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Plato's Symposium and Plutarch's Alcibiades

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Plato's *Symposium* and Plutarch's *Alcibiades*

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Abstract

This paper examines Plutarch's exploitation of Plato's *Symposium* in chs. 4-7 of the *Life of Alcibiades*. It aims to demonstrate that the *Symposium* is much more than a "source" for the *Alcibiades*. Rather the *Alcibiades* invites an intertextual reading with the *Symposium*, and becomes more meaningful when read with the *Symposium* in mind. In particular, knowledge of the *Symposium* reveals how Plutarch has constructed Socrates' attitude to and relationship with Alcibiades as that of the ideal lover with his beloved.

Plato's *Symposium* offers perhaps the most vivid, and certainly the most influential, picture of Alcibiades to survive from classical antiquity. It is no surprise, then, that Plutarch should in his *Life of Alcibiades* draw heavily on it, as well as on other Platonic texts such as the *First Alcibiades* and *Republic* Book 6[1]. A full analysis would attempt to trace Plutarch's use in this Life of all the Platonic texts; indeed it is the way the *Alcibiades* uses allusions to multiple Platonic texts, together with material drawn from non-Platonic sources, especially Thucydides and the rhetorical tradition, that makes it so rewarding and so complex. But the aims of this paper are more limited. I shall focus solely on the *Symposium* and shall attempt to show not only the depth of Plutarch's engagement with that text, especially in chs. 4-7, but also how the *Alcibiades* becomes richer and more meaningful if it is read with the *Symposium* in mind[2].

The importance of Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates and of the Platonic texts is made clear right at the start of the Life, where, after dealing briefly with Alcibiades' family, Plutarch makes the surprising claim that Alcibiades' fame was owed "in no small part" to Socrates' kindness to him; a little later he cites Plato as a source for the name of Alcibiades' tutor (1.3)[3]. In ch. 3 Plutarch mentions a scandalous story of Alcibiades' running away from Pericles' house to one of his lovers (3.1); the kind of precocious sexual behaviour exhibited there might suggest to readers the story of Alcibiades' failed seduction of Socrates in *Smp.* 218b-219d[4]. At any rate it provides a nice

[1] There are allusions to numerous other Platonic texts in the *Alcibiades*, including the *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, and *Apology*. Important discussions are in D. A. Russell, 1966, pp. 39-41 (= repr. 1995, pp. 195-8); C. B. R. Pelling, 1996, pp. xlvii-xlix; 2005, pp. 116-25; D. Gribble, 1999, pp. 270-6; T. E. Duff, 1999, pp. 224-7; and, on the use made of both Plato and other Socratic writers, F. Alesse, 2005.

[2] Cf. C. B. R. Pelling, 2005, p. 125: "In *Alcibiades*, then, pervasive intertextuality with Plato lends depth and resonance to the sort of associations which we saw in Plutarch's other works, and draws the reader into tracing how rich is the possibility of learning from Socrates' example – and also how difficult it can be". Cf. also C. B. R. Pelling, 2008, p. 548.

[3] The reference is to *Alc.* 1, 122b.

[4] Alcibiades' reference to Marsyas, the inventor of the flute, in 2.6 may recall his comparison

link to the theme of the rivalry between Socrates and Alcibiades' other lovers, who compete for influence over him, which fills chs. 4-7 of the Life.

Plutarch begins by noting the strong contrast between the motivations of the two groups: they are "awestruck" (ἐκπεπληγμένοι) at his beauty[5], whereas Socrates does not stop merely at such external attributes; indeed Socrates' love is evidence of Alcibiades' "potential for virtue" (τῆς πρὸς ἀρετὴν εὐφυΐας), which he could see "hinted at in his appearance and shining through". This contrast, between those interested in a beautiful boy for his looks alone and those interested in fostering his moral development, is central in Platonic and post-Platonic discussions of love, and exemplified in Socrates' behaviour to Alcibiades in the *First Alcibiades*, which is clearly in mind here[6].

Plutarch now describes, in a passage heavily influenced by *Republic* 6, how Socrates tried to protect Alcibiades from the corrupting flatteries of his other lovers (4.1)[7]. Plutarch continues, giving Socrates motivation: "For" [sc. Socrates thought] fortune never so surrounded or fenced anyone off with so-called good things[8] that he becomes invulnerable to philosophy and unreachable by words which have boldness and bite" (ὥστ' ἄτρωτον ὑπὸ φιλοσοφίας γενέσθαι καὶ λόγοις ἀπρόσιτον παρρησίαν καὶ δηγμὸν ἔχουσιν)[9]. The metaphor of biting to describe the effect of outspoken criticism, is known from elsewhere in Plutarch[10]. Its use here might make one think of the story of Alcibiades' literal biting of his opponent in a wrestling match in 2.2-3; this time it is he that is bitten, by philosophy. But it also draws on Alcibiades' claim in *Smp.* 217e-218a,

of Socrates to Marsyas in *Smp*. 215a-216c. The story of Alcibiades' killing one of his attendants (ἀκολουθούντων mss) or servants (ἀκολούθων Cobet) at a wrestling ground (3.1) might also bring to mind Alcibiades' wrestling with Socrates before his attempted seduction, as well as the attendant who used to accompany him on his meetings with Socrates (217a) and the ἀκόλουθοι mentioned at his entrance to the party (212c-d); cf. also the ἀκόλουθοι in Th. 6.28 who inform on Alcibiades' profanation of the Mysteries.

[5] This recalls Alcibiades' words in *Smp.* 215d, where he declares that he and everyone else are awestruck (ἐκπεπληγμένοι) by Socrates' words; the interests of Alcibiades' lovers are in a less high-minded direction. There may also here be an allusion to the reaction of Charmides' admirers to his physical beauty (*Charm.* 154c), suggesting a parallel between Alcibiades and Charmides.

[6] For Socrates as interested in improving Alcibiades' soul rather than merely possessing his body, see e.g. *Alc.* 1 131e; Aeschines, *Alc.* fr. VI A 53.26-27 Giannantoni = 11 Ditmar; cf. Plato, *Prt*. 309c. Xenophon states this as a general principle of Socrates in Xen., *Mem*. 4.1.2 and has Socrates himself argue that love of the soul is more noble than love of the body in Xen., *Smp*. 8.1-41.

[7] See *Rep*. 491d-492a and 493e-5b: see below, nn. 9, 30, 35, 44, and C. B. R. Pelling, 1996, p. xlviii; 2005, pp. 120-1; T. E. Duff, 1999, pp. 224-7; D. Gribble, 1999, pp. 219-20, 272-3.

[8] Τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀγαθοῖς: an allusion to *Rep*. 6: the philosophical nature is corrupted and diverted from philosophy by τὰ λεγόμεθα ἀγαθά, defined first as "beauty, wealth, strength of body, influential family connections in the city and all such things" (491c) and later as "wealth and all such paraphernalia" (495a).

[9] Possibly also an allusion to *Smp.* 219e, where Alcibiades notes that Socrates was invulnerable (ἄτρωτος) to money; Socrates knows that *no-one* is invulnerable to the superior power of philosophy.

[10] "Biting" παρρησία: *De aud*. 47a; *De adul.* 55c-d; 59d; 68f-69a; *Phoc*. 2.3; *Per*. 15.1 (with P. A. Stadter, 1989, ad loc.); *Praec. ger*. 810c; fr. 203 Sandbach.

that the effect of Socrates' words on him was worse than a snake-bite: only one who has been bitten by a snake can imagine the pain. "I have been bitten by a more painful creature and in the most painful way one could be bitten - in my heart or soul or whatever one should call it, wounded and bitten by the words of philosophy" (πληγείς τε καὶ δηχθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγων). Such words, he declares, "adhere more fiercely than a viper, whenever they grip the soul of a young and not untalented (μὴ ἀφυοῦς) man". Plato's Alcibiades goes on to appeal to his fellow-symposiasts, naming six of them, who had all experienced what he calls "philosophic madness and frenzy". Memory of that passage underlines how painful Alcibiades' experience of being exposed to Socrates' philosophic probing was. It also explains and lends more force to Plutarch's Socrates' belief that *no-one* is invulnerable to philosophy.

Plutarch now talks, in a passage enriched by further allusions to the *Republic*, of the efforts of Alcibiades' flatterers to prevent him from listening to Socrates, though in fact, despite this, Alcibiades did let Socrates approach him (4.2). Alcibiades, Plutarch continues, "listened to the words of a lover who was not hunting unmanly pleasure (ἡδονὴν ἄνανδρον) nor begging for kisses and touches . . ." (4.3). The insistence that Socrates was not interested in Alcibiades' body is probably meant to bring to mind Socrates' rebuffing of Alcibiades' sexual advances in the *Symposium*. The phrase "unmanly pleasure" recalls Alcibiades' wonder, after his rejection, at Socrates' "nature, self-control and manliness (ἀνδρείαν)" (*Smp.* 219d). It invokes a set of ideas, common in ancient thought, which associated love of pleasure with the feminine. Plutarch's words are perhaps not to be taken as implying a criticism of pederasty per se; rather the point here is about the *goal* for which a relationship with a boy is pursued: the courting of a free-born boy for sexual gratification alone, without any educational or moral intent, was in the Classical period, as in Plutarch's own, seen as unacceptable and had in fact been condemned in no uncertain terms by Pausanias in his speech in the *Symposium* (183d-185b). Socrates, then, was not interested in Alcibiades merely for physical pleasure; instead he wanted to improve Alcibiades morally. The claim that Socrates was not seeking "unmanly pleasure" is also a point about the *effects* of Socrates' love on Alcibiades. Socrates' love was not one that "unmanned" him, through encouraging soft-living, love of pleasure and luxury – the kind of things that his other lovers offered (cf. 6.1, πολλὰς ἡδονὰς ὑποβάλλουσιν). Rather, it toughened and hardened him. Plutarch will return to the hardening effect of Socrates' love in ch. 6, where he compares Socrates' treatment of Alcibiades, when he returns from his other lovers, to thrusting iron which has been softened by heat into cold water. He will also demonstrate in ch. 7, when he deals with Socrates and Alcibiades' service together on campaign, that Socrates' love really did encourage Alcibiades to be a man, to fight bravely in the battle-line and not shirk from danger[11].

[11] The notion that a lover might want to keep his beloved from being a man — a reversal of the usual justifications of pederasty for its educational benefits — is set out in Socrates' one-sided attack on love in his speech in *Phaedrus* 238e-241d: a lover will want to make his beloved

Plutarch is here, then, making explicit what emerges implicitly from Alcibiades' narrative in the *Symposium*: that Socrates' love, unlike that of his other suitors, neither sought pleasure as its goal nor unmanned its object. Instead, Plutarch continues, Socrates was a lover, " . . . who tried to expose the cracked elements of Alcibiades' soul and squeeze his empty and foolish pride" (ἐλέγχοντος τὰ σαθρὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ πιεζοῦντος τὸν κενὸν καὶ ἀνόητον τῦφον). This is loosely based on *Smp.* 215c-216a, where Alcibiades speaks of the powerful effects of Socrates' λόγοι on him, which made him cry and reduced him to a feeling of inadequacy and shame, and implanted desires both to listen and to run away. The word ἐλέγχοντος is particularly appropriate for Socrates and suggests his question-and-answer method of teaching, which often resulted in the ignorance of his interlocutor being exposed, as it does to Alcibiades in the Platonic *First Alcibiades*[12]. The wrestling metaphor implied in πιεζοῦντος (cf. 2.2) is also particularly appropriate; it brings to mind the wrestling of Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Symposium,* which Alcibiades hoped would lead to his seduction; instead of sex he gets a psychological going-over at Socrates' hands[13].

Despite this rough treatment, Plutarch goes on, "Alcibiades thought that Socrates' business (πρᾶγμα) was in reality a service of the gods directed towards the care and salvation of the young" (4.4). The phrasing brings to mind, and implicitly refutes, the charges on which Socrates was tried and condemned, that he corrupted the young and denied the existence of the gods[14]; it also recalls Socrates' own claim in the *Apology*, "I think that there has never been a greater good in the city than my own service to the god" (*Ap.* 30a). But the word πρᾶγμα alludes to the lead-up to the failed seduction scene in the *Symposium*, where Alcibiades says that he invited Socrates to dinner to find out "what his business (πρᾶγμα) was" (*Smp.* 217c)[15]. In the rest of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* we have a picture of a man profoundly affected by Socrates, though it is not quite clear how deep this goes; Plutarch is here a little more clear and explicit. Alcibiades *himself now recognises* the divine nature of Socrates' mission, and this not only shows the profound spiritual and intellectual effect that Socrates had on the young man, but also confirms, as Plutarch puts it, Alcibiades' own "potential for virtue" (4.1, 4.2).

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weaker, poorer and more isolated, so he can master him more fully. Cf. esp. 239c-d: "We should now see how he who has been forced to pursue pleasure rather than good will care for the body of whomever he masters. He will plainly pursue someone soft (μαλθακόν) and weak, not brought up in the clear sunshine but under a mingled shade, accustomed not to manly toils and healthy sweat but a soft and unmanly way of living (ἁπαλῆς καὶ ἀνάνδρου διαίτης) . . . In war and in other important crises such a body makes the enemy take heart but makes friends and even lovers afraid." Cf. *Amat.* 749f.-750a.

[12] C. B. R. Pelling, 2005, p. 118.

[13] T. E. Duff, 1999, pp. 217-8; C. B. R. Pelling, 2005, p. 118. The language of wrestling can also be used metaphorically for sex and that may add to the resonance here: e.g. Ar., *Peace* 896-898; *Eccl.* 964-5; ps.-Luc., *Golden Ass* 7-11; *AP* 12.206, 222.

[14] Plato, *Ap.* 23c-d; 24b-26b; 30b; 33c-34b. Cf. Xen., *Mem.* 1.1.1; 1.2.1, 8; *Ap.* 10.

[15] It also recalls the question asked by the young Alcibiades in the Platonic *First Alcibiades* (104d) about why Socrates kept bothering him, "For I really do wonder what your business is" (ὅ τι ποτ' ἐστὶ τὸ σὸν πρᾶγμα). For Socrates' πρᾶγμα, cf. also cf. *Ap.* 20c; *Crito* 53c-d.

That we are meant to be thinking here of the *Symposium*, and of the failed seduction scene, is confirmed by Plutarch's description immediately afterwards of how Alcibiades "despised himself, but admired him, loved his friendliness but was ashamed in the face of his virtue" (καταφρονῶν δ' αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ, θαυμάζων δ' ἐκεῖνον, ἀγαπῶν δὲ τὴν φιλοφροσύνην, αἰσχυνόμενος δὲ τὴν ἀρετήν). This is based on the emotions that Alcibiades confesses to feeling in the *Symposium* after his failure (219d-e): he thought himself "insulted, and yet was amazed at this man's nature, chastity and manliness" (ἡγούμενον μὲν ἠτιμάσθαι, ἀγάμενον δὲ τὴν τούτου φύσιν τε καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν). But Plutarch has made explicit what is implicit in Alcibiades' words in the *Symposium*, that is, his self-loathing, and has also drawn the notion of Alcibiades' shame before Socrates from earlier in his speech (216a-b). Indeed, in the *Symposium* Alcibiades had described how Socrates "despised", i.e. counted as unimportant, his beauty (216e; 219c). Here Alcibiades extends that to a more thorough-going self-despising.

The *Symposium*, as we have noticed, leaves it unclear to what extent Alcibiades' feelings went beyond passionate obsession, curiosity and mortification at having his beauty held at nought, though his speech in praise of Socrates does suggest that he had some appreciation for Socrates' uniqueness and wisdom. Plutarch is much more definite in his assertion that Alcibiades really did love Socrates back, claiming (4.4) in a quotation from the *Phaedrus* (255d), that Alcibiades acquired "an image of love . . . in return for love". Socrates' love, then, was a true, moral and educative one, and Alcibiades, to his credit, returned that love[16]. "The result", Plutarch continues, "was that everyone was amazed when they saw him dining with Socrates, and wrestling with him and camping with him (συνδειπνοῦντα καὶ συμπαλαίοντα καὶ συσκηνοῦντα), while to all his other lovers he was harsh and hard to get to grips with . . ." In the *Symposium* Alcibiades had talked of his wrestling and eating with Socrates as part of his strategy of seducing him (συνεγινόμην. . συνημερεύσας . . . συγγυμνάζεσθαι . . . συνδειπνεῖν: 217b-d)[17]. Here Plutarch uses this shared life as evidence of Alcibiades' love for Socrates, which causes the amazement of everyone else[18]. Plutarch thus transforms what in Alcibiades' mouth had been a tale of sexual desire and failed seduction into evidence of a life lived together.

Plutarch goes on to contrast Alcibiades' love for Socrates, and his humility in his presence, with his arrogant behaviour to other lovers, citing two examples of such arrogant behaviour (4.4-5.5)[19]. One of the examples which Plutarch

[16] The *Symposium* makes clear Alcibiades' love for Socrates (cf. 222c). But there it is a passionate, obsessive and shocking love, in which Alcibiades takes the role of the *erastes*, though much younger than Socrates. Here the suggestion is of a more calm and chaste love. Cf. C. B. R. Pelling, 2005, p. 119.

[17] The notion that Socrates did not regard himself as above his pupils but lived alongside them seems to have been an important one: cf. *An seni.* 796d, συμπίνων καὶ συστρατευόμενος ἐνίοις καὶ συναγοράζων.

[18] Note the sequence: they were first awe-struck at Alcibiades' beauty (4.1); now they are amazed that he hangs around with Socrates (4.4).

[19] The thought is familiar from the *First Alcibiades*, where, as here, there is a contrast between

mentions, the incident of Alcibiades' outrageous treatment of Anytus (4.5-6), may have been partly inspired by the description of Alcibiades' entry in the *Symposium*. The setting is the same: a symposium, to which Alcibiades arrives late and drunk, "stands at the door" (ταῖς θύραις ἐπιστάς; cf. *Smp.* 212d, ἐπιστῆναι ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας), and interrupts proceedings by his outrageous behaviour (cf. esp. *Smp.* 212d-e)[20]. But whereas his entry in the *Symposium* was greeted with indulgence, the consequences here are much more serious: the other guests talk of Alcibiades' *hubris* and arrogance (ὑβριστικῶς καὶ ὑπερηφάνως) – the first appearance of accusations which will later in the Life become more frequent; and Anytus, though he indulges Alcibiades now, will later (as the readers are presumably meant to know) be one of Socrates' accusers. One can certainly see how Alcibiades' behaviour here might have lent weight to accusations that Socrates corrupted the young men under his tutelage. And that the mention of Anytus might bring these associations to mind is suggested by the fact that, when Plutarch tells the same story in his *Dialogue on love*, direct allusion is made to Anytus' later role as Socrates' prosecutor (*Amat.* 762c-d)[21]. This anecdote, then, like the next one in which Alcibiades forces a lover to bid for an expensive tax-farming contract (5.1-5), shows, as Plutarch makes clear in ch. 6, that Socrates' influence on Alcibiades was limited and did not affect a complete transformation; indeed, Alcibiades' arrogant behaviour may have contributed to his teacher's prosecution and death.

In 6.1 we return to Socrates' love for Alcibiades. Here, as in 4.1-2, Alcibiades wavers between devotion to Socrates and the attractions of his other lovers, who offer him pleasure and play on his ambition. Plutarch is once again drawing heavily on the *Republic* and *First Alcibiades*, but the clearest allusion is to Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* on the effect which Socrates had on him (esp. 215d-216c). Despite his many rivals for Alcibiades' affections, Plutarch begins, "Socrates' love would sometimes master (ἐκράτει) him, when because of his good nature (δι' εὐφυΐαν) Socrates' words would touch him and twist his heart and force out tears" (ἁπτομένων τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν καρδίαν στρεφόντων καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεόντων). This is an adaptation of

Alcibiades' attitude to Socrates and to his "other lovers": *Alc. 1* 103a-104c; cf. Plu., *Alc.* 4.1; 4.4; 5.1; 6.1.

[20] The theme of Alcibiades' drunken processions was a familiar one in declamation, influenced ultimately, one assumes, by the *Symposium*, and by the accusations that he was involved in the mutilation of the herms and profanation of the mysteries (Th. 6.28, which mentions drinking). Libanius, *Decl.* 12.20 has him arrive drunk to see Timon (πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἐπέστη μεθύων Ἀλκιβιάδης), and going on a *komos* with "torches from the mysteries" (*Decl.* fr. 50, title). Several speeches imagine him being prosecuted for *hubris* after going on a *komos* to where the Spartan prisoners from Sphacteria are held (Apsines, *RG* 1.348.4-7 [= 242 6 Spengel and Hammer]; Syrian, *Scholia ad Hermogenis librum* Περὶ στάσεων 4.601.15-17 Walz). Cf. R. Kohl, 1915, pp. 35-6.

[21] Cf. C. B. R. Pelling, 1996, p. xlviii; 2005, pp. 123-4; R. L. Hunter, 2004, pp. 103-4. As Pelling notes, the reminiscence of *Ap.* 30a (Socrates' speech at his trial) in 4.4 ensures that the trial is in our minds. Both Socrates' detractors and defenders claimed that Socrates was executed for the behaviour of his pupils, especially Alcibiades and Critias, as much as for anything he himself said or did (e.g. Xen., *Mem.* 1.2.12-48).

Alcibiades' words at *Smp.* 215e, "For my heart leaps, and tears pour out under the influence of his words" (ἥ τε καρδία πηδᾷ καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων τῶν τούτου)[22], but Plutarch has added στρεφόντων ("twisting"), which gains particular force because of the wrestling metaphor which follows in 6.2 (cf. also πιεζοῦντος in 4.3); it also looks back to the earlier story of Alcibiades' wrestling in 2.2-3: though in real wrestling Alcibiades could beat his opponent through a trick, emotionally and intellectually Socrates outwrestled him[23]. Plutarch has also added from the *Republic* the notion of Alcibiades' εὐφυΐα, prominent already in ch. 4 (cf. *Smp.* 218a, μὴ ἀφυοῦς). Here, as in ch. 4, it provides an explanation for why Socrates took such an interest in Alcibiades; it also explains why Socrates' words had such an effect on Alcibiades: it was to his credit that he allowed Socrates to master him.

In ch. 4, when discussing the tough treatment Alcibiades received at Socrates' hands, Plutarch had quoted a line of a lost play, probably by the tragedian Phrynichos, "a cock, he crouched down like a slave, lowering his wing"[24]. The image is of a defeated bird in a cock-fight, which seems to have been called a δοῦλος (4.4)[25]. Now Plutarch presses the metaphor of slavery further: "There were times", he continues (6.1), "when Alcibiades surrendered himself to his flatterers too, who offered many pleasures, and he would slip away from Socrates and like a runaway slave (δραπετεύων) would be quite simply hunted down, only towards Socrates having the experience of shame and fear" (πρὸς μόνον ἐκεῖνον ἔχων τὸ αἰδεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι) (6.1). The notion of Alcibiades as a runaway slave draws on his speech in the *Symposium*, where he describes himself as "in a state of slavery" to Socrates (215e: ὡς ἀνδραποδωδῶς διακειμένου), and as trying to avoid listening to him but to flee instead. When he is in Socrates' presence, he admits his deficiencies and feels ashamed: "I experienced only with this man, what no-one would have thought me capable of – shame before anyone. Only before him am I ashamed"[26]. But when he leaves Socrates' presence he is "defeated by the honour which comes from the multitude". "So I run away from him and flee (δραπετεύω οὖν αὐτὸν καὶ φεύγω), and when I see him I am ashamed as I think of my former admissions" (216b-c)[27]. But whereas Plato left it vague

[22] Noted by D. A. Russell, 1966, p. 40 (= repr. 1995, 196). Plutarch also paraphrases this passage in *Prof. in Virt.* 84d, *Quomodo adulat.* 69f, and *Cat. Ma.* 7.1

[23] Στρέφω can be used of inflicting pain in general (e.g. Plato, *Rep.* 330e), but also of twisting an adversary in wrestling: e.g. Pollux 3.155; M. B. Poliakoff, 1982, pp. 140-1. ἀπωλίσθανε in 6.1 ("used to slip away") may suggest slipping out of an opponent's grip in wrestling. The word is frequent in Plutarch though otherwise always used literally, but cf. Epict. 3.25.1 (ἀνάλαβε κἀκεῖνα ὧν ἀπώλισθες).

[24] Or, "he crouched down like a slave-cock . . .": ἔπτηξ' ἀλέκτωρ δοῦλος ὡς κλίνας πτερόν.

[25] Cf. Ar., *Birds* 71-72, ὄρνις ἔγωγε δοῦλος, with N. Dunbar, 1995, p. 158. Its application to the young Alcibiades suggests both his strutting and preening (cf. 1.8; 16.1) and the totality of his humiliation at Socrates' hands. For cocks seen as symbolising strutting confidence, cf. Dem. 54.9.

[26] πέπονθα δὲ πρὸς τοῦτον μόνον ἀνθρώπων, ὃ οὐκ ἄν τις οἴοιτο ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐνεῖναι, τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι ὀντινοῦν· ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτον μόνον αἰσχύνομαι.

[27] D. A. Russell, 1966, p. 40 (= repr. 1995, p. 196) notes the parallels with 216b.

where Alcibiades runs off to (though the mention of the honour which comes from the multitude is suggestive), Plutarch is specific: to his other lovers, "who suggest many pleasures" (6.1).

But was pleasure all they offered? Plutarch has already hinted that it was not merely pleasure when he calls them "flatterers" (κόλαξι). He now explores this, and the contrast with what Socrates offers, further. First he quotes a saying of the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes, that he used words to attract his beloved, whereas his rivals could use the physical pleasures of the body. As before, knowledge of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* deepens the implications of this passage: Cleanthes, Plutarch says, claimed that "someone loved by him [i.e. Cleanthes] had to be mastered by the ears, but provided many holds to his rivals in love which were out of bounds to him . . ." (6.2). The image is once again of wrestling[28]. But Cleanthes' saying also recalls Alcibiades' words in *Smp.* 216a: if he were willing to "lend Socrates his ears" (παρέχειν τὰ ὦτα) he would not be able to resist his arguments, and would have to admit that "I neglect myself while attending to the affairs of the Athenians". "Therefore", Alcibiades said, "I withhold my ears (ἐπισχόμενος τὰ ὦτα) as from the Sirens and make off, in order not to grow old, sitting here beside him". We have already heard of the attempts of Socrates' rivals to prevent Alcibiades from listening to Socrates (4.2)[29]. Memory of the *Symposium* passage confirms that Alcibiades was not an altogether willing or cooperative beloved. It also suggests the emotional turmoil in which Alcibiades found himself: he is deeply affected by philosophical talk and deeply attracted to Socrates; he wants to listen but, like Odysseus before the Sirens, he knows how dangerous listening to Socrates is[30]. Furthermore, memory of the *Symposium* passage also makes clear that it was Alcibiades' political ambitions which pulled him away from Socrates; thus although Plutarch has talked of the "pleasures" his other lovers offered (6.1), and the saying of Cleanthes was about the pleasures of the flesh providing rival attractions to the words of the philosopher, we know that the stronger pull was Alcibiades' political ambition, which he feared Socrates would make him want to give up. Indeed Plutarch now makes this point explicitly: "Alcibiades *was* of course susceptible to pleasures too" (ἦν μὲν ἀμέλει καὶ πρὸς ἡδονὰς ἀγώγιμος); however (οὐ μὴν ἀλλά) it was rather through taking hold of his love of honour and glory that those who were trying to corrupt him began

[28] An anecdote about Zeno uses the same metaphor: "the right hold to use on a philosopher is by the ears (ἐκ τῶν ὤτων). So persuade me and drag me off by them" (Diog. Laert. 7.24 = *SVF* 1.278). There is perhaps here a punning reference to a type of kiss, associated particularly with parents and children, which involved holding by the ears: *De aud.* 38c; Pollux 10.100; Tib. 2.5.92; Aristaenetus, *Ep.* 1.24; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 5.1.13.1.

[29] . . . ἀποκλειόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν πρὸς χάριν ἐξομιλούντων εἰσακοῦσαι τοῦ νουθετοῦντος καὶ παιδεύοντος, which alludes to *Rep.* 494d and 559d-560a.

[30] Plutarch himself hints that Alcibiades might be seen as Odysseus by applying the word πολύτροπος to his fortunes (2.1) and his cleverness (24.5). Like Odysseus Alcibiades will wander in exile and desire to return home (cf. 32.1). Coriolanus was compared directly to Odysseus (*Cor.* 22.4). Cf. D. Gribble, 1999, pp. 26-7; 269-70.

thrusting him prematurely into grandiose thinking, convincing him that, as soon as he entered upon public life . . ." (6.3)[31].

The result of such flattery was that Alcibiades was made conceited, and Socrates was forced to do some tough-talking and to humble and crush him (6.5). As we have already noted, the metaphor which Plutarch uses here, of iron which has been softened in the fire and is then condensed and hardened in cold water, suggests very well both the painfulness of Socrates' shock-treatment of Alcibiades, but also that his love had the effect of toughening Alcibiades and making a man of him (cf. 4.3). Socrates, Plutarch continues, made Alcibiades understand "how much he lacked and how incomplete he was in virtue" (ἡλίκων ἐνδεής ἐστι καὶ ἀτελὴς πρὸς ἀρετήν). The reference to Alcibiades' incompleteness in virtue recalls 4.1 where Socrates had recognised Alcibiades' "potential for virtue" (εὐφυΐα πρὸς ἀρετήν). The return to this notion here not only provides a sense of closure to the section before we move on to a cluster of anecdotes, but also expresses neatly the Socratic method; the first and most important step for the gifted pupil was for him to acknowledge how truly ignorant he really was[32]. The wording also recalls Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*, where he had declared, "He forces me to admit that, although I am sorely in need (πολλοῦ ἐνδεής[33]), yet I neglect myself . . ." (216a)[34].

Several anecdotes follow, which seem to show Alcibiades' desire for learning, but also his arrogance and ambition (7.1-3). We then hear two stories about Socrates and Alcibiades at Potidaea and Delium, the source for which is once again Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* (7.3-6 ~ 220d-221c). The two campaigns were actually separated by some eight years, and Delium (424 BC) postdates Alcibiades' marriage, which is discussed in the next chapter (ch. 8)[35]. But in the *Symposium* Alcibiades talks about Delium directly after Potidaea, and Plutarch follows that order. He has, however, made some significant changes[36].

[31] Plutarch cites in evidence Thucydides' famous words about the "παρανομία of Alcibiades' lifestyle as regards his body" (6.3 ~ Th. 6.15.4). For Plutarch's use of this quotation, see C. B. R. Pelling, 1992, pp. 18-9; 1996, pp. xlix-li.

[32] Contrast Coriolanus at *Cor*. 18.2-3, 21.1, who refuses to be humble when some humility would help.

[33] ἐνδεής can also mean "inferior" (LSJ b.3): the flatterers persuade Alcibiades that he will "put in the shade" other generals and orators, and "surpass" even Pericles (6.4) but Socrates shatters his illusions.

[34] It also recalls the start of the *First Alcibiades*, where Socrates tells a younger Alcibiades "you say that you are not in need of anyone for anything" (οὐδενὸς φῂς ἀνθρώπων ἐνδεὴς εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν; 104a). Both parallels are noted by D. A. Russell, 1966, p. 40 (= repr. 1995, p. 196). There is also allusion to *Rep*. 491d: if a plant lacks the proper food and environment, the stronger it is the more it falls short of perfection (ἐνδεῖ τῶν πρεπόντων); so with talented men deprived of philosophical education. Cf. *Cor.* 1.3, alluding to the *Rep*. passage: a good nature which is lacking in education (παιδείας ἐνδεής) is unstable.

[35] The battle associated with the Potidaea campaign is probably the one fought in 432 before the siege of Potidaea began, in which the Athenians lost their general and 150 hoplites, not counting allies (Th. 1.62-63). See K. J. Dover, 1980, p. 165.

[36] He has also introduced some parallels with the *Coriolanus*. The mention that Socrates and A. "distinguished themselves" (ἠρίστευσαν) and the discussion of the prize (ἀριστεῖον) recall the description of the young and ambitious Coriolanus, who is said to have "joined

He describes Socrates as Alcibiades' tent-mate and comrade in the battle-line (σύσκηνον...καὶ παραστάτην) (7.3; cf. 4.4, συσκηνοῦντα). This is Plutarch's embellishment; in *Symp* 219e Alcibiades says merely that they ate together; indeed, they were from different tribes, so may have had to camp separately and were almost certainly brigaded in different hoplite units[37]. But having them fight together perhaps draws on another part of the *Symposium*, before Alcibiades' entry: Phaedrus' speech in *Smp.* 178e-179b. There, in arguing for the blessings that pederastic love brings, Phaedrus imagines pairs of *erastai* and *paidika* fighting side by side, defending each other on the battlefield. Plutarch thus assimilates Alcibiades and Socrates to this kind of idealised pederastic couple[38].

Plutarch's description of Socrates' saving Alcibiades at Potidaea, and of the award of the prize for valour to Alcibiades (7.4-5), is close to Alcibiades' words in the *Symposium* (220d-221c)[39]. But Plutarch's version is more vivid, as he creates a picture of Socrates standing guard (προέστη καὶ ἤμυνε) over a fallen Alcibiades. Furthermore, the term ἤμυνε recalls 4.1, where Socrates wanted to protect Alcibiades and not allow him to be corrupted (ἀμύνειν καὶ μὴ περιορᾶν . . .). Here Socrates' protective role, exercised in the physical rather than spiritual dimension, is made concrete[40]. Plutarch's version of the award of the prize is also more vivid and dramatic than the Platonic original[41]; the

exploits to exploits (ἀριστείαις ἀριστείας) and added spoils to spoils" (4.3). The eagerness of A.'s commanders to give him the crown and suit of armour and Socrates' testimony on his behalf recalls Coriolanus' commanders, who were "always striving with their predessors to honour him and to surpass in their testimonials (marturiva")". "From none of the numerous conflicts in which Rome was involved did Coriolanus return uncrowned or without a prize". Alcibiades, then, under Socrates' influence, is as brave on the battlefield and as decorated as the soldierly Coriolanus. For other parallels, see nn. 32, 34, 40 and 46.

[37] Cf. P. Krentz, 2007, p. 164.

[38] Plutarch is here of course making more explicit what was implicit already in Plato: Alcibiades' description of Socrates saving him in *Smp.* 220d-e would itself have brought Phaedrus' speech to mind. The notion of pairs of lovers fighting side by side became reality in the early fourth century (i.e. around the time when Plato was writing the *Symposium*) in Thebes' so-called Sacred Band; Xen., *Smp.* 8.32 mentions the Sacred Band in his discussion of pederasty; Plutarch in his discussion of the Sacred Band in *Pel*. 18-19 refers to Phaedrus' speech (*Smp*. 179a), as well as to the *Phaedrus* itself (255b) (18.6); in *Pel*. 17.13 he quotes from Phaedrus' speech (*Symp*. 178d): after Leuctra the other Greeks realised that it was not Sparta which produced good fighters, but wherever young men αἰσχύνεσθαι τοῖς αἰσχροῖς καὶ τολμᾶν ἐπὶ τοῖς καλοῖς. Cf. *Amat*. 761b.

[39] In particular, Plutarch's τοῦ δ' Ἀλκιβιάδου τραύματι περιπεσόντος ὁ Σωκράτης προέστη καὶ ἤμυνε, καὶ μάλιστα δὴ προδήλως ἔσωσεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῶν ὅπλων is closely based on *Smp.* 220d-e: οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐμὲ ἔσωσεν ἀνθρώπων ἢ οὗτος, τετρωμένον οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀπολιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ συνδιέσωσε καὶ τὰ ὅπλα καὶ αὐτὸν ἐμέ.

[40] Contrast Coriolanus' lonely death without any one to protect him: προσήμυνεν οὐδεὶς τῶν παρόντων (*Cor*. 39.8). For other parallels between *Alc*. 7 and the *Coriolanus*, see T. E. Duff, 1999, pp. 217-8.

[41] Plu., *Alc*. 7.5: ἐπεὶ δ' οἱ στρατηγοὶ διὰ τὸ ἀξίωμα τῷ Ἀλκιβιάδῃ σπουδάζοντες ἐφαίνοντο περιθεῖναι τὴν δόξαν, ὁ Σωκράτης βουλόμενος αὔξεσθαι τὸ φιλότιμον ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρῶτος ἐμαρτύρει καὶ παρεκάλει στεφανοῦν ἐκεῖνον καὶ διδόναι τὴν πανοπλίαν. Plato, *Smp.* 220e: καὶ ἐγὼ μέν, ὦ Σώκρατες, καὶ τότε ἐκέλευον σοὶ διδόναι τἀριστεῖα τοὺς στρατηγούς ...

imperfects ἐμαρτύρει καὶ παρεκάλει draw the reader into the scene, as though we were watching it happen – a device typical of Plutarchan narrative[42]. The idea that the generals were influenced by Alcibiades' "rank in society" (ἀξίωμα) is in Plato, but in Plutarch it gains extra point as it, like ἤμυνε, recalls 4.1, where Socrates' desire to protect Alcibiades comes from his fear of the effect of Alcibiades' "wealth and rank" (ἀξίωμα), and of those who, as Plutarch puts it, "rushed to lay hold of him with flatteries and favours"[43]. Thus for Plutarch the generals' desire to curry favour with Alcibiades becomes part of this process of flattery.

Plutarch has introduced two other changes[44]. First, he omits Alcibiades' claim that he himself had urged the generals to award Socrates the crown. This may be because Plutarch simply judged Alcibiades' claim unreliable (he *would* say that, wouldn't he?). At any rate, in Plutarch's telling, the sequence and its implications are simpler: Socrates deserved the prize but urged the generals to give it to Alcibiades; Socrates is the protector, educator and champion, Alcibiades the recipient of Socrates' kindness (cf. 1.3) and protection[45]. Secondly Plutarch inserts a motive for Socrates' championing of Alcibiades' cause: he "wanted his [Alcibiades'] ambition in fine things (τὸ φιλότιμον ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς αὐτοῦ) to increase". That is, he wanted to direct in a worthy direction the ambition which has been such a feature of the early chapters of the Life (esp. 2.1) and which his flatterers played on (6.4)[46]. The phrase thus presupposes that Alcibiades' ambition might well be aimed at an unworthy goal, and

ἀλλὰ γὰρ τῶν στρατηγῶν πρὸς τὸ ἐμὸν ἀξίωμα ἀποβλεπόντων καὶ βουλομένων ἐμοὶ διδόναι τἀριστεῖα, αὐτὸς προθυμότερος ἐγένου τῶν στρατηγῶν ἐμὲ λαβεῖν ἢ σαυτόν.

[42] E.g. *Alc*. 5.5; 14.12; 20.1; 25.2; 32.3; *Pyrrh*. 28.1-3, 5-7; 29.5-6. Smyth §1898 labels this the "imperfect of description': "The imperfect often has a dramatic or panoramic force; it enables the reader to follow the course of events as they occurred, as if he were a spectator of the scene depicted". On Plutarch's tendency to use imperfects in narrative, see T. E. Duff, forthcoming.

[43] φοβούμενος δὲ τὸν πλοῦτον καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ τὸν προκαταλαμβάνοντα κολακείαις καὶ χάρισιν ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων καὶ συμμάχων ὄχλον (4.2), itself an allusion to *Rep*. 494c, προκαταλαμβάνοντες καὶ προκολακεύοντες τὴν μέλλουσαν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν. Alcibiades' ἀξίωμα ("rank in society": LSJ 3), was owed in large part to his noble birth (Th. 5.43.2, ἀξιώματι προγόνων τιμώμενος; 6.15.3). Later in Plutarch's Life his noble birth and wealth will "open great doors" (μεγάλας κλισιάδας) to his political career (10.3.)

[44] He has also specified that the award consisted of a crown and suit of armour, a detail which he probably took from Isoc. 16.29. Crowns were regularly awarded for valour (e.g. Hdt. 8.124; Aesch. 2.169; Plato, *Rep*. 468b: W. K. Pritchett, 1974, ii, pp. 276-90); it is not clear whether at this period they might be of gold or of e.g. laurel. There is no other evidence for the award of armour, though the use of the article suggests that Plutarch might have thought it well known: ibidem, pp. 289-90.

[45] Cf. C. B. R. Pelling, 2005, pp. 122-3 n. 41: keeping attention focused on Socrates' action rather than Alcibiades fits the larger theme of the struggle of Socrates and the flatterers for influence over Alcibiades.

[46] This seems to find a parallel in the discussion of the effect of honour gained in war upon the young Coriolanus in *Cor.* 4.1-4 (see above, n. 36). Honour gained too early in life, Plutarch argues, may extinguish the desire for honour in "lightly ambitious souls". But in the case of "weighty and firm spirits" (i.e. like Coriolanus) the honours impel them to "the apparent good" (πρὸς τὸ φαινόμενον καλόν). The contrast between "the apparent good" and Alcibiades' "ambition ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς" is suggestive.

shows Socrates combating the malign influence of Alcibiades' flatterers. It also shows Socrates not only playing a pedagogical role but playing this role in the practical context of the battlefield; his love was not enervating or corrupting, as was theirs (cf. 4.3), nor was his instruction merely theoretical[47].

But the phrase "ambition in fine things" also alludes specifically to Phaedrus' speech in the *Symposium* (178c-179b). Phaedrus speaks of love bringing the greatest blessing a man can have. What love brings, Phaedrus claims, cannot be obtained by "kinship, honours or wealth" (all advantages that Alcibiades had)[48]; it provides a moral principle for life, that is, feeling "shame at shameful things, and ambition for fine things" (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχύνην, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαν) (178d); thus, Phaedrus argues, lovers defend and never desert each other on the battlefield. By alluding to this passage, Plutarch makes more explicit what is implicit in Alcibiades' description of the Potidaea campaign in the *Symposium*, namely, that Socrates and Alcibiades on campaign are to be seen as an ideal pederastic couple, with the older exercising an educational and protective role over the younger, and inspiring him towards fine conduct[49].

The success of Socrates' tutelage is revealed in the next incident, the story of how Alcibiades, in the aftermath of the Athenian defeat at Delium, despite being on horseback, refused to leave Socrates and make his own escape (7.6). This is closely based on *Smp.* 220e-221a, though Plutarch focuses attention more squarely on Alcibiades' actions in defending Socrates rather than on Socrates' calmness under attack. But this incident gains extra point in Plutarch from its placing immediately after Socrates' attempt to nurture Alcibiades' "ambition in fine things" (τὸ φιλότιμον ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς αὐτοῦ); in Plutarch's account Alcibiades' defence of his teacher seems to show Socrates' success in stirring Alcibiades to noble action, and thus confirms Alcibiades' good nature and that he really did love Socrates[50]. Phaedrus in the *Symposium* imagined that no lover would desert his beloved, and at Potidaea Socrates had defended Alcibiades. Now Alcibiades, the beloved, defends Socrates, suggesting a mutuality in their love, a mutuality which Plutarch himself had emphasised in ch. 4, with a quotation from the *Phaedrus* itself (Alcibiades acquired "an image of love . . . in return for love"). Indeed Plutarch's παρέπεμψε καὶ περιήμυνεν ("escorted and protected him")[51] recalls Socrates'

[47] Cf. D. A. Russell, 1966, p. 41 (= repr. 1995, p. 197); C. B. R. Pelling, 1996, p. xlvii; D. Gribble, 1999, pp. 273-6.

[48] See 4.1-2; 10.3; Plato, *Rep*. 494c; *Alc*. 1.104a-b. Cf. Lys. 14, 18, 38; Dem. 21.143; Diod. 12.84.1.

[49] Plutarch is possibly influenced by Lys. 14.42, where Alcibiades' son accuses his opponents of ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς καλοῖς αἰσχύνεσθαι, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς κακοῖς φιλοτιμεῖσθαι.

[50] Antisthenes had Socrates deserving a prize for bravery here too but giving it to Alcibiades (Antisthenes fr. V A 200 Giannantoni=*FGrH* 1004 F 4).

[51] But περιήμυνεν, the reading of Y, is doubtful; περιαμύνω is attested only here in Greek literature. Ziegler's apparatus suggests προσήμυνεν ("came to the aid of"), which may be right (cf. *Fab*. 16.5, ἀπολιπὼν τὸν ἵππον πεζὸς τῷ ὑπάτῳ προσήμυνε, and Holden on *Them*. 9.3). N.'s περιέμεινεν ("waited for") seems bland, but may also be right.

protection both moral (4.1: ἀμύνειν) and physical (7.4: προέστη καὶ ἤμυνε). Here Alcibiades is able to return Socrates' protection[52].

To conclude, my point in this paper has been a simple one. That is, that the *Alcibiades* draws heavily on Plato's *Symposium*, and that knowledge of the *Symposium* enriches the experience of reading the *Alcibiades*; the chapters that we have examined (4-7), in which Plutarch frequently uses phraseology drawn from the *Symposium*, and frequently makes explicit what had been implicit there, become more meaningful when approached with the *Symposium* in mind. This is different from saying merely that the *Symposium* was used as a "source" for the *Alcibiades*; rather these chapters of the *Alcibiades* invite an intertextual reading with the *Symposium*, and for their full effect presuppose a reader who is familiar with it[53]. This has important implications for the way we might approach Plutarch's use of other texts and other authors, both in the *Alcibiades* and elsewhere, where we might look not for a one-sided exploitation of source texts but for a creative dialogue with them.

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[52] C. B. R. Pelling, 2005, p. 123.

[53] Cf. the similar remarks made by C. B. R. Pelling, 2007 about the *Themistocles – Camillus*, a text which presupposes a reader familiar with Herodotus, esp. p. 155: "By now Herodotus should seem much more than a simple "source" for Plutarch's *Life*: he offers a *repertoire of possibilities*, one which Plutarch knew extraordinarily well, and assumed his audience knew well too; and an author whose themes and subtleties he thoroughly understood".

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