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A complementary observation to determine Phaedrus' age in Plato's *Phaedrus*

Uma observação complementar para determinar a idade de Fedro no *Fedro* de Platão

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Abstract: This paper deals with the problem of determining Phaedrus' age in the eponymous dialogue. The vocatives *ὦ νεανία* and *ὦ παῖ*, in Pl. *Phdr.* 257c8 and 267c6, could suggest that Plato depicts him as a teenager. However, most scholars believe that Phaedrus is an adult and that the vocatives point at his passive and childish character. I will first summarize the evidence given for supporting the latter thesis. Then, I offer complementary evidence, showing that those vocatives mockingly compare his passiveness with that of a young beloved in a homoerotic context.

Keywords: Plato; Phaedrus; Socrates; Lysias; homoerotic love.

1. Introduction

At *Phdr.* 257c8 and 267c6 Socrates calls his partner by the terms 'young man' (*νεανίας*) and 'child' (*παῖς*), respectively. This could mislead the reader into believing that the Phaedrus of the eponymous Platonic dialogue is still young. In turn, it could make one suppose that the dialogue depicts the traditional context of the homoerotic and didactic relationship known as *παιδικὸς ἔρως*[2]. Were this true, Lysias and Socrates would be the potential adult lovers

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[2] The most ancient commentary on the *Phaedrus* preserved, Hermias' one, shares this misled approach, as it is clear from the very beginning of his commentary. The Alexandrian starts his commentary stating that Socrates helps "the race of men and the souls of the young (*νέοι*)" (*In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia*, 1.1-2). Few lines later, he points out what follows: "Lysias, who loves (*ἐρῶν*) Phaedrus in a shameful fashion but pretends not to love him" (1.10-11). Similarly, later on he writes the following: "Lysias, then, is reported (...) to have had a licentious passion (*ἀκόλαστος ἔρως*) for boys (*παῖδες*), and Phaedrus to have been beautiful in outward appearance" (18.17-20). This mistake is not exclusively of ancient readers. PARMENTIER (1926) 9-10 has clearly stated that this was, with the honourable exception of H. Taine, the almost unanimously shared reading by the philologists of the second half of the XIXth century and beginning of the XXth, including Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and C. Ritter amongst others (for Taine's Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and

who seek after the young beloved Phaedrus. Doing so, the dialogue would show the distinctive traits of philosophical love compared with other kinds of erotic relationships. It goes without saying that these implications would be decisive for interpreting the main issues of the dialogue, including both its main theme and its conclusions. For instance, believing that the dialogue depicts a situation of a truly didactic and homoerotic relationship[3], it has been suggested that, by means of the relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus, Plato refers to his own relationship with Dion of Syracuse[4]; even more, according to that reading, this would be the reason that spurs Plato to make his Socrates speak for erotic possession along with some other forms of divine madness.

The implications of this possible mistake are noteworthy. However, commentators seem to have generally discarded this idea during at least the last century. Most scholars have noticed that there are several pieces of evi-

Ritter's references, see PARMENTIER (1926) 9-10). What is more, even today the same mistaken reading is held by some scholars; see e.g. BALTZLY AND SHARE (2018) 28-29, whose translations are given in this note.

[3] I am referring to the work of NUSSBAUM (2001). However, let us clearly state that Nussbaum does not believe that Phaedrus is actually a boy. Even if she refers to Phaedrus from the very beginning of her book-section as a "young person" (2001) 200, she finally — and surprisingly— proves to be aware of the inaccuracy of this interpretation, and she maintains that it is not true that Phaedrus is a mere boy, but a man around forty (2001) 229. Nevertheless, this fact does not prevent her from believing that the plot actually depicts a homoerotic context in which Phaedrus has to choose between the relationship offered by Socrates and the one required by Lysias.

[4] NUSSBAUM (2001) 228-230 highlights the following sentence of *Phdr.* 252e1-2: *οἱ μὲν δὴ οὖν Διὸς δῖόν τινα εἶναι ζητοῦσι τὴν ψυχὴν τὸν ὑφ' αὑτῶν ἐρώμενονα*. She points out that scholars like HACKFORTH (1952) 99, n. 2 and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff have rightly realized that the terms *Διὸς δῖόν* might constitute an emphatic innuendo alluding to Dion of Syracuse. The first word is the genitive form of the term 'Zeus'; the second one, which shares etymon with the first, means Zeus-like and in Socrates' mouth is referred to the young beloved of the philosophical relationship described in the palinode. According to Nussbaum, the second term should be understood also as *brilliant* or *shining*. Going a step further, she points out that the names Phaedrus (*Φαῖδρος*) and Dion (*Δίων*) share meaning, namely, brilliant or shining. Then, according to her, Plato would be suggesting by the play on words mentioned and some other allusions that Phaedrus represents Dion of Syracuse: in the same way that Plato loved the younger Dion, Socrates loves the younger Phaedrus.

dence showing that the Phaedrus depicted is already an adult[5]. In the following second section, I will show some of the main reasons that led commentators to this outcome. However, the main goal of this paper is not to briefly summarize the pieces of evidence given but to offer a supplementary one. In the third section, I hold that there is an important fact that has been omitted concerning Phaedrus' age. If I am not misled, this point would not change the most common view, but would be useful for strengthening it and revealing a small nuance.

2. Brief summary of the evidence given

Phaedrus' life is quite unknown to us. Apart from the text *On the Mysteries* of the logographer Andocides, by which we know that he was accused of profaning the Eleusinian mysteries and escaped into exile in 415, the greatest part of the historical data concerning Phaedrus has been collected from the three Platonic dialogues in which he appears, namely, the *Protagoras*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*[6]. In the first work, he is at Callias' house amongst some other youngsters following Hippias' lessons on natural and astronomical matters[7]. It is believed that the dramatic date of that dialogue is 433-432[8]. Besides, it is believed that Phaedrus and the other young men there should be around eighteen in order to be able to follow Hippias' lessons. So, Phaedrus would have been born around 450[9] or a bit later. There is general agreement on setting the dramatic scene of the *Symposium* in 416[10], so Phaedrus would be around his mid thirties in the drinking party. There are many more problems when setting the period represented by the *Phaedrus*. What is more, a thorough analysis of the problem shows that there is no possible real date for the conversation presented, since the different data given in the dialogue seem to be incompatible. In ROBIN'S (1985) xvii words the scene is set "*en dehors de toute*

[5] See e.g. PARMENTIER (1926), ROBIN (1985) xx-xxi, DE VRIES (1969) 6, NEHAMAS (1999) 332, SALA (2007) 27 and YUNIS (2011) 7.

[6] For biographical information on Phaedrus, see NAILS (2002) 232-234.

[7] See *Prt*. 314c).

[8] See e.g. PARMENTIER (1926) 10, NAILS (2002) 309, and BRISSON (2004) 19.

[9] See e.g. YUNIS (2011) 7-8.

[10] See e.g. ROBIN (1985) xvii and NAILS (2002) 314.

histoire." Pointing out a similar idea, DE VRIES (1969) 7 believes that "Plato had no precise historical situation in mind."

The different data of the dialogue, which do not fit together, make impossible to set a precise date for the conversation[11]. Taking into account that Socrates died in 399 and that Phaedrus escaped into exile 415–403, if there was a real date for the drama it should be fixed before 415 or between 403 and 399. The latter option is not plausible, since Sophocles and Euripides, both dead in 406-405, seem to be referred to at *Phdr.* 268c-d as alive. Besides, Polemarchus, who died in 404, also seems to be mentioned as alive at *Phaedrus* 257b-4. However, the former option does not look likely either. First, Isocrates, born in 436, is referred to as still young (*νέος*, 278e10), though he has already started his rhetorical studies[12]. According to YUNIS (2011) 8, this would mean that the reference would only be compatible with a period between 418 and 403. Second, Lysias, born near 445, was in Thurii 430–412[13]. Third, Lysias is referred to by Phaedrus as the most terrific contemporary writer[14], which would not match a date much prior to 403[15]. Fourth, Phaedrus mentions a politician who had recently blamed Lysias for his occupation as speech-writer, which may suggest that the scene takes place in the period of the restoration of the Athenian democracy in 403 or shortly after[16]. Fifth, Socrates claims that, with the sole exception of Simmias of Thebes, during

[11] This article is not the place for discussing *in extenso* the issues concerning the dramatic dating of the scene. For a more thorough analysis on this matter, see SALA (2007) 14-16 and YUNIS (2011) 7-10.

[12] Socrates goes further and foresees that, Isocrates being superior to Lysias in both speeches and character, he will surpass by far the rest of the logographers (*Phdr.* 279a3-9).

[13] Even if Plutarch (*Mor.* 835d6-7) claims that Lysias went back to Athens in 412, this point is far from being undisputed, since several scholars have recently supplied alternative hypotheses: DOVER (1968) 42 states that the logographer went back to Athens in 420 and NAILS (2002) 190 maintains that he visited Athens some time between 418 and 416. Were some of these hypotheses true, it would be possible to set the dramatic scene somewhere between 420 and 415 or between 418 and 416. However, in the following lines I offer supplementary information that denies the possibility of setting the dialogue prior to 415. See also SALA (2007) 15.

[14] *Phdr.* 228a1-2.

[15] See YUNIS (2011) 8.

[16] See YUNIS (2011) 8.

Phaedrus' life no one has brought about so many speeches as Phaedrus, either by uttering them by himself or by forcing others to make them[17]. On the one hand, it does not seem plausible that someone could say that about a teenager; on the other, Socrates' words might be alluding to the *Symposium*, where Phaedrus is called the *father of the subject* (*πατὴρ τοῦ λόγου*, *Symp.* 177d5) discussed —namely, ἔρως— and so the spur that compels —even if by means of Eryximachus— the people there to make speeches on love. In the same way, the fact that in the *Symposium* it is claimed that Phaedrus complains because love has not been yet praised as it deserves[18] seems to suggest that the dramatic scene of the *Phaedrus* is set later on[19].

These data make it impossible to assign a specific date to the drama. And yet, the intertextuality between the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, the reference to Lysias as the best speech-writer of the day, the allusion to Phaedrus as a prominent speech producer and the hint of the young but promising Isocrates evoke the last ten or fifteen years of the Vth century as its context, as defended by YUNIS (2011) 7-8.

If this is true, in the *Phaedrus* the eponymous character, even if younger than Socrates, would not be a child or a teenager anymore, but an adult in his thirties or forties[20]. Thus it should be explained why Socrates calls him *young man* (*νεανίας*) at *Phdr.* 257c8 and *child* (*παῖς*) at *Phdr.* 267c6. Besides, light should be shed on why Socrates counts him at *Phdr.* 275b7 amongst the young (*νέοι*) he criticises[21]. One possible and straightforward answer is that Socrates uses those terms just because Phaedrus is younger than him[22]. This solution is not risky, but there should be more compelling reasons to explain the use

[17] *Phdr.* 242a7-b5.

[18] *Symp.* 177a-e.

[19] This is the most widespread opinion amongst scholars. See e.g. ROBIN (1985) ix-x.

[20] YUNIS (2011) 8.

[21] I do not refer to *Phdr.* 261a3, where the term *καλλίπαιδά* is referred to Phaedrus, since the context makes clear that its sense is not that of *beautiful child* but that of *someone who has beautiful children*. Using this term, Socrates hints at Phaedrus' capacity to produce speeches, metaphorically his progeny. This would perfectly match up with the allusion of Phaedrus as the *πατὴρ τοῦ λόγου* in *Symp.* 177d5.

[22] For this explanation, see e.g. DE VRIES (1969) 226.

of those terms in the conversation, since even if younger, Phaedrus is not a teenager any more and there should be no reason to call him νεανίας or παῖς.

Going a step further and founding his hypotheses on an attentive reading of the full conversation, PARMENTIER (1926) offered the most decisive contribution to rebuke the belief that the vocatives refer to Phaedrus' age. PARMENTIER (1926) 14 has argued convincingly that Socrates calls his conversational partner νεανίας to point out the naïveté, thoughtlessness, boldness and similar typical pejorative qualities of the young that are characteristic of Phaedrus, regardless of his age[23]. Similarly, PARMENTIER (1926) 14 holds that when later on Socrates refers to his partner by the term παῖς, the dramatic context allows the reader to realize that Socrates is not alluding to his age, but is mocking him: in a moment when they are discussing rhetoric, Phaedrus forgets a rhetorical technical term, and Socrates replies full of mockery, pretending to be a pedagogue who reminds his young student about a rule of his handbook on rhetoric. Socrates would be behaving at that point as if he had a child in front of him because his interlocutor is not able to leave behind his blind fascination with speeches —especially for the stylistic subtleties of the speeches— nor engage in philosophy.

Parmentier's hypothesis, solid enough, has been generally followed by subsequent commentators. Yet, we could strengthen it with a complementary

[23] This image of Phaedrus as mediocre is mostly shared amongst scholars (see e.g. the short description of him given by ROBIN (1985) xxxvii. See also SALA (2007) 26). In this way, Rosen (1968) 39-40 alludes to him as a man of relatively insignificant gifts and states that he is not an expert in anything, but a mere dilettante. We should consider that he does not speak on his own behalf about the topics discussed, but reports what other have claimed. In the *Phaedrus* it is clear —as he limits himself to reading Lysias' text— but an attentive analysis of his speech in the *Symposium* shows that, full of quotations and references, it represents more of a pastiche than his own research on love (see ROSEN (1968) 46). So, GRISWOLD (1986) 21 rightly states that "Phaedrus seems to be an eternal student and disciple". As WERNER (2012) 20 points out, he is unable to analyse things in a critical way and independently. That is why I cannot agree with Nussbaum, who depicts him as being not just beautiful but also *talented* (see NUSSBAUM (2001) 202). This point is far from insignificant, since this positive image she has of Phaedrus is one of the key elements that compels her to say that Plato is hinting at Dion and that the scene depicts a homoerotic context.

datum. With this purpose, I will focus on a text at *Phdr.* 235a6[24], where Socrates uses the verb *νεανιεύεσθαι*[25] in a pejorative way, referring to Lysias' rhetorical or stylistic aspiration when writing his speech. Socrates states that the logographer has *behaved childishly*, boasting of his skill for expressing the same things in multiple ways and always excellently. If Socrates uses this verb to blame Lysias' rhetorical amusements, it is reasonable to assume that he uses a substantive with the same etymon to refer to someone such as Phaedrus, who is unable to surpass the mere rhetorical level and to engage in philosophy[26].

[24] Taking into account that the verb *νεανιεύομαι* is used at *Phdr.* 235a6 while the vocative *ὦ νεανία* is not uttered until *Phdr.* 257c8, one could deny that the reader is supposed to see a link between both terms, given that both terms are too far apart in the dialogue. This claim appears to make sense, but let us remember that the term *νεανίας* is quite rare in Plato (used only twelve times in the dialogues) and the verb *νεανιεύομαι*, extremely rare (used merely three times in the dialogues). Besides, as will be shown in this text, the term *νεανίας* and especially the verb *νεανιεύομαι* are often to be read derogatorily, since when referring to adults they evoke the idea of being poorly educated. In this sense, the verb referring to Lysias and the vocative referring to Phaedrus would be used to express the same idea, namely, an inappropriate immaturity. So I believe that it would not be totally out of place to understand that Plato would be compelling the reader to link both terms.

[25] Notably, the verb *νεανιεύομαι* is only used twice more in Plato's full *corpus*, both times in the *Gorgias* and also in a pejorative way. In *Grg*. 482c4 Callicles uses the verb to criticize the *childish* way in which Socrates speaks; immediately after, Callicles himself sheds light on the meaning of his claim, stating that philosophy is not bad when practiced moderately during childhood, though it is harmful and ridiculous (*καταγέλαστον*) when it is practiced too much during adolescence or when adults keep philosophising (*Grg.* 484c4-485e2). In *Grg.* 527d6 Socrates uses the verb pejoratively as well, asserting that they are not ready for politics yet, since they are *behaving* so *childishly* (poorly educated) that they constantly change their opinion about the same things.

[26] Let us remember that the first definition of the sophist in the eponymous dialogue depicts the sophist as a mercenary hunter of rich *young* people (*νέων καὶ πλουσίω νέμμισθος θηρευτής*, *Soph*. 231d3). It is so, in part, because sophists are especially good at getting young people to think that they are the wisest men in every subject (see *Soph*. 233b1-7). As NARCY (2013) 61, n. 10 points out, "it is to young people that the sophists direct their teaching: *παρὰ τῶν νέων πολλὰ χρήματα λαμβάνων* (281b7), *συνὼν τοῖς νέοις χρήματα πολλὰ ἠργάσατο* (282b8), *τοῖς νέοις συνὼν χρήματα ἔλαβεν θαυμαστὰ ὅσα* (282c5–6)." Another example can be found in *Prt.* 318a6-9, where the sophist Protagoras offers his services to the young (*νεανίσκος*) Hippocrates, promising to make him a better

Beyond the problem of the two mentioned vocatives, let us see how it has been explained that Socrates counts Phaedrus at *Phdr.* 275b7 amongst the wise (*σοφοί*) young (*νέοι*) in comparison with the simplicity (*εὐήθεια*) of the men from former times (*οἱ μὲν οὖν τότε*). Significantly enough, the term *νέοι* has been translated by some authors as *moderns*[27]. The passage should be connected with *Phdr.* 229a1-230a7, where Phaedrus asks Socrates with great astonishment if he believes ancient myths —such as the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia— to be true. We should keep in mind that, in the *Protagoras,* he is following the lessons of Hippias of Elis, one of the most polymathic sophists, and that we learn from the *Phaedrus* that he has spent the morning listening to Lysias, perhaps the most celebrated speech writer of those days. Moreover, this dialogue also shows that Phaedrus is attentive to the advice of renowned physicians such as Acumenus[28 & 29]. Apart from this, we know that the historical Phaedrus was accused of profaning the Mysteries as was Acumenus. In short, these data depict him as a typical follower of the intellectual avant-gardes and trends of his period[30], as one of those who believe them to be wise, sophisticated and much cleverer than the naïve ancients. It could be say with GRISWOLD (1986) 24 that "he has no great respect for tradition, the opinions of the ancients, and the like." That is why Yunis is certainly right when, commenting on *Phdr.* 275b-c, he says, "*εὐήθεια* ('simplicity') is used

man. Sophists direct their teachings at young people because the (inexperienced and mindless) children are more easily persuaded and deceived by their images than adults (see *Soph.* 234b5-e2). In this sense, the sophist would be like a juggler (*θαυματοποιός*, see *Soph.* 235b5), who has the power to astound children with his appearance-making, though he is not so effective with adults, in the same way that jugglers are more appreciated by children than adults. Thus understood, childishness or youth would be epistemologically feebleness. This is because the sophist only produces appearances, and children are not able to distinguish between mere appearances and reality; that is to say, the activity of the sophist is a mere game (*παιδιά*, see *Soph.* 235a5-7) in the same way that the juggler's performance is a mere game. He is a sorcerer (*γόης*, *Soph.* 235a8) and an imitator (*μιμητής*, *Soph.* 235a8), and adults don't take those people too seriously.

[27] See e.g. ROWE (1986) 123.

[28] See *Phdr*. 227a5.

[29] Besides, in the *Protagoras* and in the *Symposium* his friendship with the physician Eryximachus —son of the physician Acumenus— is manifest.

[30] See SZLEZÁK (1989) 74.

ironically (as *σοφοῖς*, b7) to indicate that the practices of these simple ancient people may contain a valuable lesson for sophisticated moderns like Phaedrus" (2011) 229. In conclusion, the term *νέοι* is not connected to Phaedrus' age in this passage.

In the same way, I believe, along with YUNIS (2011) 7, n. 11 that "the *vocatives ὦ νεανία* (257c7), *ὦ παῖ* (267c5) with which Socrates addresses Phaedrus do not mean that he is a youth, but tease him for his inability to understand the point at issue". Yunis' claim can be reinforced by briefly analyzing how these terms are used in other dialogues. It would take us too long to comment on all the uses of the term *παῖς* in the dialogues, especially because it is a general term to allude to young people in general and also slaves. However, let us point out one significant example in which the terms *παῖς* and *νεανίσκος*[31] are also used in a context where it can be inferred that being young or a child is understood in an epistemologically pejorative way: at *Lys.*204b5-6 Socrates calls the young but already adult lover Hippothales using the vocative *παῖ*; later on, at *Lys.*205a7-8 Ctessipus says that Hippothales is not of sound mind (*οὐχ ὑγιαίνει*, *Lys.*205b7), but silly (*ληρεῖ*, *Lys.* 205b7) and mad (*μαίνεται*, *Lys.* 205b8), since as he is a lover (*ἐραστής*, *Lys.*205b7) he only says ridiculous things (*καταγέλαστα*, *Lys.* 205b7) and has nothing to say that a mere child (*παῖς*, *Lys.* 205c1) could not say, simply because his mind only cares about the beloved boy (*τῷ παιδί*, *Lys.*205b8). That is to say, as it has been shown by PENNER AND ROWE (2005) 21, n. 23, Ctesippus criticizes Hippothales' words because they are *childish (boy-like)*. After having seen an example of the term *παῖς* addressed teasingly to an adult in a context similar to the one depicted in the *Phaedrus* —i.e. a homoerotic context—, let us briefly analyze the use of the term *νεανίας* in the dialogues, especially since it only appears twelve times there[32], in order to see that it is

[31] The term *νεανίσκος* is used forty times throughout the dialogues in a way that does not significantly differ from the way in which the terms *παῖς* and *νεανίας* are used.

[32] The term is used once in *Chrm.* 155a4 referring to Charmides by Socrates, when the former is still young and Critias is his guardian (NAILS (2002) 90-91 believes that he must still be around seventeen); once in *Prt.* 309b4 referring to Alcibiades when he is still eighteen, by a friend of Socrates — his beard has already grown and he is still Socrates' beloved (see NAILS (2002) 10-13); once in *Grg.* 481e4 referring to the young and politically ambitious Callicles by Socrates; in the *Republic* the term is used non-specifically four times

not unusual for the term to be pejoratively used. The term is mainly used to refer to young people under the age of twenty[33] or non-specifically to youth[34]; however, it is also used to refer to an insane eagerness (*Leg.* 687e1) and the insolence of the one who claims to be able to speak correctly —following the rules agreed by Theetetus and the Eleatic Stranger to speak about what it is— about what it is not[35]. So it could be said that the term is used —at least twice— in a pejorative way, alluding to a behavior that might be usual in youth, but that is completely inappropriate for exemplary adults[36].

3. New supplementary evidence to conclude that Phaedrus is not a teenager in his eponymous dialogue

The previous section showed that there is strong evidence to support the thesis of those who defend the view that the younger man in the *Phaedrus* is an adult. In this section, I argue that an attentive reading of the plot makes it possible to find a complementary reason to understand why, Phaedrus being an adult, Socrates calls him twice by the vocatives *ὦ νεανία* and *ὦ παῖ*.

The dialogue's so called *first part* mainly consists of a discursive contest: there are three speeches —one by Lysias and two by Socrates— competing for being considered the best. The three of them share a common element. Their context is that of a homoerotic relationship between an adult man (either a lover [*ἐραστής*] or a non-lover [*οὐκ ἐραστής*]) and a teenager

(in *Rsp.* 389d7, 403c9 and 559e6 refers to the young in general; in *Rsp.* 549b10 alluding non-specifically to young timocrats); once in *Phdr.* 257c8; once in *Soph.* 239d5 referring non-specifically to a sophist or a disciple of a sophist by the Eleatic Stranger; twice in the *Laws*, firstly working non-specifically as the *eagerness of youth* (*Leg.* 687e1), and secondly, non-specifically too (*Leg.* 903b4); in the dubious *Amores*, Socrates uses the vocative *ὦ νεανία* (132c1) to address a young athlete who despises philosophy.

[33] *Chrm.* 155a4; *Prt.* 309b4; *Am.* 132c1; probably in *Grg.* 481e4 too, though there is not much data to conjecture Callicles' age in the *Gorgias*

[34] *Rsp.* 389d7, 403c9, 549b10, 559e6; *Leg.* 903b4.

[35] *Soph.* 239d5.

[36] Apart from the terms mentioned, let us point out that the diminutive *μειρακίσκος* is used at *Phdr.* 237b2, perhaps suggesting, as FERRARI (1987) 253, n. 15 points out, that Socrates' addressee in his two speeches might be more mature than Lysias'. Were this true, it would suggest the same idea that I have highlighted: the younger a person is, the easier he/she will be deceived.

(the beloved [*ἐρώμενος*]), in which the elder tries to persuade the younger to confer on him his favours. The three speeches represent the speech that an adult man would address to a teenager. Yet, let us clearly state that the situation of the speeches is not real but imagined. There is no need of a thorough analysis to grasp this. Not only does Phaedrus spend the full morning listening to Lysias' speech but he also takes with him the text of the discourse in order to learn it by heart[37]. So, the fictional —and epideictic— nature of the speech seems clear. In this context, at least at one level, the two Socratic speeches compete with Lysias' one and are presented as fictitious situations as well. The introduction[38] of the first Socratic speech undoubtedly depicts an imaginary situation, beginning with a typical start for an imaginary story: "there was once upon a time" (*ἦν οὕτω*). Later on, the second Socratic speech sets up a clear continuity with the previous one if we consider that, before uttering it, Socrates asks where is the boy with whom he had just been speaking[39]. Then, both the fictional adult man and the imaginary beloved would be the same in Socrates' first and second speeches.

This is an important remark, since the imaginary speakers are not Lysias or Socrates, nor is Phaedrus the fictional sought-after boy. Taking into account their nature, it comes as no surprise that we find many times the vocative *ὦ παῖ* and similar expressions in the three speeches[40 & 41]. These vocatives have not misled anyone into believing that Socrates is an actual lover and Phaedrus a teenaged beloved. It is taken for granted that they are part of a representation, that is to say, part of a fiction. Only two concrete vocatives, *ὦ νεανία* at *Phdr.* 257c8 and *ὦ παῖ* at *Phdr.* 267c6 opened the possibility of considering Phaedrus a teenager, precisely because they are not part of the speeches mentioned.

[37] See *Phdr*. 227a1-228e5.

[38] *Phdr*. 237b2-6.

[39] *Phdr*. 243e4-6.

[40] See e.g. *Phdr*. 237b7; 241c7; 243e9; 252b2; 256e3.

[41] To be more precise, there are no vocatives in Lysias' speech. The logographer was famous for mastering *characterisation* (*ἠθοποιία*), i.e. for his ability to produce speeches that suited well the character of his clients (for an analysis of Lysianic characterisation see USHER (1965)). In this case, Lysias' rhetorical skills would make the nature of the speech sober and impersonal according to the cold and temperate character of the imaginary non-lover who fictively utters the speech.

However, the key to understanding these two troubling vocatives could be found in the homoerotic fiction depicted in the discourses. Significantly enough, in the context of this fiction, there are some moments in which both Socrates and Phaedrus vividly represent the characters of the adult lover —or, in the case of his first speech, of the concealed lover— and the young beloved respectively. To appreciate this, note two key texts that are especially noteworthy. The first corresponds to the beginning of the palinode, namely, the second Socratic speech. By means of it, not only does Socrates start his representation of the adult lover who speaks to a young beloved but also shows clearly that the speaker of his first and second speeches —but also the sought-after teenager— are the one and the same:

> *Where then is that boy I was talking to? I want him to hear this too; if he doesn't he may go ahead and grant favours to the non-lover before we can stop him.*
>
> *(Ποῦ δή μοιό παῖς πρὸς ὃν ἔλεγον; ἵνα καὶ τοῦτο ἀκούσῃ, καὶ μὴ ἀνήκοος ὢν φθάσῃ χαρισάμενος τῷ μὴ ἐρῶντι).*[42]

In the second, Phaedrus carries on the role play displayed by Socrates as is clear in his immediate answer:

> *Here he is right next to you, whenever you want him there.*
>
> *(Οὗτος παρά σοι μάλα πλησίον ἀεὶ πάρεστιν, ὅταν σὺ βούλῃ).*[43]

Consequently, there is no doubt that Socrates and Phaedrus do not limit themselves to uttering and hearing two imaginary speeches, but play the roles of the adult man and the teenager as well[44 & 45].This is important, since the two troubling vocatives I mentioned only appear subsequent to this representation, namely at *Phdr.* 257c8 and 267c6[46]. What is more, the first of

[42] *Phdr*. 243e4-6. Trans. by ROWE 1986.

[43] *Phdr*. 243e6-7. Trans. by ROWE 1986.

[44] GILL (2012) xviii points out the same idea: "Phaedrus and Socrates engage in playacting in the first part of the dialogue, especially in their elaborate flirtation."

[45] Probably this was not a strange behaviour at all. It is obvious that actors represented or imitated the characters they were playing, and rhapsodists might somehow imitate during some precise moments the characters' singing —or the characters they were representing when singing— as well.

[46] Before the two characters finish with their role playing, there is no a single term or innuendo that could point to Phaedrus' status as a young beloved. At *Phdr.* 236c8-

those two vocatives appears immediately after Socrates finishes his second speech; so it would not come as a surprise that Socrates would use it to pretend —somewhat maliciously, with a dose of irony— to have forgotten that his role-playing had come to an end. That is why my hypothesis is that, by means of the two vocatives, Socrates would be somehow continuing the fictional homoerotic context[47] in a mocking way. This kind of joke or cutting remark would not be out of place since one of the problems discussed in the dialogue —but also one of the main problems that Phaedrus has to deal with— is the potential danger of imitation (*μίμησις*). We should remember that Phaedrus had tried to learn by heart Lysias' text to represent —imitate— it in front of Socrates and other citizens. Later on, discussing the appropriateness of writing, by means of the myth of Theuth and Thamus, Socrates blames those who believe that learning by heart implies any kind of knowledge. Lacking critical spirit and without a criterion for judging things[48]; Phaedrus is a passive imitator who risks becoming blended into the

236d3, Phaedrus says, considering that they are alone and that he is stronger and younger than his interlocutor, he could use violence to force the philosopher to make a new speech that competes with Lysias'. FERRARI (1987) 108 has claimed that, at this point, Phaedrus would identify himself with the young beloved. Yet, there is no hint of Phaedrus' alleged status of beloved teenager here. Even more, were we to force the reading for finding a hidden meaning or allusion that matches up with a homoerotic relationship in this passage, the only possible concealed innuendo would consist of a threat that Phaedrus would address to Socrates, suggesting perhaps that if Socrates does not agree to give a new speech Phaedrus will assault him.

[47] I totally agree with RYAN (2012) 283, who, commenting the vocative *ὦ παῖ* in *Phdr.* 267c6, rightly points out what follows: "Socrates here addresses Phaedrus as if he were the imaginary boy to whom he directed the Palinode (243e9 and 252b2)."

[48] That is why Socrates' main purpose in the dialogue is to find a criterion for judging speeches (whether written or oral. See *Phdr*. 258d7, 259e1-2), i.e. a research on rhetoric —the art of writing or speaking well —; and before; and Socrates' conclusion is that true rhetoric —the criterion for judging any speech— does not consist in formal style but in dialectic (*Phdr*. 265d3-5, 265e1-3). However, faithful to his *maieutic* method, Socrates is not explicit about his conclusions, and Phaedrus does not grasp the outcome of the research. Unaware of the link between rhetoric and dialectic, he believes that the inquiry has gone wrong in that they were seeking rhetoric they found dialectic instead (*Phdr*. 266c5-9).

characters of people he imitates[49]. To this extent MURRAY'S (1995) 4 remarks on Plato's considerations on representation (*μίμησις*) in the *Republic* are noteworthy: "for when someone speaks in the voice of another [...] he makes himself like that person not just in voice, but also in character: he adopts his looks, his gestures and even his thoughts, so that in a sense he almost becomes that person [...]. Mimesis thus has profound effects on character". Plato considers *μίμησις* to be a potential danger for a person's character, at least when the represented behaviour is not appropriate[50].

Were this true, continuing with the homoerotic representation in a sarcastic way after the declamation, Socrates would be criticising his interlocutor's passivity. Let us briefly take into account once more Phaedrus' attitude: he has not produced any text by himself but limits himself to representing a logographer's one; he limits himself to reading in a clearly passive attitude[51]; he does not have a thesis of his own on love, nor on rhetoric; at the end of the dialogue[52], Socrates seems to assign him the role of mere medium or herald, and he would willingly accept it[53]. If so, after the role play represented in the first part of the dialogue —and especially during the two Socratic speeches— Socrates would carry on in some precise moments with the role of lover and beloved to highlight Phaedrus' passive attitude, which is not suitable for an adult man. Doing so, he would be trying to spur him on a

[49] Let us recall once more that Plato depicts him as being primarily influenced by rhetoricians and modern physicians.

[50] See e.g. *Resp*. 395d1-3.

[51] Well aware of the homosexual-parody engaged in by Socrates with Phaedrus, SVENBRO (1988) 212–222 points out that in antiquity the dichotomy of active and passive was employed not only in reference to the relationship between lover and beloved, but also to the relationship of writer to reader. The Greeks would have considered the relationship between lover and beloved in some sense similar to the relationship between writer and reader: beloved and reader are passive, while lover and writer are active. Taking this into account, Svenbro suggests that, when he reads Lysias' text, Phaedrus willingly accepts a passive role, in the terms of a sexual relationship inappropriate for an adult Athenian citizen as he is.

[52] See *Phdr*. 278b7–d1 and 278e4.

[53] This last idea has been suggested and connected with Phaedrus' passive role, e.g. by BURGER (1980) 8-9 and LAVILLA DE LERA (2018) 98.

more active role[54], more appropriate to an adult. This is important, since this dialogue represents philosophy as an *active* research for truth in comparison with some *passive* practices related with sophistical teaching such as learning by heart a series of theses —or topics— or learning by heart —either by reading or hearing— the text of a speech-writer.

4. Conclusion

By its third section this paper has offered an additional reason that could lead Socrates to address Phaedrus —already an adult— by the vocatives *ὦ νεανία* and *ὦ παῖ*: with a big dose of irony, Socrates would be continuing to play the roles that he and Phaedrus have played during the two Socratic speeches on love. That is why these two vocatives only appear in the last part of the dialogue, just after the two Socratic speeches. As claimed by PARMENTIER (1926) and others, Socrates would be using the vocatives to blame Phaedrus' passive and uncritical attitude, more suitable for a teenager than for an adult. My supplementary explanation does not entail a change on Parmentier's reading. Quite the opposite, it strengthens it. Besides, it offers a small nuance: not only does it hold —as PARMENTIER (1926), YUNIS (2011) and others do— that the vocatives point at Phaedrus' passivity and his lack of critical spirit, but it also adds that this passivity is linked to the passivity shown by the beloved in a typical homoerotic relationship.

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[54] Erotic *passivity* was tolerated in the youth, but it was not well seen in adults.

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Resumo: Este artigo aborda o problema de especificar a idade do personagem Fedro no diálogo epónimo. Em Pl. *Phdr*. 257c8 e 267c6, os vocativos *ὦ νεανία* e *ὦ παῖ* poderiam sugerir que Platão o está a caraterizar como um adolescente. No entanto, a maioria dos comentadores considera que Fedro é um adulto e que os vocativos aludem, antes, ao seu caráter passivo e imaturo. Em primeiro lugar, o artigo resume os argumentos mais importantes a favor desta última tese. Em segundo lugar, oferece um argumento complementar que mostra que esses vocativos comparam zombeteiramente a passividade do personagem com a passividade de um jovem amado num contexto homoerótico.

Palavras-chave: Platão; Fedro; Sócrates; Lísias; amor homoerótico.

Resumen: : Este artículo aborda el problema que supone concretar la edad del personaje Fedro en el diálogo epónimo. En Pl. *Phdr*. 257c8 y 267c6, los vocativos *ὦ νεανία* y *ὦ παῖ* podrían sugerir que Platón lo esté caracterizando como un adolescente. Sin embargo, la mayoría de comentadores considera que es representado siendo adulto y que los vocativos aluden, más bien, a su carácter pasivo e inmaduro. En primer lugar, el artículo resume los argumentos más importantes en favor de esta última tesis. En segundo lugar, ofrece un argumento complementario que muestra que dichos vocativos comparan burlonamente la pasividad del personaje con la pasividad de un joven amado en un contexto homoerótico.

Palabras clave: Platón; Fedro; Sócrates; Lisias; amor homoerótico.

Résumé : cet article aborde le problème de la détermination de l'âge de Phèdre dans le dialogue éponyme. Les vocatifs *ὦ νεανία* et *ὦ παῖ* dans Pl. *Phdr.* 257c8 et 267c6 suggèrent que Platon le dépeint comme un adolescent. Néanmoins, la plupart des spécialistes sont convaincus que Phèdre est décrit comme un adulte et que les vocatifs ne font en fait allusion qu'à son caractère passif et immature. Cet article commence par synthétiser les arguments les plus importants en faveur de cette thèse, avant d'avancer un argument complémentaire qui montre que ces vocatifs sont utilisés sarcastiquement par Platon afin de comparer la passivité du personnage avec celle des jeunes bien-aimés dans un contexte homoérotique.

Mots-clés : Platon ; Phèdre ; Socrate ; Lysias ; amour homoérotique .