus whip who says sure, fine Al, vote your conscience on this one, but if you expect to get the party nomination next fall, well, I wouldn't count on it...

ANOTHER ANGLE:

The camera tracks away from Hardyman over the Socrates, who is watching the Congressman intently.

HARDYMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's times like that I think: Jesus, Al, book yourself a ticket to that commune in India. Or better yet, just follow Socks around. So, no offence, Cole, but if there's a lifetime achievement award to give out tonight, I think it should go to Brother Socrates. C'mere, Superman!

Hardyman hauls Socrates to his feet. Hands him the Oscar. Lots of laughter. Hardyman and Socrates smile at each other.

Beat.

Goodman and Adams rise to congratulate Hardyman. Several other Frat Brothers follow. But then...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...the door bursts open. It's Kate. Megaphone in hand.

KATE

(megaphoned)

All right, gentlemen! Move away from the Oscar!

Demi and Perry appear in the doorway. A bit breathless.

KATE (CONT'D)

We are tired of being excluded. We are tired of being locked out of the inner rooms. The Inner Sanctum used to belong to us and we want back in! I demand to see my Congressman!

REVERSE ANGLE

Socrates is vastly amused -- at last, the women have arrived!

SOCRATES

Cole, I believe these strong ones have given birth to a party.

GOODMAN

Care to speak English?

Socrates doesn't have to, because at that moment...

RETURN TO SCENE

...both Goodman's and Hardyman's Entourages pour into the room, sweeping Perry, Demi and Kate before them. LOUD MUSIC. Champagne flows like a river. The party is getting started.

Socrates, Goodman and Hardyman are a small immovable island in the human stream. Socrates looks like he's searching the crowd for someone. Bright, Belcher and the two Unnamed Guests come up to Socrates. Shake his hand, just as...

...Demi comes up to them. Looking very businesslike.

BRIGHT

Demi, my dear! How did you ladies amuse yourselves while we were sacrificing virgins in here?

Bright looks to his Frat Brothers for support. Finds none.

DEMI

Oh, you know, Leon, we talked about women's things. Like Philadelphia, the growing *agape* between rich and poor, twenty-fifth ribs -- that sort of thing.

Leon looks at his wife with confused suspicion.

BRIGHT

Have you been drinking?

Demi addresses her remarks to Goodman.

DEMI

Thank you for a, lovely evening, Cole. Most illuminating. But Reverend Bright and I have an early service tomorrow morning.

GOODMAN

Thank you for coming, Demi -- you don't know how much it means to me.

SOCRATES

I'm pretty sure she knows exactly what it means to you, Cole.

Goodman shoots Socrates a "what the hell?" look. Demi takes Bright's arm.

DEMI

We're going home, Leon. And I don't want any of that Matthew 26, verse forty-one bullshit tonight.

Bright protests and apologizes as Demi leads him away.

BRIGHT

What's got into you? Night, Brothers. Wait'll I get you home, woman...

Demi and Bright cross with Kate. Who marches up to Crohn.

CROHN

Hey, babe. Where'd you get the loud-hailer?

KATE

Otis, we need to talk.

Crohn opens his mouth to protest. Sees the look in Kate's eyes. Shuts it.

KATE (CONT'D)

You'll excuse us, gentlemen?

Kate steers Crohn off to one side. Crossing with...

... Perry. Who comes up slowly to Belcher. Who puts on his most caring expression.

BELCHER

Perry, darling -- did you miss me?

Perry is very close to the Doctor. Looking composed. But hardly affectionate.

PERRY

I felt like you were in the room with me the whole time.

BELCHER

Isn't she sweet?

PERRY

I have something for you. Close your eyes and give me your hand...

Grinning, Belcher does as he's told. Socrates et al watch as Perry places a half-eaten pomegranate in Andy's hand, closes his fingers over it, then squeezes until pulp and juice squirt from his fingers. Belcher leaps back, yelping.

BELCHER

Hey! What the hell --

Socrates, Goodman and company try to keep straight faces as Perry digs through her purse.

PERRY

Oh, one more thing -- here's your keys. I won't need them anymore.

Perry tosses the keys to Belcher, who unthinkingly grabs them with his pomegranate stained hand. Eee-uw...

BELCHER

Perry, what's wrong?

PERRY

Nothing. Everything is harmony and beauty -- or will be. I was going to have the *yee naaldlooshii* sing the Beesh nghiz for you just as soon as I get home to Cortez. But I decided you really need a Night Chant with Talking God.

Perry turns and walks away through the crowd. Belcher turns to his Frat Brothers.

BELCHER

What the hell is she on about?
What's a beech en-giz?

SOCRATES

The Hard Flint song. It's an ancient Navajo curse called "Praying a Person Down into the Ground."

BELCHER

She wouldn't -- I mean, Jesus --

GOODMAN

What's the problem, Andy? That's just black magic voodoo stuff.

HARDYMAN

Yeah, and since you don't have a soul, no bigee.

Belcher wipes his pomegranate hand unconsciously on his suit.

BELCHER

Shit! I knew I should never have let here near Kate Crohn. This is her fault! Perry? Perry!

Belcher storms off. All chuckle at his comeuppance.

HARDYMAN

Well, that's the end of another of Andy's unlikely relationships.

SOCRATES

At least he didn't buy her a house.

Kate and Crohn come up with a tray of champagne.

CROHN

Belcher will lecture me, but we propose one last toast.

SOCRATES

To neurosurgery? Or to protoplasm?

KATE

No. To love - real love. The kind of love you talked about tonight, Socks.

GOODMAN

How do you know what we talked about?

SOCRATES

There's a Persian proverb: "Ask not and lick up the honey, stranger."

HARDYMAN

Here, here!

CROHN

Call it a peace offering.

The little group take their glasses and toast as the party swirls around them.

GOODMAN

C'mon. Let's adjourn to the big room.

The group cuts a swathe through the party-goers and exits the side room...

CUT TO:

INT. PLATO'S, GOODMAN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...where they find a relatively quiet spot by some couches and chat, laughing...

...until Best arrives. Anxious, he rounds on Hardyman.

BEST

Congressman, I strongly advise you to split.

HARDYMAN

Party's just gettin' started, Arie.

BEST

If the media finds out you were here, it'll look bad --

HARDYMAN

Arie --

BEST

Mid-term elections are coming up. Not to mention the primaries --

HARDYMAN

Arie, another old saying: What happens at Plato's stays at Plato's.

BEST

But the Protesters --

HARDYMAN

All taken care of. And I have a new high-flyer I want you to put on my staff... here she comes now!

Vesta joins the group. She shakes Hardyman's hand.

HARDYMAN (CONT'D)

Hey! There's my trouble-shooter!

VESTA

Glad to be of service, Congressman.

BEST

(resigned)

SO what's your plan?

HARDYMAN

I am going to spend some quality time with old friends.

Hardyman turns away from Best. Engages Vesta in conversation. Socrates comes up to Vesta and whispers in her ear. She shakes her head emphatically...

CUT TO:

BEST's P.O.V.

The group (Crohn-Kate, Socrates, Goodman, Hardyman-Vesta) talking, drinking and enjoying each other's company as the party around them gets progressively wilder. Best scans the room. Spots an empty couch in the corner. Makes for it, passing scenes of increasing debauchery. Sits down. Swivels to see the in-group still at the center of the room, yacking.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

The entire room is a swirling, pulsating party palace with a still center.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM - TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE

In a swift montage of images, we see the party reach its peak, start to fade, then break up. Everyone is gone, save Socrates, Hardyman, Goodman and Crohn. Still talking...

CUT TO:

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM BEST' COUCH MORNING

Best is sound asleep. Awakes with a start. Looks groggily around. He sees...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Socrates. Still talking with Goodman and Crohn. Hardyman is sound asleep on the couch beside them. Kate sleeps on a sheepskin rug beside the couch.

SOCRATES

Why shouldn't a comic writer be able to write tragedy? Or vice versa? They're so close together - mirror images of the same story. Am I right?

CROHN

(very groggy)
Yeah, yeah -- King Lear - very funny.

Goodman passes out. Followed by Crohn.

Beat.

Socrates kisses the heads of his three sleeping friends. Turns to see Best rising with difficulty.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Socrates goes over to Best and grins. They do the fraternity secret handshake.

BEST

C'mon. I'll take you back to the Y.

SOCRATES

(awkward))

Yeah, thanks, but I got a slamfest at
UCLA at ten --

A noise at the door startles Best. He turns to see...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Vesta opening the door. Letting in the ageless, elegant Daisy Devi. Dressed in Indian garb. Carrying a handbag. Who takes in the debauched spectacle with equanimity.

BACK TO SCENE

Best stares at Daisy. Socrates smiles quietly.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)

Aristotle Best, may I introduce Dayita Devi?

BEST

(under his breath)

Like she needs an introduction.

(louder)

Pleasure. Heard a lot about you.

Daisy takes Best's proffered hand.

DAISY DEVI

Heard a lot about you. I see you two are the last ones standing.

BEST

Typical Delta Phi Kappa bash. They came to school to break the rules and flunk in each exam.

SOCRATES

C'mon, Arie -- these are the beloved
of the gods, crowned with laurels.

Daisy laughs.

DAISY DEVI

The very picture of virtue. Any
chance they'll feel immortal later
this morning?

BEST

More likely they'll wish they were
dead when they wake up.

DAISY DEVI

Ah. It's all about being awake,
isn't it?

Beat. Socrates smiles at Devi.

SOCRATES

I was kinda expecting you a little
earlier.

DAISY DEVI

I know. Something came up.

BEST

What?

(the penny drops)

You were up to something last night,
weren't you?

SOCRATES

I had a hidden agenda, yeah.

DAISY DEVI

Socks invited me to the party last
night. I was supposed to be his
surprise guest.

Best has seen a lot in his career, but this takes the
cake.

BEST

He was gonna help you gate-crash --

SOCRATES

I would'a helped her gate-crash the
speeches too. The Frat Brothers
should have heard it straight from
the yogin's mouth.

BEST

That's why you kept on looking at
your watch.

(to Daisy)

I hope it was nothing too serious.

DAISY DEVI

It was the most serious thing in the
world. Let me show you...

Daisy reaches into her handbag. Pulls out her
cellphone. Clicks on the "video" apps.

DAISY DEVI (CONT'D)

I was sneaking in the back way, as we
had agreed, when I met this couple...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOLY CROSS HOSPITAL FOR THE POOR, DELIVERY ROOM -
NIGHT

On the tiny, but crystal-clear phone screen we see
Penny on a hospital bed, Source on one side of her, a
NURSE on the other. Obviously in labour. And loud,
despite the tinny sound quality of the phone.

PENNY

Ow! Jesus!

SOURCE

Keep pushing, babe!

PENNY

Fuck you, Source!

NURSE

Almost there...

The Nurse disappears out of frame.

RETURN TO SCENE:

Socrates is beaming, Daisy smiling. But Best is
gobsmacked.

BEST

Them? But -- how did you know?

SOCRATES

(Cheshire Cat grin)

Know what?

BEST

That she was about to pop the sprog.

SOCRATES

I didn't.

BEST

You gave them that five hundred bucks so they could have their baby in a hospital instead of that filthy alleyway, didn't you?

SOCRATES

Naw. It was for his college fund. It was a boy, right?

DAISY DEVI

See for yourself.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOLY CROSS HOSPITAL, DELIVERY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A beautiful, wrinkled, swaddled BABY BOY is nuzzled on Penny's chest. She is drenched in sweat, totally spent -- and experiencing eternity.

PENNY

He's so beautiful. So beautiful.

SOURCE

Think we're gonna name him Love.

(to Nurse)

Love's a boy's name, right?

NURSE

Love is every child's name.

RETURN TO SCENE

Best, Socrates and Daisy stare at the screen for a long beat.

Socrates slaps Best on the back.

SOCRATES

Hey! Let's visit 'em in the hospital on the way to UCLA. Coming with us?

Best glances over at Hardyman, still snoring on the couch. A momentary pang of guilt. Then...

BEST

What the hell...

Socrates and Daisy smile as the trio turn their backs on the debauchery.

INT. GOODMAN'S ROOM, THE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Daisy, Socrates and Best exit quietly. Vesta is there to see them out. She looks into the room to see...

REVERSE ANGLE

...Goodman, Hardyman and the Crohns all snoring. Beside them in a wastepaper basket is...

CLOSE UP ON THE WASTEPAPER BASKET

...the Oscar. Surrounded by paper plates, plastic cups and confetti. But still gleaming seductively.

CREDITS

FADE OUT