

THE CONTEST OF HOMER AND HESIOD AND ALCIDAMAS' *MOUSEION**

I. THE ROLE OF ALCIDAMAS

Did Alcidamas invent the story of the contest of Homer and Hesiod? Martin West has argued that he did (*CQ* N.S. 17 (1967), 433 ff.). I believe that there are a number of reasons for thinking this improbable.

The stories of the deaths of Homer and Hesiod were traditional before Alcidamas. Heraclitus knew the legend of the riddle of the lice and Homer's death (*Vors.* 22 B 56), and the story of Hesiod's death was well known by Thucydides' time (3. 96). The first attempt to record information about Homer's life is ascribed to Theagenes of Rhegium, in the late sixth century B.C. (*Vors.* 8.1). By that time it seems likely that there was already a considerable body of legends about the early poets.¹ The pieces of hexameter verse in the *Herodotean Life of Homer*, some of which show detailed knowledge of the area around Smyrna in the archaic period, probably date from before 500 B.C.

In relating the stories of the poets' deaths Alcidamas is recording the results of *ιστορία*, and this is what he implies in Michigan papyrus 2754 (cf. West op. cit. 437). West's theory requires one to assume that he has incorporated with these traditions his own fiction of the contest. This seems to me to go against what we know in general about the activity of sophists such as Alcidamas. Although they were capable of inventing myths (such as Prodicus' 'Choice of Heracles'), there is no evidence that they created such stories about earlier historical figures, rather than collecting popular legends about them, and using these for their own purposes.² It is true that Critias (for example) used the evidence of Archilochus' own poetry to draw conclusions about his life (*Vors.* 88 B 44).³ But this is not the same as inventing a story virtually from scratch. Hesiod's own testimony about his poetic victory (*Op.* 650 ff.), the original starting-point for the legend of the contest with Homer, did not on its own provide a basis from which such inferences could be drawn. It seems more likely that the legend is the product of earlier popular embroidery, at a time when speculation about these early poets' lives was becoming common.

This general consideration may not, in itself, be thought to carry much weight. But there are other points which seem to suggest the sixth century as a more likely date for the story of the contest.

* I owe a special debt to Dr Richard Janko, since the impulse to set down these reflections on paper derives in part from discussions with him about the chronology of early Greek epic poetry, and I have profited greatly from his comments. I should also like to thank Sir Kenneth Dover, Dr Doreen Innes, Professor Mary Lefkowitz, and Professor Martin West, for their useful comments and constructive disagreements. Professor Rossi's stimulating lecture course at Oxford in Michaelmas term 1979, on Greek sympotic poetry, has also helped to fill in the background to one aspect of the problems considered in the first section.

¹ cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Legende von Homer dem fahrenden Sänger* (Leipzig, 1942).

² cf. R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* i. 51 ff., on Hippias and Critias, as parallels to Alcidamas in this respect. The works of Glaucos of Rhegium (*περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ποιητῶν καὶ μουσικῶν*) and Damastes of Sigeum (*περὶ ποιητῶν καὶ σοφιστῶν*), both of about this period, could also be mentioned in this context.

³ cf. M. Lefkowitz, 'Fictions in Literary Biography: The New Poem and the Archilochus Legend', *Arethusa* 9 (1976), 181 ff.

The fact that the story of Homer's death, which Heraclitus knew, centred on his failure to solve a children's riddle is surely important. As Heraclitus says, Homer was 'wiser than all the Greeks'. It was this role of Homer and Hesiod as σοφοί which was the chief target of attack for both Heraclitus and Xenophanes. The ability to solve riddles and answer difficult questions was traditionally an important aspect of such σοφία, as shown by the stories of contests between seers (e.g. Hesiod fr. 278 M.-W.), of the Seven Wise Men, and of Oedipus and the Sphinx. Such ἀπορίαι play a large part in our existing version of the contest, and it is reasonable to see this as a product of the period which produced the legend of Homer's death. Hesiod also died because he misinterpreted an oracle, another traditional intelligence test (*Certamen* 215 ff., pp. 233 ff. Allen). Moreover, the idea of a rhapsodic contest in σοφία as an alternative to athletic contests (cf. *Certamen* 64 ff.), is appropriate to the age of Xenophanes, who was himself a travelling rhapsode, and who explicitly stated the view that athletic prowess was not so valuable to the community as intellectual excellence, and should not be honoured so highly (fr. 2 West). The role of the riddle is particularly prominent in Plutarch's version of the contest story at *Moralia* 153 F ff. Here the order of events is different from that of our surviving account. The recitation of prepared passages comes first, and the contest is decided by a riddle, which is solved by Hesiod. This could reflect an early version of the story.⁴ A possible argument in favour of this is that the order of the contest in Aristophanes' *Frogs* is similar (discussion of prepared passages followed by political questioning and riddling answers), and this episode makes better sense if seen against the background of an existing story of a contest of Homer and Hesiod, rather than vice versa.⁵ Aristophanes would thus be taking a familiar theme, the poetic contest, and giving it new life by the original way in which he handles it.

It would be tempting to infer that it was Alcidas who reversed the order, and made Hesiod's victory rest on the recitation of prepared passages, which revealed Hesiod as the poet of peace rather than of war. But there are further considerations which seem to tell against this.⁶ One of the riddles from the *Certamen* (107 f.) appears in Aristophanes' *Peace* (1282 f.), produced in 421 B.C. As West says (440 f.), this does not on its own prove that the contest story existed already. But it is surely significant that the situation in the *Peace* also seems to echo the contest. When Lamachus' son sings some epic verses about war, Trygaeus is shocked, and tells him to celebrate the recovery of Peace by singing of feasting instead.⁷ He then suggests the riddle ὥς οἱ μὲν δαίνυντο βοῶν κρέα (etc.) as an example. Here, in addition to the riddle, we have two themes which occur in the *Certamen*, rejection of war poetry, and praise of feasting (*Cert.* 80 ff.). The end of the *Acharnians* makes a similar point about the superiority of feasting and peace to war and fighting. If one believes that Alcidas

⁴ cf. M. J. Milne, 'A Study in Alcidas and his relation to contemporary Sophistic' (Diss. Bryn Mawr, 1924), 57 f., who suggests that this was the original version of the story. The reference to Lesches in Plutarch's version remains a puzzle. West's attempt to explain him away (438 ff.) seems an obvious subterfuge. Milne's suggestion is more attractive, that Lesches' name was substituted for Homer's in the Hellenistic period or later, because of the chronological problem of making Homer and Hesiod contemporaries.

⁵ cf. Milne op. cit. 60, F. Dornseiff, *Gnomon* 20 (1944), 136 f.

⁶ Note that West is compelled to alter the anecdote about Cleomenes I of Sparta, who is said to have remarked that Homer was the poet of the Spartans and Hesiod of the helots, because Homer sang of war and Hesiod of farming (Plut. *Mor.* 223A, Aelian *VH* 13. 19). West (443) arbitrarily assigns this to an anonymous opponent of Alcidas. The distinction of course also underlies Ar. *Ran.* 1033–6, where Homer is a teacher of strategy, Hesiod of farming.

⁷ cf. M. Lefkowitz, *CQ* N.S. 28 (1978), 468 (although she there preferred a fourth-century date for the contest story).

invented the contest story, one must either argue that all these correspondences are coincidental, or else that Alcidas wrote his version before 421 B.C. The second view does not fit well with the other evidence for Alcidas' chronology. The first remains a possibility, but it seems an unlikely one.

These themes (praise of feasting and rejection of war poetry) were not, in fact, new at this time. They fit well into the general context of the sympotic poetry of the sixth century. In the *Peace* (775 ff.) we find in a sympotic context some verses which have been thought to echo Stesichorus' *Oresteia* (fr. 210 Page), where the Muse is asked to sing of feasting rather than war. Xenophanes criticizes the practice of singing about the battles of Titans, Giants or Centaurs, or about *στάσιος σφεδανός*, at a symposium (fr. 1 West), and Anacreon dislikes anyone who sings of *νείκεα καὶ πόλεμον δακρύνοντα* on such occasions (fr. 2).

Thus, the admiration accorded to Homer for his praise of feasting as 'the fairest thing for mortals' is ideally suited to this period. Equally, the unexpected victory of Hesiod as the singer of peace rather than of war is not inappropriate to this time.

West argues also that the ethical and political questions in the *Certamen* have a sophistic flavour, which suggests a later date. It is possible, of course, that these may be due to Alcidas. But I doubt whether one can assert so dogmatically that such questions are out of place in the sixth century. Other scholars have not always taken this view.⁸

Finally, there is the minor problem of 'Hesiod' fr. 357 M.-W., in which the poet recalls an occasion where he and Homer each sang a hymn to Apollo on Delos. West thinks that if Alcidas had known of this he would have been compelled to set the contest on Delos, and so the fragment is probably later. There is no reason to suppose this. But in any case there is no need to associate this fragment with the contest story, and it should be left out of account in considering this problem.⁹

If Alcidas did not invent the story, it is reasonable to ask what motives led him to use it, and what aspects he may have emphasized for his own ends. A re-examination of the end of the Michigan papyrus may throw some light on these questions.

II. THE MICHIGAN PAPYRUS¹⁰

The concluding lines of this papyrus are obscure.

περι τουτου μεν ουν ποιεισθαι την αρετην ποι	15
ησομεν μαλιστα δ'ορων τους ιστορικους θαν	
μαζομενους οδη. ος γουν δια τουτο και ζων	
και αποθανων τετιμηται παρα πασιν ανθρω	
ποις ταυτη[.]οην αυτω της παιδιας χαριν α	
ποδιδα[.]ενος αυτου και την αλλη[ν] ποι	20

⁸ cf. Schadewaldt, op. cit. 64 ff., K. Hess, 'Der Agon zwischen Homer und Hesiod' (Diss. Zürich, 1960), 7 ff.

⁹ R. Janko suggests (in his unpublished dissertation, 'Studies in the Language of the Homeric Hymns; the Dating of Early Greek Epic Poetry', pp. 128 ff.) that it may be connected with the creation of a unified version of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the first part being ascribed to Homer and the second to Hesiod. This version may have been produced when Polycrates was organizing a festival of Apollo on Delos, and debating whether to call it 'Pythian' or 'Delian'. Cf. on this tradition H. W. Parke, *CQ* 40 (1946), 105 ff. and W. Burkert, *Arktouros* (Hellenic Studies presented to B. M. W. Knox, Berlin 1979), 58 f.

¹⁰ Besides the references in West op. cit. see also R. Renehan, *HSCP* 75 (1971), 85 ff., G. L. Koniaris, *HSCP* 75 (1971), 107 ff., and Renehan, *Studies in Greek Texts (Hypomnemata* 43, 1976), 144 ff.

ησιν δια. [. . .] ειας μνημης τοις βουλομε
νοις φι[. . . .] ειν των Ελληνων εις το κοινον
παрадω[]

[Αλκι]δαμαντος

περι Ομηρου

25

15 lacunam post ποιείσθαι statuit West 17 Ὅμηρος Winter 19 ταύτη[ν] Winter:
ταύτη[s] Koniaris παιδ(ε)ίας Körte 19 f. ἀποδιδούς, ἀφέμ]ενος West 20 διὰ
β[ραχ]είας West 22 φι[λοκαλ]εῖν Hunt: φι[λοδοξ]εῖν Richardson 23
παрадώ[σω] West 24 [Αλκι]δαμαντος Winter

The interpretation of lines 15 f. is unclear, and West may be right to suppose a lacuna here. There is no way of telling to what *περὶ τούτου* refers, and ποιείσθαι τὴν ἀρετὴν is hard to interpret: 'To win one's reputation' might, however, be a possible translation. Cf. *Od.* 2. 126 μέγα μὲν κλέος αὐτῇ ποιεῖτ(αι).¹¹ ἀρετή means 'fame for prowess' in (for example) Pl. *Symp.* 208 D, a passage which is relevant to Alcidas' theme here, as we shall see. ποιείσθαι τὴν ἀρετὴν is the sort of periphrastic expression which Alcidas especially liked as Blass noted.¹² For ποιήσομεν it is perhaps worth suggesting as an emendation πονήσομεν (cf. *Soph.* 30), although this is not attested elsewhere with an infinitive. For τοὺς ἱστορικοὺς West compares the reference to ἱστορία at *Soph.* 1. It is interesting that ἱστορικός seems to be first attested here and at Pl. *Soph.* 267 E, where it appears to be treated as a new or recent coinage. The admiration accorded to ἱστορικοί and the honours paid to Homer could pick up the language of *Cert.* 66, 71 (θαυμαστῶς), 90 ff. (θαυμασθήναι), 176 f., 205 ff. (θαυμάσαντες), and perhaps also the sections on later honours to Homer (271 ff., 276 ff., 286 f., 302 ff., 319 ff.), if these were part of Alcidas' version.¹³ This theme, of honours paid to Homer and other intellectuals, recurs in similar words in the quotation from Alcidas at Arist. *Rhet.* 1398 b 10 ff.:

καὶ ὡς Ἀλκιδάμας, ὅτι πάντες τοὺς σοφοὺς τιμῶσιν· Πάριοι γοῦν Ἀρχίλοχον καί περ βλάσφημον ὄντα τετιμήκασι, καὶ Χίοι Ὅμηρον οὐκ ὄντα πολίτην (etc.).¹⁴

Cf. Mich. pap. 2754. 16 ff.:

μάλιστα δ' ὁρῶν τοὺς ἱστορικοὺς θαυματομένους· Ὅμηρος γοῦν διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ζῶν καὶ ἀποθανόν τετιμῆται παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.

¹¹ Alcidas was fond of epic language (Arist. *Rhet.* 1406 a 6 ff.).

¹² *Die Attische Beredsamkeit* ii. 2. 356 f. For ποιείσθαι cf. *Soph.* 17, 20. Blass noted also his fondness for the periphrastic use of παραδίδωσιν at the end of a clause (*Soph.* 15, 26, 27–8 twice). Cf. Mich. pap. 2754. 23 παραδώ[σω] (West), as a final clausula.

¹³ E. Bethe, *Der hom. Apollonhymnos und das Prooimion* 3 ff., argued that the character of much of these sections was Hellenistic. West allowed Alcidas 260–74, but not 275–321 (op. cit. 446 ff.).

¹⁴ Despite West's assertion (448), this need not contradict *Cert.* 305 ff. Alcidas could well have made Homer a resident of Chios, but not a citizen by birth, as in some of the Lives.

This quotation from Alcidas goes on to refer to honours to Sappho, to Chilon, Pythagoras and Anaxagoras, and then to the benefits resulting from the laws of Solon and Lycurgus, and those of good leadership at Thebes. It is carefully constructed, with three triads of examples. It also has twelve instances of hiatus. As has been noticed, the final reference to Theban leaders who were philosophers, and consequent Theban prosperity (in the past tense), should date it after the deaths of Pelopidas and Epaminondas in 364 and 362 B.C. (cf. J. Vahlen, *Gesammelte Philologische Schriften* i. 128 ff.). It could come from Alcidas' *Messenian Speech*, which also contained hiatus (cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1397 a 11 f. εἰ γὰρ ὁ πόλεμος αἴτιος τῶν παρόντων κακῶν, μετὰ τῆς εἰρήνης δεῖ ἐπανορθώσασθαι). Renehan has suggested that it is from the *Mouseion*, and therefore that this was written after 362 B.C. (*Studies in Greek Texts* 154). For reasons which will appear below I should not want to date the *Mouseion* as late as this.

The fact that honours to Homer are paid by all men in his lifetime, as well as after death, accords with the general theme of *Cert.* 254–321. This theme goes back, as we have seen, to Xenophanes. But it also occurs notably at the opening of Isocrates' *Panegyricus*. Here too the setting is that of the Panhellenic contests. Isocrates expresses amazement that athletic prowess should be rewarded so liberally, whereas such honour is not paid to intellectual service to the community.¹⁵ Alcidas and Isocrates were rival followers of Gorgias, and Alcidas' attack on the composers of prepared speeches in *On Sophists* is usually thought to be really an attack on Isocrates.¹⁶ It has been assumed that Isocrates replied to Alcidas' criticism in the *Panegyricus* (11), which was published in c. 380 B.C.¹⁷ There is at any rate a close relationship between the two works. The *Certamen* also has striking parallels with Isocrates' speech.¹⁸ Alcidas' references elsewhere to sweat and the Isthmian Games (*Rhet.* 1406a20–2) could also have occurred in the context of a comparison between physical and intellectual prowess.¹⁹

It has often been noted that the theme of improvisation in the *Certamen* forms a strong link with Alcidas' *On Sophists*, and also with Isocrates' comments on this subject. The discussion at the end of Plato's *Phaedrus* (274C ff.) shows how much attention was being paid to the question at this period, as one would expect in view of the shift in emphasis, in the later part of the fifth century and in the course of the fourth, from the spoken to the written word.²⁰

Alcidas seems to have been interested in the story of the contest not only because it gave prominence to the value of improvisation, but also because it answered the sort of criticism made by Xenophanes and Isocrates, that due honours are not paid to intelligence by the Greeks.²¹ In Aristotle's quotation Alcidas claims that Homer and other poets have indeed been highly honoured, and that the same is true of philosophers and lawgivers. The theme is echoed in the passage in Plato's *Symposium* (already mentioned) where Diotima gives a discourse *ὡς περ οἱ τέλει σοφισταί* (208C) on men's desire for fame (*φιλοτιμία*), and cites poets and political leaders, such as Homer and Hesiod, Lycurgus and Solon, to show how their spiritual products and the *ἀρετή* to which they gave birth have won them fame and even religious honours (208E–209E). Such men 'go round' looking for noble souls in which to implant their wisdom, and so endeavour to educate them (209BC).

In the same way, Alcidas also thanks Homer for his *παιδεία*, by recording the results of his own *ἱστορία* for the benefit of other Greeks who are lovers of honour

¹⁵ *Paneg.* 1 (and 45).

¹⁶ cf. Vahlen, op. cit. 140 ff., Blass op. cit. 353 ff., W. Steidle, *Hermes* 80 (1952), 285 ff.

¹⁷ Blass op. cit. 353.

¹⁸ *Cert.* 64 ff. *πάντας τοὺς ἐπισήμους ἄνδρας οὐ μόνον ῥώμῃ καὶ τάχει, ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφίᾳ ἐπὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα μεγάλας δωρεαῖς τιμῶν συνεκάλεσεν* ~ *Paneg.* 1 *τὰς μὲν τῶν σωμάτων εὐτυχίας οὕτω μεγάλων δωρεῶν ἥξίωσαν* (etc.), *Paneg.* 45 *ἀγῶνας μὴ μόνον τάχους καὶ ῥώμης, ἀλλὰ καὶ λόγων καὶ γνώμης... καὶ τούτων ἄθλα μέγιστα*. Cf. however already perhaps Gorgias 82 B 6, p. 286. 2, 6 D–K.

¹⁹ cf. F. Solmsen, *Hermes* 67 (1932), 138 f. (= *Kl. Schr.* ii. 134 f.), who compares also Alcidas' phrase *δρομαῖα τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς ὁρμῇ* (Arist. *Rhet.* 1406a23 f.).

²⁰ cf. W. C. Greene, *HSCP* 60 (1951), 23 ff., P. Friedländer, *Plato* (English version) i. 110 ff., Pfeiffer op. cit. 25 ff.

²¹ Cf. also Gorgias, *Vors.* 82 B 8, where contests in *τόλμα* and *σοφία* are contrasted. If one accepts the manuscript reading *σοφίας δὲ τὸ αἰνιγμα γνῶναι* here, the *Certamen* is a good example of Gorgiastic *σοφία*! Gorgias was the master of improvised answers, short or long (82A 1, 1a, Pl. *Gorg.* 447C, 449BC, *Phdr.* 267A, Arist. *Rhet.* 1418a34). In general see also W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* iii. 42 ff.

(Mich. Pap. 2754. 19 ff.). The reading of line 20 is uncertain. I am inclined to agree with Koniaris' criticism of West's ἀποδιδ[ός, ἀφέμ]ενος.²² It is unclear whether Alcidas is saying that he will go on to discuss other poetry ascribed to Homer, or the work of other poets. The latter seems, however, *prima facie* more probable, for the reasons given by West (438). This fits the subscription, which suggests that Alcidas has now finished his section on Homer. At lines 21–3 I think that one should probably read τοῖς βουλομένοις φι[λοδοξ]εῖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων εἰς τὸ κοινὸν παραδ[ώ]σω. φιλοδοξεῖν picks up the theme of honour more clearly than φιλοκαλεῖν. φιλοδοξεῖν εἰς τὸ κοινόν occurs in later Greek as an idiomatic phrase, and it is not impossible that these words should be taken together here.²³

III. ALCIDAMAS' *MOUSEION*

If Alcidas' piece on Homer is indeed an extract from his *Mouseion*, and if in this work he also discussed the life and work of other poets, we might ask what his general aims may have been in doing so. The story of Hesiod's death, which certainly occurred in the *Mouseion* (*Certamen* 239 f.), has an obvious moral in the divine punishment of his killers and the miraculous recovery of his body.²⁴ We have also seen how the honours accorded to both poets were important for Alcidas, and how he could see them as the agonistic forerunners of the later sophists and orators. But above all Alcidas is concerned with Homer's value as an educator. In this context it is striking that he sees him as a *ἱστορικός*.²⁵ This may suggest that he sees him either as a faithful recorder of tradition, or as an accurate observer of life. In the *Iliad* he would be primarily the first, in the *Odyssey* the second. And in fact Alcidas described the *Odyssey*, in a famous phrase, as καλὸν ἀνθρωπίνου βίου κάτοπτρον (Arist. *Rhet.* 1406b 12 f.). He also referred to the meeting between Odysseus and Nausicaa, adapting *Od.* 6. 128–9 in his own style into something like τοῖς τῆς ὕλης κλάδοις τὴν τοῦ σώματος αἰσχύνην παρήμπισχεν (*Rhet.* 1406a 27–9). It has not, as far as I know, been noticed that another quotation (1406a 1 f.),

μένους μὲν τὴν ψυχὴν πληρουμένην, πυρίχρων δὲ τὴν ὄψιν γιγνομένην,

is an adaptation of *Il.* 1. 103–4, describing the anger of Agamemnon:

μένους δὲ μέγα φρένες ἀμφὶ μέλαινα
πίμπλαντ', ὅσσε δὲ οἱ πύρι λαμπετόωντε ἔϊκην.

Other quotations may also refer to Homer or to passages in Homer, although this is less certain. κυανόχρων τὸ τῆς θαλάττης ἔδαφος could be inspired by Homer's 'wine-dark sea' (*Rhet.* 1406a 4 f.), and Alcidas also used such epic words as ἄθυρμα and ἀτασθαλία (1406a 8 f., b 13 f.). It has been suggested that the quotation οὐδὲν τοιοῦτον ἄθυρμα τῇ ποιήσει προσφέρων, which occurs immediately after the reference to the *Odyssey*, contrasts Homer as a σπουδαῖος ποιητής with other less serious poets.²⁶ Other fragments show close similarities with the views of Gorgias on

²² *HSCP* 75 (1971), 124. Could one read ἀρξάμενος αὐτοῦ, if the space permits? Cf. (e.g.) *Pl. Rep.* 600 E, in a context where Plato may have Alcidas Περὶ Ὀμήρου in mind (see IV below).

²³ cf. also for example Isocr. *Paneg.* 1 τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν ἰδίᾳ πονήσας, referring to intellectual service.

²⁴ cf. Vahlen, op. cit. 128.

²⁵ For *ἱστορία* and *παιδεία* together cf. the opening of Alcidas *On Sophists*, where 'some of the so-called sophists' are accused of neglecting both. Cf. also 3–4, 13, 15.

²⁶ H. E. Foss, *De Gorgia* (Halle, 1828), 83, Vahlen op. cit. 126.

rhetoric and the power of poetry. Solmsen has suggested that all the quotations from Alcidas in Arist. *Rhet.* 33 are taken from a single work (as in the case of nearly all of those in *Rhet.* 3. 9–11, which are from Isocrates' *Panegyricus*), and that this work discussed the civilizing power of poetry and rhetoric.²⁷ Solmsen hazarded the view that they all come, in fact, from the introduction to the *Μουσείον*. Alluring though this hypothesis is, it is hard to prove. The fragments do however give us a good idea of Alcidas' general attitude to literature. Above all, in describing the *Odyssey* as 'a fair mirror of human life' Alcidas was surely thinking not only of its realism as *μίμησις*, but also of the ethical value of such a realistic portrayal.²⁸ The orator Lycurgus echoes this view when praising the rule that Homer should be recited at the Panathenaea, as evidence of the importance attached to his poetry by the Athenians. He says that they were right in this, since laws are too brief to teach and can only issue commands,

οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ μιμούμενοι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον, τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ἔργων ἐκλεξάμενοι, μετὰ λόγου καὶ ἀποδείξεως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους συμπεύθουσιν (*In Leocratem* 102).²⁹

The *Odyssey*'s 'ethical' character, as at once both realistic and 'moral' (cf. *ἥθος*), was recognized by later critics (Arist. *Poet.* 1459b15, 'Longinus' 9. 15). Comedy, its successor (*Poet.* 1453a30 ff.), had a similar function. Menander himself may have represented a wise father as thus advising his son:

Inspicere tamquam in speculum in vitas omnium
Iubeo atque ex aliis sumere exemplum sibi (Ter. *Ad.* 415 f.).

The passage was echoed by Horace (*Sat.* 1. 4. 105 ff.), when speaking of his own education. Cicero described comedy as 'imitationem vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imaginem veritatis' (ap. Donatus *de com.* 5. 1), and of a scene taken by Caecilius from Menander he said:

haec conficta arbitror esse a poetis ut effectos nostros mores in alienis personis expressamque imaginem vitae cotidianae videremus (*Pro Rosc. Amer.* 47).³⁰

Likewise (to return to the *Odyssey*) Horace sums up what was by his time a commonplace, when he shows how Ulysses may be regarded as a 'useful model' of virtue and wisdom (*Ep.* 1. 2. 17 ff.).

That this idea of literature as such a mirror was no commonplace in Alcidas'.

²⁷ *Hermes* 67 (1932), 133 ff. (= *Kl. Schr.* ii. 129 ff.).

²⁸ For Alcidas' interest in *μίμησις* cf. the phrase ἀντίμιμον τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιθυμίαν (*Rhet.* 1406a29 f.), and especially *Soph.* 27 f., where written λόγοι are described as εἰδῶλα καὶ σχήματα καὶ μιμήματα λόγων, like statues and pictures which are μιμήματα of real bodies, whereas impromptu speech is alive and τοῖς ἀληθέσιν ἀφωμοίωται σώμασιν; and 32, where (in spite of these criticisms) written works are of some use as memorials, because it is possible εἰς τὰ γεγραμμένα κατιδόντας ὥσπερ ἐν κατόπτρῳ θεωρῆσαι τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιδόσεις. Plato's description of written works as being like silent, motionless pictures in the *Phaedrus* (276D) may be influenced by Alcidas. There is, however, something vaguely similar in Isocr. *Soph.* 12, which may be earlier than Alcidas' *On Sophists* (cf. Steidle op. cit. 290 f.). It is notable that in the *Phaedrus* Plato twice uses the word μουσεῖον (at 267B, with reference to Polus, who was like Alcidas a follower of Gorgias, and 278B, of the nymphs). See also Milne op. cit. for a rather unsatisfactory attempt to deal with the relationship of Isocrates *Soph.*, Alcidas and the *Phaedrus*.

²⁹ The parallel was noted also by Vahlen (op. cit. 125 f.). Cf. Isocrates' reference to the Panathenaic rule in *Paneg.* 159, where this is also cited as evidence of honour accorded to Homer's poetry 'in musical contests and the education of our youth', and of his value as an ethical model.

³⁰ On these passages see Eduard Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* ii. 386.

time is suggested by Aristotle's censure of his use of the metaphor.³¹ This is by no means the only occasion where Alcidas appears to be an innovator, creating or developing concepts which were later to become common currency. We have already noted his early use of *ιστορικός*, which Plato seems to treat as a coinage (*Soph.* 267E), and it is striking to find that Plato uses it in the phrase *ιστορικὴν τινα μίμησιν*. One might note that Alcidas possibly uses *οἰκονομία* for the first time in a literary sense (*τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων οἰκονομίαν Soph.* 25.).³² He also says that a written work may produce *τινας ἐκπλήξεις*, like works of art (*Soph.* 28).³³ Moreover, the division between subject-matter, structure and language is clearly stated here (*Soph.* 33), although not perhaps quite for the first time.³⁴

It may be partly due to chance that Alcidas appears to be original in such respects, since we do not possess much in the way of earlier rhetorical theory. But what we do have of his work can only make one echo the regret expressed by Blass that more has not survived.³⁵

IV. ALCIDAS AND PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

In the light of what we have seen of Alcidas' views on Homer, and the possible echoes of some of his ideas in Plato, it is interesting to look again at the impact of this kind of discussion of poetry on the *Republic*. When Plato returns to the attack on art at the end of this work we find a very different tone from that of Diotima's 'sophistic' discourse. He begins by considering the nature of *μίμησις* (595C ff.), and it is noticeable that Alcidas' image of the mirror is used here (596D).³⁶ The idea of painting and poetry as 'at third remove from reality' might possibly be influenced by Alcidas' condemnation of written words as *εἰδῶλα καὶ σχήματα καὶ μιμήματα λόγων*, spoken (or real) words being in turn 'like real things' (*Soph.* 27 f.), although Plato of course does not distinguish here between the spoken and the written word, both being representations of things, and these in turn images of reality. Plato then moves on to the claim that Homer and the tragedians are masters of all knowledge (598D ff.). Here we may recall again that the contest of Homer and Hesiod was a contest in *σοφία* in general, one of the points being Homer's ability to answer questions on a wide range of subjects, and to solve all *ἀπορίαι* or problems. In this respect, of course, the poet was the model for the sophists. Plato attacks this view on the grounds that if one were truly *ἐπιστήμων* one would try to leave behind as memorials of oneself *καλὰ ἔργα*, rather than mere *μιμήματα*, and would wish to be oneself a subject for encomia rather than their author (599B). At this point the poets, who were associated in the *Symposium* with other *δημιουργοί* and with the lawgivers, are separated from these. For when it comes to *παιδεία*, Plato says that there is no evidence that any city has been improved by Homer's influence, as in the case of the great lawgivers, or that he contributed to strategy or science, or that he had any school of followers who adopted his way of life, like Pythagoras. On the contrary, he seems to have suffered

³¹ It had already been used in poetry, however: cf. Pindar *N.* 7. 14, where song itself is *ἔργοις καλοῖς ἔσποτρον*. Here, as so often, Pindar anticipates the language of later literary criticism.

³² Cf. *οἰκονόμος* used metaphorically in a rhetorical context by Alcidas (*Rhet.* 1406a 26 f.), probably of style. Blass, however, read *οἰκοδομίαν* at *Soph.* 25, which would go well with the verbs *διαλύειν καὶ συνενερίπειν*, and this metaphor is certainly used in later literary criticism (e.g. Dion. Hal. *CV* 6, p. 28 U-R).

³³ For this term in literary criticism cf. Ar. *Ran.* 962, Pl. *Ion* 535B, Arist. *Poet.* 1454a4, 55a17, etc.

³⁴ cf. Isocr. *Soph.* 16, and also (probably later) Pl. *Phaedrus* 234E, 236A.

³⁵ op. cit. 359.

³⁶ cf. Solmsen op. cit. 143.

from great neglect in his lifetime, even his companion Creophylus being of no use to him in this respect (599C–600 B; cf. *Certamen* 321 ff.). The great sophists have had many pupils and have been highly honoured, whereas Homer and Hesiod were allowed ‘to go round as rhapsodes’ (cf. *Certamen* 56, 255), i.e. wandering from place to place without followers. So we should assume that ‘beginning from Homer, all poetic composers are imitators of images of ἀρετή’, rather than of the truth (600C–601 A). Consequently μίμησις is παιδιὰ and not σπουδή (for this contrast cf. Alcidas Soph. 34 f.: improvised speeches are truly serious and useful, whereas writing is to be practised ἐν παιδιᾷ).³⁷

In this section Plato undermines the foundations of Alcidas’ views on poetry, and also the general theme of the *Certamen*, that Homer, Hesiod and other poets have received due honours in their lives, as well as after death. We cannot, of course, be sure how much of the section in the *Certamen* on the honours paid by particular communities to Homer goes back to Alcidas. Some of it could even be a result of later attempts to rebut the attack of Plato. But one should notice that Plato does not actually contradict the evidence of the *Certamen* itself. Plato says that Homer and Hesiod went round singing without any followers, and that is the picture portrayed in the *Certamen*. He also says that no city acknowledges Homer as a lawgiver; he does not say that Homer and Hesiod never received any honours from individual communities. The reference to Creophylus and the neglect of Homer also fits the *Certamen*, where Homer stays with Creophylus on the island of Ios as an old man, and dies there. The ignominious circumstances of his death (failure to solve a children’s riddle, and slipping on some dung) certainly justify the accusation of Plato that Creophylus did not take good care of his master!

Plato goes on to condemn artistic imitation because of the dangerous effect it can have on the emotions, and the dubious character of the pleasure which it produces (603C ff.). Here again, it is attractive to compare those of Aristotle’s quotations from Alcidas which seem to concern this subject, e.g. πανδήμου χάριτος δημιουργός and οἰκονόμος τῆς τῶν ἀκουόντων ἡδονῆς (cf. Pl. *Gorgias* 453 A), and perhaps σκυθρωπὸν τὴν φροντίδα τῆς ψυχῆς (sc. ἐκλύει? Solmsen), and ἀντίμιμον τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιθυμίαν.³⁸

Consequently, when Plato concludes by referring to those ‘Ομήρου ἐπαινέται who say that Homer is the educator of Greece, and that he deserves to be used as a guide πρὸς διοίκησιν τε καὶ παιδείαν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων (606E), we may reasonably see Alcidas’ *Mouseion* as in the forefront of Plato’s mind here.

V. THE *MOUSEION* AND *ON SOPHISTS*

If Plato did have the *Mouseion* in mind, it is significant that there seem to be echoes at the same time of Alcidas’ *On Sophists*. In this piece Alcidas includes a defence of his apparent illogicality, in condemning writing when he himself εὐδοκιμεῖν παρασκευάζεται παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν by its agency, and in praising improvisation and chance inspiration above forethought and preparation, when he is himself practising philosophy (29). This most naturally suggests that *On Sophists* is the preface to a longer philosophical work, by which Alcidas believes he will make his reputation.³⁹ Taken

³⁷ cf. also Pl. *Phdr.* 276B ff., *Gorgias* 82B11. 21, *Isocr. Hel.* 11, and generally Friedländer, loc. cit.

³⁸ cf. Solmsen op. cit., esp. 136 f. (comparing also *Gorgias* 82B11. 8).

³⁹ cf. also 32: ἐτι δὲ καὶ μνημεῖα καταλιπεῖν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν σπουδάζοντες καὶ τῇ φιλοτιμίᾳ χαριζόμενοι λόγους γράφειν ἐπιχειροῦμεν.

together with the other references to *ἱστορία* and *παιδεία*, this could lead one to suppose that the work in question is the *Mouseion* itself, in which Alcidas went on to illustrate, from the legends of Homer and Hesiod, the value of improvisation and the role of the epic poets as educators. How much of the other material in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 3. 3 derives from the same work one cannot say, but as *On Sophists* is concerned with rhetoric, and its relationship to philosophy and life in general, it would not be surprising to discover that the *Mouseion* is indeed (as Solmsen suggested) the source of the other quotations also.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ Milne, op. cit. 61 f. (working from a different viewpoint) has also suggested that *On Sophists* was the introduction to the *Mouseion*. She noted too a further possible point of contact between Alcidas and Plato: the Midas epigram, ascribed to Homer at *Certamen* 260 ff., is quoted in the *Phaedrus* (264D).

It is theoretically possible, of course, that the parallels which I have discussed between Alcidas and Plato are due to influence the other way. This could be the case if one accepts Renehan's dating of the *Mouseion* after 362 B.C. (loc. cit. above, n. 14). But (i) in that case it is odd that no better attempt seems to have been made by Alcidas to answer Plato's charges in the *Republic*, about the failure of Homer and Hesiod to leave behind any followers or to produce genuine *καλὰ ἔργα* rather than *μιμήματα*, and about the bad emotional effects of artistic imitation; (ii) if *On Sophists* was composed before Isocrates *Panegyricus* (380 B.C.), and if it is the introduction to the *Mouseion*, this possibility would in any case be ruled out.