SOCRATES IN LOVE
passages from ancient texts for consideration

1) Plato *Symposium* 201d: (speech of Socrates)

And now I shall let you alone, and proceed with the discourse upon Love which I heard one day from a Mantinean woman named Diotima: in this subject she was skilled, and in many others too; for once, by bidding the Athenians offer sacrifices ten years before the plague, she procured them so much delay in the advent of the sickness. Well, I also had my lesson from her in love-matters; so now I will try and follow up the points on which Agathon and I have just agreed by narrating to you all on my own account, as well as I am able, the speech she delivered to me.

2) Plato *Symposium* 219e f. (speech of Alcibiades)

Now all this, you know, had already happened to me when we later went on a campaign together to Potidaea; and there we were messmates. Well, first of all, he surpassed not me only but every one else in bearing hardships; whenever we were cut off in some place a nd were compelled, as often in campaigns, to go without food, the rest of us were nowhere in point of endurance. Then again, when we had plenty of good cheer, he alone could enjoy it to the full, and though unwilling to drink, when once overruled he used to beat us all; and, most surprising of all, no man has ever yet seen Socrates drunk. Of this power I expect we shall have a good test in a moment. But it was in his endurance of winter— in those parts the winters are awful—that I remember, among his many marvellous feats, how once there came a frost about as awful as can be: we all preferred not to stir abroad, or if any of us did, we wrapped ourselves up with prodigious care, and after putting on our shoes we muffled up our feet with felt and

little fleeces. But he walked out in that weather, clad in just such a coat as he was always wont to wear, and he made his way more easily over the ice unshod than the rest of us did in our shoes. The soldiers looked askance at him, thinking that he despised them. So much for that: "but next, the valiant deed our strong-souled hero dared" on service there one day, is well worth hearing. Immersed in some problem at dawn, he stood in the same spot considering it; and when he found it a tough one, he would not give it up but stood there trying. The time drew on to midday, and the men began to notice him, and said to one another in wonder: 'Socrates has been standing there in a study ever since dawn!' The end of it was that in the evening some of the Ionians after they had supped— this time it was summer—brought out their mattresses and rugs and took their sleep in the cool; thus they waited to see if he would go on standing all night too. He stood till dawn came and the sun rose; then walked away, after offering a prayer to the Sun.

"Then, if you care to hear of him in battle—for there also he must have his due—on the day of the fight in which I gained my prize for valor from our commanders, it was he, out of the whole army, who saved my life: I was wounded, and he would not forsake me, but helped me to save both my armor and myself. I lost no time, Socrates, in urging the generals to award the prize for valor to you; and here I think you will neither rebuke me nor give me the lie. For when the generals, out of regard for my consequence, were inclined to award the prize to me, you outdid them in urging that I should have it rather than you. And further let me tell you, gentlemen, what a notable figure he made when the army was retiring in flight from Delium: I happened to be there on horseback, while he marched under arms. The troops were in utter disorder, and he was retreating along with Laches, when I chanced to come up with them and, as soon as I saw them, passed them the word to have no fear, saying I would not abandon them. Here, indeed, I had an even finer view of Socrates than at Potidaea—for personally I had less reason for alarm, as I was mounted; and I noticed, first, how far he outdid Laches in collectedness, and next I felt—to use a phrase of yours, Aristophanes—how there he stepped along, as his wont is in our streets, "strutting like a proud marsh-goose, with ever a side-long glance," turning a calm sidelong look on friend and foe alike, and convincing anyone even from afar that whoever cares to touch this person will find he can put up a stout enough defence. The result was that both he and his comrade got away unscathed: for, as a rule, people will not lay a finger on those who show this disposition in war; it is men flying in headlong rout that they pursue.

3) Plato *Menexenus* 235c f.

Menexenus
You are always deriding the orators, Socrates. And truly I think that this time the selected speaker will not be too well prepared; for the selection is being made without warning, so that the speaker will probably be driven to improvise his speech.

Socrates
Why so, my good sir? Each one of these men has speeches ready made; and what is more, it is in no wise difficult to improvise such things. For if it were a question of eulogizing Athenians before an audience of Peloponnesians, or Peloponnesians before Athenians, there would indeed be need of a good orator to win credence and credit; but when a man makes his effort in the presence of the very men whom he is praising, it is no difficult matter to win credit as a fine speaker.

Menexenus
You think not, Socrates?

Socrates
Yes, by Zeus, I certainly do.

Menexenus
And do you think that you yourself would be able to make the speech, if required and if the Council were to select you?

Socrates
That I should be able to make the speech would be nothing wonderful, Menexenus; for she who is my instructor is by no means weak in the art of rhetoric; on the contrary, she has turned out many fine orators, and amongst them one who surpassed all other Greeks, Pericles, the son of Xanthippus.

Menexenus
Who is she? But you mean Aspasia, no doubt.

Socrates
I do and; also Connus the son of Metrobius; [236a] for these are my two instructors, the one in music, the other in rhetoric. So it is not surprising that a man who is trained like me should be clever at speaking. But even a man less well taught than I, who had learnt his music from Lamprus and his rhetoric from Antiphon the Rhamnusian,—even such a one, I say, could none the less win credit by praising Athenians before an Athenian audience.

Menexenus
What, then, would you have to say, if you were required to speak?

Socrates
Nothing, perhaps, myself of my own invention; [236b] but I was listening only yesterday to Aspasia going through a funeral speech for these very people. For she had heard the report you mention, that the Athenians are going to select the speaker; and thereupon she rehearsed to me the speech in the form it should take, extemporizing in part, while other parts of it she had previously prepared, as I imagine, at the time when she was composing the funeral oration which Pericles delivered; and from this she patched together sundry fragments.

Menexenus
Could you repeat from memory that speech of Aspasia?

Socrates
Yes, if I am not mistaken; for I learnt it, to be sure, from her as she went along, [236c] and I was about to be slapped whenever I forgot.

Menexenus
Why don't you repeat it then?

Socrates
But possibly my teacher will be vexed with me if I publish abroad her speech.

Menexenus
Never fear, Socrates; only tell it and you will gratify me exceedingly, whether it is Aspasia's that you wish to deliver or anyone else's; only say on.

4) Diogenes Laertius *Life of Socrates* (excerpts)

[18] Socrates was the son of Sophroniscus, a sculptor, and of Phaenarete, a midwife, as we read in the *Theaetetus* of Plato; he was a citizen of Athens and belonged to the deme Alopece. It was thought that he helped Euripides to make his plays; ...

[19] According to some authors he was a pupil of Anaxagoras, and also of Damon, as Alexander states in his *Successions of Philosophers.* When Anaxagoras was condemned, he

became a pupil of Archelaus the physicist; Aristoxenus asserts that Archelaus was very fond of him.

He was formidable in public speaking, according to Idomeneus; [20] moreover, as Xenophon tells us, the Thirty forbade him to teach the art of words. And Aristophanes attacks him in his plays for making the worse appear the better reason. For Favorinus in his *Miscellaneous History* says Socrates and his pupil Aeschines were the first to teach rhetoric; and this is confirmed by Idomeneus in his work on the Socratic circle. Again, he was the first who discoursed on the conduct of life, and the first philosopher who was tried and put to death. Aristoxenus, the son of Spintharus, says of him that he made money; he would at all events invest sums, collect the interest accruing, and then, when this was expended, put out the principal again.

[22] Unlike most philosophers, he had no need to travel, except when required to go on an expedition. The rest of his life he stayed at home and engaged all the more keenly in argument with anyone who would converse with him, his aim being not to alter his opinion but to get at the truth...

He took care to exercise his body and kept in good condition. At all events he served on the expedition to Amphipolis; and when in the battle of Delium Xenophon had fallen from his horse, he stepped in and saved his life. [23] For in the general flight of the Athenians he personally retired at his ease, quietly turning round from time to time and ready to defend himself in case he were attacked. Again, he served at Potidaea, whither he had gone by sea, as land communications were interrupted by the war; and while there he is said to have remained a whole night without changing his position, and to have won the prize of valour. But he resigned it to Alcibiades, for whom he cherished the tenderest affection, according to Aristippus in the fourth book of his treatise *On the Luxury of the Ancients.* Ion of Chios relates that in his youth he visited Samos in the company of Archelaus; and Aristotle that he went to Delphi; he went also to the Isthmus, according to Favorinus in the first book of his *Memorabilia.*

[24] His strength of will and attachment to the democracy are evident from his refusal to yield to Critias and his colleagues when they ordered him to bring the wealthy Leon of Salamis before them for execution, and further from the fact that he alone voted for the acquittal of the ten generals; and again from the facts that when he had the opportunity to escape from the prison he declined to do so, and that he rebuked his friends for weeping over his fate, and addressed to them his most memorable discourses in the prison.

[26] Aristotle says that he married two wives: his first wife was Xanthippe, by whom he had a son, Lamprocles; his second wife was Myrto, the daughter of Aristides the Just, whom he took without a dowry. By her he had Sophroniscus and Menexenus. Others

make Myrto his first wife; while some writers, including Satyrus and Hieronymus of Rhodes, affirm that they were both his wives at the same time. For they say that the Athenians were short of men and, wishing to increase the population, passed a decree permitting a citizen to marry one Athenian woman and have children by another; and that Socrates accordingly did so...

His disdainful, lofty spirit of his is also noticed by Aristophanes when he says:

Because you stalk along the streets, rolling your eyes, and endure, barefoot, many a hardship, and gaze up at us [the clouds].

And yet at times he would even put on fine clothes to suit the occasion, as in Plato's *Symposium*, where he is on his way to Agathon's house.