

ARTICLE

Eros and Authority: Rereading Pontus de Tyard's *Solitaires*

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SUMMARY

The amorous discourse in Pontus de Tyard's *Solitaire premier* (1552) and *Solitaire second* (1555) has been examined as bringing life to otherwise dry philosophical texts, as an amorous relationship working parasitically with the source dialogue, or as an exposé of an exchange echoing the Neoplatonism of the subject matter. This article seeks to show that the proto-erotic rapport between the *Solitaire* and Pasithée is neither simply a parallel nor an ancillary aspect of the dialogues. Rather, *eros* in the Platonic sense constitutes an infrangible element of the *Solitaires*, in terms of both structure and topos. *Eros* serves not only as a formally organizing force around which the dialogues advance, but also as a philosophical guiding principle.

KEYWORDS: Pontus de Tyard, *eros*, Neoplatonism, authority, agency, sixteenth-century France, early modern France, dialogue, *Solitaire premier*, *Solitaire second*, pedagogy

The dialogic functioning of Pontus de Tyard's *Solitaire premier* and *Solitaire second* has long intrigued readers of early modern French literature and philosophy. The amorous discourse between the interlocutors, the *Solitaire* and Pasithée, has been examined as bringing life to otherwise dry philosophical texts, as an amorous relationship working parasitically with the source dialogue, or as an exposé of an exchange echoing the Neoplatonism of the subject matter.¹ In what follows, I will argue that the proto-erotic rapport between the *Solitaire* and Pasithée is neither simply a parallel nor an ancillary aspect of the dialogues. Rather, *eros* in the Platonic sense constitutes an infrangible element of the *Solitaires*, in terms of both structure and topos. *Eros* serves not only as a formally organizing force around which the dialogues advance, but also as a philosophical guiding principle.

Solitude and dialogic forms

Tyard's *Solitaire premier* and *Solitaire second* both open with an image of the humanist predilection for solitary study. In the first work, the *Solitaire* had been looking forward to a "solitaire séjour" (*SP* 75) before he encounters Pasithée,² whose singing and lute-playing render him "ravy comme d'une celeste harmonie" (*SP* 76) – which leads him to explain the Neoplatonic theory of love and the four furors. Similarly, in the *Solitaire second*, the *Solitaire* begins with his "plus solitaires pensées" (*SS* 67) before Pasithée beseeches him to enlighten her on ancient Greek musical theory. Solitude is thus established as the state from which the scholar (the *Solitaire*) must emerge for the dialogue to unfold. Indeed, the dialogic form seems to subvert Tyard's motto, "solitudo mihi provincia est."³ The Curieux, who eventually joins the conversation, describes the *Solitaire's* ability to emerge from his study and become well-spoken when in the presence of

Pasithée: “(L)’objet de tant de rares grâces desquelles vous êtes accomplie pourrait esmouvoir la plus muette solitude à devenir disert et acointable” (SS 180). In both *Solitaires*, the presence of Pasithée, including her graces and her lively interest, thus becomes the impetus that gives rise to the dialogues.

As a genre, the dialogue enjoyed a considerable surge in popularity in mid-sixteenth-century France. Such literary humanist “conversations” as Erasmus’s *Colloquies* (1516), Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), and Castiglione’s *Courtier* (1528) had met with great success and prepared the way for French dialogues in the vernacular. The commentary on Plato’s *Symposium* by Marsilio Ficino was published in French in 1545, and the French translation of Leone Ebreo’s Neoplatonic *Dialoghi d’amore* appeared in 1551, revealing a renewed interest in Platonic dialogues. Du Bellay’s exhortations in *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise* (1549) posited French as the language of choice for all genres, and Pontus de Tyard, Louis Le Caron, Estienne Pasquier, Jacques Tahureau, and others responded to the call in their creation of philosophical dialogues. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the “dialogocentrism”⁴ of humanist culture corresponded to the scholars’ desire to examine and understand subjects from all sides, *in utramque partem*.⁵

At first glance, the *Solitaire premier* conforms to the dialogic genre of its apparent model, the *Dialoghi d’amore* of Leone Ebreo (translated into French by Tyard in 1551) – both treat of the subject of Neoplatonic love and of the four furors – *poétique, mystique, prophétique* and *amoureuse*, and both dialogues feature lover-interlocutors. In what might be called “pedagogical dialogues” (as in Socratic maieutics), however, the central character or teacher tends to dominate the discourse, and Tyard’s *Solitaires* (1552 and 1555) are no exception. As Jean-Claude Carron has observed, in such dialogues “a reader is not meant to be persuaded of the exchange taking place within the written dialogue, but by the formal representation of the victorious intellectual position” (Carron, “Dialogical Argument” 21). In the case of the *Solitaires*, the instructor (the Solitaire) holds the superior intellectual position, to be sure, but the student interlocutor (Pasithée) whose favors he seeks fundamentally transforms the characters’ interaction as well as the structure of the text.

Reflecting medieval representations of the liberal arts as seen in Herrad of Landsberg’s *Hortus deliciarum*, the Solitaire, after having studied philosophy (the Queen of the liberal arts) and music (one of the disciplines of the quadrivium), now assumes the obligation to teach what he has learned.⁶ But the teaching will take place in a diegetic framework that allows for interruptions from Pasithée, who prefers exchange as a mode of learning. The Solitaire accedes to her wishes despite his propensity toward individual scholarly pursuits:

[Pasithée:] ... je vous ay ouy dire, que la vive voix a trop plus d’efficace, que la lecture, tant diligente qu’elle soit.

[The Solitaire:] C’est chose asseurée (respondy-je) que la vive voix peut beaucoup en ce que vous dites : mais celà se doit entendre, quand la personne, qui escoute, aime celle, qui parle. Et n’y a doute que le disciple, qui est affectionné à son precepteur, a la mémoire plus tenante des choses ouyes de luy, que de celles qu’il a leües en son songneux estude. (SP 86)

Learning is inevitably sparked by the affection of the pupil, the Solitaire argues, and he accuses Pasithée of not feeling *amitié* or *affection* for him. She responds: “Eh bien (dit Pasithée) voudriez-vous pour si froide excuse me faire rougir d’un refus?” (*SP* 86). Pasithée’s blushing and her frequent “souzris” raise the question of the role played by affect in general, and of *eros* in particular, in the *Solitaires*.

The *erastes* as lover, and lover of knowledge

Plato’s “erotic dialogues,” notably the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, provide a useful backdrop for examining the genealogy of the dialogical *eros* undergirding the *Solitaires*. In these Platonic dialogues, not only does *eros* figure at the center of discussions, but erotic relationships also develop among the interlocutors.

In the *Symposium*, Pausanias presents two sorts of love: the first, a base, vulgar love (limited to physical desire), and the second, a love of wisdom, which may also include physical love, but only if the motivation warrants it. He describes an implicit syllogism in which *eros* seeks beauty, wisdom is beautiful, and therefore *eros* is a lover of wisdom (*Symposium* 184c–185c). Later in the dialogue, Socrates, recounting Diotima’s speech while also adding his agreement, goes so far as to say that what men love is solely the good, and that *eros* (ὁ ἔρως) itself loves the good (206a). Although this passage mentions only *agathon* (ἀγαθόν, the good), subtending Diotima’s speech is the Platonic concept of *kalokagathia* (καλοκαγαθία), a conflation by *crasis* of “beautiful and good” (καλός καγαθός). *Eros*, by its nature, aspires toward the good and the beautiful. Both Ebreo and Tyard adhere to this concept of love in their dialogues, although Tyard deviates from the Platonic model in the exchanges between the Solitaire and Pasithée, as will be examined below.

As Luc Brisson and Olivier Renaut have asserted, the definition of Platonic *eros* oscillates between the physical and the intellectual, between sublimation and resistance to sublimation.⁷ An erotically charged relationship between Socrates and his students in Platonic dialogues often mimics the sexual models of ancient Greece with a hierarchical disposition of roles. There are no expectations that the *eromenos* (the beloved) reciprocate the desire/*eros* of the *erast* (the lover). In the traditional Greek model of sexual exchange, the younger partner expresses *philia* and serves as the object of the *erast*’s desire out of respect and admiration. In most of the dialogues, Socrates incarnates the *erastes*’s dominant position, both in knowledge and in the possibility of sexual expression.⁸

Unlike Aristotle, who views the ideal relationship in the state as achieving a kind of *philia* (*Politics* 2.1262b), Plato posits that *eros* can be the basis of a perfectly realized intellectual relationship. In the *Gorgias* (481d), Socrates states that he is enamored of two things: Alcibiades and philosophy. While the term *erastes* had traditionally been applied to the sexually active lover, Plato significantly broadens the use of it, as in the *Republic*, in which philosophers are called the *erastai* of truth (501d). In the *Timaeus*, the dialogic treatise on harmonic cosmology from which Tyard borrows significantly in the *Solitaire second*, the physicist becomes the *erastes* of thought and knowledge (46b).⁹ Socrates uses both the passive and the active forms of erotic love to describe his devotion to learning and posits himself as an *erastes* of speeches (*Phaedrus* 266b and 228c). In *Thaetetus*, Socrates confesses to a “terrible love” (ἔρως δεινός) of intellectual exercises (169c).¹⁰ As in the figure of the *epistemerastes*,¹¹ *eros* and the passion for higher knowledge are often intertwined in the Platonic imagination. In what David Halperin terms “the erotics of narrativity”

(Halperin, “Narrativity” 93) and Frisbee Sheffield describes as “a chain of reception inspired by eros” (9), Plato invites readers to engage in an inner dialogue along with the exchanges of the characters, to become *erastai* of knowledge themselves. Tyard’s *Solitaires*, through their erotically inspired pedagogical expositions, function in a similar manner.

Desire, both for knowledge and for physical pleasure, plays a crucial role in the *Solitaire premier*. The proto-erotic exchanges between the Solitaire and Pasithée begin with a linguistic ambiguity at their first meeting in the *Solitaire premier*: “Je ne sçay (me dit-elle) Solitaire, si, vous demandant quel est vostre portement, je serois indiscrete: ou incivile, vous caressant de joyeuse bien-venue” (SP 76). One meaning of *caresser* in the sixteenth century is to greet or welcome. But Cotgrave’s first definitions of the word are “to cherish, hug, make much of” – thus the polysemic nature of the word leaves room for the imagination.

In the *Solitaires*, even the most elevated discourse returns to desire and to the physical body. The Solitaire explains the soul’s desire to unite with the Sovereign One:

En fin, quand tout ce qui est en l’essence, et en la nature de l’Ame, est fait un, il faut (pour revenir à la source de son origine) que soudain elle se revoque en ce souverain UN, qui est sur toute essence, Chose, que la grande & celeste Venus accomplit par Amour, c’est à dire, par un fervent, et incomparable desir, que l’ame ainsi eslevée a de jouir de la divine et eternelle beauté. (SP 85)

Pasithée’s response, brimming over with corporeal metaphors, conflates desire for knowledge with physical desire for nourishment: “En bonne foy (dit-elle) puis que vous m’avez fait appétit de tant delicate viande, vous auriez tort de m’en donner si peu, et me laisser aussi affamée [...] Oseriez vous me refuser le fruit, duquel ceste occasion vous offre le moyen de me faire jouir ?” (SP 85–86). The verb *jouir*, which Cotgrave defines as “to enjoy, possesse, hold [...] receive the fruit, have the fruition of,” blurs the celestial and the terrestrial in both these passages: the *incomparable desir* for eternal beauty is counterbalanced by the appetite for *delicate viande* and fruit. Pasithée’s corporeally expressed desire to learn is in turn echoed by the Solitaire’s lexical field as he explains the names of the Muses and their origins: *désir, plaisir, chatouiller, délecter* (SP 107–08). Similarly, in translating the desire for learning as physical thirst, the Solitaire agrees to explain the nature of the three Graces, “pour estaindre la soif, de laquelle la studieuse et diligente curiosité vous altere” (SP 92). Intellectual and corporeal pleasures thus linguistically commingle in Tyard’s text. Beneath such corporeal language as *desir* and *plaisir* in several contexts, the *braisier* (SP 94) of the Solitaire’s affection for Pasithée continues to smolder, signaling the omnipresence of eros in the otherwise purely intellectual dialogues.

Pasithée: revisiting the passive pupil

Pasithée’s role as an intellectually capable interlocutor is adumbrated even before the dialogue begins in the *Solitaire premier*. Tyard’s introduction to the 1552 edition launches into a lengthy defense of women worthy of the *querelle des femmes*, with Thucidides’s contemporary descendants serving as the rhetorical enemy:

Mais quant à vous, mes Dames, le devoir, que j’ay à la plus precieuse Perle d’entre vous, m’incite de toucher un mot de l’honneur de vostre sexe, duquel certains Thucidides de ce

tems confinent le nom et la louenge autant loing de toutes oreilles [...]; et non contens de ce, vous imputent (pour couvrir la vile impudence de leurs cruelz outrages) la foiblesse pusillanime, l'ignorance, l'inconstance, le defect d'amitié, l'impromptitude de conseil, la lubricité, et telz vices mensongers [...]. Car quant à la foiblesse, qui la pourroit marquer pour vice et imperfection, si ceste mesme objection faite par les brutes animaux est effacée par l'humaine raison, et l'entendement, armes d'industrie invincible? (*SP* 211–12)

After citing a multitude of both fictional and historical heroic women from Camilla of the *Aeneid* to the Amazons, from Sappho and Arete (daughter of Pythagoras) to Marguerite de Navarre, Tyard states that women, “au paragon, ont egalez les hommes, et souvent les ont devancez de loing” (213). He concludes his introduction by assuring all women readers, “quelque part que soyez, savez faire luire [voz particulieres vertuz], et esclairer les tenebreux Misogynes d'assez de lumiere, pour leur faire appercevoir [...] à combien de hauteur pouvez estre eslevées,” thus proving “que à tout vertueux exercice vous estes nées” (*SP* 217). This rousing defense of women's intellect predisposes readers to imagine Pasithée in the same light.

In the second edition of the *Solitaire premier*, Tyard mounts a similar defense of learned women in his dedication to Catherine de Clermont, who, in addition to her role as patron of the arts, was a humanist figure in her own right. A poet active in the *Académie royale de poésie et de musique* during the reign of Charles IX, she is also known for her collected album of French, Latin, and Italian poetry, which serves as a literary and cultural marker of late sixteenth-century France.¹² La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier note that she deserved to be “mise au rang des plus doctes et mieux versées tant en la poésie et art oratoire qu'en philosophie, mathématiques, histoire et autres sciences” (I, 99). Tyard compares Catherine to the Muses and praises her “rars et divins accomplissemens” and her “cognoissance de toutes sortes de lettres, desquelles vous estes si richement embellie, à l'honneur de vostre sexe, que vous en merités le surnom d'admirable” (*SP* 219, 220).

Even in his earlier work, Tyard claims in “Le Traducteur à sa dame” preceding the *Dialoghi d'amore* that the addressee's intelligence will allow her to understand the Neoplatonic theories that follow, “choses qui, de beaucoup de femmes, ny, possible, de grand nombre d'hommes puissent estre au premier œil comprises, ainsi que vous n'estes (et telle je vous juge) d'autre femme en beauté, ny d'autre personne en grandeur d'esprit, passée” (A3v). Joining in the praise of women so prevalent in the *école lyonnaise*, the anonymity of the dedicatee can be seen as implicitly broadening the audience to all female readers. He goes one step further (further than the dialogues warrant, it might be said) in depicting the reciprocity between Philon and Sophie as an even exchange: “[Sophie], avec un Amoureux travail, est tant ingenieusement icy de son Amant entretenue, que pour le prys de ses amoureuses audiences elle reçoit l'instruction des plus haultes et louables disciplines.”¹³ Whatever his motivation might be, it becomes clear that in all these dedications, Tyard explicitly seeks to raise the profile of female readers.

In the *Solitaire premier*, the astute Pasithée remains wary of such flattery of women. When the *Solitaire* declares that “la femme est embellie de plus de diverses perfections, que l'homme” (*SP* 102), especially in her constancy and her virtue, Pasithée questions his motives: “Lors en souriant je vous remercie Solitaire (dit Pasithée) de l'avantage, que vous donnez à ce sexe accusé ordinairement d'inconstance & legereté. Mais je crain que ce-que vous en dites, soit plus pour me contenter (car possible soupçonnez vous que je me laisse avec plaisir chatouiller aux loüanges)

que pour resolution veritable à ma demande” (*SP* 102). Thus not only does the text repeatedly praise women, but the character Pasithée also reveals herself to be unmoved by flattery.

Pasithée further serves as a conduit between the theoretical texts and the physical world of amorous attraction, and also as a pedagogical foil, a pretext for translating rarified Neoplatonic theory into explanations for an intelligent lay audience. As Ronsard’s celebrated poem discloses, Tyard had been previously criticized for his pretentious language:

Thiard, chacun disoit à mon commencement
 Que j’estoi trop obscur au simple populaire :
 Aujourd’hui, chacun dit que je suis au contraire,
 Et que je me dements parlant trop bassement.
 Toi, qui as enduré presque’un pareil torment,
 Di moi, je te suppli, di moi que doi-je faire ?¹⁴

In addition to initiating the popularization of Neoplatonic theory in the dialogues, Pasithée, much like the character Sophie in Ebreo’s *Dialoghi d’amore*, asserts her individual agency as a resister to her interlocutor’s expressed devotion. Early in the *Dialoghi*, Sophie argues that love and desire are incompatible as she distinguishes between a lover and a pursuer: “pource que l’amant, ha ce qu’il ayme, et, celuy qui desire, n’est encore possesseur de son bien désiré” (Ebreo, trans. Tyard 3). She insists to Philon that if he truly loves her, he should not try to elicit any desire on her part: “tu dois plustot travailler à prononcer tranquillité en mon esprit, que d’inciter en moy aucun appetit” (5). Sophie frequently rejects Philon’s advances throughout the *Dialoghi d’amore*, from this opening rebuff to the end of the dialogues. She concludes, “Il ne seroit honneste à moy Philon, de confesser que je t’ayme, ny encore piteusement fait de le nier: mais croy, ce que la raison fait estre plus convenable, combien que tu ayes peur du contraire” (300). While Philon’s fate is not definitively sealed in the *Dialoghi*, Tyard instantiates a subtler dynamic between the interlocutors in the *Solitaire premier*.

The relationship between Pasithée and the Solitaire follows what Shigeru Yonezawa identifies in Plato as a “a reciprocity founded on the meeting of two unilateral desires.”¹⁵ Both the Solitaire and Pasithée benefit from their exchange, albeit in different ways. From the outset, the Solitaire establishes a parallelism of language in the description of their collective enterprise that belies the notion of a one-sided discourse: “Je seray tres aise, di-je, que le discours de chose qui vous plaise, m’apporte occasion de ne vous point ennuyer, pendant que de ma part je contenteray le desir, que j’avois de vous voir” (*SP* 79–80). Tyard highlights Pasithée’s pleasure in learning as commensurate with the Solitaire’s desire to see her and to speak of things that she wishes to learn. Moreover, because the Solitaire is smitten (*transporté*, *SP* 94) in Pasithée’s presence, his character remains deferential even as he explains the nuances of the Aeolian mode.

Although the balance of power appears to weigh heavily in favor of the Socratic Solitaire by the sheer number of words he is granted in the text, specific passages reveal that Pasithée’s voice functions decisively in the *Solitaires*. Not only does she instigate the dialogues, as we have seen, but she also controls the path of the exposé as she interrupts the Solitaire, poses questions, and brings him back to the subject at hand. At one point in the dialogue when he equivocates about his own opinion, Pasithée challenges directly: “Il semble (me repliqua-elle) que vous ayez envie

de confondre et mettre en ténèbres ce point, out que vous en vouliez dissimuler vostre advis. Je vous prie declarez-vous” (SS 118).

In response to Pasithée’s request to learn more about *divine fureur*, the Solitaire explains, “je veux vous declairer une grande partie de ce, que les fables Poëtiques ont touché des Muses, sous l’escorce de quoy le suc et la moelle se trouve de plusieurs bonnes doctrines: et vous en pourrez aisément recueillir ce, que vous demandez” (SP 90). The reception will then be in Pasithée’s hands, reminiscent of Montaigne’s famous declaration: “la parole et moitié à celuy qui parle, moitié à celuy qui escoute” (III, 13, 1088).

Another sign of the characters’ convergence can be found in music, which serves not only as the *topos* of the *Solitaire second*, but also as a reflection of the relationship between the Solitaire and Pasithée. The first dialogue begins when the Solitaire finds Pasithée “tenant un Leut en ses mains, accordant au son des cordes, que divinement elle touchoit sa voix douce et facile: avec laquelle tant gracieusement elle mesuroit une Ode Française, que desjà je me sentoisy ravy comme d’une celeste harmonie, et, sans entrer plus avant, demeuroy coy pour n’entrompre son plaisir, ny le contentement que je recevoisy à la contemplation de ses grâces.” (SP 75–76).

The Solitaire’s *ravisement* presages his subsequent explanations of the power of music, both ancient and contemporaneous: “la Musique [...] est propre à esmouvoir, comme à moderer les passions” (SS 73). Pasithée’s pleasure in music-making is echoed by the Solitaire’s contentment.

Near the end of the *Solitaire second*, lute-playing again enters into the dialogue, but this time, Pasithée notices the melancholy of the Solitaire as he plays one of his own Odes: “[...] hier-soir à ma requeste, ayant sur ce Lut sonnè sur une sienne Ode finissant par Epode remplie de quelques passions, il devient si melancholique que j’en pris pitié” (SS 193). The Solitaire’s sentiment recalls that of Tyard’s “Chant à son Luth” from the *Erreurs amoureuses*:

Chante combien celle divine grâce
Gaigne sus moy et scet vivement peindre
L’amour au cueur et le dueil en la face.
Si tu ne peux à la louenge atteindre
Que la beauté merite de ma Dame,
Vueilles au moins si doucement te plaindre
Qu’elle ait pitié (triste Luth) de ma flame.¹⁶

The lute, ubiquitous in lyric poetry of the period, was the favored instrument for transmitting amorous sentiments. Its association with lyric poetry can be glimpsed in the work of many early modern poets, perhaps in part because its anatomy subliminally suggests that of the female body.¹⁷ Tyard’s “Chant du Luth,” conflated with the Solitaire’s classically inspired ode and epode in the preceding passage, reflects the humanistic design of the *Solitaires*. The Solitaire assures Pasithée that his teachings on ancient Greek poets and the Muses will enhance her understanding of contemporary poets: “Le souvenir de telles choses vous servira de quelque lumiere à la lecture des œuvres de tant de doctes Poètes de ce tems qui decorent si richement leurs vers des ornemens de l’antiquité.” Pasithée responds with equal enthusiasm: “Je loue (dit Pasithée) et admire leur mode d’escrire, et suis aise que tels gentils esprits se delectent à rapporter les rares et précieuses

richesses, qu'ils ont acquises aux voyages faiz sus la Grecque, et sus la Latine mer, pour les semer et faire pulluler en nostre France" (*SP* 114).

The two interlocutors counterbalance one another's laudatory language concerning not only French poets, but also themselves. Both Ebreo's *Philon* and Tyard's *Solitaire* shower their pupils with praise, and both pupils resist by bringing their interlocutors back to their expository tasks. But Pasithée also praises the *Solitaire* in turn for his excellent ability to explain: "vrayement, vous m'avez en peu de paroles rendu cler et facile, ce que je jugeois tenebreux et impossible" (*SS* 135). She also tells the *Solitaire* that she sees "ce qui reluit en vous" (*SS* 157). In one instance, she embarrasses him by her compliments to such an extent that he interrupts her, countering by paying homage to her:

[Pasithée:] Quant aux graces que les hommes bien naiz ou possèdent, ou acquièrent, n'avez-vous à remercier nature, qui de sa plus large main: C'est assez (dy-je, qui pour entrerompre ce propos, lequel je voyois se continuer à quelques loüanges, que je ne desirois d'ouir) c'est assez Pasithée: il n'est besoin que sur subject de si petit merite vous fassiez preuve de vostre diserte façon de dire." (77)

In what might be called a "pedagogy of the impressed," these compliments reveal a mentor and a student who are simultaneously struck by one another's brilliance.

The final moments of the *Solitaire premier* explicitly signal another *quid pro quo*: "Alors je luy diz l'Adieu, duquel un reciproque de sa part fut la gracieuse recompense qui me tira de sa compagnie, laquelle j'abandonnay autant ennuyé comme desireux de la recouvrer le lendemain" (*SP* 123). Analogously, at the end of the *Solitaire second*, Pasithée's "rare et admirable industrie de toucher une Espinette" is met with "une humble reverence" (*SS* 245) on the part of the *Solitaire*. Reciprocity, albeit sometimes seen through the eyes of the *Solitaire*, remains a central tenet of the interaction between the interlocutors.¹⁸

One might argue that the reciprocity between the *Solitaire* and Pasithée ends with his amorous pursuit, which is not met with commensurate fervor by Pasithée. It is important to note, however, that Pasithée's objections to the *Solitaire*'s soliloquies on her virtue and her beauty, or to his swooning in her presence, do not constitute an absolute rejection. While she demonstrates several techniques for undermining the *Solitaire*'s advances, some small sign of emotion is often embedded in her speech. When the *Solitaire* becomes agitated and declares to Pasithée his "affection ardent devant votre image," she interrupts him: "Deà *Solitaire* (dit Pasithée sourougissant et interrompant mon propos, lequel, comme transporté, je voulois faire filer plus longuement), je vous prie ne vous alterez pour si peu" (*SP* 94). Her "sourougissant" and "modeste souzris" betray, at least in the *Solitaire*'s mind, Pasithée's potential interest. By her complimenting the *Solitaire*'s explanations, redirecting his melancholy, and showing muted signs of emotion toward him, she suspends judgment in the text, much like Montaigne's motto, *epecho* (I abstain or I delay). In this "dialogical dynamics of desire and deferral" (Leushuis 188), Pasithée holds the bipartite role of engaged student and potential lover.

In his pedagogical stance, the *Solitaire* first appears to be simply an early modern Socrates or a French *Philon*. Tyard employs the erotically charged discourse of Platonic and Neoplatonic dialogues, even devising a *locus amœnus* that dramatizes the amorous banter of the interlocutors.¹⁹

The *Solitaires* thus remain within the tradition of Platonic dialogues,²⁰ but with an important twist: Tyard's Solitaire is Socratic without Socrates's quasi-omniscience and without his definitive conclusions. Even when Socrates leaves acolytes in a state of *aporia*, he remains in control of the discourse. Deviating from his Platonic and Neoplatonic models, Tyard has created in the Solitaire a more modest Socratic figure, one who exhibits *curiosité* rather than complete mastery.

Tyard presents readers with an early modern pedagogue who also differs from the contemporaneous models of humanist education, quite distinct from the author of *The Education of the Christian Prince* or Rabelais's fictional Ponocrates.²¹ While the Solitaire shares these tutors' commitment to teaching and to instilling enthusiasm for learning in their charges, his own position is one of the starstruck lover who slips into distracted lyricism while also admitting his lack of definitive knowledge. Without relinquishing his status of authority on the philosophical matters at hand, the Solitaire remains nonetheless guided by *eros*. Tyard's later dialogues will assume a more traditional diegetic disposition, but in his more youthful *Solitaires*, the humanist writer creates an enthusiastic albeit naïve mentor who, combining love of wisdom with human love, shares his newly acquired knowledge of Neoplatonic and musical theories, as well as an intelligent female interlocutor who suggests a reciprocal devotion. Tyard thus succeeds in presenting complex theories in an animated and (for the most part) accessible form for Pasithée as well as readers, combining *eros* and intellect in a humanist enterprise undertaken "avec des aesles Nouvelles."²²

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Notes

¹ See Carron, “Interférences dialogiques” 219–220, 231, and “Le dialogue amoureux” 226–27; Leushuis 184–95; and Yandell in Tyard, *Solitaire second* (hereafter *SS*), 53–58.

² The name probably derives from Πασιθέα, Pasitheia, “all divine.” For an extensive list of associations and conjectures surrounding Tyard’s use of this mythological figure, see Jean-Claude Carron, *Solitaire premier* (hereafter *SP*) 129, n. 32; 152, n. 152; and 155–56, n. 170.

³ See, among other examples, the verso folio of the frontispiece in Tyard, *Discours*.

⁴ Jean-François Vallée has invented this highly descriptive term (131–44).

⁵ For useful studies of the early modern dialogue as a genre, see Eva Kushner, *Le Dialogue*; Donald Gilman; Jean-François Vallée and Dorothea B. Heitsch; and Leushuis.

⁶ In Herrade de Landsberg’s *Hortus deliciarum* of ca. 1185, Queen Philosophy reigns over the seven liberal arts. Below the allegorized women depicting the liberal arts sit Plato and Socrates, signifying that teaching is the logical and necessary next step following learning. See Engelhardt, Plate VIII, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9400936h/f12.item.r=hortus%20deliciarum>.

⁷ “*Erôs* renvoie alors à un désir dont l’interprétation n’a cessé d’osciller entre une intellectualisation du désir sexuel jusqu’au paradigme de l’amour ‘platonique’ et une résistance à cette sublimation” (Brisson and Renaud 7).

⁸ A more reciprocal model is sketched in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Symposium*, but not without complications. Alcibiades criticizes the fact that Socrates elicits in the beautiful boys a desire equal to his own and that they pursue him as if he were a boy (*Symposium* 217c, 222b). For an influential albeit controversial analysis of the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates, see Nussbaum.

⁹ Figuring in the inventory of Tyard’s library are both the complete works of Plato in Greek (with Tyard’s *ex libris*) and Proclus’s commentary on the *Timaeus*, the only commentary of any of the Platonic dialogues among the recorded works (Roudaut 408, 417). Gordon shows that although the *Timaeus* in no way treats of amorous attachments, the dialogue nonetheless sheds light on the function of eros in the Platonic corpus.

¹⁰ For further examples of the polysemic uses of *erastes*, see Halperin 70–73.

¹¹ See Casella, who coins the term to reflect the conflation of erotic love and love of knowledge in Platonic dialogues.

¹² See the first modern edition of Catherine de Retz’s *Album de poésies* in Works Cited.

¹³ “Le traducteur à sa dame,” preceding Tyard’s translation of Ebreo’s second dialogue (104). On this point see Marino (91–94), although she concludes that in his prefaces, Tyard, following Scève, presents another form of the Petrarchan idolization of women. On Tyard’s exchanges with contemporaneous women writers, see Campbell 105.

¹⁴ Ronsard, vol. 7, 115–16. See also on this poem Hudson 5.

¹⁵ See Yonezawa 125–46. On the concept of reciprocity in Plato, see Giménez.

¹⁶ Tyard, *Erreurs* 248. Tyard undoubtedly echoes Ronsard’s “A sa lyre” and “A son luth” from the *Odes* of 1550. Yet Tyard (much like the Solitaire), unlike Ronsard and his loftier approach, interjects modesty and immediacy to his ode, personifying the lute. For an analysis of Tyard’s “A son Luth” in conjunction with Ronsard’s poems to his instruments, see Kushner, “Poète lyrique” 190–92.

¹⁷ For further analysis of the lute’s gendered nature and its connection with lyric poetry, see Zecher.

¹⁸ Dorothea Heitsch notes a similar conjuring of reciprocity on the part of the poet in Sonnets XVI and XXVII of the *Erreurs amoureuses* (218).

¹⁹ For studies of the *locus amoenus* in Tyard’s dialogues, see Hudson, Kushner, “Le rôle structurel,” and Yandell.

²⁰ As Bruno Méniel has noted, in the sixteenth century, “chacun, en fonction de ses partis pris, de ses goûts poétiques, de sa stratégie d’écriture, redéfinit la forme du dialogue platonicien” (596).

²¹ While otherwise respecting the work of the eminent scholars Kathleen Hall and John McClelland, I do not concur with their opinion that Tyard lacks imagination, as illustrated in this and other examples (Hall 171 and McClelland 40).

²² Tyard first expresses this idea in the introduction to the first edition of the *Solitaire premier* in 1552 (210).