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THE LOVES OF ALCIBIADES

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The stories of Alcibiades' sexual penchants are plentiful, ranging from the tale of the incestuous *ménage à trois* with his uncle and daughter/niece, to his seduction and impregnation of the queen of Sparta. Alcibiades' notorious behavior in all spheres of his life led to many embroideries on his sexual adventures in antiquity and even today we find in Peter Green's novel, *Achilles His Armor*, Alcibiades sleeping with Aspasia, Pericles' mistress. In this paper I propose to gather the evidence concerning Alcibiades' sex life, including the vexed material on Socrates' relations with Alcibiades,[1] and to separate fact from fiction. It will become evident that while most of the details of the scandalous stories about Alcibiades are probably false, most likely his sexual appetites were as prodigious as portrayed.

There are four main groups of sources for Alcibiades' sex life; oratory, comedy, biographical anecdotes, and the Socratics. The orators attacked Alcibiades. The comedians lampooned him. Historians and biographers found him an appealing figure. Largely because of his involvement with Socrates, the works of the Socratics contained much about his private affairs.

I. ORATORY

We know of three abusive orations against Alcibiades, a pseudo-Lysias, a pseudo-Antiphon, and a pseudo-Andocides. Of these only pseudo-Andocides (Andocides 4) is extant. In general, the historical material presented in these abusive orations is not reliable, since the

[1] Although many of the incidents concerning Alcibiades' sex life have been treated individually, particularly by J. Hatzfeld, *Alcibiade* (Paris 1951), no one has gathered the stories together and viewed them as a whole.

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writers were interested in presenting a strong case and had little regard for the truth. An example of the type of distortion one can expect occurs in Lysias 14.26–27. Lysias there accuses Alcibiades, the son of Alcibiades, of betraying his father's castle to the Thracians, when he must have known that Alcibiades' son was only eleven years old at the time.

The surviving fragments from pseudo-Antiphon's speech against Alcibiades are preserved in Plutarch *Alcibiades* 3 and Athenaeus 12.525B. In one incident in *Alcibiades* 3 Alcibiades ran away from home to the house of Democrates, one of his lovers. Plutarch refutes this and another anecdote from Antiphon with the observation that one who confessed that he abused Alcibiades through hatred should not be trusted. Although the story of Alcibiades' flight can probably be rejected, there is no external reason to believe or disbelieve that he had a lover called Democrates.

Athenaeus (12.525B = Blass F C 1) cites an abusive oration by Antiphon against Alcibiades, in which Alcibiades is accused of sailing to Abydus as soon as he had been presented to his deme by his guardians, not to collect a debt or to gain the *proxenia*, but to learn from the women of Abydus ways corresponding to his licentiousness, in order to use them in his future life. A slight chronological difficulty is presented by his alleged trip. Isocrates 16.29 implies that Alcibiades fought at Potideia shortly after he was presented to his deme. However, a trip to Abydus is not impossible at this time. Since this and pseudo-Antiphon's other λοιδορίαι in *Alcibiades* 3 deal with Alcibiades' early life, possibly they belong to the period of the ostracism of Hyperbolus and were part of an attack on Alcibiades. Hatzfeld[2] suggests these λοιδορίαι are out of character with Antiphon and were probably written by some anti-Alcibiades pamphleteer and later connected with Antiphon, much in the same way Andocides 4 attached itself to the Andocidean corpus. Athenaeus' reference to Antiphon's account comes in a section where he is commenting on the licentiousness of Abydus. He also quotes a passage from Aristophanes' *Triphales*, which mentions Abydus as a place to sell young boys. Since the *Triphales* was apparently aimed at Alcibiades, this suggests that Alcibiades and Abydus were connected in the comedy.

[2] Hatzfeld (see above, note 1) 59–60.

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The remaining fragments of pseudo-Lysias' speech against Alcibiades deal with his sex life at Abydus. Again Athenaeus (534F–535A and 574E = Thalheim Lysias 246) preserves the story: according to Lysias in his speech against Alcibiades, Alcibiades became enamoured of Medontis of Abydus on the mere report of her, and sailed to the Hellespont with Axiochus, who was a lover of Alcibiades' beauty, and shared her with him (574E). In 534F–535A Athenaeus records more of the incident: a daughter was born to them and Medontis could not tell whose child the girl was. When the child was marriageable, Alcibiades and Axiochus each slept with her. When Alcibiades had her, he claimed she was the daughter of Axiochus; when Axiochus did, he said she was Alcibiades' daughter.

Axiochus was Alcibiades' uncle, though probably not much older than he.[3] He was implicated with Alcibiades in the profaning of the mysteries.[4] This may have led comedians and pamphleteers to associate them in debauchery. Besides the suspect nature of the source, another problem presents itself in accepting the validity of this story. If the account were true, Alcibiades and Axiochus would have to have been at Abydus at about a fourteen year interval, if the girl was just marriageable as Lysias implies. Alcibiades was operating in the Hellespont during the years 411–404 B.C. Assuming the second visit took place at this time, this would necessitate that both Alcibiades and Axiochus be at Abydus the first time from the mid 420's onward. From what we know of Alcibiades' career and activity in Athens, it would be very difficult to assign him a visit to Abydus between 424 and 416 B.C. Given the chronological difficulty and the nature of the source for this story, viz., abusive oratory perhaps originating in comedy, the tale is probably false.

The only surviving anti-Alcibiades oration is Andocides 4. It is not considered to be by Andocides, but to belong to the fourth century.[5] In the speech there are two incidents which deal with Alcibiades' sexual behavior, the affair of the Melian woman, and his near divorce from

[3] Hatzfeld (see above, note 1) 29.

[4] Andocides, *De Myst.* 16.

[5] See A. E. Raubitschek, "The Case Against Alcibiades (Andocides IV)," *TAPA* 79 (1948) 191–210, who puts the speech in the fifth century; F. Blass, *Die attische Beredsamkeit* (Leipzig 1887) 1.332–39; A. R. Burn, "A Biographical Source on Phaiax and Alkibiades?" *CQ* n.s. 4 (1954) 138–42.

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Hipparete. Both these stories also occur in Plutarch's *Alcibiades*.[6] In pseudo-Andocides (22–23) the speaker makes the accusation that after recommending that the Melians be sold into slavery, Alcibiades purchased a Melian woman by whom he later had a child. Plutarch's account (*Alcibiades* 16.5–6) is shorter and less abusive. The orator's interpretation of this event is distorted and some of his facts are wrong, i.e., he labels Alcibiades as the chief instigator of the executions when Thucydides' silence on the matter suggests this is not so. However, the core of the story, Alcibiades' purchase of a Melian slave by whom he had a child, does not seem inherently improbable. Since it was not unusual for a master to sleep with an attractive female slave, the incident is not scandalous enough on its own to be invented for the sake of discrediting Alcibiades, but rather a scandalous interpretation seems to have been put on what is probably a true story.

Pseudo-Andocides (14–15) and Plutarch (*Alcibiades* 8) both relate the story of Hipparete's attempted divorce from Alcibiades. As in the case of the Melian woman, the fact that Hipparete should want a divorce is not improbable. However, Hipparete's motivation is suspect. In Plutarch (*Alcibiades* 8.4) she is driven to seek a divorce because of Alcibiades' consorting with hetairae, and in pseudo-Andocides 14 because Alcibiades is bringing them into the house. Whatever reason Hipparete had for divorce, her husband's notorious behavior with courtesans is the sort of motive the orators would assign to her, whether true or not. In any event, Alcibiades brought Hipparete home by force and we have no record of any further discord between them. According to Plutarch she died shortly after this.

II. COMEDY

Comedy is another source for reports of Alcibiades' amatory adventures. Aristophanes wrote his play *Triphales* or triple-phallus, apparently with Alcibiades as the subject.[7] The play probably was full of jokes about

[6] Although some incidents in Andocides 4 and Plutarch's *Alcibiades* are very similar, there are too many differences for Plutarch to have used Andocides 4 directly. Either they have a common source, as Burn suggests, or there has been some intermediary between Andocides 4 and Plutarch.

[7] See Kock, 1.528–33.

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Alcibiades' sexual adventures. According to Hesychius, in talking about this play s.v. *Ἐπὶ Φαληνίου*, Aristophanes says Alcibiades was born in that year, playing on *φάλης*, the penis.

Athenaeus 535A–B says that Eupolis (Kock 1.300) in the *Flatterers* ridicules Alcibiades as a profligate in his relations with women with the following:

> *Ἀλκιβιάδης ἐκ τῶν γυναικῶν ἐξίτω.* ALK. *τί λῃρεῖς;*
> *οὐκ οἴκαδ' ἐλθὼν τὴν σεαυτοῦ γυμνάσεις δάμαρτα;*

There are two possible interpretations of this passage. First, Alcibiades is told to leave the women alone. He responds to the speaker that he is talking nonsense and he should go home to his own wife. This is apparently how Athenaeus took the passage. The second, which I prefer in the context of Pherecrates (Kock 1.194), is that Alcibiades is speaking with his male lover, who says Alcibiades should cease to take the woman's role, at which Alcibiades asks him why does he not return to his own wife.

Pherecrates (Kock 1.194) has the lines

> *οὐκ ὢν ἀνὴρ γὰρ Ἀλκιβιάδης, ὡς δοκεῖ,*
> *ἀνὴρ ἁπασῶν τῶν γυναικῶν ἐστι νῦν.*

"For Alcibiades is not a man (i.e., a homosexual) as it seems, he is now the man (i.e., lover) of all women." Diogenes Laertius 4.49, quoting Bion, who probably was influenced by this passage, says Bion accused Alcibiades in his boyhood of drawing husbands away from their wives, and as a young man wives from their husbands.[8]

According to an anonymous comic poet (Kock 3.398 = Athenaeus 574D) all Lacedaemon wishes to capture Alcibiades as an adulterer. More comic material is contained in Athenaeus 12.534E. Athenaeus says Alcibiades had a shield, made from gold and ivory on which was a shield device of Eros, holding a thunderbolt.[9] This picture of Alcibiades, strutting with a shield device of Eros, is one typical of comedy. Also, the meter suggests a comic source. The comic origin of this passage and the fact that this shield is mentioned nowhere else, despite

[8] Cf. Suetonius, *Julius Caesar* 52; "*Curio pater quadam eum (Caesarem) oratione omnium mulierum virum et omnium virorum mulierem appellat.*" Cicero, *Verr.* 2.78; "*magis vir inter mulieres, impura inter viros muliercula.*"

[9] This also appears in a slightly different form in Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 16.1.

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its uniqueness, suggest that the existence of the shield is comic invention.[10] Further evidence of Alcibiades' reputation in comedy is presented by the scholiast V to Aristophanes *Acharnians* 716. He says *Ἀλκιβιάδην τὸν Κλεινίου ὡς καταπύγονα κωμῳδοῦσιν.*

Comedy of the fifth century reflected contemporary events and individuals. References to a man's sexual behavior would not be funny if they did not reflect his character. In a few cases an incident totally out of character might produce humor, for instance if a notorious thief were portrayed as very honest. Alcibiades had a reputation in comedy for adultery and great sexual activity. Because of the nature of comedy it was irrelevant both to the poet and the audience if the remarks were strictly true. However, while the specific details presented in comedy are not to be trusted, Alcibiades' reputation in comedy for licentious behavior indicates that he also had a general reputation for such actions.

III. BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES

Late authors such as Plutarch and Athenaeus preserve several stories about Alcibiades' sexual adventures which may or may not go back to the fifth and fourth centuries. In *Alcibiades* 4.4–5 (also in *Moralia* 762C) Plutarch gives an account of Alcibiades' arrogant treatment of one of his lovers, Anytus. Athenaeus 12.534E–F, quoting Satyrus, records essentially the same incident. As the prosecutor of Socrates, Antyus was the possible subject of much vilification. Although in the *Meno* Plato portrays him as a sober character, it is very possible that some Socratic source or some writer made him the fawning lover of Alcibiades. No other source suggests any close relationship between the two men.

In *Alcibiades* 5 Plutarch gives a further incident of Alcibiades' obsequious lovers. A certain metic who was his lover sold everything he had in order to give it to Alcibiades. In gratitude Alcibiades helped him

[10] D. A. Russell, "Plutarch, 'Alcibiades' 1–16," *Greece and Rome* 13 (1966) 45, makes this point. P. H. von Blanckenhagen, "The Shield of Alcibiades," in *Essays in Memory of Karl Lehman*, ed. L. F. Sandler (New York 1964) 38–42, misses the comic origin of this account and assumes that Athenaeus and Plutarch refer to a real shield. He examines the representations of Eros in art and then posits that Alcibiades' shield is meant to serve as an homage to Socrates.

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beguile the tax farmers out of a talent. There is no reason to disbelieve the incident involving the tax farmers. Andocides (*De Myst.* 134 ff.) used the same ruse against the tax farmers. The metic might have been meant to be Poulytion, who was implicated with Alcibiades in the parodying of the mysteries.

According to Athenaeus (13.574E and also 535C) Alcibiades usually traveled with two courtesans, Damasandra and Theodote. The latter buried him in Melissa when he died as a victim of a plot by Pharnabazus. Damasandra is another name for Timandra. It probably originated as a play on her name, "man-tamer" for "man-honorer." Plutarch (*Alcibiades* 39) records several accounts of Alcibiades' death, all of which place Timandra, the mother of Lais, with him, except one. In that version a girl whom Alcibiades had seduced was his companion, and her irate family killed him.[11] The accounts of Alcibiades' death were late, probably written in the fourth century and probably fictitious.[12] It would be natural to connect famous courtesans to Alcibiades since he had a reputation for licentious living. Because these stories appear to belong to the fourth century and were probably invented, I would choose to reject them. I do not deny the possibility, however, that Alcibiades traveled in he company of unnamed courtesans, nor the possibility, even probability, that he slept with Theodote. She lived in Athens at the same time as Alcibiades and according to Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 3.11.1) she would sleep with anyone. Athenaeus (574D) accuses Alcibiades of leaving the married women of Sparta and Attica to break in at the doors of prostitutes.

One of the most scandalous charges leveled against Alcibiades, and the one which has been most widely accepted, is that he seduced and impregnated Timaea, the queen of Sparta. Drawing on Xenophon (whose account does not name the adulterer) and Duris of Samos, Plutarch preserves the account. I have treated this incident at length elsewhere.[13] There I concluded that Leotychidas, the alleged child of Alcibiades and Timaea, was probably born in 425 B.C., which would make it impossible for Alcibiades to be the father, although he still could have been Timaea's lover. Leotychidas lost the throne on the

[11] For other versions see Nepos, *Alcibiades* 10.2–6; Diodorus 14.11; Justin. 5.8.13 ff.
[12] See B. Perrin, "The Death of Alcibiades," *TAPA* 37 (1906) 25–37.
[13] "A New Date for Leotychidas," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 269–77.

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charge of bastardy. Alcibiades had a reputation for adultery in Sparta. Later accounts, perhaps oratory, not realizing the chronological difficulty, made Alcibiades the adulterer and father of Leotychidas.

IV. SOCRATIC SOURCES

The fourth major group of sources for Alcibiades' sexual misadventures is the Socratics, particularly Antisthenes and Plato. In his *Cyrus* Antisthenes (quoted in Athenaeus 5.220c) accused Alcibiades of perversions with women and of incest with his mother, daughter, and sister, in the manner of the Persians. This charge is highly suspect. There is no evidence for the existence of a sister of Alcibiades. He apparently had a daughter who married a Hipponicus. Lysias (14.28) accused Alcibiades' son of incest with this sister. The charge of incest was often leveled at major figures, especially by the orators. For example, Lysias (14.41) talks of men (including Alcibiades), some of whom have slept with their sisters and others of whom have had children by their daughters. Cimon had also been charged with incest with his sister, Elpinice. Alcibiades was reputed to have adopted Persian ways.[14] Thus Antisthenes seems to be assigning Persian incest customs to Alcibiades.[15] Given the lack of evidence for the existence of a sister and the frequency with which incest charges were bandied about, especially in association with the Persians, Alcibiades is found not guilty of this excess.

According to Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 1.2.24) Alcibiades was pursued by many great ladies because of his beauty. In his *Axiochus* (quoted in Athenaeus 5.220c) Aeschines, the Socratic, calls Alcibiades a drunkard and a chaser of other men's wives.

[14] Cf. Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 23, and perhaps Aristophanes, *Triphales* frg. 546.

[15] Antisthenes is referring to the Persian custom of *xvaētvadatha*, next-of-kin marriages, usually between parents and children, and brothers and sisters. This custom is not fully understood. The modern Parsis maintain that this was only marriage between first cousins (which is the case today). However, the Greek and Latin writers (cf. Quintus Curtius 8.2.19, who records the marriage of the Bactrian satrap Susimithres to his mother. Also see Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 23, 26; Ctesias, *Pers.* 54; Agathias 2.23) and most modern scholars of Parsis prefer the interpretation of parent-child incest. For a full account of this custom see J. Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York 1916) 8.456–59.

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ALCIBIADES AND SOCRATES

The problem of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades is an extremely vexed one, largely because the main sources are Socratic literature, particularly Plato.[16] Because these sources are concerned with philosophic ideas, their use for historical material presents difficulties, especially in regard to Socrates.[17] The matter is complicated by the philosophic importance of Eros in Plato and by the ambiguous way in which Plato treats the sexual side of Socrates' character. Consistent in the dialogues is the theme that spiritual love is better than the physical. Nowhere is it explicitly stated that Socrates indulged in the physical. However, throughout the Platonic dialogues he is presented as an ἐρωτικὸς ἀνήρ.[18] In *Phaedrus* 257A Socrates refers to his ἐρωτικὴ τέχνη. Alcibiades (*Symposium* 213C) accuses Socrates of sitting next to the prettiest man who was there. Socrates speaks of the time when he became enamoured of Alcibiades. Alcibiades (*Symposium* 215A) compares his physical appearance to Silenus. In the *Charmides* 155D Socrates recounts his reaction when the beautiful boy Charmides sat next to him: "Then I saw inside his garment and I was aflame." In his speech in *Symposium* 177D Socrates asserts that he is ignorant of all things save the nature of love. In these passages and many others there is the consistent play on Socrates' erotic nature, and yet these are always turned into love of the spirit.[19] In our analysis of Alcibiades' and Socrates' relations as presented in Plato, we must allow for Plato's general treatment of both Socrates and Eros.

Socrates' and Alcibiades' relationship is very much connected to the role of pederasty in education in classical Greece.[20] Usually the

[16] For a general treatment of their relationship see Hatzfeld (see note 1 above) 32–58.

[17] See J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy* (London 1914); A. E. Taylor, *Socrates* (Edinburgh 1932); O. Gigon, *Sokrates* (Bern 1947); A. H. Chroust, *Socrates, Man and Myth. The Two Socratic Apologies of Xenophon* (London 1957).

[18] As Proclus, *Opera* ed. Cousin, col. 369, calls him. In Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, 2.6.28) Socrates describes himself as ἐρωτικός when he tells Critobulus that he (Socrates) can help him win friends διὰ τὸ ἐρωτικὸς εἶναι.

[19] For the concept of Eros in Plato see P. Friedländer, *Plato*, trans. H. Meyerhoff (New York 1964) 32–58; T. F. Gould, *Platonic Love* (New York 1963).

[20] For pederasty in education see H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb (New York 1964) 50–62; G. Devereux, "Greek pseudo-homosexuality and the Greek miracle," *SO* 42 (1967) 69–92.

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relationship was a sexual one between an older and younger man, with the younger to be taught by the older through daily association, example, sharing of common life, and the introduction of the younger into social activities. The circle around Socrates advocated this type of homosexuality. In the *Symposium* (181A ff.) Pausanias praises pederasty as superior to love of women. Plato's theory of Eros in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* is based on homosexual rather than heterosexual love. In the *Phaedrus* (256B ff.) it is assumed that the mere sight of a handsome boy will produce erotic desire.[21] Most of the circle indulged in it, for example Critias, Euthydemus, Phaedrus, Agathon, Callicles, Alcibiades and Plato.[22]

Given the acceptability and wide practice of pederasty in Socrates' circle, and Socrates' erotic nature, it would be most unusual if he did not engage in it himself. Plato's ambiguity and the abhorrence of Judeo-Christian thought to homosexuality until recently has led modern scholars vehemently to deny that Socrates had homosexual relations. Typical is A. E. Taylor's remark in respect to Alcibiades' and Socrates' relationship: "This testimony, coming from Plato, is enough to dispose once and for all of the late gossip of Aristoxenus and the Alexandrians who collected such garbage."[23] Marrou, however, gives Socrates as an example of a philosopher who was a pederast.[24] If we re-examine the evidence in the Platonic dialogues, taking into account the above factors, it will become evident that there is a reasonable possibility that Alcibiades had "un-Platonic" relations with Socrates.

There are a few bits of information from Socratics other than Plato. In a fragment of Aeschines (frg. 11c) Socrates says that because of his love for Alcibiades, he (Socrates) has become like an inspired bacchant; as they draw milk and honey from dried wells, so through his love for Alcibiades he hopes to make him better. The tone of this passage seems to suggest more than spiritual love, but it is ambiguous. Without the rest of the dialogue, it is impossible to reach a definite conclusion.[25]

[21] On homosexuality, especially in Plato, see K. J. Dover, "Eros and Nomos (Plato, *Symposium* 182A–185C)," *BICS* (1964) 31–42.

[22] For the evidence see L. R. De Pogey-Castries, *Histoire de l'Amour grec dans l'Antiquité par M. H. E. Meier, augmentée d'un choix de documents originaux et de plusiers dissertations complementaires* (Paris 1930) 84–140.

[23] *Plato, the Man and his Work* (New York 1929) 233.

[24] Marrou (see above, note 20) 55.

[25] Hatzfeld (see above, note 1) 54, suggests Aeschines is deliberately ambiguous.

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Herodicus,[26] the pupil of Crates, quotes verses ascribed to Aspasia which purport to be a conversation between Socrates and Aspasia, in which she gives him advice on how to seduce Alcibiades.[27]

Plato presents information on the relations of the two men in the *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Alcibiades*,[28] and *Symposium*. In the *Gorgias* 481D Socrates says to Callicles that the two of them are enamoured each of two things, himself of Alcibiades, son of Cleinias, and philosophy, and Callicles of the Athenian Demos and the son of Pyrilampses.[29]

In the beginning of the *Protagoras* 309A–B a friend of Socrates observes that Socrates has just been in pursuit of Alcibiades and his youthful beauty. Then, twitting Socrates, he remarks that Alcibiades is becoming a man and his beard is already appearing. Socrates responds with reference to Homer, that youth has the highest grace in him whose beard is appearing, as now in the case of Alcibiades. The friend then asks how matters stand between them and how he is being treated by Alcibiades.

In *Alcibiades* 1 Alcibiades is about eighteen and his physical charms are waning. His other lovers have left him and now Socrates, who has not had contact with him for years, renews their relationship. The dialogue begins (103A) with Socrates' remark that he, the first of all his lovers (*πρῶτος ἐραστής σου γενόμενος*) is the only one who has not deserted him. Those who love only his body quit him when his youth has passed (131C–D). The only true lover is the lover of his soul. Since Socrates loves his soul, he is Alcibiades' only true lover.

[26] In Athenaeus 5.219C.

[27] Cf. *P.L.G.*[4] 2.288, where these verses are ascribed to Socrates.

[28] There is some question about the authenticity of *Alcibiades I*. It was accepted as genuine in antiquity and was not questioned as such until the nineteenth century. The arguments against its genuineness are at best inconclusive. I believe that it is authentic, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to re-argue the question. Whether or not it is by Plato, it still stands as evidence for Socrates' and Alcibiades' relationship and does not substantially affect my arguments on Plato's treatment of the relationship of the two men. For its authenticity: P. Friedländer, *Der grosse Alkibiades* (Bonn 1921 and 1923); C. Vink, *Platos eerste Alcibiades. Een onderzoek naar zijn authenticiteit* (Amsterdam 1939) (see his Chapter 1 for a summary of views since antiquity); A. J. Festugière, *Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon* (Paris 1950). Against its authenticity: É. de Strycker, "Platonica I: L'authenticité du *Premier Alcibiade*," *Études Classiques* 11 (1942) 135–51; J. Kerschensteiner, *Platon und der Orient* (Stuttgart 1945) 202 ff.; J. Bidez, *Eos, ou Platon et l'Orient* (Brussels 1945); R. S. Bluck, "The Origin of the *Greater Alcibiades*," *CQ* n.s 3 (1953) 46–52; P. M. Clark, "The Greater Alcibiades," *CQ* n.s. 5 (1955) 231–40.

[29] E. R. Dodds, *Plato Gorgias* (Oxford 1959) 261, interprets this and the remarks in *Protagoras* 309A–B as a current joke against Socrates.

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Although this passage makes it clear that the lovers of Alcibiades' body were not lovers of his soul, there is no implication that Socrates loved only Alcibiades' soul. Rather the implication is the opposite.

These passages in the *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, and *Alcibiades* I strongly suggest that Alcibiades and Socrates were more than spiritual lovers. In the *Symposium* Plato further explores the question of physical love versus the love of the soul between the two men. However, in the *Symposium*, their love is only spiritual. Plato presents the delightful account of Alcibiades' attempted seduction of Socrates when he first became involved with him. At the end of his story of the seduction (219C–D) Alcibiades complains that he rose in the morning, no more having slept a night with Socrates than if it had been with a father or an older brother. Alcibiades says (219E) after this he wandered round, enslaved by this man.[30] Then he passes on to the account of Socrates' actions at Potideia.

In his speech in the *Symposium* Socrates expounds his view on love. Eros is the striving after the lasting possession of the Good and thereby after immortality. Immortality can be secured only through procreation, which act requires the presence of Beauty. There are many forms of beauty, physical, moral and mental, culminating in the Idea of absolute Beauty. Thus the *erastes* has to proceed from level to level of these forms of beauty, until he reaches the Idea. At each level he is moved not only to understand and appreciate beauty, but to reproduce it. According to the dialogue when Socrates first encounters Alcibiades he is past the initial stage of carnal love, and has moved on to the love of the soul and the desire to reproduce Beauty in the soul of Alcibiades. Alcibiades' speech is an attempt to show Socrates as the exemplar of one who has reached the highest level. To do this Socrates must be shown to have climbed beyond the first stage of carnal love. However, the relationship between the two men was well known, and thus it would be impossible for Plato to present such a speech without allusion to it. Therefore, he has Alcibiades give an account of his failure to seduce Socrates when first becoming involved. This incident fits both the playful, but serious tone of the

[30] Ordinarily the older man, the lover (*erastes*), pursues the younger, the beloved (*erômenos*), and tries to seduce him. Here in a reversal of the usual roles Alcibiades becomes the *erastes* and Socrates the *erômenos*.

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rest of the dialogue, and also shows that Socrates embodies his own principles.

Nothing leads us to disbelieve the account of the attempted seduction of Socrates. However, in passing from their first encounter on to Potideia, Alcibiades omits the events of a number of years. In *Alcibiades* 1 Socrates and Alcibiades had a long-standing relationship, and then Socrates ignored Alcibiades for some time, resuming contact when Alcibiades was coming to manhood, just before Potideia. Plato denies that Alcibiades had carnal relations with Socrates at this early encounter, but he may be suppressing information on whether Alcibiades subsequently managed to seduce him, or vice versa.

Plato's incidental remarks in the *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, and *Alcibiades* 1 suggest a physical relationship. In the *Symposium* Plato's philosophic purpose leads him to assert that Socrates' and Alcibiades' relations were not carnal. Socrates had a "sexual" nature. Alcibiades had many homosexual experiences. There was general approval and practice of pederasty in the Socratic circle. All this leads us to the conclusion that it would not be surprising if Socrates and Alcibiades were physical as well as spiritual lovers, though lack of evidence makes it impossible conclusively to determine their exact relationship. Bion (quoted in Diogenes Laertius 4.49) best summed up the matter when he remarked that if Socrates felt desire for Alcibiades and abstained, he was a fool; if he did not, his conduct was in no way remarkable.[31]

CONCLUSIONS

Alcibiades' notorious behavior in all spheres of his life made him a natural target for the comedians and orators who painted him as promiscuous with both men and women. As a result there was much contemporary and later even more distortion, particularly about his prodigious sex life. Very few of the tales which survive are trustworthy.

We can be fairly certain about the following. Alcibiades took a Melian girl as a concubine and had a child by her. His wife Hipparete

[31] Antiquity, outside the Socratics, was divided on their relationship. For example Athenaeus 5.219B–220A thought that Socrates' and Alcibiades' relations were carnal. Maximus of Tyre, *Philos.* 18.6., believed the opposite.

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unsuccessfully tried to divorce him. He had many male lovers (among these probably Socrates, possibly Democrates, and questionably Anytus and Poulytion). He was also involved with many women, perhaps even with Timaea, the queen of Sparta. While the specifics of most of Alcibiades' alleged incests, adulteries, and promiscuities should probably be rejected, comedy's and oratory's portrait of him seems to be an accurate reflection of the man.

The most famous of Alcibiades' lovers and the one with whom he was said to be most involved was Socrates. The extent of their physical relations is unclear. However, many of the Socratics felt that Socrates' association with Alcibiades had contributed to his conviction and execution. Consequently, these sources tried to defend Socrates' involvement with Alcibiades. For example, Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 1.2.12–47) says Alcibiades was good as long as he was with Socrates. For this and for philosophic motives, like Plato they would naturally want to de-emphasize any sexual connection between the two men. For this reason Alcibiades' reputation for general promiscuity survives and his reputation for sexual relations with Socrates has been muted.[32]

[32] A version of this paper was presented at the meeting of the American Philological Association in New York in December 1970.

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