SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN ALCIPHRŌN'S *LETTERS OF COURTESANS*

by

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Abstract

Current studies on the topic of sexuality in the ancient Greek world tend to favour the active/passive paradigm of understanding sexual relations which was originally proposed in Kenneth Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* (1978) and Michel Foucault's three volume *History of Sexuality* (1978, 1985, and 1986). In Dover and Foucault, the sexual behaviour of the classical Athenian male takes primacy, so much so that the reader of either scholar can be left with the impression that the role of the active partner was available only to adult citizen males. Alciphrôn's *Letters of Courtesans* (Book 4 of his works) depict a group of desiring female subjects who demonstrate that sexual agency, the assumption of the active role in a sexual relationship, need not be the exclusively masculine phenomenon that Dover and Foucault describe. *Letters of Courtesans* prove that female sexuality can be portrayed as active and therefore that women in literature can be sexual agents. Additionally, these letters demonstrate the limits of the approaches of Dover and Foucault, that sexuality need not be defined as exclusively active or exclusively passive. By approaching *Letters of Courtesans* from this perspective, we are able to see that ancient Greek literature includes depictions of active female sexuality that Dover and Foucault overlooked. *Letters of Courtesans* are therefore a way to challenge and develop the work on ancient sexuality that has followed from these two landmark studies. Because of their fictional nature and their epistolary format, *Letters of Courtesans* lay bare the process of Alciphrôn's construction of sexuality and gender. I shall therefore show that Alciphrôn's *Letters of Courtesans* are an ideal locus for a discussion of these topics. This study will establish that *Letters of Courtesans* ought to occupy a place of importance in any discussion of ancient ideas of sexuality and gender.
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Dedication

This is dedicated to my husband, John, who is unfailingly encouraging and supportive,

and to my mom and dad, who inspire me everyday.
Introduction

Current studies on the topic of sexuality in the ancient Greek world tend to favour the active/passive paradigm of understanding sexual relations which was originally proposed in Kenneth Dover’s *Greek Homosexuality* (1978) and Michel Foucault’s three volume *History of Sexuality* (1978, 1985, and 1986). In Dover and in the second and third volumes of Foucault, the sexual behaviour of the classical Athenian male takes primacy, so much so that the reader of either scholar can be left with the impression that the role of the active partner was available only to adult citizen males. Alciphrôn’s *Letters of Courtesans* (Book 4 of his works) depict a group of desiring female subjects who demonstrate that sexual agency, the assumption of the active role in a sexual relationship, need not be the exclusively masculine phenomenon that Dover and Foucault describe. *Letters of Courtesans*, part of a series of fictional letters written by the Second Sophistic writer Alciphrôn, with the others written from the perspective of farmers, fishermen, and parasites, prove that female sexuality can be portrayed as active even in the Foucauldian sense, and therefore that women in literature can be sexual agents. Additionally, these letters demonstrate the limits of the approaches of Dover and Foucault, that sexuality need not be defined as exclusively active or exclusively passive. By approaching *Letters of Courtesans* from this perspective, we are able to see that ancient Greek literature includes depictions of active female sexuality that Dover and Foucault overlooked. *Letters of Courtesans* are therefore a way to challenge and develop the work on ancient sexuality that has followed from these two landmark studies.

Since the publication of Foucault’s three volumes, and particularly their subsequent translation into English, few scholarly works on the topic of the construction of sexuality have
not addressed Foucault in one way or another. The History of Sexuality informs almost all current discourse on sexuality in the fields of Classics, History, and Cultural Theory. In chapter 2, I shall outline the major issues that have arisen out of this discussion, primarily as they apply to classical and feminist scholarship, contextualizing The History of Sexuality with reference to other major works from the field of Classics that also deal with sexuality.

An associated aspect of my approach to sexuality and its expression will deal the influential work of both Laura Mulvey and Teresa De Lauretis on the penetrative male gaze. As in the case of Foucault’s History of Sexuality and its effects on the scholarship that followed it, Laura Mulvey’s 1975 article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” established a new paradigm for understanding film and the act of looking. De Lauretis built on Mulvey’s work using the same concept of the male gaze. My use of their work acknowledges that a significant shift from their understanding of the gaze has yet to occur, and therefore that Mulvey and De Lauretis are essential to any discussion of the gaze.

These works will inform my own analysis of Letters of Courtesans in Chapter 3, as I examine how the courtesans’ sexuality has been constructed by Alciphrôn. This section will employ categories taken from Foucault’s second volume, The Use of Pleasure: aphrodisia, or sexual pleasures (1985: 38), telea, a pattern of moral conduct within an erotic relationship with a specific aim (1985: 27-8), and chrêsis aphrodizôn, the use of sexual pleasures (1985: 53). In addition to those of Foucault, I have also added my own category of peithô, persuasion. By using categories originally employed in an analysis of male sexuality to look at the sexuality of the

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1 Volume 1 was originally published in French in 1976, with its English translation published in 1978. Volumes 2 and 3 were both published in French in 1984, then published in their English translations in 1985 and 1986 respectively. I have chosen to cite the publication dates of the translations rather than the original French publications as The History of Sexuality became well-known and influential in the field of Classics after the translation of volumes 2 and 3 were released (Skinner 1996: 1).
hetairai in the *Letters of Courtesans*, I shall establish two points: that Foucault’s androcentric
theories can be applied meaningfully to women, and that in terms of our current
conceptualization of ancient sexuality, women can indeed be active participants in erotic
relationships.

Chapter 3 will examine Alciphrōn’s representation of the female voice. This discussion
of a male author writing in the female first person will use Elizabeth D. Harvey’s term
“transvestite ventriloquism,” (*Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance
Texts*, 1992). My discussion of ventriloquism will also incorporate theories concerning the
construction of gendered identities, particularly as outlined by Judith Butler. These theories will,
in turn, be used in a comparison of the courtesans from Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans*
and the courtesans of Alciphrōn. By taking this approach, I will demonstrate that Alciphrōn’s
ventriloquism of the female voice draws on images of women found throughout ancient Greek
literature.

Because of their fictional nature and their epistolary format, *Letters of Courtesans* lay
bare the process of Alciphrōn’s construction of sexuality and gender. My conclusion will
therefore show that Alciphrōn’s *Letters of Courtesans* are an ideal locus for a discussion of these
topics. It will establish that *Letters of Courtesans* ought to occupy a place of importance in any
discussion of ancient ideas of sexuality and gender.
Chapter 1: Alciphron

Located Alciphron

Alciphron is a prose author who writes in a Classical Attic Greek dialect, about whom very little is known. He is thought to have lived in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE, but is never mentioned by name in antiquity. His name is taken from later manuscripts, along with the appellations “rhetor” and “Atticist” (Benner and Fobes 1949: 6). A collection of fictionalized letters (twenty-two written by fishermen, thirty-nine by farmers, forty-two by parasites, and twenty by courtesans and their lovers) is his only known work; all of these letters are written in a highly Atticizing style that draws heavily on New Comedy, particularly the works of Menander.

Letters of Fishermen and Letters of Farmers are both set in rural Attica. They contain references to various locations in Athens such as the Pnyx (2.19.2), the Kerameikos (2.22.2), and the Peiraeus (1.6.2, 1.11.4, 1.14.2, 1.15.2, and 1.16.3), and to Athenian festivals like the Apaturia and Thesmophoria (2.371), although there are no mentions of any major historical figures. All of the names of the writers of these two types of letters are so-called “speaking names,” which indicate the context from which the letter-writer comes. These sets of letters share three themes: the drudgery of physical labour, the conflict between urban and rustic lifestyles, and love. Letter 1.2 captures the motif of hard daily toil:

2 Johannes Tzetzes refers to Alciphron as ῥήτωρ in a scholion to the Chiliades 8.895, while Eustathius calls him ΑΤΤΙΚΙΣΤΗΣ in his commentary on The Iliad.

3 Examples of such speaking names are the writer and addressee of letter 1.22, Thalasserōs to Euplōs (“Sea-love” to “Good-sail”), and Hylē to Nomius (“Forest” to “Shepherd”) of 2.22.
μάτην ἡμῶν πάντα πονεῖται, ὡς Κύρτων, δι’ ἣμέρας μὲν ὑπὸ τῆς ἄλεας
φλεγομένοις νύκτωρ δὲ ὑπὸ λαμπάαι τοῦ βυθὸν ἀποξύουσι, καὶ τὸ
λεγόμενον δὴ τούτῳ εἰς τοὺς τῶν Δαναΐδων τοὺς ἀμφορέας ἐκχέομεν
πίθους.

In vain are all our toils, Cyrtōn; in the daytime we are scorched by the fierce
heat, at night by torchlight we comb the surface of the deep with nets, and in
fact, as the saying goes, we keep emptying our pitchers into the jars of the
Danaïds. (1.2.1, tr. Benner and Fobes, adapted)4

Letter 2.8 deals with the rural/urban dichotomy: οὐκέτι σοι μέλει οὔτε τῆς εὕνης ἡμῶν οὔτε
tῶν κοινῶν παιδίων οὔτε μὴν τῆς κατ’ ἱγρὸν διατριβῆς, ὅλη δὲ ἐὰν τοῦ ἄστεος, “You no
longer care for our marriage bed or for the children of our union, or in fact for our country way
of life; you are wholly wrapped up in the city” (2.8.1). Finally, love is a topic which preoccupies
both the fishermen and farmers, and those around them. Letter 1.11 is from the young girl
Glaucippē to her mother, Charopē. She writes about her love for a guardsman from the city:

ἡ τούτω μιγῆσομαι ἡ τὴν Λεσβίαν μιμησαμένη Σαπφῶ οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς
Λευκάδος πέτρας, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῶν Πειραικῶν προβόλων ἐξαιτην
εἰς τὸ κλυδώνιον ὠσοῦ.

I intend to have this man, or, if I can’t, I shall follow the example of Lesbian
Sappho: not indeed from the Leucadian cliff but from the jutting rocks of the
Peiræus I shall hurl myself into the surf. (1.11.4)

Letter 1.11 also illustrates a key contradiction implicit in Letters of Fishermen and Letters of
Farmers: the letters are written in fine Attic style by supposedly ignorant rustics. Alciphrôn
refers to just such an inconsistency in letter 3.34, from one parasite to another on the subject of
the farmer Corydon (who is also the addressee of letter 2.23): γεωργῶ συνήθης ἐπιεικῶς ἦν,
kai τὰ πολλὰ ἐξεχεῖτο ἐν ἐμοι τῶ γέλωτι, Ἀττικῆς στωμυλίας καὶ ἕνωσ ἦ κατὰ τοὺς

4 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Alciphrôn are from Benner and Fobes (1949). Where indicated, I
have adapted the translation.
χωρτάς ἐπαίρων, “I was fairly well acquainted with the farmer Corydon, and he often indulged in making fun of me, for he had a style of banter quite above the level of our country folk” (3.34.1, adapted).

*Letters of Parasites* are set in urban Athens. Like *Letters of Fishermen* and *Letters of Farmers*, their writers and addressees have speaking names, all of which in this case allude to the main feature of a parasite’s life, which is the dominant theme of these letters: the never-ending pursuit of food. In this pursuit, as the letters relate, these parasites are subject to all kinds of abuse at the hands of their patrons. Letter 3.3, from Artepithymus to Cnizozomus—“Loaf-Lust” to “Savoury-Soup” (names as in Benner and Fobes)—exemplifies the parasite’s quandary:

Strangling is what I need, and shortly you will see me with my neck in a noose. For I am able neither to endure the cuffings and the general maudlin behaviour of the cursed shot–payers, nor to control my disgusting and glutinous belly; for it keeps demanding, and not for satiety merely but to satisfy its craving for delicacies. And my face cannot stand the continuous blows, and, pestered as I am by the repeated cuffings, I am in danger of having one of my two eyes messed up. Poor me! The evils that we are compelled to suffer by this glutinous and all-devouring belly of ours! (3.3.1-3, adapted)

This letter therefore represents the basic stereotype of the insatiable parasite, as the letters written by fishermen and farmers also contain fictionalized perspectives of stock characters. These types

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5 Letter 3.7, for example, is from Psychoclastes to Bucio —“Crumb-Breaker” to “Stuff-cheek” (names as in Benner and Fobes).
of characters are found in varying types of Greek literature,\textsuperscript{6} but most important is the New
Comedy of Hellenistic Athens.

This process of casting backwards in time to the cultural heyday of Athens was part of a
broader cultural trend in the Roman Empire, one that looked directly to Classical and Hellenistic
Athens as a focal point of intellectual culture. Hellenistic Athens stands out most in \textit{Letters of
Courtesans}, as these include fictionalized letters referring to, and in some cases are written in the
voice of, actual historical Athenian figures of the Hellenistic period, such as Praxitelēs the
sculptor, Menander the comic playwright, Hypereidēs the orator, Epicurus the philosopher, and
Demetrius Poliortēs, the Hellenistic general who famously liberated Athens from the
occupation of Cassander and Ptolemy.\textsuperscript{7} Even certain names of the courtesans themselves refer to
historical personages, such as Phrynē and Glykeria.\textsuperscript{8} Because of this use of historical figures,
\textit{Letters of Courtesans} stands apart from the others written by Alciphrōn as an example of the
learned display that characterized literature at the time. In his detailed description of Attic life,
Alciphrōn can be described as a “miniaturist,” who “gives us a sample of sophistic learning
indulged for its own sake or for purposes of learned entertainment” (Anderson 1993: 10).

Another factor that sets \textit{Letters of Courtesans} apart from Alciphrōn’s other groups of
letters is the interconnected nature of the individuals and events they describe.\textsuperscript{9} Taking letter 4.1,
from Phrynē to her lover Praxitelēs, as an example of this interconnectness, we can see how it is

\textsuperscript{6} For example, Jackson suggests that Alciphrōn’s sympathy for the difficult life of the fishermen reflects Theocritus
21 (1912: 75).

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{OCD}\textsuperscript{1} gives the following dates for these figures (all are BCE): Praxitelēs, c.375-330; Menander, 344/3-292;
Hypereidēs, 389-322; Epicurus, 341-270; and Demetrius Poliortēs, 336-283.

\textsuperscript{8} For a selection of ancient texts referring to Phrynē and Glykeria, see the section in this chapter on the historical
hetairai (pp. 31-8).

\textsuperscript{9} See Appendix 1 for a table of all the examples of interconnectedness in \textit{Letters of Courtesans}. 
connected to letters 4.3-5, which all discuss the trial of Phrynē. These letters are written by Bacchis, who is the topic of discussion in 4.11, and the addressee of 4.2 and 4.14. Letter 4.2 is written by Glykera, who exchanges letters with her lover Menander in 4.18 and 4.19. The only letters that are not connected with the others in any way are 4.12, which is fragmentary, and fragment 5. Because of the interrelated plots, *Letters of Courtesans* are more cohesive as a collection than the other sets of letters.10

All of Alciphrōn’s *Letters* are best understood in comparison with works of similar form and subject matter, which can then aid in the process of assigning dates to him. Three works which are similar in form and content to Alciphrōn’s *Letters* place the author in the late second/early third century CE: Aelian’s *Letters of Farmers*, Philostratus’ *Love Letters*, and Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans*.11 Like Alciphrōn, Aelian writes a collection of twenty fictionalized letters from farmers, which deal with two of the main topics from Alciphrōn’s *Letters of Farmers*: the difficulty of rural life and love.12 These letters are also written in imitation of Attic Greek, and, again like those of Alciphrōn, betray a higher degree of sophistication than one might expect from rustics. Phaedrias, the writer of letter 20 in Aelian, credits this to their authors being Athenian:

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10 That the interconnected plots of *Letters of Courtesans* are chronologically inconsistent with the actual dates of their various characters suggests that they are intended as a generic, rather than a historical, picture of Hellenistic Athens.

11 Aelian’s dates are given as ca.175-ca.253 CE by *OCD*3, while in Philostratus’ case ascertaining dates is made much more difficult by the existence of several “Philostrati.” The author of the letters mentioned here is generally thought to be Philostratus II, a sophist who was based first in Athens, then in Rome under Severus (193-211 CE) and into the time of Philip (244-249 CE). Benner and Fobes base this on the 10th Century *Suda* (1949: 388-9). The *OCD* gives Lucian’s dates as c.120 to post-180 CE.

12 *OCD*3 also credits Aelian, a Roman teacher of rhetoric, with two other works, Ποικίλη ἱστορία (*Varia Historia*) and Ξυσσών ἰδιότης (*De Natura Animalium*).
If these written words addressed to you are too clever for the country to supply, do not marvel; for we are not Libyan nor Lydian, but we are Athenian farmers.

(tr. Benner and Fobes)

Indeed, an analysis of the names of letter-writers and addressees from Aelian shows that he draws as heavily on the Classical Athenian past as Alciphron does. Of these names, four come from Old Comedy, five from Middle Comedy, four from New Comedy, one from Tragedy, and three come from Demosthenēs while three are also found in Alciphron and four are found in Lucian.13

Philostratus writes a collection of seventy-three love letters, all written from the same perspective, to both young boys and to women, the majority of whom are unnamed.14 Some of these letters are prescriptive, such as letter 36, in which Philostratus instructs his addressee on the most attractive choice of footwear. Others are letters of admiration to a beloved, such as letter 38, which is addressed to a prostitute. This letter praises the addressee and her occupation:

That which seems to others infamous and deserving of reproach— the fact that you are shameless and bold and complaisant— is what I love about you most... You place your charms at men’s disposal with full knowledge, and you possess a skill

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13 Two of the names shared with Alciphron come from Aristophanes: Comarchidēs, of Aelian’s second letter, is also found in Alciphron 2.29 and Aristophanes’ Peace, while Chremēs, of Aelian 9 and 19, is found in Alciphron 1.13 and Ecclesiazusae. Callarus and Calliclēs of Aelian 6 are from Demosthenēs’ Against Calliclēs.

14 Only nineteen of seventy-four addressees are named by Philostratus, and none of these names are found in Alciphron. (Letter 70 is addressed to two individuals, Cleophon and Gaius.)
that is nicely adjusted to produce its effect. For fire is not so hot as is your panting, nor aulos so sweet to hear as are your words. (tr. Benner and Fobes, adapted)

Other letters of this type praise young boys, and, in the case of letter 30, a married woman.

Lucian’s Dialogues of the Courtesans are the most useful text to form a comparison with Alciphron’s Letters of Courtesans. As Alciphron does with his letters, Lucian situates his dialogues in Athens, looking back in time to the Hellenistic era. Five of the names of Lucian’s hetairai are shared by those of Alciphron, and both share the common source of New Comedy. More important than their shared sources, though, is Alciphron and Lucian’s common subject. In both authors, courtesans speak of their erotic relationships in the first person, which makes Lucian’s Dialogues of the Courtesans the closest text to Alciphron’s Letters of Courtesans.

Textual Transmission

The transmission of Alciphron’s texts is a complex issue, as the original configuration of the Letters is unknown. There are four groups of manuscripts from which the current standard Greek text, Schepers’ second edition of 1905, is drawn. These include independent manuscripts and those of uncertain position in the stemma, none of which contain the entire corpus of letters. Family 3 is the only group of manuscripts with a complete collection of the Letters of Courtesans. The editio princeps of the Letters consisted of forty-four letters from all four sets of

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15 The five names of courtesans found in both authors are Melissa, Thaïs, Glykera, Bacchis, and Leaena. Out of thirty-five speaking characters in the Dialogues of Courtesans, eight names come from Menander (Glykera, Thaïs, Philinna, Doris, Krobylē, Pamphilus, Polemōn, and Pythias).

16 The Loeb edition of 1949 is based primarily on Schepers’ first and second editions, with minor supplementation from Castiglioni’s Collectanea Graeca of 1911. In grouping the Letters, Schepers followed what he considered to be the best manuscripts (Benner and Fobes 1949: 5).

17 The full manuscript history is reproduced following Benner and Fobes’ 1949 Loeb edition in Appendix 2.
letter-writers, in a Venetian edition of 1499.\(^\text{18}\) Bergler’s edition of 1715, with a Latin translation, added seventy-two more letters from two separate manuscripts, and is the first complete collection of fishermen’s letters. Wagner’s 1798 edition contains the first complete collections of both *Letters of Farmers* and *Letters of Courtesans*, while Seiler’s 1853 and 1856 editions were the first to have all the extant letters. In their modern editions (Schepers and Benner and Fobes), the *Letters* are arranged according to their writers: the fishermen, farmers, parasites, and courtesans.

As the *Letters* do not occupy a prominent place in the canon of ancient literature, their translation history is limited.\(^\text{19}\) There are five Latin translations, the first being *Graecanicae Mutuae* of “Cujas” (Geneva 1606).\(^\text{20}\) There is an equal number of German translations, with the first, J.F. Herel’s Altenburg edition, coming in 1767.\(^\text{21}\) There are four French translations, the first of which is not the complete collection, but rather selections from the *Letters* in a 1739 London collection of the *Letters* of Aristaenetus.\(^\text{22}\) The first of two Italian translations is by F.

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\(^{18}\) See Appendix 3 for all of the editions of Alciphrón’s *Letters*.

\(^{19}\) Most of this information comes from the introduction to Benner and Fobes’ 1949 edition (32-3).

\(^{20}\) Latin translations are as follows: the *Epistolae Graecanicae Mutuae* of “Cujas” (Geneva 1606), S. Bergler (Leipsic 1715 and Utrecht 1791), J.A. Wagner (Leipsic 1798), E.E. Seiler (Leipzig 1853 and 1856), and R. Hercher (Paris 1873, an adaptation of Seiler’s version).

\(^{21}\) The German translations are from J.F. Herel (Altenburg 1767), F. Jacobs (selections, Leipsic 1824), H.W. Fischer (selections, Leipzig 1906?, second edition 1907), P. Hansmann (selections along with letters of Philostratus, Berlin 1919), and W. Plankl (selections, Munich 1925 and 1939).

\(^{22}\) Translations in French are as follows: selections from the *Letters* in a 1739 London collection of the *Letters* of Aristaenetus, l’abbé Jérôme Richard (Amsterdam and Paris, 1784 and 1785), S. de Rouville (books 2 and 3, Paris 1874), and Anne-Marie Ozanam (Paris 1999).
Negri (Milan 1806). The first English translation of five is W. Beloe and T. Monro (London 1791). Benner and Fobes’ 1949 edition is currently the only complete English text in print.

**Dating Alciphrôn**

Research dealing with Alciphrôn has been rather limited, most likely due to the *Letters*’ minor status in the canon of ancient literature. Research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tackled the rather tricky issue of dating Alciphrôn. Reich (1894) attempts to establish both a *terminus ante quem* and a *terminus post quem* by comparing the *Letters* to works by Lucian, Aelian, and Longus. He finds fifty-one proper names that recur in Lucian and Alciphrôn, all of which are found in *Letters of Farmers* and *Letters of Courtesans* (Reich 1894: 5). On this basis, Reich claims that Alciphrôn drew on Lucian and therefore determines Alciphrôn’s *terminus post quem* as no earlier than ca. 170 CE. Reich then postulates that Aelian’s *Letters of Farmers* imitate Alciphrôn’s *Letters of Farmers*, therefore producing a *terminus ante quem* of ca. 229 CE, the time of Aelian’s death (Reich 1894: 29). In addition to this, Reich considers *Letters of Farmers* to be products of Aelian’s youth, which means that Alciphrôn is most likely writing no later than 200 CE (Reich 1894: 67).

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23 The two Italian translations are F. Negri (Milan 1806) and E. Avezzù and O. Longo (Venice 1985).

24 There are five English translations: W. Beloe and T. Monro (London 1791), an anonymous translation of 1896 which was printed for the Athenian Society, F.A. Wright (London and New York 1923), the 1949 Loeb of Benner and Fobes, and Patricia Rosenmeyer (selections, London and New York 2006). Letters 2.24, 2.25, and 4.2 from the Benner and Fobes edition have been recently reprinted in Trapp (2003), an anthology of various Greek and Latin letters under the heading, “Affairs of the Heart.”

25 Part of Reich’s evidence for the Aelian-Alciphrôn connection is that they share eight different proper names, but Bonner (1909a: 33) points out that six of these names come from Comedy.

26 While Reich’s dates are generally accepted for Alciphrôn, Bonner (1909a and 1909b) disagrees with the idea that Alciphrôn was a source for Aelian and with Reich’s assertion that Alciphrôn borrowed in turn from Longus. Bonner ascribes the similarities between Alciphrôn and Aelian to their shared topic (rustic life) and the common influence of New Comedy. Baldwin (1982) offers a suggestion based on letter 4.19, from Glykera to Menander. At 4.19.7,
Much more scholarship on the topic of Alciphrôn has dealt with Lucian, the writer to whom Alciphrôn is most often compared. Lucian, a Syrian sophist, is slightly earlier than the dates that Reich assigns to Alciphrôn and in his *Dialogues of the Courtesans* shares subject matter with Alciphrôn’s *Letters of Courtesans*. Classicists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries explored three potential options to explain the similarities between these two authors: either Lucian drew from Alciphrôn, Alciphrôn drew from Lucian, or both were working from shared source material. As I see it, a comparison between Lucian and Alciphrôn centers on three points: their mutual emphasis on *paideia*, their Atticizing tendencies, and their works on courtesans. Like Alciphrôn, Lucian draws on the “canon of Attic diction” in building his fictional world (Jones 1986: 159).

Recent scholarship on Alciphrôn has focused on his use of the letter as a literary technique. Costa (2002) and Jenkins (2006) deal with both Greek and Roman fictional letters and therefore include Alciphrôn in their studies, while Rosenmeyer (2006) contains several selected letters from each of Alciphrôn’s four books, with brief commentary. Her 2001 book, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions*, has an entire chapter dedicated to Alciphron which thoroughly examines the ramifications of the epistolary format in the context of the Second Sophistic. König (2007) takes

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Glykera mentions singing statues (τὰ ἡχοῦντα ὀγαλματα) which can be found in Egypt. Baldwin looks to graffiti that attest to such a phenomenon, and their end point, which is ca. 200 CE. Therefore, according to Baldwin, the *Letters* are “not later than the first decade of the third century” (Baldwin 1982: 254). Baldwin’s theory is contradicted by the fact that Alciphrôn’s letters are about a distant past. For Alciphrôn to write about them, all that matters is that they were ever famous for their singing, not that they did so at the time of Alciphrôn’s writing. In a general survey of Alciphrôn’s *Letters*, C.N. Jackson suggests that Alciphrôn is contemporary with Aelian and Philostratus (1912: 72).

27 For an outline of the eighteenth and nineteenth century discussions of these issues, see Benner and Fobes (1949: 8-14).

28 These similarities between the two sophists were enough for the late antique writer Aristaenetus to write fictional correspondence between the two (letters 1.5 and 1.22). In his introduction to the 1971 Teubner edition, Otto Mazal gives Aristaenetus’ dates as ca.500 CE (1971: iv).
a similar approach, investigating anxiety as it is represented in Alciphrôn and the effects of the epistolary format on its depiction.

Beyond these scholars' work on epistolarity, there are two other considerations which inform any reading of Alciphrôn's Letters: their place in the larger context of Second Sophistic fictional prose, and their use of New Comedy as a source. A fourth dimension may be added to a consideration of Letters of Courtesans: the fictional portrayal of historical personae. While many of the male characters named in these letters are very famous in their own right, I will be examining Alciphrôn's portrayal of historical hetairai in this section, tracing what information Alciphrôn may have drawn on in creating his courtesan authoresses. The remainder of this chapter will explore these aspects of Alciphrôn's writing, to which the categories of sexuality and gender will be added in subsequent chapters.

**Epistolarity**

The Letters are part of a larger trend towards Greek epistolography in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, a trend in which fictional letters became popular as a literary form, and became "an established genre in their own right" (Rosenmeyer 2006: 2). Altman defines epistolarity as "the use of a letter's formal properties to create meaning" (1982: 4). The format of a letter shapes the content of that same letter. Letters are not monolithic in their intent. Rosenmeyer believes that "every epistolary message has a double meaning," its literal meaning and its "connotations as a social phenomenon" (2001: 66-7). The epistolary format is particularly defined by the use of
certain conventions that are not unique to the letter on an individual basis, but in combination shape its discourse in a manner unlike any other genre.²⁹

Letter 4.15, from Philumena to her lover Crito, exemplifies the dual nature of a letter, with its format communicating as clearly as its content:

τί πολλὰ γράφων ἂνισσας σαυτόν; πεντήκοντα σοι χρυσών δεῖ καὶ γραμμάτων οὐ δεῖ. εἰ μὲν οὖν φίλεις, δός· εἰ δὲ φιλαργυρεῖς, μὴ ἐνόχλει. ἔρρωσο.

Why do you trouble yourself with a lot of letter writing? What you need is fifty pieces of gold, and you don’t need letters. So then, if you love me, hand them over; if you love money, don’t bother me. Farewell.

Although brief, this letter proclaims its writer’s intent: Crito can either pay up or Philumena will end their relationship. When Philumena calls attention to Crito’s letters (γράμματα), she highlights her own epistolary act. Her “farewell,” the conventional ἔρρωσο that signs off the letter, is also her final farewell to Crito.

Most prominent among the conventions of letter-writing, as laid out in Altman, is what she terms the “Particularity of the I-you” (1982: 117). “I-you” is defined by “the I of epistolary discourse always having as its (implicit or explicit) partner a specific you who stands in unique relationship to the I” (Altman 1982: 117). In return, the you is expected to and often does respond with another letter, creating a reciprocal relationship between author and addressee, a relationship that shifts with each exchange of letters.³⁰ This relationship between author and

²⁹ When referring to the epistolary format, I will be using the terms writer and addressee to refer to the fictional author and recipient of each letter. When using the terms audience and author, I am referring to the reader/listener and the author of the collection, which is Alciphron in this case. I use the term audience specifically because the letters may have been read privately and silently (Gavrilov 1997: 68), or aloud to listeners (Johnson 2000: 616).

³⁰ Letters 4.8 and 4.9 are an example of the reciprocal nature of the epistolary format. In 4.8, Simalio writes to the courtesan Petale, begging her to take him back. In 4.9, Petale responds that she will not return to him without
addressee shapes the content of any given letter: "I becomes defined relative to the you he addresses" (Altman 1982: 117). This does not mean that the author and addressee will automatically be the main characters in the letter's narrative. It does, however, mean that the audience's perception of the characters in the narrative will be shaped by the author's presentation (Altman 1982: 120).

The second convention Altman identifies is use of the present tense. A letter writer is fixed temporally in an individual present, able to reflect on the past and anticipate future events, in reference to the author's present. Because of this, a letter's author is "highly conscious of writing in a specific present against which past and future are plotted" (Altman 1982: 122). Thus the author's present frames the events narrated in a letter, so that the past and future of the letter are defined by relation to the present. The narrative of a letter never occurs at the same time as it is being written. The present tense of the author's statements is transitory, since by the time a letter has arrived in the hands of its addressee, the moment of writing is past (Altman 1982: 129).

Altman's third convention, related to the shift in the author's present tense, is temporal multivalence. In terms of letter-writing, "the temporal aspect of any given epistolary statement is relative to innumerable moments: the actual time that an act described is performed; the moment when it is written down; the respective times that the letter is dispatched, received, read, or reread" (Altman 1982: 118). Thus the author of a letter writes in the present to an addressee who will read it in the future, which is in turn the addressee's present, converting the author's present into the addressee's past. Letter 11 demonstrates the temporal shift of the epistolary format. Written from Menecleidēs to Euthyclēs, it is in commemoration of the dead Bacchis, and yet compensation. Because of the reciprocal nature of an exchange of letters, the dynamic shifts from the romantic beseeching of 4.8 to the cold ultimatum of 4.9.
Bacchis herself is the writer of letters 4.3-5, and the addressee of 4.2 and 4.14. Because of the epistolary format, Bacchis can be dead in the present of one letter and alive in the present of another.\footnote{On the other hand, an epistolary novel, such as Chion of Heraclea, requires a consistent internal chronology.}

Ancient conventions of letter-writing, particularly in the Roman Empire, were centered on three basic elements of epistolary style: brevity, clarity, and gracefulness (\textit{syntomia, sapheneia, and charis}).\footnote{Ussher 1987: 99. These elements apply to both fictional and non-fictional letters.} Letter 4.1, from Phryne to her lover Praxiteles, which ends with an invitation to lovemaking, shows all three elements:

\begin{quote}
...μὴ δείξης· ἐξείργασαι γὰρ πάγκαλον τι χρῆμα, οἶον ὅτι τοῖς εἰδὲ πῶς ποτε πάντων τῶν διὰ χείρων ποιηθέντων, τὴν σεαυτοῦ ἔτειραν ἱδρύσας ἐν τεμένει. μέσα γὰρ ἔστηκα ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης καὶ τοῦ Ἐρωτός ἁμα τοῦ σου. μὴ φθονήσῃς δὲ μοι τῆς τιμῆς· οἱ γὰρ ἡμᾶς θεασάμενοι ἐπαινοῦσιν Πραξιτέλη, καὶ ὁτι τῆς σῆς τεχνῆς γέγονα οὐκ ἀδοξοῦσί με θεσπιεῖς μέσαν κεῖσθαι θεῶν. ἐν ὑπὲρ τῇ δωρεᾷ λείπει, ἐλθεῖν σε πρὸς ἡμᾶς, "ἵνα ἐν τῷ τεμένει μετ' ἀλλήλων κατακλίνωμεν. οὐ μιανοῦμεν γὰρ τοὺς θεοὺς οὓς αὐτοὶ πεποιηκαμεν. ἔρρωσο.

...have no fear; for you have wrought a very beautiful work of art, such as nobody, in fact, has ever seen before among all things fashioned by men’s hands: you have set up a statue of your own mistress in the sacred precinct near your Aphrodite and your Erōs too. And do not begrudge me this honour. For it is Praxitelēs that people praise when they have gazed at me; and it is because I am a product of your skill that the Thespians do not count me unfit to be placed between gods. One thing only is still lacking to your gift: that you come to me, so that we may lie together in the precinct. Surely we shall bring no defilement on the gods that we ourselves have created. Farewell. (tr. adapted)
\end{quote}

In this letter, Phrynē is succinct, her motivation for writing the letter (praise of Praxitelēs and the invitation to make love) is clear, and her gracefulness is expressed through her deferring the praise of her beauty from the Thespians to Praxitelēs for his sculpture.
For Alciphrón, then, the epistolary format allows him to write a form of *ethopoieia*, assuming the identities of a variety of fictionalized characters and expanding on what was a popular intellectual exercise at the time. In some manuscripts, in fact, Alciphrón is identified as Alciphrón *rhetór*, indicating that the work is indeed considered a type of sophistic exercise. At the time of Alciphrón, letters were a common form of *ethopoieia* used in schools (Schmitz 2004: 91). As an intellectual exercise, the *ethopoieia* is intended as “a learned paradox contrived to make its point in the shortest possible compass” (Anderson 1993: 191). As well, *ethopoieia* lend themselves to being presented in a series, which is exactly what Alciphron has done with his four sets of letters. Hodkinson even labels the collection of letters its own genre (2007: 287). By the Second Sophistic, there are volumes of letters such as Ovid’s *Heroides*, Aelian’s *Letters of Farmers*, Philostratus’ *Love Letters*, and even the epistolary novel *Chion of Heraclea*, which indicates that the genre of letter collections was becoming more prominent, and that letters were no longer considered to be a secondary form of writing. The epistolary volume becomes equivalent to the book of poetry, a “macro-unit of composition.”

The phenomenon of ancient letters in a literary context begins with Homer, in *Iliad* 6, in Glaucus’ story of Bellerophôn and Proteus. In response to his wife, Anteia’s, false allegations of sexual assault against Bellerophôn, Proteus sends him to Anteia’s father, with a letter of introduction:

\[ \text{πέμπε δέ μιν Λυκίνιν δέ, πόρεν δ’ ο γε σήματα λυγρά γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ δυμοφθόρᾳ πολλά.} \]

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33 In the *Heroides*, Ovid does exactly this when he assumes the voices of mythological women such as Penelope, Dido, and Hermione, who write to the lovers who have abandoned them.

34 Hodkinson relates the establishment of the collection of fictional letters to an increase in the variety of characters and plots employed in them (2007: 287).
He sent him to Lycia, and gave him baneful signs, many life-destroying things which he had written on a folded tablet. (Il. 6. 169-70, my tr.)

Letters also play a significant role in the Greek historians. Herodotus, for example, tells of Demaratos sending word to the Spartans of the Persian plan to attack by means of a tablet. Neither Homer nor Herodotus reveals the actual contents of these letters. In Euripidēs’ Hippolytus, the message of the letter itself takes on greater importance with Phaedra’s letter of accusation against Hippolytus. At 876, Theseus hints to the chorus about the contents of the letter: ἑσχηξ ἑσχηξ δέλτος ἀλαστα, “The tablet cries out, it cries out painful things.” Phaedra, the letter-writer is displaced, and Theseus treats the tablet as though it were “the sender herself” (Jenkins 2006: 83). In Latin literature, non-fictional letters are an important genre. Letters such as those by Cicero and Pliny the Younger raise the profile of the epistolary format, which allows Ovid to work with a set of well-established conventions from prose in writing his Heroides in poetry. Therefore by the time of the Second Sophistic, the letter as a genre, both fictional and non-fictional, is a recognizable literary format.

Alciphrōn’s Letters build on this epistolary tradition. Although they can be viewed as a unit in Hodkinson’s sense, Letters of Courtesans is markedly different from the rest of Alciphrōn’s letters. Epistolarity is one of the ways in which this difference manifests itself. Because its characters are no longer wholly fictional versions of the New Comic types seen in the other three collections, but rather fictionalized historical figures, its letters are more distinctly rooted in specific places and times in their reference to real events and people. Alciphrōn relies on the sophistication of his audience in recognizing these references, as “being deceived takes

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35 This occurs at 7.239. The writing on the tablet is covered in beeswax, so that the bearer of the tablet will remain ignorant of its message. Gorgo, the wife of the king of Sparta, realizes Demaratos’ trick, scrapes off the wax, and reveals the hidden message.
wisdom, of a sort” (Feeney 1993: 234). In order to embrace the world created by Alciphrôn, the reader requires knowledge of Classical Athens in addition to a recognition of the dual fictional/historical shaping of these characters. The key to these seemingly contradictory facets of Alciphrôn’s writing is his use of the epistolary format. Alciphrôn is “playfully exploring and exploiting the ‘double vision’ that is inherent in the fictitious epistolary situation” (Schmitz 2004: 96). Allowing his characters to speak “for themselves” is a powerful authenticating technique, one that positions the reader as an eavesdropper of sorts. This process of reinforcing fiction through format is referred to as the “buttressing power of literature by its device” (Feeney 1993: 243). In a sense, these fictional letters are “proof” of their own content. For the true art of the Letters to be appreciated, Alciphrôn’s art must be simultaneously apparent and invisible, and to fully appreciate his fiction, the reader must believe in the logic of the world Alciphrôn has created, while aware of its fictional aspect at the same time. The reader of fictional letters must be cognizant of the fictional writer and addressee, and the actual author at the same time. The educated reader of Alciphrôn doubles this process in the simultaneous apprehension of the historical Athens and Alciphrôn’s mimetic version.

The ultimate consequence of the epistolary format is that it invites the reader to engage with the letter in place of its intended audience. In a sense, the reader assumes the role of addressee. This is due to one of the key aspects of feminine love letter-writing: the absence of the addressee. Skinner recognizes this connection between love letter and absence when she states “a connection to the absent partner cannot be sustained, in practice, without recourse to writing.”

36 For example, in letter 4.1, a knowledgeable reader would recognize both Phrynê and Praxitelês, and know that the Knidia was said to be modelled on Phrynê.

37 Jenkins sees this process of intercepting another person’s letter (whether they are fictional or not) as key to the narrative itself (2006: 1).

The instability of identity that the addressee/reader shift exemplifies is also found in the variety of subject matter that Alciphrôn makes use of in Letters of Courtesans. Each letter represents a shift in objective, and therefore a shift in how the author portrays herself, her addressee, and her narratees. In this process, the courtesans “construct themselves with an eye to achieving their objectives,” from Phryné’s invitation to love-making in 4.1 to Leaena’s invective towards her lover’s wife in 4.12 to Philumena’s outright demand for money from her lover in 4.15. The variety of what Lindheim terms “performances” (2003: 4) reveals how Alciphrôn has these women manipulate their own identities to achieve their various erotic goals, and by extension, reposition both the addressee and the reader. It is because of the epistolary format that such a process can occur.

38 Letter 4.17, from Lamia to her absent lover Demetrius, exemplifies this.

39 Lindheim says this of the Heroides (2003: 10), yet it is equally applicable to Alciphrôn’s courtesans.
The Second Sophistic

A second way of reading the *Letters* is to approach them as a product of the Second Sophistic. This cultural movement is generally characterized by the use of such tropes as Atticizing vocabulary and a focus on the Greek past, as found in Alciphrön. The German scholar Erwin Rohde, writing in 1886, first identified and named the Second Sophistic as a cultural development of the Roman imperial period. It is a modern term only, and does not apply to a clearly delineated time period, but rather the cultural trend itself. There is “no strong sense of actual temporal location,” for the Second Sophistic beyond the first to the third centuries CE (Whitmarsh 2005: 4).

As a cultural movement, the Second Sophistic was concerned with the idea of self-fashioning, defining oneself through rhetoric. Rhetoric in the Second Sophistic, as described by Gleason, was an “instrument of self-presentation” (1995: xx). In fact, its practice was so popular at this time that small sophistic auditoria were built for the express purpose of giving speeches. Often these speeches were either given in the persona of, or addressed to, famous mythological or historical figures (Whitmarsh 2005: 20).

Rhetoric was not only a method of self-fashioning, but also a way to establish oneself in relation to others. As Goldhill expresses it, *paideia* represented much more than just education; the term also “implies both a body of privileged texts, artworks, values – a culture to be inherited and preserved as a sign of civilization – and also a process of acculturation – education – which ‘makes men’, which informs the structures and activities of the lives of the civic elite” (2001: 17). (I am following Goldhill (2001:15) in his identification of culture as “an idea of a

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40 Intellectual trends seen in the Second Sophistic did continue beyond the third century, as indicated by Aristaenetus’ *Letters* of the fifth century CE; however, the movement as whole had waned before that time.
conglomeration of protocols, behavioural patterns, micro-social expectations and ideological formations.”) Paideia, as displayed through one’s rhetorical skill, was used to maintain one’s status (Gleason 1995: 164). The paradox of paideia as an indicator of status was its attainability. Most of the well-known Atticists (Lucian being the most prominent example) were distinctly not Athenian and sometimes not even Greek. In the multi-ethnic Roman Empire, paideia provided a shared “Greekness” which “[transcended] ethnic origin,” and provided “a solid basis of identity in a culture which [was] in conflict around fundamental ideas of citizenship, religion, and engagement” (Goldhill 2001: 13-15). Texts like Alciphrôn’s Letters allowed any author with a sufficient education to claim the Greek past and share it with an equally knowledgeable reader. This process was more than just the assumption of a common culture by a diverse group of people. It was also an active challenge to the political realities of the Roman Empire. By categorizing Greek culture as “discrete, everlasting, ‘natural’, or essential,” the writers of the Second Sophistic set themselves in opposition to Roman imperial influence.

Using Greek, specifically Attic Greek (the language of Classical and Hellenistic Athens), was a way to indicate one’s cultivation and acculturation (Goldhill 2001: 17). Lucian draws on this in Teacher of Rhetoric, when the teacher directs his student:

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Επείτα πεντεκαίδεκα ή οί πλείω γε τῶν εἰκόσιν Ἀττικὰ ὀνόματα ἐκλέξας ποθὲν ἀκριβῶς ἐκμελετήσας, πρόχειρα ἐπὶ ἀκραῖς τῆς γλώττης ἔχε.
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Cull from some source or other fifteen, or anyhow not more than twenty, Attic words, and have them ready at the tip of your tongue. (tr. Harmon)

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41 Lucian’s Greek appellation was Λουκιανός ὁ Σαμοσατέως (“Lucian of Samosata”). This identified him as Syrian.

42 Preston 2001: 90. Preston is discussing Greek cultural identity in terms of the Greek elite under Roman rule. The process for the intellectual elite was similar and there was much crossover between the two groups.
More than simply choosing Attic-sounding vocabulary, sophists would fully embrace the Attic dialect by replacing double –οο– with double –ττ–, using the optative mood more frequently, and inserting the deictic iota. There were even various lexica of Atticisms to help would-be sophists perfect the dialect. By adopting a dialect that was by then out of date, the sophists show that Classical Athens, although it could be studied and known through its cultural output, was nonetheless markedly different from the reality of the Roman Empire.

For the writers who used such Atticisms, Greek culture was more than a source of education, it was also a treasury of figures and events suitable for imitation. For the Second Sophistic, mimesis was the dominant mode of literary expression. In its fullest sense, mimesis captures the idea not only of imitation, but representation. Imitating the past was therefore a way to give it fresh dynamism (Whitmarsh 2001: 88).

Alciphrôn’s Letters are an example of this mimetic process. They are not only imitative of the culture and location of Hellenistic Athens, but take many of their characters and situations directly from New Comedy, a distinctly Athenian genre. A classic example of Atticism, the Letters are written in an elevated Athenian dialect. Because of the epistolary format, Alciphrôn exposes his literary technique, while erasing his own authorial voice. According to Schmitz, this is the mark of a talented sophist:

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43 Whitmarsh 2005: 42. An example of the deictic iota is ταυτά instead of ταυτά. Lucian uses ταυτά twenty-seven times in his corpus, while Alciphrôn uses it three times, all in Letters of Courtesans, at 4.13.15, 4.13.16, and 4.14.5.

44 Whitmarsh lists as extant examples of these lexica Harpocration’s Usages of the Ten Orators, Aelius Dionysius’ Attic Words, and Phrynicus’ Selection of Attic Words and Phrases (2005: 43 n. 9).

45 The LSJ’s second definition for μίμησις is “representation through art,” as the term is used by Plato in his Republic.
A sophist was most successful when he was most invisible; at the same time, his success would make him conspicuous and let him reap very tangible rewards from his efforts. Alciphrón’s letters can be read as a playful, yet sophisticated re-enactment of this situation. (2004: 103)

Alciphrón’s epistolary device is a transparent technique that is easily recognizable to the reader, and simultaneously allows for more direct characterization.

**New Comedy**

In looking at Alciphrón’s sophistic devices, it is also important to keep in mind that New Comedy is the source material for many of his characters. Such an approach to Alciphrón can be combined with a Second Sophistic reading of the *Letters*. New Comedy is so prevalent in Alciphrón that he even goes so far as to include Menander, the most famous writer of Greek New Comedy, as one of his letter writers in the fourth book. New Comedy was a primarily Hellenistic genre popular from the late fourth century until the mid-third century. Menander’s works, although mostly fragmentary, are the best extant examples of this type of domestic comedy peopled with stock characters. The fact that both Plautus and Terence, Roman playwrights of the third and second centuries BCE, were able to transport these comedies wholesale to the Roman stage attests to their enduring popularity in the ancient world.46

The stock figures of Greek New Comedy include young men (most likely in their early twenties), soldiers, parasites, *hetairai*, young women who are often the object of the young man’s affections, and difficult old men, among others.47 While fishermen are not represented in

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46 That Menander himself had drawn from other sources is attested to by Aristophanēs of Byzantium’s book called *Parallels to Menander and a selection of the sources from which he stole* and Latinus’ six-volume *Non-Menandrian Elements in Menander* (Zagagi 1994:17).

47 Pollux’ catalogue of the masks of New Comedy attests to these stock characters, as it includes masks for old men, young men, parasites, slaves, old women, young women, concubines, and prostitutes (Wiles 1991: 75-70). Ovid demonstrates that these types of characters are distinctly associated with Menander in the ancient world in *Amores*.
Menander as in Alciphrôn, Menander’s plays *Georgos* (“The Farmer”) and *Kolax* (“The Parasite”) testify to the presence of these two types in New Comedy. The plays are often set in the city of Athens. The plots are concerned with romantic affairs and the obstacles that keep lovers apart. These obstacles are usually connected to social status in some way. Either the lovers are not of the same class, or there is a lack of money keeping them apart. The young men are never truly poor, and are often members of the upper class. They most often fall in love with the young woman they will be married or promised to by the end of the play, due to her physical appearance. The beloved young woman is sometimes the victim of rape (before the play itself begins) at the hands of her eventual husband, as in *Samia, Georgos, and Heros*. A scene of *anagnorisis* (recognition) at the end of the play neatly overcomes any of the obstacles that have kept the young man and his beloved apart (Rosivach 1998: 1-3). By the end of the play, they are usually married or betrothed.48

An understanding of the figure of the courtesan in New Comedy is most important for a reading of *Letters of Courtesans*. There are several Menandrian plays named for prostitutes: *Hymnis, Paidion, Phanion,* and *Thaïs*.49 In addition, other *hetairai* make appearances in a variety of Menander’s plays, and as stated earlier, were stock figures on the New Comic stage, much like the farmers and parasites that Alciphrôn uses.50 Although later than the time of New Comedy, Pollux’ 2nd century CE catalogue of the masks of New Comedy was roughly

1.15.17-18: *dum fallax servus, durus pater, improba lena / Vivent et meretrix blanda, Menandros erit.* “While the dishonest servant, harsh father, wanton bawd / and fawning whore live on, there will be Menander” (my tr.).

48 *Dyskolos* is one such example.

49 The name *Thaïs* also appears in Alciphrôn, where she is identified as the author of letters 4.6 and 4.7.

50 Other *hetairai* in Menander include Habrotonon of *Epitreptontes*, and Malthakê of *Sikyonioi*. Glykera of *Perikeiromenê*, Chrysis of *Samia*, and Krateia of *Misoumenos* are all in long-term, live-in relationships with their patrons.
contemporary with Alciphrôn's work, and therefore illustrates later assumptions about the conventions of New Comedy that may have informed the *Letters.*\(^{51}\) The masks detailed by Pollux include the grown *hetaira*, the little *hetaira*, the golden *hetaira*, and the *hetaira* with a headband (Brown 2001: 62). The variety of masks depicting *hetairai* indicates their prominence in New Comedy. Konstan, referring to the prevalence of courtesans in New Comedy, says that, "one might indeed be forgiven for gaining the impression from New Comedy that every Greek woman who was not a citizen or a domestic slave was necessarily some form of prostitute, so exclusively do such women appear in the role of courtesans" (1993: 146). The *hetairai* that appear in Menander’s plays are independent women, by and large, and not to be considered as *pornai* (common prostitutes working on an encounter-by-encounter basis).\(^{52}\)

The *Samia* provides a good illustration of how the relationship of the Menandrian *hetaira* with her client can be depicted. Here, such a relationship is portrayed through the lens of the inappropriateness of older men being involved with younger courtesans. The plot of the *Samia* involves Chrysis, a *hetaira*, who is able to pretend successfully to be the mother of an infant. The protagonist is Moschiôn, whose father has established an arrangement with Chrysis (she is effectively his concubine). In the prologue of the play, Moschiôn relates his father’s situation, particularly as affected by his advanced age:

\[
\Sigma\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma\ \epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\rho\alpha\varsigma\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon\iota\tau\mu\iota\alpha\nu\ \tau\iota\nu\delta\\si\iota\pi\tau\iota
\]
\[
\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu\ \epsilon\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu\iota\nu, \ \pi\rho\alpha\gamma\mu\iota\ \iota\sigma\omega\varsigma \ \alpha\nu\theta\rho\omicron\omega\pi\iota\nu\iota\nu.
\]
\[
\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\upsilon\pi\iota\tau\iota, \ \dot{\eta}\sigma\chi\upsilon\nu\iota\tau, \ \dot{\eta}\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\omicron\upsilon\iota\nu \ \dot{\epsilon} \gamma\omega
\]

\(^{51}\) *OCD* places Pollux in the 2nd century CE. He is therefore an appropriate reference point for the accepted conventions of the Second Sophistic.

\(^{52}\) Rosivach 1998: 107. In *Perikeiromenê*, at 340, Daos makes it clear that Glykera is a *hetaira*: *οὐδὲ ώς πορνίδιον τρισάδθλιον*, "She’s no pathetic prostitute" (tr. Arnott, adapted). For a catalogue of *hetairai* in Old and Middle Comedy, see Henry (1988: 17-40).
He fell in love with a courtesan from Samos, something that’s human, possibly. He kept it secret, being embarrassed. I found out, against his wishes, and I judged that if he didn’t take her under his protection, he’d then be plagued by younger rivals. (21-6, tr. Arnott)

This passage from the *Samia* corresponds to letter 4.17 from Alciphron, in which Leontium writes to her fellow courtesan Lamia of her distaste for her elderly lover Epicurus and her preference for her more age-appropriate lover Timarchus. Epicurus, nearly eighty years old in this letter, is her “besieger” (ὁ ντος ἐπιπολιορκητὴν ἔχω τοιούτον, 4.17.3). Timarchus, on the other hand, because he is younger, and therefore more attractive to her, causes a series of physical symptoms of lovesickness in Leontium: ὡς ἐνθυμημέσα τοῦ Τιμάρχου τὸν χωρισμὸν ἀρτι ἀπέψυγμαι καὶ ἰδρώσα τὰ ἀρκα καὶ ἡ καρδία μου ἀνέστραπται (“At the very thought of separation from Timarchus I have at this moment turned cold, and my hands and my feet have begun to sweat, and my heart has turned upside down,” 4.17.8).

A significant difference between the plays of Menander and *Letters of Courtesans* is that while New Comedy is relatively chaste (Segal 2001: x), the courtesans’ activities, particularly as detailed in letters 13 and 14, are distinctly not chaste. In *Letters of Courtesans* we see the sexual activity that is hinted at and often sets the plot in motion in New Comedy.

Vocabulary provides the most objective point of comparison between Menander and Alciphron. Both use a similar Attic dialect that does not differ with their characters’ social status.
Proof that Alciphrôn drew more than just his characters from Menander is the fact that he uses forty-one words from Menander not found in the standard Attic dialect. The only Second Sophistic authors to use more Menandrian vocabulary are Plutarch and Lucian. For the sake of a more full comparison, Alciphron uses 41 Menandrian words to Plutarch’s 125 and Lucian’s 70 (Durham 1913: 103). When considered against the relative size of each writer’s corpus, it is clear that Alciphrôn was drawing directly from Menander.

**The Historical Hetairai**

Searching for traces of historical personae is a method of reading Alciphrôn that applies only to *Letters of Courtesans*. These letters, unlike the others, move beyond the stock characters of New Comedy into a semi-fictional *demi-monde* peopled with historical figures. By using *hetairai*, Alciphrôn has chosen a group of women that occupy a prominent place in ancient Greek culture. Certain members of their profession were “celebrities in their own right” (Skinner 2005: 100), which is indicated by the fact that Alciphrôn chooses, five centuries later, to use their names in his historical fictions with the expectation that they will be recognized. These historical *hetairai* in Alciphron lived during the Hellenistic period, what Skinner terms “the great era of courtesan idolatry at Athens” (2005: 100).

This is not to say that all courtesans lived lives of ease and wealth. Perhaps the most difficult conflict in the life of the *hetaira* was her reliance on a complex system of gift exchange

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54 See Alciphôn 3.34, in which Limpetyês mentions his farmer friend, Corydôn’s odd use of elevated Attic Greek.

55 This standard dialect is defined by Durham (1913: 9-10) as that used by the orators of Classical Athens, Thucydides, Aristophanes, and the other writers of Old Comedy.

56 Because Durham’s study was published in 1913, it does not include *Dyskolos*, and significant pieces of *Samia* and *Aspis*. Nonetheless, I believe that Durham’s evidence is useful in establishing a connection between Menander and the Second Sophistic authors.
as income (Kurke 1999: 185). In return for the gifts they received from their lovers, *hetairai* were “obliged to give something in return – at their own discretion, of course” (Davidson 1997: 123). A true courtesan would limit herself to only one or two lovers, often entering into an exclusive relationship with one wealthy benefactor. As well, her services could not be obtained for a set fee, as this was the mark of the common *pornē* (Davidson 1997: 201). As a result, she had to remove herself from the “explicit moneyed sphere of public life” (Llewellyn-Jones 2003: 142). A *hetaira*’s income, therefore, was not from set fees for her services, but rather from gifts given to her in exchange for her favour, which she could refuse at anytime (Kurke 1999: 183). A large portion of this income would be reinvested in the *accoutrements* of her trade, as she required fashionable clothing, cosmetics, and perfumes in order to attract her patrons. The exchange of letters between Simaliōn and Petalē (letters 4.8 and 4.9) demonstrates this. Simaliōn is being spurned by the courtesan Petalē, primarily for insufficient payment. Petalē is well aware of the economic necessities of her profession, when she replies to Simaliōn:

> Ἐβουλόμην μὲν ὑπὸ δακρύων οἰκίαις ἔταιρας τρέφεσθαι· λαμπρῶς γὰρ ᾗν ἐπραττον ἀφθόνων τούτων ἀπολαύσασα παρὰ σοῦ· ύμῶν δὲ δεῖ χρυσίου ἡμῖν, ἱματίων, κόσμου, θεραπαινιδίων. ἦ τοῖς βίοις διοίκησις ἀπασα ἐντεύθεν.

I wish that a courtesan’s house were maintained on tears; for then I should be getting along splendidly, since I am supplied with plenty of them by you! But the present fact is that I need money, clothes, finery, maidservants; on these the whole ordering of my life depends. (4.9.1)

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57 Ogden says of the relationship between *hetairai* and Hellenistic rulers that “the relationship between the money and property they were given and the sexual services they provided was doubtlessly kept discreetly indirect” (1999: 237). For a survey of the terms used of female prostitutes in Greek literature, see McClure (2003: 10). For an historical account of the evolution of the terms *hetaira* and *pornē*, see Kurke (1997). Cohen claims that this economic division is the key difference between the *hetaira* and the *pornē* (2002: 97).

58 Alciphrōn contradicts this in letter 4.15, in which Philumena demands the set amount of fifty pieces of gold. Such a demand reduces Philumena to the status of *pornē*.

59 Letter 4.9 in Alciphrōn is one example of such refusal.
Because of these needs, and their attendant costs, a skilful *hetaira* was only marginally available to the wealthiest patrons. The high fees for her companionship indicated her exclusivity and high social status.

Because maintaining her high status necessitated elusiveness, a truly “grand” *hetaira* would comport herself in the manner of a noblewoman, revealing herself only when necessary (Llewellyn-Jones 2003: 142). Theodotē, as described in Xenophōn’s *Memorabilia*, is a woman who exemplifies these conflicting ideas. As a *hetaira*, she is sexually available to those with sufficient resources, and yet, when posing for artists, she only shows as much as is proper (οἵς ἐκείνην ἐπιδεικνύειν ἐξουθῆς ὕσσα καλως ἔχοι, 3.11.1). Indeed, the *hetairai* that appear in vase paintings in non-sympotic contexts behave much like citizen wives, concealing their bodies at home and veiling themselves in public (Dalby 2002: 120). Phrynē, who was famously exposed to the court by her lover Hypereidēs as a method of defence (an incident referred to in letter 4.4), carefully kept herself clothed in public (Athenaeus 13. 590e-f). As a result of the combination of public αἰδῶς and inaccessibility, *hetairai* were able to maintain relatively high standing in Greek society. Thus when Xenophōn refers to a group of courtesans at Thebes, he is able to describe them as σεμνοστάται καὶ καλλίσται (“grandest and most beautiful” Hel. 5.4.4).

The historical *hetairai*, as they appear in *Letters of Courtesans*, are a group of women who are very much a part of the intellectual and cultural life in Athens. Many of the anecdotes about the famous Athenian *hetairai* come from Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*, which is dated to

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60 Precedents in Greek literature of breast-baring to gain sympathy include Hecuba baring her maternal breast to Hector at *Iliad* 22.79-83, which is then echoed by Clytemnestra at Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi* 896-7, and the story of Helen baring her breast to Menelaus at Euripidēs’ *Andromachē* 637-41.
the third century CE. This work is thought to have taken much of its information regarding these women from a third century BCE work called the *Chreiai* by Machōn, meaning that some of the famous Hellenistic *hetairai* may have still been alive while the *Chreiai* was being written (Ogden 1999: 219). The reader of 4.1 is confronted with the first in a series of famous women. Phrynē’s letter to Praxitelēs discusses the famous Aphroditē Knidos. She (Phrynē) stands in the middle of the shrine, as embodied in the statue (μέση γαρ ἔστιν, 4.1.1). As the first monumental female nude, this statue holds a prominent place in the history of Greek art. The Knidia stands in a *contrapposto* pose, her weight resting on one foot, her right hand holding some draped cloth, and her left hand in front of, but not covering her genitals (see fig.1). Stewart credits this pose of partial modesty as a way of recognizing that Praxitelēs’ “Aphrodite had simultaneously to acknowledge the protocols of female modesty laid down by the public eye; overwhelm the eroticized glance with her irresistible sexuality; and yet still maintain her distance and dignity as a goddess” (1997: 101). The statue was reportedly so beautiful that Lucian relates the anecdote that a young man contrived to spend the night in the sanctuary, attempted to have intercourse with it, and afterwards committed suicide. The proof of this encounter is the stain left behind on one thigh from the young man’s semen (*Amores* 11). The

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61 McClure suggests that Athenaeus’s characters, like Alciphron’s in *Letters of Courtesans*, are a mixture of historical and fictional characters (2003: 208 n.35).


63 There was also a gold statue at Delphi, thought to be modeled on Phrynē, which Plutarch mentions at 401a8-12 of *The Oracles at Delphi*, Dio Chrysostom at *Orationes* 37.28.7, and Athenaeus at 13.591b. Keesling suggests that the statue is unique among the other portrait statues at Delphi simply because it depicts a woman by herself (2002: 66).

64 Stewart dates the statue to ca. 350 BCE (1997: 97).

65 The original does not survive, but numerous copies attest to the Knidia’s fame in antiquity.
key to this story is “the extent to which all parties concerned behave as though the Cnidia were not a mere sculpture but partly a living woman” (Skinner 2005: 175).

Who then was the “living woman” behind the statue? There are many references to the fourth century woman known as “Toad” in ancient sources. Most of these stories refer to her baring her body in two famous incidents. The first is related by Athenaeus, that Phrynē, while attending the Mysteries at Eleusis, walked naked into the sea, thus inspiring Praxitēles to use her as his model for the statue of Venus. Indeed, Praxitēles’ love for Phrynē was so strong that he sculpted an Erōs for her, which she in turn dedicated in her hometown of Thespiai.

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66 Havelock claims that Phrynē as the model for the Knidia is “largely a fictitious character” (1995: 3), while Stewart claims the opposite, claiming that the statue’s pose of simultaneous invitation and rejection mirrors a courtesan’s dealings with her clients (1997: 106).

67 The word φρόνη translates into “toad,” which Plutarch, at 401a10-2 of The Oracles at Delphi, suggests was a nickname that came from her sallow complexion. He also says that her real name was Mnesaretē, which Athenaeus also claims at 13.591e.

68 Athenaeus 13.591a. At this point in his text, Athenaeus also says that Phrynē was the model for Apellēs’ painting of Aphrodite rising out of the sea.

69 Pausanius relates the story of Phrynē selecting this Erōs from Praxitēles’ workshop. She wanted his favourite work, and when he refused to tell her which one it was, she had a slave burst in, saying that Praxitēles’ workshop was on fire. Praxitēles started to rush off, saying that he wanted to rescue his Erōs, which is the statue that Phrynē then selected (1.20.1-2). The same statue is also mentioned at 9.27.3. According to Athenaeus, the inscription at the base of this statue said this:

Πραξιτέλης ὄν ἐπασχε διηκρίβωσεν Ἐρωτα, ἐξ ἰδίης ἔλκων ἀρχέτυπον κραδής, Φρυνὴ μισθὸν ἐμεῖο διδοὺς ἐμ. φίλτρο δὲ βάλλω οὐκέτ ὀιστεῖκος, ἄλλ’ ἀτενιζόμενος.

Praxitēles has portrayed to perfection the Passion which he felt, drawing his model from the depths of his own heart, and dedicating me Phrynē as the price of me. The spell of love which I cast comes no longer from my arrow, but from gazing upon me. (13.591a, tr. Gulick, adapted)

In his Geography, Strabo says that this statue of Erōs was a gift from Praxitēles to Glykera, who then dedicated it to the Thespians, as she was a native of Thespiai. This is obviously a conflation with Phrynē.
Another prominent story about Phryne is mentioned by Alciphron in letters 4.3, 4, and 5. These letters refer to the trial in which Phryne was charged with impiety by her former lover Euthias. As a woman, Phryne could not defend herself, and so the orator Hypereidēs spoke in her defence. When it seemed that Phryne would be convicted, Hypereidēs brought her into the view of all present, and opened her dress, baring her breasts. This caused the jury to “feel superstitious fear” (δεισιδαίμωνησι) at the sight of “this handmaid and ministrant of Aphrodite” (ἡ ὑποφήτης και ζάκορος), and so she was acquitted. Cooper suggests that Phryne did not actually disrobe (1995: 315). Nevertheless, this anecdote, along with the traditions associated with the Knidia, shows that Phryne was known for the exceptional beauty of her body in antiquity. Her reputation as a beauty was so wide-spread that Plutarch (Advice About Keeping Well, 125a11) claims that as she got older, she was able to get a higher price from her patrons, despite her advanced age.

A final anecdote concerning Phryne relates to the vast wealth she is said to have accumulated from her lovers. When the walls of Thebes were destroyed in 335 BCE by

70 The motivation for Euthias bringing these charges is usually ascribed to a lovers’ quarrel between the two (Cooper 1995: 390).

71 In Letters of Courtesans, Hypereidēs is Myrrhina’s lover. Letter 4.5, from Bacchis to Myrrhina, is full of transparent scorn for Myrrhina, who has apparently left Hypereidēs for Euthias. Bacchis warns Myrrhina not to ask anything of Euthias, lest she be charged with setting the shipyards on fire or overthrowing the laws (4.5.3). In his Life of Hypereidēs, at 849ε3, Plutarch suggests that Hypereidēs took up Phryne’s case because they had been lovers. At 849ε6-7, he also states that it was Hypereidēs who removed Phryne’s tunic. Athenaeus also has Hypereidēs removing her tunic at 13.590ε.

72 This story is recounted in Athenaeus 13.590d-e.

73 Athenaeus 13.590e. Athenaeus, citing Hermippus as his source, says that Euthias was so angry at the outcome of this trial that he never tried another legal case again (13.590d).
Alexander the Great, she offered to have them rebuilt. All of these anecdotes illustrate the glamour and appeal of the courtesan in literary tradition. She is always beautiful, wealthy, often associated with prominent men, and sometimes scandalous.

The next historical courtesan named in Alciphrôn is Glykera, the writer of letters 4.2 and 4.19, and the addressee of letter 4.18. Glykera was thought to be Menander’s mistress, and is portrayed as such by Alciphrôn. In artistic tradition, Glykera is usually portrayed alongside Menander. A stone carving depicts the two together, along with several typical New Comedy masks of the type that Pollux catalogued (see fig.2). As well, there is a floor mosaic from Daphne in modern Turkey, depicting Glykera and Menander alongside a personification of Comedy (see fig.3). This mosaic dates to the second half of the third century CE, and thus represents a continuation of the tradition from which Alciphrôn is working.

According to Athenaeus, Glykera was also a mistress of the Macedonian aristocrat Harpalus. He says that Harpalus was so besotted with her beauty that he set up bronze portraits of her in Syria and demanded that anyone who wished to offer him a crown offer one to Glykera as well (13.586c). Diodorus Sicilus says that when Harpalus was in Babylon, he brought Glykera there, and kept her in luxury there (17.108.6).

Two more of Alciphrôn’s courtesans, Thaïs and Lamia, were associated with Hellenistic rulers. While the Thaïs of letters 4.6 and 4.7 is concerned with petty matters, and therefore likely inspired by Menander’s Thaïs, Athenaeus claims that the historical Thaïs was a lover of

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74 Athenaeus 13.591d. Phryne’s offer was made on the condition that the Thebans make an inscription saying, Αλέξανδρου μὲν κατέσκοψεν, άνέστησεν δὲ Φρύνη ἦ ἑταῖρα, “Whereas Alexander demolished it, Phryne the courtesan restored it” (tr. Gulick).

75 Athenaeus relates the same anecdote at 13.595d. In his Rhetorum Praeceptor, Lucian uses Glykera as a model of seductiveness (12.9-11).
Alexander the Great (13.576e). After the death of Alexander, he says that she became a Hellenistic queen, married to Ptolemy Sōter, the king of Egypt (13.576e). Lamia, the author of letter 4.16, was also the mistress of a powerful Hellenistic figure, Demetrius Poliorcētēs. According to Plutarch’s *Life of Demetrius*, Lamia first became known for her aulos-playing, and then became a courtesan (16.5). Athenaeus says that she bore a daughter, Phila, to him.

More than anything else, what these anecdotes and bits of information tell us is that the glamorous courtesans of Hellenistic Athens captured the public imagination. The most common themes in these stories are their great beauty and seductiveness, which brings them into association with the most influential men (whether politically or culturally) in the Greek world. Alciphrōn’s *Letters* participate in this tradition by adapting several of these stories (Phrynē in letters 4.1 and 4.3-5, Glykera in 4.2 and 4.18-9, and Lamia in 4.16) and narrating them from the first person perspective.

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All four of these methods of reading Alciphrōn demonstrate that his *Letters* are a deeply mimetic text. The epistolary format brings the very thoughts of Alciphrōn’s characters to his audience in first-person perspective. His reconstruction of Classical Athens in *Letters of Courtesans* brings a bygone era back to life. By drawing on New Comedy, Alciphrōn expands on

76 That is also one of the speakers in Lucian’s first dialogue between courtesans.

77 Alciphrōn refers to this tradition at 4.16.3, when Lamia promises to besiege the besieger with her *auloi* (*αὐτῶν τοῖς αὐλοῖς ἐκπολιορκήσατο*). This is also found at Athenaeus 13.577e, in a fragment of *Chreiai*. Demetrius was apparently so besotted with her that after ordering the Athenians to raise two hundred fifty talents, he gave it to Lamia and the other courtesans for soap (Plutarch, *Dem*. 27.1). Because of her supposed greed, Lamia becomes cautionary tale to tell children in Strabo 1.2.8.

78 Athenaeus says this at 13.577c, and also states here that she built a painted stoa for the Sicyonians. Plutarch says that she was able to seduce Demetrius despite the fact that her beauty had begun to wane with age (*Dem*. 16.6).
the world of Menander, and then calls attention to that process by using him as one of his characters. In giving the historical *hetairai* voice, he draws on established biographical traditions. It is this combination of factors that allows for a rich, multi-faceted reading of Alciphron.
Chapter 2: Sexuality, Foucault, and Classics

I would like to propose, supplementary to the foci in Chapter 1, a reading of Alciphron’s *Letters of Courtesans* through the lens of the courtesans’ sexuality. This perspective highlights what I see as the definitive aspect of the *hetaira* letters, which is Alciphrôn’s portrayal of the courtesans as actively desiring women. From Zeitlin isolates three keys to any discussion of sexuality in the Greek world: “Freud, Foucault, and Feminism(s)” (1999: 54). While I will only briefly discuss Zeitlin’s first “F,” I will be working in more detail with the other two, Foucault and Feminism, particularly as the combination applies to the field of Classics. The intention of this chapter is to offer a brief history of theories of ancient sexuality, and to situate my own perspective within this larger body of discourse. Using modern theories that deal with ancient sexuality, I will use this chapter as a basis for my examination of the courtesans’ sexuality in Chapter 3.

Before I begin this process, I would like to elaborate on the definition of sexuality that I am using in this context. According to Phillips and Reay, sexuality is composed of a variety of concepts, including, but not limited to, “identities, orientations, sex acts, work-practices, images, bodies, thoughts, institutions, [and] systems of power” (2002: 3), and accordingly, theoretical approaches to the topic are equally multi-faceted. Weeks identifies five categories of social relations that are involved in the shaping of sexuality: kinship systems, economic and social organizations, patterns of social regulation (both legal and moral), power and politics, and cultures of resistance (2002: 33). Therefore, in my analysis of *Letters of Courtesans*, I consider sexuality to be a composite of the actions and emotions related to an individual’s erotic desire (or lack thereof). In addition, the individual’s actions are to be appreciated in the context of their culture. I want to make it clear that this understanding of sexuality is not comparable to our
modern conception of sexuality in the West, which assigns sexual orientation to an individual based on who they are having sex with (Parker 2001: 313). I am not approaching sexuality as something that is consistent regardless of time and culture, but rather as a phenomenon that is particular to a given culture.  

I shall trace the shift in theory from the psychoanalytic approaches of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to Foucault’s landmark *The History of Sexuality*. I will then examine post-*History of Sexuality* work in the field of Classics before moving on to feminist reactions to Foucault (primarily within Classics). In doing so, I will set out my own theoretical position in relation to *The History of Sexuality*.

I will then outline another influential theory related to sexuality and gender: the gaze. Originally described in terms of the cinema (particularly by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 article “Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema”), the idea of the gaze has been incorporated into work on both art and literature. As *Letters of Courtesans* contain several instances in which desire and looking are combined, an examination of how looking can shape desire is necessary for a thorough understanding of sexuality in Alciphrôn. I will therefore also establish my position in relation to Mulvey (1975).

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79 This is based on Parker (2001), who explains the idea of a culturally-defined sexuality using the categories emic and etic. An emic category is unique to a culture, while an etic category is applicable to any culture. Parker defines these in the following ways: 1) emic categories [e.g. sexuality] exist only inside of a single culture; 2) the lines that distinguish one category from another may be drawn on completely different axes; 3) an emic category may lump together what another culture keeps rigorously separate; and 4) an emic category may separate what another considers a distinctive unity (320-1). Following this, sexuality is emic.
Freud to Foucault

In the twentieth century, theoretical sexual discourse begins with the psychoanalytic works of Sigmund Freud. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud advances his idea that adult sexuality is inextricably linked to early childhood.\(^8^0\) Although he observes that there is little differentiation between male and female before puberty, Freud states that for little girls, inhibitions related to sexuality develop earlier than in little boys, and “where the component instincts of sexuality appear, they [little girls] prefer the passive form” (1905: 85). In his understanding, the sexual drive, what Freud refers to as “libido,” has an exclusively masculine character. In what I see as a contradictory statement, Freud also says that the masculine nature of the libido is apparent regardless of whether “it occurs in men or in women and irrespectively of whether its object is a man or a woman” (1905: 85). For Freud then, feminine sexuality is a passive phenomenon, and when female desire does exist, it is defined in masculine terms.

Using a psychoanalytic approach built upon that of Freud, Jacques Lacan interprets female sexuality in terms of desire. For Lacan, the expression of desire is important in its shaping of sexuality. Like Freud, Lacan understands active sexuality as essentially masculine. Indeed, Lacan’s work was heavily influenced by Freud.\(^8^1\) The work in which he engages directly with female desire, is titled *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (1975). The first section of this work concerns the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*, which in Lacan’s words,

\(^{80}\) This group of essays is most famous for Freud’s introduction of penis envy and the Oedipus complex.

\(^{81}\) Lacan was even director of the École Freudienne de Paris from its founding in 1964 until 1980.
is “what serves no purpose” (1975: 3). In Lacan’s analytic perspective, “Woman” is “not whole” (pas-tout), particularly in terms of sexual jouissance, which is centered on the phallus; “jouissance, qua sexual, is phallic” (1975: 9). Woman are not sexed, except with regard to their “sexual organs” (Lacan 1975: 7). This situates Woman as the eternal “Other,” marked only by her relationship to the male signifier.

Departing from Lacan’s heavily psychoanalytic and linguistic approach to sexuality, Michel Foucault’s landmark three-volume History of Sexuality takes an historical approach to the subject. Foucault’s understanding of sexuality as a product of a specific culture represents a paradigm shift from the psychoanalytic tenet that sexuality was a fundamental aspect of human experience. His first volume, The Will to Knowledge, examines sexuality from the nineteenth century onwards, and sets out Foucault’s goal, “to account for the fact that it [sexuality] is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said” (1976: 11). For Foucault, ideas of sexuality arise out of cultural discourse, and are therefore in constant flux (Philips and Reay 2002: 6). The Will To Knowledge also sets out Foucault’s version of the active/passive sexual paradigm in terms of power relations. For

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82 Lacan’s jouissance should not be confused with the conventional translation of the term as “enjoyment.” There is an added inflection to the term: it can also mean orgasm. Lacan plays with this added meaning when he says of jouissance that a woman “knows it of course, when it comes. It doesn’t happen to all of them” (1975: 74).

83 Lacan says of female analysts, “They haven’t contributed one iota to the question of feminine sexuality. There must be an internal reason for that, related to the structure of the apparatus of jouissance” (1975: 58). This is one of many explicitly misogynist comments that Lacan makes when discussing the concept of “Woman.”

84 One of Lacan’s most noted students is Luce Irigaray, who takes a gendered approach to language, arguing that language use is gendered, and that in its use there are two discrete sexes. As she states, in her relations with others, as a woman, she is “un corps sexué” (1997: 58).

85 According to Foucault’s conception of it, sexuality then fits into Parker’s emic category.
Foucault, sexuality is a focal point of power relations (1976: 103). Such relations are not independent of non-sexual relationships and are intentional, “imbued with calculation” (1976: 94). As well, power relations are in constant flux, particularly in sexual relationships. Pleasure in Foucault’s understanding, unlike Lacan’s jouissance, is a source of truth, and can be conceptualized as a practice. It is imperative to hold pleasure “in its greatest reserve since...it would lose its effectiveness and its virtue by being divulged” (1976: 57).

Sexual pleasure is a powerful phenomenon, one that “gives the individual access to his own intelligibility...to the whole of his body...to his identity” (1976: 155). Foucauldian pleasure is therefore something to be carefully controlled by the individual, who should not overindulge.

In Volume Two of *The History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault moves his focus from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to Classical Greece. In doing so, he demonstrates that sexuality cannot be considered a constant, but rather it is a mutable concept that varies by culture. I believe that this is the strongest aspect of Foucault’s argument. *The Use of Pleasure* also introduces two factors that Foucault identifies as important in shaping ancient Greek sexuality: the subject’s telos within a relationship and aphrodisia, or sexual pleasures.

The idea of the telos is key to understanding Foucault’s construction of ancient Greek sexual relationships. For Foucault, telea are the result of a complex series of actions:

An action is not only moral in itself, in its singularity; it is also moral in its circumstantial integration and by virtue of the place it occupies in a pattern of conduct. It is an element and an aspect of this conduct, and it marks a stage in its life, a possible advance in its continuity. A moral action tends toward its own accomplishment; but it also aims toward the latter, to the establishing of a moral

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86 This understanding of pleasure would have great bearing on Foucault’s work in Volumes 2 and 3 on the ancient Greek concept of enkrateia (self-control).

87 Marriage, loss of virginity, and economic gain are examples of telea within the context of erotic relationships.
conduct that commits an individual, not only to other actions always in conformity with values and rules, but to a certain mode of being. (1985: 27-28) *Telea* are therefore the “modes of being” that result from an individual’s values (whether determined by society or not) and that work to locate the individual within larger society.\(^{88}\)

*Aphrodisia*, or sexual pleasures, are extremely important in Foucault’s configuration of sexuality. From Plato, Foucault identifies three basic appetites: food, drink, and sex (1985: 49).\(^ {89}\) Lust for sexual pleasure is the strongest of the three. The category *aphrodisia* is not limited to explicitly sexual activity, but rather includes the “acts, gestures, and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure” (1985: 40).\(^ {90}\) Indeed, pleasure is linked directly to *aphrodisia* through such actions, so that pleasure and *aphrodisia* combined are considered a “solid unity,” along with the desire for pleasure. Act, desire, and pleasure come together in *aphrodisia* (1985: 42).

Sexual pleasures are then subject to “use,” or management by the individual. Foucault refers to this as *chρēsis aphrodisiōn* (1985: 53).\(^ {91}\) The individual relationship to sexual desire is defined by that individual’s agency, how the individual is able to control the desire for sexual pleasure. Foucault outlines three strategies for such management of sexual desire: need, time, and status. Need could regulate *aphrodisia* in that the intention was “to maintain [pleasure] and to do so through the need that awakened desire...pleasure was dulled if it offered no satisfaction to the keenness of a desire” (1985: 55-6). The idea of time as a strategy to control desire is

\(^{88}\) An example of this would be the courtesan’s economic *telos* within an erotic relationship. Her individual values shape her selection of *telos*, and the *telos* in turn locates her in a certain social position.

\(^{89}\) Foucault isolates these appetites in Plato’s *Laws*. Plato discusses the overwhelming power of sexual lust at *Laws* 1.636a.

\(^{90}\) Citing Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1118a-b, Foucault isolates “touch and contact” as the only media of pleasure (1985: 40).

\(^{91}\) The title of volume 2 comes from this term.
termed \textit{kairos} (the ideal time), which has three manifestations: the temporal location of the individual within the entire lifespan, the time of year, and the best time of day for undertaking sexual activity (1985: 58). According to Foucault, one’s age determined one’s eligibility for sex as sexual pleasures were inappropriate for those too old and too young (1985: 58).\footnote{Foucault’s source here is Aristotle’s \textit{History of Animals} 7.1.582a. Aristotle identifies twenty-one as an ideal age for reproduction, as prior to this, sperm is not strong enough to produce healthy offspring.} The time of year was directly related to a sexual regimen, with winter an ideal time for sexual relations, which both warm and dry the body (1985: 112). The best time of day for sex was at night.\footnote{Foucault reaches this conclusion based on the discussion in Plutarch’s \textit{Table Talk} 3.6.} Status is a complex method of sexual management, as it varies from individual to individual on the basis of age, gender, physical condition, and social ranking (1985: 59-60).\footnote{The source for this is Demonsthenēs’ \textit{Erotic Essay}.}

All three of these techniques of management (need, \textit{kairos}, and status) can be employed by the individual in the process of what Foucault calls \textit{enkrateia} (self-mastery). \textit{Enkrateia} is the result of victory in the struggle within oneself to manage desire. He also identifies \textit{enkrateia} as an essentially male process. Even for women, \textit{enkrateia} is “virile by definition” (1985: 83).\footnote{Foucault gets this idea from Xenophōn’s \textit{Oeconomicus}. At 10.1, in a discussion of Isomachus’ wife, Socratēs praises her for her “masculine mind,” (ἡ ἄνδρικη διάνοια). This brings to mind Freud’s conception of the libido as exclusively masculine.} Immoderation therefore “derives from a passivity that relates it to femininity” (1985: 84). In establishing this binary relationship, Foucault sets up what is still the dominant paradigm of understanding sexuality and gender in the Classical Greek world—masculinity is equivalent to sexual agency while femininity is equivalent to passivity.
Foucault’s great success in *The Use of Pleasure* is in identifying that in the Greek world there was “no assumption that sexual acts in themselves and by nature were bad” (1985: 117). This achieves his goal from the first volume of separating modern ideas of sexual morality from ancient ones. He is correct when he states that the ancient Greeks did not make any distinctions of object choice in their understanding of sexuality. The sexual male was identified not so much by whether he preferred women or boys, but by his approach to *aphrodisia*: “What distinguished a moderate, self-possessed man from one given to pleasures was, from the viewpoint of ethics, much more important than what differentiated, among themselves, the categories of pleasures that invited the greatest devotion” (1985: 187).[^96]

In my estimation, Foucault is less successful in his privileging of the erastês/erêmenos pederastic relationship. In the context of such relationships, Foucault states that “the Erôs came from the lover; as for the beloved, he could not be an active subject of love on the same basis as the erastês” (1985: 239). Foucault focuses only on the erastês/erêmenos dynamic in illustrating his active/passive model, and by omission excludes a model of sexual relations in which both lovers are active.

The third and final volume of the *History of Sexuality* is titled *The Care of the Self*. In this volume, Foucault concentrates on *aphrodisia*, the individual, and the body, which is an expansion on his discussion of *enkrateia* from Volume Two. Citing Artemidorus, the author of the *Oneirocritica*, Foucault isolates three types of sexual acts: *kata nomon* (according to

[^96]: Foucault means that there were no ancient equivalents of modern classifications of sexuality such as homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual.
regulation), *para nomon* (against regulation), and *para phusis* (against nature). The first category is clearly the one that an individual with *enkrateia* would pursue.

In this volume Foucault also draws attention to the body as a focal point for sexual discourse (1986: 56). In this context, the "image of the self" is of an individual suffering from various ills, which in turn requires that the individual have thorough self-knowledge, and when necessary, practice abstinence (1986: 57-8). Sexual acts need to be placed "under an extremely careful regimen, in accordance with the individual" (1986: 124). Such a regimen for *aphrodisia* would be "centered on the body" (1986: 133), which recalls the *chrēsis aphrodisōn* of the second volume. In this case, however, the regimen would be structured around the "number and frequency of acts," in opposition to the object of desire or the mode of activity (1986: 42).

Foucault’s greatest contribution to the study of sexuality is his separation of ancient and modern concepts. In proving that sexuality is a product of culture he relies exclusively on philosophical works and medical treatises. This is the cause of his greatest failure, which is the near-exclusion of women from his theoretical construct. His basic framework is nonetheless applicable to ancient works in other genres, and I believe that it can be used to illuminate constructions of female sexuality.

**Post-History of Sexuality Reactions and Constructions**

Kenneth Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* is exactly contemporary with the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (both were published in 1978), and shares a similar focus on male

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97 In this context, *nomos* refers to regulation on both an individual and a societal basis (Foucault 1986: 17).
sexuality with Foucault’s work. Dover disregards women, as Foucault does, except as models of passivity. Like Foucault, he also closely adheres to an active/passive conceptualization of sexuality (Dover 1978: 103). His model of sexuality, like Foucault’s, focuses on the active or passive role of the partner, specifically using the erastēs and erōmenos to illustrate his point. For Dover, penetration was “the essence of aphrodisia” (Nussbaum and Sihvola 2002: 17). The active, penetrating partner is described as conquering the passive, penetrated partner (Dover 1978: 105).

In comparison with Foucault, Dover has the advantage of being a dedicated classicist, and is therefore able to use a wider variety of sources than Foucault, and to use them more skilfully. Dover, on the other hand, is clearly surpassed by Foucault in the way that he structures Greek Homosexuality, even in its very title. Where Foucault was successful in divorcing Classical Greek ideas of sexuality from modern conceptualizations of sexual orientation, Dover imbues his work with modern ideas of homosexuality, much to its detriment. As demonstrated by this statement from his first chapter, “Problems, Sources and Methods,” he is a slave to the terminology he chooses: “How, when and why overt and unrepressed homosexuality became so conspicuous a feature of Greek life is an interesting subject for speculation” (1978: 1). In his use

98 Prior to Dover (1978), the first comprehensive study of ancient sexuality was written by Friedrich Karl Forberg in 1824. De Figuris Veneris is an exhaustive collection of writings on erotic subjects in Latin and Greek. The collection’s English translator, Viscount Julian Smithson, is very careful to stress that De Figuris Veneris is a purely scholarly text: “Those persons...who may peruse it as a means of awakening voluptuous sensations will be severely disappointed. Never did a work more serious issue from the press” (Smithson 1844: v). In much the same vein as Forberg, Paul Brandt (under the pseudonym Hans Licht) published his account of ancient sexuality in 1931. Sexual Life in Ancient Greece is a basic collection of information on sexual activity which, like De Figuris Veneris, uses literary sources. Like Forberg’s work, it is best used as a sourcebook, and propounds no significant theory on ancient sexuality.

99 Dover offers the Eurymedon vase as evidence for his victor/conqueror metaphor. This vase depicts a Persian on one side, bent over, while on the other side a Greek man moves toward him, penis in hand. The Persian is saying, “I am Eurymedon, I stand bent over,” in reference to the site of an Athenian victory over the Persians. Dover declares that such an image proclaims “We’ve buggered the Persians!” (1978: 105). See fig. 4.
of the words “overt and unrepressed,” Dover colours his approach with language that hints at a twentieth century Freudian version of homosexuality, rather than the ancient version he purports to be examining.

Dover’s work influenced Foucault in his preparation of the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. In a 1982 interview with the journal *Masques*, Foucault praises *Greek Homosexuality* and isolates what he sees as vital to a study of ancient sexuality, that homo- and heterosexuality are not concepts that apply in such a context: “C’est que Dover montre que notre découpage des conduits sexuelles entre homo- et hétéro-sexualité n’est absolument pas pertinent pour les Grecs et les Romains” (Joecker, Overd, and Sanzio 1982: 286). In the same interview, Foucault outlines what he thinks is the crux of the active/passive paradigm of male-male sexual relations, that a man of high standing in society simply cannot accept the passive role in a sexual relationship (Joecker, Overd, and Sanzio 1982: 28). In an article of the same year, Foucault further discusses Dover, and it becomes quite apparent that Foucault greatly admires *Greek Homosexuality*, and was inspired by it in writing the latter two volumes of his *History of Sexuality*.100 Once more Foucault praises Dover for his separation of sexual discourse from its modern context: “Le coeur de l’analyse de Dover est là: retrouver ce que disaient ces gestes du sexe et du plaisir, gestes que nous croyons universels ... et qui, analyses dans leur spécificité historique, tiennent un discours bien singulier” (Foucault 1982: 315).

While Dover and Foucault propound similar ideas of sexuality as a social construction, it is Foucault who has received the vast majority of reaction. These reactions vary widely, from apologists such as David Halperin, to detractors, such as Amy Richlin. Most critics, however,

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100 Foucault cites Dover on multiple occasions, particularly in discussing the *erastês* and *erômenos* (Foucault 1985: 196), and the distinction between modern and ancient concepts of sexuality (Foucault 1985: 252).
fall somewhere between these two extremes, acknowledging Foucault’s contribution to the study of sexuality, while criticizing his methodology. I will work through the reactions of several prominent classical scholars who have reacted to Foucault, but in no way do I claim that I am presenting an exhaustive collection. In light of the sheer volume of Foucault-related work, I am choosing to outline the work of scholars whom I believe have been the most influential, or have engaged most directly with *The History of Sexuality*.

Davidson traces Dover’s effect on Foucault in Volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality*. He criticizes both scholars for their focus on penetration and active/passive sexual roles: “The picture of ancient sex and sexual morality as a plus-minus ‘zero-sum game’, where one party can only ‘win’ at the expense of the other, is not only unsubstantiated, but contradicts what evidence there is” (2001: 7). The distinction between the two, according to Davidson, is Dover’s unerring belief in Greek sexuality as heterosexuality; erotic activity between two men was not sexuality, just a “behavioural pattern” (2001: 13). Davidson also finds fault with Foucault’s over-emphasis on discourse (as compared with actual behaviour). He claims that by privileging representation, “Foucault and his followers sometimes seem to forget about the world itself...as if the Greeks walked around in a virtual reality they had constructed for themselves from discourse” (1997: xxv). I challenge the basis of Davidson’s criticism here: what evidence of ancient sexuality do we have beyond representations?101

David Halperin is one of Foucault’s most vocal defenders. As a theorist working extensively in the areas of gender studies, queer theory, and ancient sexuality, Halperin’s work has been heavily informed by Foucault. Perhaps this is because of the strong identification that

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101 For that matter, what evidence of modern sexuality do we have beyond the representations of others?
Halperin feels with Foucault's personal and professional politics. In his own words, Halperin was "the only professional classicist in North America to give the second volume of Foucault's History of Sexuality...a favourable review" (1995:4). Halperin has consistently espoused and promoted Foucault's work, often taking on his detractors. In "Forgetting Foucault" (2002), Halperin engages with Jean Baudrillard's 1977 anti-Foucault pamphlet, entitled "Forget Foucault." In this article, Halperin discusses the hyper-saturation of Foucault in academia, complaining:

Foucault's continuing prestige, and the almost ritualistic invocation of his name by academic practitioners of cultural theory, has had the effect of reducing the operative range of his thought to a small set of received ideas, slogans, and bits of jargon that have now become so commonplace and so familiar as to make a more direct engagement with Foucault's texts entirely dispensable. As a result, we are so far from remembering Foucault that there is little point in entertaining the possibility of forgetting him (2002: 22).

Halperin's strongest defence of Foucault is that he sees The History of Sexuality as an analysis of discourse, as opposed to a social history. In identifying the History of Sexuality as "discursive analysis" (Halperin 2002: 28), he responds to those who criticize Foucault for privileging masculine sexuality. The key to appreciating Halperin's defense of Foucault is his connection

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102 Halperin's identification is so strong that he states, "Michel Foucault, c'est moi" (Halperin 1995: 8).

103 According to Halperin, the second volume of The History of Sexuality marks a turning point in Foucault's approach to sexuality. Halperin says that this is due to his use of a more rigorous philological method, particularly as influenced by Dover (1990: 64).

104 This precisely what Bruce Thornton accuses Halperin of doing. He says that both Halperin and Winkler have reduced Foucault's theories "to a banality of sorts that any modern scholar working on ancient sexual behaviour and attitudes would accept" (1991: 83).

105 Halperin is clear that The History of Sexuality is "not a social history, let alone an exhaustive one" (2002: 28). Davidson's (1997, 2001) dislike of Foucault's discursive approach places him in direct opposition to Halperin.
of modern sexual and political theory with ancient. Halperin recognizes that theories based in history can and do have very real effects in contemporary society.106

Another important response to Foucault, this one dealing exclusively with classical literature, is Simon Goldhill’s *Foucault’s Virginity: Ancient erotic fiction and the history of sexuality* (1995). Goldhill introduces the book as contributing to three topics of discussion: literary criticism and classical studies, the history of the discourse of sexuality, and “the specific and influential contribution to both classical studies and the history of sexuality made by Michel Foucault” (1995: x-xi). Goldhill is interested, following Halperin, in Foucault’s approach to discourse. In Goldhill’s own construction, the discourse of literary sexuality has a very specific *telos*: the loss of virginity. Chapter one of *Foucault’s Virginity* uses the novel *Daphnis and Chloë* to illustrate the didactic aspect of erotics. Goldhill links desire and literary discourse, stating, “The formulation of the desiring subject is a process in which reading ... plays a fundamental role” (1995: 45).

The strongest asset of Goldhill’s approach is that it incorporates much more detail on female sexuality than Foucault. In his discussion of how literature presents female sexuality, Goldhill moves beyond the loss of virginity to chastity and on to marriage, examining how the ideals and conventions of marriage shape female sexuality. Goldhill’s failing, though, is in following Foucault, who is his primary point of reference. As a result of this, he construes

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106 He claims, for example, that studying ancient sexuality can challenge modern assumptions about the nature of sexuality (1989: 259). This a reflection of Foucault’s approach as well, who is interested in a “history of the present” (Weeks 1982: 116).
female sexuality as initiated by male sexuality. In his assessment, female sexuality is defined by its relation to chastity, and therefore the presence or absence of the male partner (1995: 112).

J.J. Winkler (1990), while still basing his study on literature, explores ancient sexuality from an anthropological perspective. He claims that by using such methodology, one “can elicit from those texts and pictures a richer and more complex understanding of sex and gender” (1990: 3). Winkler’s greatest asset in this work is the amount of attention given to women, and his recognition of the inherent misogyny of ancient Greek culture as expressed in its texts (1990: 138). In his examination of ancient female sexuality, he engages with the difficulty inherent in discussing a subject that is dominated by works written by men. His solution, which he applies to the poetry of Sappho, is to “read what is there,” by focussing less on the public, male dominated domain, and more on private, female-dominated space (1990: 164). This moves beyond Goldhill’s attempt to find female sexuality as reflected in the male version, and locates it more comfortably in feminine-centred discourse.

David Konstan (2002) expands the concept of gendered sexuality when he acknowledges (even in his title, Sexual Symmetry) that desire can be ascribed to both sexual partners. He sees bilateral passion as leading to a “collapse of gender differences” (2002: 359). He does not, however, discard the active/passive model of erotic relations as established by Dover and Foucault, but rather calls it “transitive” and sets it up in opposition to his own “symmetrical”

107 Goldhill does acknowledge that a discussion of female sexuality is limited by the fact that representation of women come from texts written almost exclusively by men (1995: 112).

108 Winkler calls this “equestrian academics,” imagining circus acrobats who “leap from one horse to another” (1990:10).

109 He asks, “How can gender-specific differences of cultural attitude be discerned when one group is muted?” (1990: 164).
model (2002: 12). In limiting his study of symmetrical sexuality to the Ancient Novel, and the
genres that inform it, such as New Comedy and Pastoral, Konstan is less ambitious in his
theoretical reach and therefore more successful in its application. Unlike Foucault and
Goldhill, Konstan avoids applying a "one-size-fits-all" paradigm to ancient sexuality. Konstan
himself recognizes that his work on sexuality is substantially different from Foucault’s in The
History of Sexuality (1994: 6-7). This is mainly due to his focus on the Novel, a focus that
constrains him to a purely literary approach in his construction of ancient sexuality.

In her concept of sexuality Froma Zeitlin (1999) addresses the inherent conflict in
ascribing agency to a lover. Working with myth as her frame of reference, she claims that if a
lover truly desires, that individual is "both active and passive at the same time, in a position of
both strength and weakness" (1999:55). Zeitlin is working with the idea that “Erōs is called a
tyrranōs” (1999: 60). She further explains this in her list of departure points for the
examination of desire, "If erotic desire is experienced as an assault on the self and its boundaries,
whatever its sensual delights, and its outcome may be figured as fusion or fragmentation" (1999:
60), then desire is a mixture of both agency and passivity. Zeitlin’s idea of desire complements
that of Konstan in that desire makes an individual simultaneously active and passive. This
discards an exclusively active/passive paradigm, which results in a more nuanced approach to
sexuality than found in Dover, Foucault, and Goldhill.

110 In his sole reference to Alciphron, Konstan uses letter 4.2, in which Glykera expresses her jealousy of Bacchis, as
an example of the inability of first-person discourse to express symmetrical desire (1994: 178). I suggest that letters
4.18 and 4.19, between Menander and Glykera, contradict that claim.

111 Konstan does acknowledge a debt of “inspiration and orientation” to Foucault (1994: 7).

112 An example of the characterization of Erōs as turannos can be found at 9.573d of Plato’s Republic.
James Davidson, in his 1997 study *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens*, takes a dramatically different approach to ancient sexuality. In Davidson’s construction of sexuality, erotic activity among the Athenians is considered simply a pleasure for which there was an appetite, comparable to eating and drinking. For Davidson, the individual’s relationship to pleasure is important. The Greeks’ approach to pleasure (and by extension sexuality) “was vigorously rationalistic and humane...confident enough to insist on personal responsibility in managing appetites, never so frightened of pleasures as to flee them in vain” (1997:314), which I suggest sounds very much like Foucault’s *enkrateia*. This concentration on appetite frames pleasure as a commodity of sorts; rather, it frames it as obtainable from a specific set of commodities, from fish, to wine, to flute-girls. Thus the *opsophagos*— a “relish-eater” in Davidson’s understanding of the term (1997: 21)— is held in the same regard as the *katapugôn*—the passive partner in male-male sexual activity (1997: 168). Appetites and individual self-control function in the same way, no matter what the object of desire is. Thus in his assessment of the economy of sexuality and appetite, Davidson is absolutely successful. The strongest aspect of *Courtesans and Fishcakes* is its linking of appetite to broader political and societal regulation, which goes beyond individual control. Davidson demonstrates that sexuality is a social construct following Weeks’ definition (Weeks 2002: 33).

**Foucault and Feminism**

From a feminist perspective, Foucault all but ignores female sexual subjectivity. This is a common charge levelled at Foucault’s work: his lack of focus on women, or gender as an issue in and of itself. Most critics dealing with gender agree that, “it is indisputable that his analyses do not identify gender as a constitutive feature of power, a fact that, according to some critics, has led to the continued— and now theoretically rationalized— erasure of women from history”
This criticism is absolutely valid in terms of gender: Foucault’s work would inarguably be strengthened by attention to women.

Perhaps the scholar most opposed to Foucault’s work and influence is Amy Richlin, for whom Foucauldian “New Historicism” constitutes “erasure and neglect of work by feminists” (Larmour, Miller, and Platter 1997: 20). Not only that, it often erases women themselves (1991: 60). She views such work as either assuming or ignoring the work of feminist scholars, and privileging a male perspective. In addition, Richlin sees *The History of Sexuality* as replicating “the omissions of the history it documents” (1997: 139). Richlin (1991) identifies three main concerns with *The History of Sexuality*: (1) that women are merely objects in Foucault’s consideration, (2) that Foucault contradicts himself by claiming that sexuality only came into existence in the nineteenth century, and (3) Foucault’s ignorance about ancient Greece and Rome (1991: 169-70). She does catch Foucault in a strikingly misogynist statement in his discussion of Aeschines, when he states, “As for the woman’s passivity, it did denote an inferiority of nature and condition; but there was no reason to criticize it as a behaviour, precisely because it was in conformity with what nature intended and with what the law prescribed” (Foucault 1985: 216). Richlin’s concern here is that Foucault leaves such a statement without comment and makes no attempt at explicating its inherent misogyny. Such occurrences are fodder for those who oppose Foucault, and rightly so.

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113 This is precisely the charge that Richlin (1991) levels at Foucault.

114 Richlin’s dislike of Foucault rings out in all of her writing regarding his work, no more clearly than when she asks, “Why does this man have his own adjective?” (1997: 169). Halperin responds to Richlin’s anti-Foucault stance by calling her work on him “simplistic,” “unappetizing,” and “political and professional opportunism” (1998: 104).

115 For more on Richlin’s own interest in Roman sexuality, see *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (1983).
Page duBois construes the dearth of female agency in *The History of Sexuality* as sexism, stating that, "Foucault’s work is a superior example of the very prejudices, historical and sexual, that I seek to contest" (1988: 2).\(^{116}\) duBois also takes issue with Foucault’s historical methodology, in that his approach to a history of constructing sexuality fails to incorporate pre-Platonic literature, therefore also failing to identify “how the creation of a discourse of discipline marks a rupture in human history” (1988: 2). For duBois, in his failure to explain “the philosophical establishment of the autonomous male subject,” Foucault has “authorized” the desiring male as subject, and effectively removed female agency from his version of history (1988: 2). Part of this issue is also that Foucault’s work is very influential in the study of ancient sexuality; its primacy is what makes it so dangerous (duBois 1995: 128). duBois does, however, praise Foucault’s assumption of historical difference (1997: 90). In doing so she recognizes, as Foucault does, that it is necessary to approach ancient thought without using modern ideas as a touchstone.

Lynn Hunt acknowledges Foucault’s usefulness to feminist historians in his identification of the body as “the site for the deployment of discourses” (1992: 81). For Hunt, despite the fact that Foucault did not engage with the feminist implications of his work, *The History of Sexuality* “opened the way for a consideration of the gendering of subjectivity” (1992: 81). Conversely, this is precisely the point that Catherine MacKinnon identifies as Foucault’s main failure: “When he misses gender, he misses how power is organized sexually, hence socially” (1992: 129). Buker reiterates the themes found in much of the feminist scholarship dealing with Foucault: *The History of Sexuality* is relevant because it opens up the topic of sexuality to a fresh examination, divorced from current essentialist ideas concerning sexuality, and yet is simultaneously highly

\(^{116}\) duBois’ work takes a psychoanalytic approach to sexuality and the female body.
flawed because it almost entirely ignores female sexuality (1990: 811). Buker identifies Foucault’s and feminism’s shared focus on relationships, connecting the two when she says, “the production of knowledge depends upon connections to the world, not upon detachment” (1990: 816).

My own opinion of Foucault is that his work has been so useful in reshaping assumptions about the essential nature of sexuality that it cannot be discarded, despite its almost complete absence of attention to women. By taking Foucault’s techniques and applying them to a different set of sources than the ones he uses, it is possible to delineate varying constructions of sexuality, some that are in line with Foucault’s own conclusions, and some that depart radically from them. I will therefore be using Foucault’s basic categories, informed by the work of Konstan and Zeitlin on desire, in my own analysis of Letters of Courtesans.

The Gaze

In both ancient and modern culture, the formulation of sexual desire is often linked to the act of seeing. According to Goldhill, looking is equivalent to “a kind of copulation” (2002: 384). This follows Laura Mulvey’s formulation of the gaze in cinematic terms. For Mulvey (1975), the gaze is a highly gendered phenomenon, one that can be found in the discourse of film. She is dealing with “the way film reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference, which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle” (1975: 6). Mulvey discusses how cinema “satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking” (1975: 9).117

117 Mulvey’s essay takes the films of Josef von Sternberg and Alfred Hitchcock as its examples of this process.
Mulvey's delineation of the gaze also uses an active/passive paradigm, similar to the one found in Foucault and Dover's conceptions of sexuality, which is understood in terms of gender: "The determining [active] male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female [passive] figure which is styled accordingly" (1975: 11). When a male projects his fantasy onto the female via the gaze, he removes her power, which in turn converts her from a dangerous to a reassuring entity (Mulvey 1975: 14). The gaze in Mulvey's construction is therefore problematically male. The male gaze determines the female object. Seeing the gaze as a masculine phenomenon limits the feminine ability to look and shapes the female as object only. Jack Berger outlines the effects of the woman-as-object version of the gaze when he states that for the female object, "her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another" (1972: 46). While not denying the existence of the masculine gaze, I would like to open it up to include a feminine gaze. Desire is often shaped by the act of looking, both genders can desire, and therefore both can be the subject of the gaze. The gaze is not static, and the "reversibility of gender roles" must be taken into account (Ancona and Greene 2005: 6).\(^{118}\)

A further dimension is added to the act of looking when it is represented in literature. Literature makes use of visual metaphor, so that when someone or something is described in a narrative, the reader envisions the object of their literary gaze. In cinema, when the subject of the gaze looks at the object, the plot slows down, freezing "the flow of the action in moments of erotic contemplation" (Mulvey 1975: 11). This is mirrored in literature, particularly first-person discourse, which replicates the camera's singular perspective. Narrative gaze, therefore, can be equally as determinative of its object as its cinematic counterpart.

\(^{118}\) In his *De Sensu*, Aristotle works with a similar concept of vision, in which the object looked at can equally affect the one who looks.
I have isolated four main issues from these modern discussions that I see as key to approaching ancient sexuality. The first is that any current notions of what sexuality is must be completely abandoned. The ancient Greeks must be treated as an entirely separate culture from that of the modern West. Secondly, sexuality, as defined in these cultural terms, should be understood as a construction, a composite of practices and acts related to desire. This means that actions that are not explicitly sexual are to be taken into account when examining an individual's sexuality. The third issue is the active/passive paradigm. While agency and passivity are valid ways of assessing sexuality, rarely is an individual exclusively active or exclusively passive. Finally, gender and sexual agency should not be thought of as inextricably linked. Gender can shape expressions of desire, but it does not determine agency. I shall therefore analyze *Letters of Courtesans* with these issues in mind.
Chapter 3: Sexuality in *Letters of Courtesans*

In *Letters of Courtesans*, Alciphron’s audience is presented with a group of women whose livelihoods revolve around and who are reliant upon their sexuality. Sexuality is therefore a dominant theme in this collection of letters. This chapter will examine how Alciphron has constructed the courtesans’ sexuality. As the current paradigm for discussing sexuality is dominated by the ideas expressed in *The History of Sexuality*, I will be presenting instances in which these women display sexual agency in Foucauldian terms: the sexual pleasures the courtesans seek (*aphrodisia*), as defined by the specific manifestations of those pleasures (*chrēsis aphrodisōn*); the goals the courtesans identify in their erotic relationships (*telea*); and my own category of persuasion (*peithō*), particularly as it applies to the achievement of the courtesans’ *telea*. These categories are far from discrete, and there is much overlap amongst them. It is a combination of all of these concepts, rather than any single one, that determines the sexual agency of the courtesans. Finally, I shall isolate examples of the desiring gaze. This will move beyond the determinative male gaze of Mulvey (1975), as the gaze that Alciphron presents can also originate with women, and is not only directed at one’s beloved, but also at one’s peers, and even oneself. Because Alciphron writes in the courtesans’ own voices, his audience is able to quite literally see from their perspectives.

It is the combination of these two dominant theories that will locate the courtesans as actively desiring women. Foucault’s and Mulvey’s theories have established a theoretical framework that can be applied in this context, with modification. Foucault and Mulvey are therefore starting points in a discussion which will extend beyond the original scope of both scholars.
**Aphrodisia**

*Aphrodisia,* as sexual pleasures, are not explicitly defined by Foucault. They are, rather vaguely, the “acts, gestures, and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure” (Foucault 1985: 40). Working with this as my basis, I have isolated references to any type of sexual activity in the courtesans’ letters, whether these instances are explicitly sexual or merely suggestive of this type of activity. Letter 1, from Phryné to Praxitelês, provides an example of sexual activity that is only suggested in Phryné’s invitation to make love: ἕν ἔτι τῇ δώρεᾳ λείπει, ἔλθειν σε πρός ἡμᾶς, ἵνα ἐν τῷ τεμένει μετ’ ἀλλήλων κατακλίνωμεν, (“One thing only is still lacking to your gift: that you come to me, so that we may lie together in the precinct” 4.1). The term she uses (κατακλίνειν) is often used in reference to reclining at a banquet; however a comparison with Old Comedy shows that Phryné’s true intentions are evident. In a scene from Arispohanes’ *Lysistrata*, Cinesias is attempting to persuade his wife Myrrhinē to end her sexual embargo and make love with him:

M. τοιγάρ, ἢν δοκῇ, κἀγὼν ἀπειμένεσι, νῦν δ’ ἀπομικνόμακα.

Κ. οὐ δ’ ἀλλὰ κατακλίνηθι μετ’ ἐμοῦ διὰ χρόνου.

M. οὐ δήτα: καὶ τοι ζ’ οὐκ ἑρῶ γ’ ὡς οὐ φιλῶ.

Κ. φιλεῖς; τί οὖν οὐ κατεκλίνης ὡς Μύρριον;

M. ὡς καταγέλαστ’ ἐναντίον τοῦ παιδίου;

Κ. μᾶ Δί’ ἀλλὰ τοῦτο γ’ οἰκάδ’ ὡς Μανῆ φέρε. ἵδου τὸ μὲν σοι παιδίου καὶ δὴ ἱπποδῶν, οὐ δ’ οὐ κατακλίνει.
M. Then, if you decide to, I’ll leave for there; but for now, I’ve taken an oath to avoid you.

K. Just lie down with me for a while.

M. No way! But I’m not saying that I don’t love you.

K. You love me? Then why won’t you lie down with me?

M. You fool! With the baby right there?

K. By Zeus! Take the baby home Manēs. See, the baby’s out of the picture, but you’re not lying down with me! (400-408, my tr.)

The plot of the play, which is about a sex strike by the women of Athens to force their husbands to end the Peloponnesian War, makes is clear what Cinesias means by κατακλίνειν in this exchange. This in turn demonstrates that Phrynē is proposing that she and Praxitelēs make love next to the Knidia.

Letter 7, from Thaīs to Euthydēmus, is more explicit than Phrynē’s letter. In this letter, Thaīs sets up a contrast between the philosophers that her lover Euthydēmus studies with and courtesans. To Thaīs, both groups have their own unique types of persuasion, and so she attempts to convince Euthydēmus that the courtesans’ version is preferable. Thaīs presents an intimate image of her relationship with her lover when she claims to prefer sleeping with him in her arms over the gold of the sophists (οἳ γὰρ περιβάλλουσα κοιμᾶσθαι μᾶλλον ἐβουλόμην ἡ τὸ παρὰ πάντων σοφιστῶν χρυσίου, 4.7.3). She goes on in the same letter to state that their shared activities produce pleasure:

119 The term συμκλίνειν also appears in Herodotus 2.181.2 in reference to intercourse. For a discussion of similar terms such as κατάκειοθαι, see Henderson (1991: 160).
Come to your beloved as you are when you have come back, for instance, from the Lyceum wiping off the sweat, that we may carouse a bit and give each other a demonstration of that noble end, pleasure. (4.7.8, tr. adapted)

Thaïs has shown that Euthydèmeus is the source of her sexual pleasure, and has even specified the conditions she would prefer for such pleasure: she would have him come to her from physical rather than intellectual exercise.

The tale of a party in the countryside with several courtesans and their lovers, as recounted in letter 13, provides the most detailed account of aphrodisia in the Letters of Courtesans. Written by an unnamed hetaira and apparently addressed to one of her peers,¹²⁰ this letter, the second-longest in the book, begins with a group of courtesans making their way to a country estate. Upon arriving, they go to a grove with statues of Pan and some Nymphs, a setting that suggests the activity to come. Sacrifices are made to the Nymphs and Aphrodité, and the banquet commences outside, alongside the statues. Wine is consumed, music is played, and there is some dancing by the courtesan Plangôn, who is so enticing that the statue of Pan seems to be excited too:

ινίκα δὲ ἀναστάσα κατωρχήσατο καὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν ἀνεκίνησεν ἡ Πλαγγών, ὄλιγον ὁ Παῦν ἐδέσεις ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρας ἐπὶ τὴν πυγήν αὐτῆς ἐξάλλεσθαι.

But when Plangôn got up and danced, swaying her hips, Pan from his rock almost leapt upon her backside. (4.13.12, tr. adapted)

Pan is not the only one to be stimulated by the happenings at the party. The courtesans too are moved by the combination of wine and music:

¹²⁰ This is the only example from Letters of Courtesans with an unnamed writer and addressee. This can be attributed to the fact that this letter is fragmentary.
And at once the music excited us and since we were a bit tipsy our thoughts turned to—
you know what I mean. We stroked the hands of our lovers, gently unbending their flexed
fingers, and between drinks we played. Someone laid back and kissed her lover, letting
him feel her breasts, and as if she were turning away she would actually press her hips on
his groin. And now our passions were rising, and those of the men too. (4.13.13-4, tr.
adapted)

This passage demonstrates that Alciphrôn can conceive that hetairai are capable of desiring their
lovers, and indeed initiating sexual contact with them. By their manipulation of the situation, it is
clear that these women are “active sexual and social subjects” (Winkler 1990: 207).

After their brief rendezvous, the partygoers return to more drinking and eating (with Pan
and Priapus looking on in approval), and become so drunk that they no longer hide their sexual
encounters from one another: ἔκραται παλάμεν μάλα νεανίκῳς μέχρι μηδὲ λανθάνειν ἀλλήλας
θέλεις, μηδὲ αἰδομενήν τῆς ἀφροδίτης παρακλέπτειν (“We set to drinking quite lustily
until we girls no longer cared to keep out of each other’s sight or modestly to enjoy our
lovemaking in secret,” 4.13.18, tr. adapted). The use of the term ἀφροδίτη as a euphemism for
sexual intercourse stands out in this letter. That this term means intercourse in this context is
demonstrated by letter 4.17, when Leontium describes her lover Timarchus as her first sexual
partner. In taking her virginity, Timarchus also provided Leontium with her first sexual
experience, which she refers to as ἡ πρώτη ἀφροδίτη. In letter 4.16, Lamia offers to
welcome her lover, the great Macedonian general Demetrius, with “the charms of Aphrodite”

121 Similar expressions for sexual intercourse include ἀφροδισίαζειν and ἀφροδίσια ποιεῖν (Henderson 1991:
154).
(ὑποδέξομαι δὴ σε ἐπαφροδίτως, 4.16.4), which further indicates that Alciphron uses the term in 4.13 to refer to intercourse. As opposed to Phryne’s κατάκλινειν, the term ἀφροδίτη is a direct reference to intercourse.

In letter 4.17, Leontium writes to Lamia in a quandary: she is stuck with an aged lover, the philosopher Epicurus, who is trying to prevent her from seeing her younger lover, the handsome Timarchus. Punning on the epithet of Lamia’s lover, Poliorcetēs (“the Besieger”), Leontium complains of her own besieger: ὁντῶς ἐπιπολιορκητὴν ἔχω τοιοῦτον, οὐχ οἶον σύ, Λάμια, Δημήτριον, “I have such a besieger, not like you have in Demetrius, Lamia” (4.17.3, my tr.). The type of sexual activity that Leontium is talking about is distinctly not pleasurable for her. She then contrasts Epicurus with the younger, more handsome Timarchus. In addition to providing her with finery, servants, and delicacies, Timarchus is identified as the man who taught Leontium how to make love:

οὐκ ἂρνοῦμαι πρὸς τὸν νεανίσκον οἰκεῖος ἔχειν ἕκαστον—πρὸς σὲ μοι τάληθη, Λάμια—καὶ τὴν πρωτὴν ἀφροδίτην ἔμαθον παρ’ αὐτοῦ σχεδόν· οὐτὸς γὰρ με διεπαρθενεύεσθαι ἐκ γείτόνων οἰκοῦσαν.

I do not deny that my relations with the young man have been familiar for a long time— to you, Lamia, I must write the truth— and I first learned about sex from him; for I lived next door to him, and it was he who took my virginity. (4.17.4, tr. adapted)

Writing to her peer Lamia, Leontium is unafraid to compare one lover to another unfavourably, nor does she hesitate to identify Timarchus as her first sexual partner.122

Letters 16 and 17 reveal a trend in the courtesans’ letters. When discussing sexual activity with each other, they are explicit, discussing in detail what has occurred. Letter 13’s

122 The word διεπαρθενεύεσθαι also appears at Herodotus 4.168.10 in a discussion of the Adyrmachidae, a Libyan people who allow their king to deflower his choice of virgins.
mentions of specific body parts and the use of ὀφροδίτη in letters 13, 16, and 17 illustrate this. When writing to their lovers, as in letters 1, 7, and 16, however, the courtesans are much coyer, using euphemisms to refer vaguely to intercourse. In either case, however, it is clear that the courtesans partake of Foucault’s *aphrodisia* in an active manner. They can desire their lovers, initiate sexual activity with them, or, as in the case of Leontium, dread the intercourse of a lover they do not desire.

*Chrēsis Aphrodisiōn*

I would now like to examine the examples of *aphrodisia* outlined above for evidence of the courtesans’ *chrēsis aphrodisiōn*. For Foucault, determining such “use of pleasures” allows one to “work out the conditions and modalities of a ‘use’” (Foucault 1985: 53). By looking at the specific manifestations of the courtesans’ sexuality, it is possible to ascertain how the courtesans manage their own sexuality. In this process, I will be using the three categories that make up Foucault’s “threefold strategy” (1985: 54): need, timeliness (*kairos*), and status.

Foucault relates *aphrodisia* and need when he identifies the practice of *aphrodisia* as “nothing more or less than the satisfaction of a need” (1985: 55). The satisfaction of sexual pleasure as a response to desire is then just another physical need, on a par with eating when hungry, or relieving oneself when necessary. In this equivocation, Foucault hints at what Davidson elaborates on, that sexual pleasure is as equally consumable as food (1997: xvi). How, then, do the courtesans identify the point at which they must satisfy their own desire?

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123 The example that Foucault provides here is Diogenēs the Cynic, who, according to Diogenēs Laertius, would relieve his sexual urges by masturbating in the agora (6.2.46). Athenæus links Diogenēs (the philosopher) to the courtesan Lais of Hycarra at 13.588c.

124 Davidson isolates what he refers to as the “consuming passions”: eating, drinking, and sex (1997: xvi).
Letters 1, 7, 13, 16, and 17, as discussed above, all contain instances in which hetairai desire their lovers, and seek sexual activity to satisfy that desire. In letter 1, Phrynē’s desire arises out of appreciation for the statue of herself that Praxitelēs has set up. The statue is of unprecedented beauty (πάγκολον τι χρήμα), and yet Praxitelēs’ gift is insufficient without the physical pleasure of lovemaking. Phrynē is clear about this when she says in reference to the statue, ἕν ἐτι τῇ δώτει λείπει, “One thing is still lacking in your gift” (4.1).

Letter 13 contains the clearest expressions of desire. The first bout of lovemaking at the party in the countryside comes when the women in attendance become excited by the music. This excitement causes them to turn to their lovers for satisfaction, who are stimulated in return. All present then dash off to gratify their desires in makeshift outdoor bedchambers:

And so we slipped away and found a thicket a short distance off, a bedchamber suited to this stage of our revel. Here we quit drinking and made in haste for our little bedrooms, doing our act not very convincingly. (4.13.14, tr. adapted)

When the courtesans and their lovers stop drinking, they exchange one of Foucault’s needs for another.

For Lamia in letter 16, the mere presence of her lover Demetrius is enough to enflame her passion. She desires her lover so much that she is unable to manipulate him as other courtesans do with their lovers:
Well then, we courtesans must at one time be ‘occupied,’ or again be ‘unwell,’ or must sing, or play the flute, or dance, or get the dinner ready, or decorate the room; blocking the way to those intimate pleasures that otherwise would surely wither fast, so that our lovers’ passions, made more inflammable by the delays that intervene, may burst into the hotter flame... Where other men were concerned, my lord, I could perhaps bring myself to take these precautions and to play these tricks; but with you... I couldn’t bear, by the dear Muses I couldn’t, to employ deceit. (4.16.6-7, tr. adapted)

Lamia’s declaration indicates two major points. First, that she, as a courtesan, understands the functioning of desire, and how she may cause it to grow in her clients by modulating her availability to them. Second, and more important in terms of the Foucauldian conception of chρēsis aρhρoδiζόν, she claims to recognize that her own desire for Demetrius is so strong that she cannot delay its satisfaction with the tricks she uses on her other lovers. Lamia’s profession of such desire becomes a method of appearing sincere to Demetrius, particularly as contrasted with her lack of desire for other men.

Lamia’s claim of a need for Demetrius is part of a larger theme of deference that runs through her entire letter. She opens her correspondence by thanking him for even allowing her to write to him:

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125 The refusal of affections is a common technique that Alciphrōn’s courtesans use to manipulate their lovers, as seen in 4.9, 4.10, and 4.15. At 4.10.3, Myrrhina reiterates this idea: εἰςωθε γάρ ἡ βαρύτης τῶν ἀμελεῖσθαι καταβάλλεσθαι, “Arrogance is generally broken down by a show of indifference.”


Σὺ ταῦτης τῆς παρρησίας αἵτις, τοσοῦτος ὡν Βασιλεὺς, εἶτα ἐπιτρέψας καὶ ἑταῖρα γράφειν σοι καὶ σοῦ ἡγησάμενος δεινὸν ἐνυγχάνειν τοῖς ἐμοῖς γράμμασιν ὀλη μοι ἐνυγχάνων.

I have you to thank for the freedom I have of addressing you, you who are such a great king, who nevertheless permit even a courtesan to write letters to you and think it no harm to hold converse with my letters as you do with my entire self. (4.16.1, tr. adapted)

This tone of capitulation continues for the entire letter. This is an example of the flexibility of discourse that the epistolary format affords (Rosenmeyer 2001: 301). Because she is writing a letter, Lamia is free to portray herself as the deferential lover to Demetrius.

Lamia’s correspondent in 4.17, Leontium, suffers from the physical side-effects of desire that goes without resolution. The mere thought of being without Timarchus is sufficient to cause physical symptoms for her:


I swear by the Mysteries, as I hope for release from these calamities, that at the very thought of separation from Timarchus I have at this moment turned cold, and my hands and feet have begin to sweat, and my heart has turned upside down. (4.17.8)

Leontium’s lovesickness shows that when the need that originates in desire is not fulfilled, there are physical consequences. As opposed to Lamia’s professed desire for Demetrius, Leontium’s can be seen as more authentic. She is not writing to a lover with manipulation in mind, but rather to a friend. This shows, along with the other three letters discussed, that when desire arises, the courtesans actively seek its fulfilment. They treat their sexual desires as a need, answerable by aphrodisia.
When seeking opportunities for sexual fulfilment, the hetairai employ Foucault’s second strategy of *chrēsis aphrodizōn*, timeliness (hereafter referred to as *kairos*). For Foucault, there are three ways to determine *kairos*, one’s age, the time of year, and the time of day (1985: 57-8). While time of year doesn’t appear to be an important consideration in the *Letters of Courtesans*, the other two issues, age and time of day, factor into the courtesans’ sexual activity.

While in marriage an age-gap between husband and wife was seemingly acceptable (Konstan 1994: 106), the age of a courtesan and her lover is an important concern. Age is a leading factor in Leontium’s preference for Timarchus over Epicurus. In her characterization of Epicurus, Leontium expresses the conflict inherent in an old man taking up with a young courtesan: οὔδὲν δυσαρεστήτερον, ὡς ἑοίκεν, ἐστὶν ἄρτι πάλιν μειρακευόμενον πρεσβύτου, “Nothing is harder to please it seems, than an old man just beginning to play at being a boy again” (4.7.1). In the juxtaposition of μειρακεύομαι and πρεσβύτης in the opening sentence of the letter, Alciphron captures the essence of Leontium’s problem: her too-old lover is supplanting her age-appropriate lover. She emphasizes Epicurus’ age (nearly eighty) and in contrasting the two later in the letter, insinuates that the younger Timarchus has the juster claim to her affections:

καὶ ὁ μὲν νεανίσκος ὡς ἀνέχεται τὸν ὑπεριστὰν ἀντεραστὴν γέροντα, ὁ δὲ τὸν δικαιότερον οὐχ ὑπομένει.

And he, though still a youth, puts up with his rival, the latecomer, an old man, but the latter cannot abide the man with the juster claim. (4.17.8)

Leontium then mentions that Epicurus is being ridiculed by his own peers for his unseemly behaviour, and calls him shameless:

126 Konstan uses the example of Xenophōn’s *Oeconomicus*, with its idea of the husband educating his wife (1994: 106).
How often do you think, Lamia, I have gone to him privately and said, 'What are you doing, Epicurus? Don't you know that you are being ridiculed for this by Timocrates the brother of Metrodorus, in the Assembly, in the theatre, in the company of other sophists?' But what can be done with him? He is shameless in his passion. (4.17.10)

The preceding statement makes it clear that Epicurus is "shameless" (ἀναίσχυντος) because of his involvement with a much younger courtesan.

Menander and Glykera provide a counterpoint to the relationship between Leontium and Epicurus. Because they are lovers of the appropriate age for one another, Menander is able to discuss the two of them growing old together:

What greater exaltation could be mine than your love, inasmuch as, thanks to your character and your manners, even our extreme old age will to me always seem youth? May we be young together, may we grow old together too. (4.18.2-3)

The key to Menander's wish is that he and Glykera are able to experience their youth and old age simultaneously, which makes them suited to each other as lovers.127

In the courtesans' management of their sexuality, the ideal time of day to make love is during the night. In letter 13, dawn puts an end to lovemaking. The second round of orgiastic lovemaking that occurs at the rural party is finally ended by the coming of dawn: μισ homic τὸν ἐκ γειτόνων ἀλεκτρωνα Κοκκύσας ἀφείλετο τὴν παροινίαν, "Oh, bother the neighbours'
cock! He crowed and brought our carousel to an end" (4.13.18). At 4.7.6, Thaïs claims that when a man stays with a courtesan, he is up until he “takes his early morning drink” (σπάσας τὸν ἐωθινὸν, my tr.).

Foucault’s final strategy in determining the manifestations of pleasure is status. For Foucault, sexual activity “had to be adapted to suit the user and his personal status” (1985: 59). For the hetairai, this is a very specific process, as their status in society is in direct correlation to their sexuality. Thaïs addresses the social standing of the courtesans when she compares them with sophists:

But possibly we seem to you inferior to the sophists because we don’t know where the clouds come from or what the atoms are like. I myself have gone to school to see them and have talked with many of them. No one, when he’s with a courtesan, dreams of a tyrant’s power or raises sedition in the state; on the contrary, he drains his early-morning beaker and then prolongs his drunken rest until the third or fourth hour. We teach young men just as well as they do. Judge, if you will, between Aspasia the courtesan and Sōcratēs the sophist, and consider which of them trained the better men. You will find Periclēs the pupil of one and Critias the pupil of the other. (4.7.5-7)
By mentioning Periclé and Aspasia, Thaís illustrates the courtesan’s status as derived from the men she associates with. On the other hand, she also highlights a courtesan’s erotic power over her lover, and thus how erotic status can affect social status.

Lamia’s letter takes such a reversal of social status to its extreme. When she sees her lover, the powerful Demetrius, with his retinue of troops and ambassadors, he is truly Demetrius the Besieger: καὶ τότε μοι δύνασθαι ὁ πολιορκητής εἶναι δοκεῖσ Δημήτριος, “And then you appear to me to be in very truth Demetrius the Besieger of Cities” (4.16.1). When he comes to her as a lover, however, he loses his military and political power:

καὶ ὅταν περιπλακεῖσ μέγα φίλης, πάλιν πρὸς ἐμαυτὴν τάναντία λέγω, ὁ ὅτος ἐστὶν ὁ πολιορκητής; ὁ ὅτος ἐστὶν ὁ ἐπὶ τοῖς στρατοπέδοις; τοῖτον φοβεῖται Μακεδονία, τοῦτον ἡ Ἑλλάς, τοῦτον ἡ Θρᾴκη;

And when you take me in your arms and give me a hearty kiss, then again I say to myself just the opposite, “Is this the Besieger of Cities? Is this the commander of armies? Is this the terror of Macedonia, of Greece, of Thrace? (4.16.3)

In the erotic domain, status is shifted, so that even the most powerful figures in society are affected. In the case of Aspasia (as mentioned by Thaís) and Lamia, the courtesans can influence powerful figures, and in Thaís’ estimation, even society.

**Telea**

Each of the courtesans’ erotic relationships has a distinct telos, falling into the two broad categories of those motivated by love and those motivated by money. There are no letters in

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128 Periclé the democratic statesman, as Aspasia the courtesan’s student is contrasted with Critias the oligarch as Socratès the philosopher’s student. Aspasia was the long-term lover of Periclé. Athenaeus refers to her as his *pallakē* (concubine) at 13. 589d-f.
which the two goals are combined. By determining the goals of their relationships, it is easier to understand the individual actions that comprise the continuum that is the courtesans’ sexuality.

Like Phryné’s letter to Praxiteles, the two letters from Glykera (4.2 and 4.19) exhibit a purely erotic telos in her relationship with Menander. In letter 4.2, Menander is off to Corinth to see the Isthmian games, and supposedly to visit Glykera’s courtesan friend Bacchis (the addressee of the letter). Glykera is concerned that her lover will not be able to resist Bacchis’ charms, a concern which is doubled by the fact that Menander “is amazingly amorous, and not even the glummiest man could resist Bacchis,” (ἐρωτικὸς γὰρ ἐστὶ δαιμονίως, καὶ Βακχίδος οὐδ’ ἂν τῶν σκυθρωποτάτων τις ἀπόσχισυ, 4.2.3, tr. adapted). Glykera’s concern is rooted in her feelings for Menander, and her fear that she may lose him.

The deep affection of Glykera for Menander is revealed in much more detail in letter 19, when she responds to news that he has been invited to Egypt by King Ptolemy. She offers to follow him to Egypt, to nurse him when the sea-voyage makes him seasick, and most importantly, assures him that she is secure in their love:

Our world stands all secure, whether it be the city, or the Peiraeus, or Egypt. No region but will have capacity for our love; even if we dwell upon a rock, I am sure that our affection will make it a bower of Aphrodité. (4.19.10, tr. adapted)

The telos of this individual letter, within the larger context to Menander and Glykera’s relationship, becomes clearer later in the letter. That she wishes to accompany him to Egypt is

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129 The letters in which courtesans discuss money in terms of their lovers are 4.6, 4.9, and 4.15. The letters that are written to a lover with no mention of money are 4.1, 4.2, 4.16, and 4.19.
made evident by how she claims she will occupy her time while she waits for him to come to her
from Peiraeus:

ἔως δὲ ἐδήμο παραγίνη πρὸς ἡμᾶς Πειραιῶθεν, μυθήσουμαι, ἵνα σε ταῖς ἐμαῖς
χεραῖν ἀκύμους ναυστολήσας πλέουσα, εἰ τοῦτο ἡμεῖν ἐναι φαίνοιτο.

Until you come to me from the Peiraeus I shall be learning the secrets of
steering a ship or of standing watch at the bow, so that I may guide you over
quiet seas with my own hands, if it should seem better to make the voyage.
(4.19.21)

In connection with the news of Menander’s invitation to Egypt in letter 4.18, and her pleas to
Bacchis in letter 4.2, the sacrifice that she is prepared to make by following him to Egypt shows
that Glykera’s primary motivation is love.

Although written by her former lover to his male friend, letter 4.11 creates an image of
Bacchis as truly in love. As related by Menecleidēs, she spurned an economic opportunity in
favour of his love, actively setting aside an economic telos to pursue an erotic one:

σῶθα τῶν Μιδείων ἐκείνων τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Συρίας δεύρι κατάραντα μεθ’ ὅσις
θεραπείας καὶ παρασκευῆς ἐδόβει, εὐνούχους ὑποχνούμενος καὶ
θεραπεύας καὶ κόσμον τινα βαρβαρικόν καὶ ὁμος ἕκουτα αὐτῶν οὐ
προσέπτο, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ τοῦμὸν ἡγαίτα κοιμωμένη χλανικίων τὸ λίτων τοῦτο
καὶ δήμοτικον, καὶ τοῖς παρ’ ἡμῶν γλίσχρως αὐτῇ πεμπομένοις
ἐπανέχουσα τὰς σατραπικὰς ἐκείνας καὶ πολυχρόσους δωρεὰς διώβειτο.

You remember that Median who put in here from Syria and stalked about with
that retinue and accoutrements, promising eunuchs and maidservants and
ornaments of barbaric splendour; and yet, when he came to her, she would not let
him in, but she was content to sleep under my poor cloak, plain and plebeian as it
is; satisfied with the scanty presents I sent her, she refused his gifts— gifts worthy
of a prince. (4.11.4, tr. adapted)

By rejecting the rich gifts of her Median suitor, Bacchis is working towards her purely erotic
telos. The romantic altruism of Bacchis is then compared with the utter lack thereof in her
mercenary counterpart Megara. Menecleides calls Megara a “dirty whore” (ἰππόπορνος), and claims that she “pitilessly fleeced Theagenès,” (Θεαγένης συλήσας ἀνηλεβῶς, 4.11.8).\(^{130}\)

Megara, however, is not alone in her mercenary bent. The exchange of letters between the estranged lovers Simaliōn and Petalē puts a spotlight on the economic reality of a courtesans’ relationships. In letter 8, Simaliōn writes to Petalē in an epistolary version of the paraclausithyron,\(^{131}\) in which he begs to get her back after a quarrel. That he writes out of love for Petalē is evident when he states his reason for doing so: ἔρως γὰρ, ὡς Πετάλη, κακῶς, “For I love you, Petalē, to distraction” (4.8.4). In contrast to Simaliōn’s protestation of love, Petalē is well aware, in her response, that her erotic attentions must come at a price:

\[\text{ἐβουλόμην μὲν ὑπὸ δακρύων οἰκίαν ἑταῖρας τρέφεσθαι: λαμπρῶς γὰρ ἄν ἔπραττον ἄφθόνων τούτων ἀπολαύουσα παρὰ σοῦ: νῦν δὲ δεὶ χρυσίου ἦμιν, ἵματίων, κόσμου, θεραπαινιδίων. Ἡ τοῦ βίου διοίκησις ἀπασα ἐντεύθεν.}\]

I wish that a courtesan’s house were maintained on tears; for then I should be getting along splendidly, since I am supplied with plenty of them by you! But the present fact is that I need money, clothes, finery, maidservants; on these the whole ordering of my life depends. (4.9.1)

Petalē even goes on to question Simaliōn’s true incentive in their relationship, effectively blackmailing him into a financial demonstration of his love:

\[^{130}\text{The word ἑπίπορνος appears in two other places in Alciphron. It is used at 2.31.2, when the farmer’s wife Anthylla complains to her husband of the attention that he is paying to a harp-girl, and at 3.14.1, when the parasite Bucopnictēs complains of a prostitute who he feels is treating a young man unkindly. It also appears at line 19 of Menander’s Theophorumenē, of a girl that Parmenōn feels has stolen his gifts. It is therefore clearly a derogative term.}\]

\[^{131}\text{The paraclausithyron is a conventional scene from comedy and elegy, in which the male lover lingers outside his beloved’s door, which is invariably shut to him. See Ovid Amores 1.6 and Zagagi (1994: 39-40). For the door’s perspective, see Propertius 1.16.}\]
φιλεῖς, ἄνθρωπος, φίς, καὶ βούλει σοι τὴν ἑρωμένην διαλέγεσθαι: ζῆν γὰρ
χαράς ἐκείνης μὴ δύνασθαι. τί οὖν; οὐ ποτηρία ἐστιν ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας
ὑμῖν;...μὴ χρυσία τῆς μητρὸς, μὴ δάνεια τοῦ πατρὸς κομιούμενος.

You’re in love, you say, sir, and you want your sweetheart’s company: for you
say you cannot live without her. Well then! Haven’t you people any goblets in
your house? ...unless you’re ready to raise cash on some of your mother’s jewels
or some of your father’s bonds. (4.9.3-4)

There is no mistaking Petalē’s goal in writing such a letter: it is apparent that love is not
part of her relationship with Simalion.

Petalē’s demands for cash and gifts are surpassed by Philumena, the ultimate avaricious
hetaira, who puts a specific price on her attentions, and makes no attempt to her disguise the
telos in her relationship with Crito. In 4.15, the shortest courtesan letter, she openly equates her
company with fifty pieces of gold:

τί πολλά γράφων ἀνιῶσας σαυτῶν; πεντήκοντά σοι χρυσῶν δεῖ καὶ
γραμμάτων οὐ δεί. εἰ μὲν οὖν πιλεῖς, δός· εἰ δὲ φιλαργυρεῖς, μὴ ἐνόχλει.

Why do you trouble yourself with a lot of letter writing? What you need is fifty
pieces of gold, and you don’t need letters. So then, if you love me, hand them
over; if you love money, don’t bother me. Farewell.132

Unlike Petalē, Philumena offers no justification for her demands. There is no detailing of the
needs of a courtesan; the fact that she demands gold from her lover is ample explanation of her
motives. That she demands a specific amount lowers her to the status of the common pornē
(Davidson 1997: 201).133

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132 This is the entire text of Philumena’s letter.

133 The amount of fifty pieces of gold is generic, and therefore does not limit this letter to a specific time.
The courtesans’ principal means of achieving their various erotic *telea* is persuasion (*peithō*). As demonstrated by the letters of Petalē and Philumena, *peithō* need not always be subtle, and can amount to the outright extortion of money. For most of the *hetairai*, however, persuasion takes on a variety of forms. Letter 10, from Myrrhina to Nicippē, outlines two different methods of regaining a lover’s lost attention. Diphilus, a one-time lover of Myrrhina, is now spending his time with Thettalē, a rival courtesan. Myrrhina’s first recourse is to the tactic of refusing affection:

> λοιπὸν οὖν ἀποκλείειν, καὶ ἐλθῃ ποτὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς κοιμηθησόμενος (ἐὰν δὴ κνίσαι ποτὲ ἐκείνην [βουληθῆν]), διώσασθαι: ἐἴωθε γὰρ ἡ βαρύτης τῶν ἀμελεῖσθαι καταβαλλέσθαι.

So the only course I have left is to lock him out; and, if he ever comes to spend the night with me (supposing he wants to annoy her now and then), to repulse him. For arrogance is generally broken down by a show of indifference. (4.10.3)

Indifference (**ἀμελεῖσθαι**) is the courtesans’ most commonly used method of *peithō*, but Myrrhina assumes that Diphilus will also use it in his relationship with Thettalē. She is, however, unconvinced of its efficacy, and so she goes a step farther in her persuasive efforts, asking Nicippē for a love potion. This will, in turn, be combined with Myrrhina’s acting to ensure Diphilus’ devotion:

> ἔστι οἱ πειρασθέν, ὡς φῆς, πολλάκις ἐφ’ ἡλικίας φίλτρον. τοιούτου τινός βοηθήματος δεύμεθα, ὁ τῶν πολὺν αὐτοῦ τὺφον, ἄλλ’ οὖν καὶ τὴν κραίπάλην ἐκκορήσειν. ἐπικηπυκευσόμεθα δὴ αὐτῶ καὶ δακρύσωμεν πιθανῶς, καὶ τὴν Νέμεσιν δεῖν αὐτὸν ὅραν εἰ ὅπως ἔμε περιόψεται ἐρώσαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τοιαῦτα ἄλλα ἐρούμεν καὶ πλασόμεθα.

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134 For more on *peithō* in Greek Tragedy, see R.G.A. Buxton’s *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peithō* (1982).
Now you have an aphrodisiac, you say, that you often tried when you were young. Some such help as that is what I need, something that would make a clean sweep of his excessive presumption and of his drunkenness too. So I will make overtures to him for a reconciliation and shed some tears in a convincing way, and tell him he must watch out for Nemesis if he neglects me who loves him; and I’ll invent some other lies of that sort. (4.10.4, tr. adapted)

Myrrhina has identified three means of persuasion in this letter: indifference, false emotion (her tears), and finally, the aphrodisiac. She ends the letter by musing about the lethal potential of the philtre, but she is not overly concerned with such a result. As long as she can remove Diphilus from Thettalē’s grasp, her peithō will have been successful, and she will have regained her patron as a source of income.

Not all of the courtesans’ attempts to persuade their lovers are quite as insidious as Myrrhina’s potion. Leaena does not seem to be seeking anything other than her lover’s preference for her over his wife in letter 4.13. She calls attention to the distinction between wife and courtesan in her letter that mocks her lover Philodemus’ wife:

Ελεώ σε νη τήν Αφροδίτην, ταλαίπωρε, οία πάσχεις μετ’ έκείνης καθεύδου τής χειλώνης. οιτοχρώμα τής γυναικός, αυτοσανδάρακη ήλίκους δε καθείτο τοὺς πλοκάμους ή νύμφη, ούδεν εοικότας ταῖς ἐπὶ τῆς κορυφῆς θριζίν...ηλίκοι δε οί πόδες, οίς πλατεῖς, οίς ἀρρυθμοί. αἱ αἱ, γυμνῆν περιλαβεῖν ἐκείνην οἶόν ἔστιν: ἐμοὶ μὲν καὶ βαρύ τι ἔδοκε προσπνέειν μετὰ φρύνου καθεύδειν ἀν εἰλόμην, Νέμεσι δέσποινα. ἐμβλέψαι Χιμαιρίδι βούλομαι...

By Aphrodite, I pity you, you unlucky fellow, for what you must suffer, sleeping with that tortoise. What a complexion the woman has, sheer vermillion! And what big curls your bride had dangling, not at all like the hair on top of her head! ... And how big her feet are! How flat! How unshapely! Dear me! What it must be like to embrace her with her clothes off! And it seemed to me she had foul
breath too. I should have preferred to sleep with a toad, O mistress Nemesis. I’d rather look the Chimaera in the face... (4.12.1-3)¹³⁵

Leaena dramatically insults her rival in every manner possible: her skin is bright red, she wears a wig, her feet are too big, and she suffers from halitosis.¹³⁶ By comparison, Leaena is a far more desirable candidate for her lover’s affections.

That beauty is an essential component in feminine peithō is alluded to in Leaena’s illicit comparison of her lover’s wife to herself. The exposure of Phryné’s breasts during her trial makes this explicit. The trial itself is the subject of letters 4.3–5, which are all written by Bacchis. The first of the three is addressed to Hypereides, who defended Phryné. His legal sophistry is praised in letters 4.3 and 4.4. Bacchis states that it set the stage for the dramatic revelation of Phryné’s naked torso:

μηδε τοις λέγουσιν κηκτετων περιπηρημαγμένη τα μαστάρια τοις δικασταῖς ἐπέδειξας, οὐδέν ὁ ρήτωρ ωφέλει, πείθου. καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ τοῦτο Ἰνα ἐν καιρῳ γενηται σοι ἡ ἑκεινου παρέσχε συνηγορία.

And when people tell you that, if you hadn’t torn open your shift and shown the judges your breasts, your advocate would have been of no avail, don’t believe them. As a matter of fact it was his pleading that gave you the opportunity to do that very thing at the right moment. (4.4.4)

While Bacchis is certain that Hypereides’ speech was what acquitted Phryné of the charges brought against her, it seems from this letter that Phryné’s gesture was equally important. If in the disrobing of Phryné, Hypereides “discovered something that was more effective and certainly more dramatic than all his best arguments” (Cooper 1995: 318), then this sets up a dichotomy

¹³⁵ This letter is fragmentary, so the second part of the comparison “I’d rather look the Chimaera in the face than...” is lost.

¹³⁶ On the theme of women and wigs, see Ovid Amores 1.14.
between Hypereidēs’ male peithō, dominated by speech and reason, and Phrynē’s female peithō, dominated by physical beauty.\textsuperscript{137}

Overall, the letters discussed above show the variety of techniques that the courtesans use in persuading their lovers, or even the general public (as in Phrynē’s case). Peithō is the courtesans’ most successful and most commonly used tool in seeking to engage with their lovers and to achieve the telea of their erotic relationships.

**The Gaze**

My final parameter for examining *Letters of Courtesans* is instances of the gaze. In doing so, I will be extending the male determinative gaze of Mulvey (1975) and De Lauretis (1987) to include instances in which the spectator is female. For De Lauretis, the spectator is identified as male, while the object of the gaze is female. Mulvey too believes that “the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification” (1975: 12). My own conception of the desiring gaze departs from the male/female paradigm established by Mulvey and De Lauretis. When one looks at someone else in an erotic context, a process of shaping and determining occurs. When one of the hetairai envisions her beloved, she is molding the version of him that she wants to see, which does not necessarily correspond to what he is. The hetairai can also look at each other erotically, occupying the position of both “surveyor and surveyed” (Berger 1972: 46). The case of Phrynē and the Knidia shows that it is even possible to hold oneself as the object of the gaze. The gaze in the *Letters of Courtesans* therefore assumes three different manifestations: a gaze toward a beloved, a mutual gaze between the hetairai, and a self-gaze. All three position the spectator as agent. The spectator within the text, like De Lauretis’ spectator

\textsuperscript{137} For more on breast-baring and peithō, see Ch.1 n.59.
within the film, “commands at once the action and the landscape” (De Lauretis 1987: 44), regardless of gender.

In Alciphron, the gaze works to slow the narrative tempo. The epistolary format allows for narration that is not fully in synch with the actual chronology of the event being described, and thus a look in Alciphron can linger for longer than the original action as the writer contemplates what is envisioned. This is in keeping with Mulvey’s “presence of the object of the gaze” (1975: 11). Thais’ letter to Euthydēmus contains an example of a desiring female’s gaze towards her beloved. Although she is not in his presence, she imagines him coming to her after exercising. It is this process of envisioning that shapes Euthydēmus as Thais would like to see him: οἶος ἐπανελθὼν ἀπὸ Λυκείου πολλὰς τῶν ἱδρώτα ἀποψώμενος, “As you are when you have come back, for instance, from the Lyceum wiping off the sweat” (4.7.8). Imagining Euthydēmus puts him into the position of object, and positions Thais as the subject, so that she able to mold him as she wishes.138

The hetaira can also direct the gaze at each other. While they do not explicitly desire each other, when they look at each other, they are performing an erotic act. The party in the countryside of letter 4.13 is described in terms of erotic vision. The first suggestion of this comes in the description of the party’s setting:

UTC 5ί Τλσ όξαις ΤεΣτπις ΝΠυμφαι τίνες ἱδρυνται καὶ Πὸν οἶου κατοπτεύων τὰς Ναίδας ύπερέκπτεν.

Under [the rock’s] projecting edges are some statues of Nymphs, and a Pan peeped over as if spying on the Naïads. (4.13.4)

138 Because this letter is addressed to Euthydēmus, as he reads Thais’ vision of him, he is invited to envision himself. His experience can be seen as the male version of Phryne’s experience in letter 4.1.
Alciphron's audience is positioned alongside the statue of Pan, spying on the party, watching the events as they unfold. Later, when the meal has been finished and the musical entertainment begun, this same statue of Pan seems to be excited at the sight of the courtesan Plangôn's dancing. After the second meal, due to their ever-increasing intoxication, the courtesans and their lovers make love in full sight of one another, which results in a sort of mutual gaze: ἐκραιπαλώμεν μάλα νεανίκώς μέχρι μηδὲ λαυθάνειν ἀλλήλας θέλεις, μηδὲ αἰδομένως τῆς ἀφροδίτης παρακλέπτειν, "We set to drinking quite lustily until we girls no longer cared to keep out of each other's sight or modestly to enjoy our lovemaking in secret" (4.13.18, tr. adapted). Two words are key to understanding this scene: λαυθάνειν and αἰδομένως. Because there is no effort on the courtesans' behalf to hide (λαυθάνειν), they are lacking in shame (αἰδομένως). That they lack shame sets them in opposition to women in the other books of Alciphron. In letter 1.12, Charopê admonishes her daughter Glaucippê for falling in love with a young man other than her betrothed: ἡτις, δέον αἰσχύνεσθαι κοπικῶς, ἀπέξεσας τὴν αἰδῶ τοῦ προσώπου, "You who, instead of being shame-faced as a girl should be, have wiped all modesty from your countenance" (1.12.1). When Epiphyllis describes her rape in letter 2.35, she is unable to describe what happened in detail, due to her shame: αἰδομέναι εἰπεῖν...τί ποθεῖν ἐπηνύκοσε, "I am ashamed to say, what he forced me to endure" (2.35.3, tr. adapted). The courtesans at the party are in stark contrast to this as they see each other having sex with their lovers.

The best example of the courtesans' shared gaze comes in letter 4.14, which contains an account of a beauty contest of sorts between the courtesans. The competition is initiated by Thryallis and Myrrhina, who want to determine who has the most attractive backside. This is identified by the author of the letter, Megara, as the most entertaining part of the party:
But the thing that gave us the greatest pleasure, anyhow, was a serious rivalry that arose between Thryallis and Myrrhina in the matter of backsides— as to which could display the lovelier, softer one. And first Myrrhina unfastened her girdle (her shift was silk), and began to shake her loins (visible through her shift), which quivered like soft cheese, the while she cocked her eye back at the waggling of her behind. And so gently, as if she were in the act, she sighed a bit, that, by Aphrodite, I was thunderstruck. (4.14.4, tr. adapted). 139

In this description of Myrrhina’s dance, she is the focal point of all of her peers’ attention. She behaves as though having sex (ἐνεργοῦσά τι ἐρωτικόν), which enhances the erotic nature of her peers’ gaze. She is not only subjected to the gaze of those watching her (Mulvey 1975: 13), but she is simultaneously subject and object of her own gaze. Her opponent in the contest, Thryallis, will not however, be surpassed, as she takes her turn and draws the courtesans’ communal gaze:

απεδύσατο το χιτώνιον καὶ μικρόν ύποσιμώσασα τὴν ὀσφὺν, “ιδού, σκότει το χρώμα,” φησίν, “ός ἀκρηβες, Μυρρίνη, ὥς ἀκήρατον, ὥς καθαρὸν, τὰ παρτόπφυρα τῶν ἱσχίων ταυτί, τὴν ἐπὶ τοὺς μηροὺς ἐγκλισιν, τὸ μῆτε ὑπέρογκον αὐτῶν ἔσθε ἀσαρκον, τοὺς γελασίνους ἐπ’ ἀκρων. ἀλλ’ οὐ τρέμει νὴ Δία” ἀμ’ ύπομειδίωσα— “ὡσπερ ἡ Μυρρίνης.”

139 Just as letter 4.1 recalls the Knidia, it seems that Alciphrôn had the Aphrodité Kallipygos in mind when he wrote this scene. Havelock dates the Kallipygos to c.300 BCE (1995:100), making it a Hellenistic creation, and therefore an apt reference for Alciphrôn. See fig. 5.
So she took off her shift; and raising her groin a little, she said, “See, look at the colour, how youthful, Myrrhina, how pure, how free from blemish; see these rosy hips, how they merge into the thighs, how there’s neither too much plumpness nor any thinness, and the dimples at the edges. But, by Zeus, it doesn’t quiver,” she said, smiling a bit, “like Myrrhina’s.” (4.14.5-8, tr. Benner and Fobes, adapted)

Thryallis, more than Myrrhina, directs her spectator’s gaze, so that when she is describing her body, she is the one shaping and determining what they see. After Thryallis is declared the winner, the contest continues, with competitions over hips, breasts, and bellies. This indicates that the hetairai are able to assess each other’s beauty, meaning that they are directing a mutually determinative gaze at each other.

Phryne’s letter to Praxitēles is my final example of the gaze. In 4.1, as she praises the Knidia, she turns the first half of her letter into erotic contemplation of her own beauty:

...μὴ δείσης· ἐξείργασαι γὰρ πάγκαλον τι χρῆμα, οἷον δὴ τι οὐδὲς εἶδε πωδὸτε πάντων τῶν διὰ χειρῶν ποιηθέντων, τὴν σεαυτοῦ ἑταίραν ἱδρύσας ἐν τεμένει. μέση γὰρ ἐστικα ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης καὶ τοῦ Ἐρωτος ἁμα τοῦ σου. μὴ φθονήσῃς δὲ μοι τῆς τιμῆς· οἱ γὰρ ἠμᾶς θεασάμενοι ἐπαινοῦσιν Πραξίτηλην, καὶ ὅτι τῆς σῆς τέχνης γέγονα οὐκ ἀδεξοῦσι με θεσπιεῖς μέσην κείσθαι θεοῦ.

...have no fear; for you have wrought a very beautiful work of art, such as nobody, in fact, has ever seen before among all things fashioned by men’s hands: you have set up a statue of your own mistress in the sacred precinct near your Aphrodite and your Erōs too. And do not begrudge me this honour. For it is Praxitēles that people praise when they have gazed at me; and it is because I am a product of your skill that the Thespians do not count me unfit to be placed between gods.

Phryne was definitely the object of Praxitēles’ gaze as he created his sculpture. It is his skill (τέχνη) that has made her image so beautiful, so that her “sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated by another” (Berger 1972: 46), the others being the Thespians. Yet she is still appreciating the statue as herself, as demonstrated by her ensuing invitation to
love-making that comes because she is erotically inspired by this image. The courtesans, therefore, can control the gaze as much as they are determined by it. They direct it at their lovers and at each other, and sometimes even themselves. In this sense, they are spectators as much as they are spectacle.

* * * *

Alciphron's courtesans display a sexuality that is diverse. It encompasses loving relationships, like that of Menander and Glykera, and relationships that are acrimoniously mercenary, like that of Simaliōn and Petalē. It is bold at times, as at the party in the countryside, and reluctant at others, as with Leontium and her relationship to Epicurus. Their sexuality is, however, consistently active. The courtesans are sexual agents when they express jealousy, disgust, and love, when they initiate erotic encounters with their lovers, and when they determine the circumstances under which those encounters will occur. In this, they can be seen to be sexual agents in the fullest sense.
Chapter 4: Ventriloquism and the Construction of Gender

I have discussed how Alciphrôn portrayed his courtesans as actively desiring examples of female sexuality, but I have not yet examined how he constructed the female aspect of that depiction. A final feature of *Letters of Courtesans* that I wish to address is Alciphrôn’s assumption of the female voice. Because several of his courtesans are well-known historical figures, Alciphrôn’s appropriation of their perspectives is all the more enticing to his audience, who have a biographical tradition with which to compare these letters. Ovid’s *Heroides* operate in much the same way, presenting the voices of mythological and historical figures, including Sappho herself (Fulkerson 2005: 5). The success of this appropriation of historical figures is directly linked to Alciphrôn’s ability to represent the female voice convincingly.

The term ventriloquism is used in literary criticism to refer to the appropriation by an author of a textual voice that belongs to an “Other” (Davis 1998: 133). An author writing from the perspective of a gender, race, age, or economic status different from his or her own is considered to be practicing ventriloquism. The very act of writing fiction can be said to be ventriloquism in a sense, because it involves appropriating a voice other than one’s own. Transvestite ventriloquism, as defined by Elizabeth Harvey, is the appropriation of a female voice by a male author, a feature shared by a number of texts from different eras (1992: 1). Of such texts Harvey says that “although written by male authors, they are voiced by female characters in a way that seems either to erase the gender of the authorial voice or to thematize the transvestism of this process” (1992: 1). Discussing a similar process in terms of philosophy, Teresa De Lauretis claims that such assumption of the female perspective in a text by a man

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140 The process of a male author taking on a female voice is also referred to as “narrative cross-dressing” in Carson (1989). I will only be using the term ventriloquism in this discussion to avoid confusion.
occurs because “that position is vacant and... cannot be claimed by women” (1987: 32). The striking paucity of female-authored texts from the ancient world indicates that this is true of ancient fiction, and therefore Alciphrôn’s work as well.

Authorial voice in its broadest literary sense can be understood as the function of discourse through which “writers... reveal a range of attitudes toward everything from the subject at hand to those whom [they] are addressing” (Murfin and Ray 1997: 403). To Harvey, voice narrows to the point that it is only the actual author’s perspective, which, in terms of the Letters, would be the voice of Alciphrôn himself. Harvey’s concept is problematized in the case of Alciphrôn, by what I see as the complete absence of his authorial voice. Because the Letters are his only attested works, and because they are all written from the perspective of individual characters, there is no sense of Alciphrôn as narrator or as representing a specific perspective. A coherent authorial voice is not important to Alciphrôn’s epistolary exercise, and therefore his authorial technique is only apparent in his polymorphous use of others’ voices. Nor do we possess any other writings credited to Alciphrôn that might illuminate his authorial presence in the Letters.

By stating that there is no authorial voice in Alciphrôn, I mean that there is no transparent sense in the Letters of who he might have been, or what views he might have held. Isolating the authorial voice is a difficult process in any text because due to an “eradicable and irreducible play of différence, writing perpetually slips through the net of fixable meaning” (Aczel 2001: 703-4). I do not expect there to be a distinct authorial voice in any given text; however it is

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141 She is referring to Nietzsche and Derrida.

142 The anthology Women Writers of Greece and Rome (Plant 2004) is a comprehensive collection of ancient female writers. It contains highly fragmentary works by only fifty-five female authors.
necessary to address the complex issue of authorial presence (or absence). This issue is identified by Aczel: “the act of ventriloquism problematizes presence. But it does so by staging presence” (2001: 705). In his use of the epistolary format Alciphrôn has effectively removed himself (however he might be conceptualized) from the text, therefore the Letters are defined by his ventriloquism of all of his fictional letter-writers.

In a comparison of the actual practice of ventriloquism as a genre of performance (dummy and all) with the use of the literary term, Davis (1998) discusses the effacement of the performer’s real voice through the process of performance. For Davis, “the ventriloquist dominates the scene on the level of material production, is effaced on the diegetic level, and participates on the mimetic level” (1998: 140). If we understand Alciphrôn as assuming the role of Davis’ ventriloquist, it is possible to understand him on these three levels: as the author who actually composed the Letters, as a non-existent presence in his narrative, and as present in the process of mimesis. It is the paradoxical combination of the latter two categories which I wish to search for in Alciphrôn. I shall therefore be seeking points in Letters of Courtesans at which Alciphrôn assumes the female voice, and is successful in his mimesis.

Although I believe that Alciphrôn is successful in his assumption of the female voice, I am hesitant to define the female voice as a quantifiable entity. As Kauffman asks, “can we deduce the gender of an author solely on the basis of internal textual evidence?” (1986: 19). Rather than pursue a topic I consider to be based entirely on essentialist assumptions, I prefer to shift this discussion of what the female voice is to what a construction of the female voice
entails. In using the term construction in reference to gender, I am building upon the work of Judith Butler, who understands gender as "the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (1988: 519). Gender is not the biological phenomenon of being male or of being female, but rather a result of the totality of an individual's actions. These actions are performed by the individual, and yet they are interpreted collectively, so that they become the basis of a culturally-based "shared experience" (Butler 1988: 525). De Lauretis shares a similar systemic approach to the construction of gender, so that she sees it as "semiotic difference," with the result that gender can be understood by systems of reference and meaning (1987: 48). In the context of Letters of Courtesans, these references and meaning that shape gender are primarily found in the courtesans' use of rhetoric. I will therefore be examining the courtesan's letters for "male ideas of what it means to write as a woman" (Goldsmith 1989: vii). Alciphrôn's Letters of Courtesans are an example of "the power of the female in the male imagination" (Lindheim 2003: 181): these women are depicted as vividly as they are due to the importance of the feminine in the male-dominated cultural imagination of the Second Sophistic. By looking at Alciphrôn's ventriloquism, we can also learn about cultural constructions of gender in the ancient world.

One way of measuring the degree to which Alciphrôn has appropriated the female voice is to compare the rhetoric of Letters of Courtesans with depictions of women and assumptions about how women express themselves that are found in other ancient texts. An apt starting point for such a process is the poetry of Sappho. Sappho is the best point of comparison for the

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143 When I use the term "essentialist," I am referring to the assumption that biological sex determines gender, and that gender-based characteristics are therefore not only linked to, but caused by, one's sex. Under this assumption, gender is a stable category, rather than one that is constantly shifting on both an individual and societal level.

144 I recognize that accepting Alciphrôn as male is an assumption.
hetairai, as her works are the most significant extant contribution to the ancient literary canon by a female writer, and they deal with issues of female desire that are pertinent to Alciphron’s work. Sappho’s poetry therefore provides a prototype of how female desire can be shaped in Greek literature.

Marilyn Skinner remarks on the linguistic “strategies” that separate the work of Sappho from that of male poets, and which therefore work “to convey the passionate sexual longing felt by a woman” (1993: 131). Such strategies depict a model of desire that is markedly different from the active/passive pattern found in male homoerotic relationships. In contrast, the paradigm that Sappho depicts in her poetry is decidedly bilateral. Skinner provides fragment 31 as the best example of the egalitarian nature of female desire (1993: 133):

φαίνεται μοι κήνος ἱος θεοσιν
εἴμεν' ἄνηρ, ὅτις ἐναντίος τοι
ισδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἀδυ φωνεί—
σας ὑπακούει

καὶ γελαίας ἰμέροεν, τὸ μ' ἥ μὰν
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτοισεν
ὡς γαρ ἐσ’ ἵδα βρόχε’, ὡς μὲ φώναι—
σ’ οὐδ’ ἐν ἔτ’ ἐκεί,

ἀλλὰ κἀ’ μὲν γλῶσσα <μ’> ἔγαγε, λέπτον
δ’ αὐτικα χρώ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
ὁππάτεσσι δ’ οὐδ’ ἐν ὑμμί’, ἐπιππόμ—
βεισι δ’ ἀκοίαι,

κἀδ δὲ μ’ ἱδρως κακχέται, τρόμος δὲ
παίσαι οὔγρει, χλωτέρα δὲ ποίας
ἐμμι, τεθάκην δ’ ὀλίγῳ πιδέψης
φαίνομ’ ἐμ’ αὐτά.

ἀλλὰ πὰν τόλματον, ἐπεὶ καὶ πένητα...
He seems as fortunate as the gods to me, the man who sits opposite you and listens nearby to your sweet voice and lovely laughter. Truly that sets my heart trembling in my breast. For when I look at you for a moment, then it is no longer possible for me to speak; my tongue has snapped, at once a subtle fire has stolen beneath my flesh, I see nothing with my eyes, my ears hum, sweat pours from me, a trembling seizes me all over, I am greener than grass, and it seems to me that I am little short of dying. But all can be endured, since... even a poor man... (tr. Campbell)

In this example, the author is active in that she desires the woman about whom this poem is written. Her beloved is the object of her gaze, as well as the object of the gaze coming from the man seated beside her, and yet, as the object, she is able to cause Sappho’s physical reaction to her presence. This is much like letter 4.17 of Alciphron, in which Leontium is struck by very similar physical symptoms at the thought of separation from her beloved. The object of desire in Sappho is able to reciprocate by affecting the one who loves her.

In fragment 31, Sappho employs the word καρδία as the center of the physical reaction to the beloved. In letters 2.31 and 1.22 Alciphron mirrors Sappho’s use of καρδία, and in doing so highlights his own constructions of gendered desire. Letter 2.31, from the farmer’s wife Anthylla to her husband Coriscus, contains the same trope found in fragment 31 of the beloved striking the female lover to her very heart:

"Εοικέ καὶ τὰ νάματα εἰς τὰ ἀνω ρωήσεσθαι, εἰ γε οὖτως, ὡς Κορίσκε, ἀφηλικέστερος γεγονός, ὅτε ἦδη υἱὸς καὶ ϑυγατριδοὺς ἔχομεν, ἐπὸς ἱθαρωδοὺ γυναικὸς καὶ με κυίζεις ἄχρι τοῦ καὶ αὐτήν ἐκρινῆσαι τὴν καρδίαν.

Apparently even the streams are going to flow uphill, since you, my Coriscus, well along in years as you are, when we already have sons’ and daughters’ sons, are enamoured of a harp-girl and are vexing me to the point of tearing out my very heart. (2.31.1-2)

In contrast, letter 1.22, from the fisherman Thalasserōs to his friend Euploïs, presents a different model of desire, in which ἔρος, as opposed to the beloved herself, strikes the lover’s heart:
On his mother’s side, therefore, Erōs is ours, and stricken by him in the heart, I have my girl by the sea, and it seems to me that I am with Panopē or Galateia, the most beautiful of the Nereids. (1.22.2, tr. adapted)

As this letter shows, male desire in the καρδία is stirred by erōs, and the beloved is accordingly severed from the equation. This results in an image of desire that is unidirectional, as opposed to the female desire of fragment 31 and letters 4.17 and 2.31. These letters strongly suggest that Alciphrōn is shaping the desire of his women characters as expressly female.

*Peithō* (persuasion) is another means of distinguishing between Alciphrōn’s male and female authors. The role of persuasion plays an important role in the shaping of feminine discourse, and in ancient literature is customarily found in domestic or erotic contexts (McClure 1999: 62). In Sappho fragment 1, *peithō* is explicitly erotic. Sappho invokes Aphroditē, who responds to her pain:

Whom am I to persuade this time to lead you back to her love? Who wrongs you, Sappho? If she runs away, soon she shall pursue; if she does not accept gifts, why, she shall give them instead; and if she does not love, soon she shall love even against her will. (1.18-24, tr. Campbell)
As seen here, *peithō* is a tool of seduction, a means to engender desire in the beloved. Letter 4.11, from Menecleides to Euthycles, on the death of Menecleides’ lover Bacchis, illustrates this connection between *peithō* and seduction:

> ἀρτίως μὲν οὗν ἐφθέγγετο, οὗν ἔβλεπεν, ὡσαί ταῖς ὀμιλίαις αὐτῆς σειρήνες ἐνίδρυτο, ὡς δὲ ἦδυ τι καὶ ἀκήρατον ἀπὸ τῶν φιλημάτων νέκταρ ἐστάζειν ἐπ᾽ ἄκροις μοι δοκεῖ τοῖς χείλεσιν αὐτῆς ἐκάθισεν ἡ Πειθώ.

How she spoke just now, how she glanced over, how many Siren charms were found in her conversations, how sweet and how pure the nectar that fell from her kisses. It seems to me that Persuasion sat on the edge of her lips. (4.11.7, tr. adapted)

Menecleides’ description of Bacchis shows how, for women, persuasion, desire, and the body are linked. Persuasive speech of this kind, coming from women, “was viewed as inextricably bound to their bodies and the desire engendered by them” (McClure 1999: 67). Letter 3.29, from the parasite Pexanconus to his fellow-parasite Rhigomachus demonstrates that precisely the opposite is true of men’s *peithō*. Male persuasion is speech-based, and reflects social status. In this letter, Pexanconus is writing in praise of a foreign merchant who has just arrived in Athens:

> ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὁφθήναι κεχαρισμενῶτατος, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῶ τοῦ Ἀλίας ἐνοπχουμενᾶς ἔχει, καὶ τὴν Πειθῶ τῷ στόματι ἐπικαθῆθαι ἐπίσοις ἀν προσπαίζειν τε γλαφυποῦ καὶ λαλῆσαι στωμύλος, οὕνεκα οἱ γλυκὸ Μούσα κατὰ στόματος χέε νέκταρ.

And he is most gracious to look at, and he has sea-nymphs dancing about his face, and you could say that Persuasion sits upon his lips; he has a smooth wit and his speech is fluent, because the Muse dropped sweet nectar on his lips. (3.29.3)
By using a reference to Theocritus 7.82, which letter 4.11 also recalls, Alciphrón constructs a clear vision of masculine peithô.\(^{145}\) Although in both cases peithô is found on the lips, in Bacchis’ case, her feminine persuasion is coupled with her kisses (τὰ φιλήματα) and is therefore corporeal, whereas that of the foreign merchant comes directly from his ability to be witty (προσπαίζειν) and to speak fluently (λαλήσαι στομύλος).

In letter 4.7, Alciphrón has Thaïs express the sentiment that women’s peithô is equivalent to seduction, and is therefore corporeal. This letter, to her lover Euthydêmus, lays out the distinction between rhetorical and erotic peithô. She begins by stressing the common telos of sophists and courtesans:

\[\text{οὐδὲ εἰς ἐταῖρα όμιλῶν τυραννίδας ὑνείροπολεῖ καὶ στασιάζει τὰ κοινά, \}
\[\text{ἄλλα σπάσας τὸν ἐωθινὸν καὶ μεθυσθείς εἰς ὧπαν τρίτην ἡ τετάρτην ἥρμει. παίδευσον δὲ ὅῃ χείρον ἱμείς τοὺς νέους.}\]

Do you think a sophist is better than a courtesan? So far, possibly, as the means by which they seek to persuade are different; but one end—gain—is the object of both. (4.7.4)

What then are a courtesan’s means of persuasion? Thaïs insinuates that they are erotic, as a man with a courtesan is distracted from his political aspirations, and cares only to stay in bed with his lover:

\[\text{oūδε εἰς ἑταῖρα όμιλῶν τυραννίδας ὑνείροπολεῖ καὶ στασιάζει τὰ κοινά, \}
\[\text{ἄλλα σπάσας τὸν ἐωθινὸν καὶ μεθυσθείς εἰς ὧπαν τρίτην ἡ τετάρτην ἥρμει. παίδευσον δὲ ὅῃ χείρον ἱμείς τοὺς νέους.}\]

No one, when he’s with a courtesan, dreams of a tyrant’s power or raises sedition in the state; on the contrary, he drains his early-morning beaker and then prolongs his drunken rest until the third or fourth hour. We teach young men just as well as they do. (4.7.6, tr. Benner and Fobes)

\(^{145}\) The line evoked from Theocritus is: οὔνεκα οἱ γλυκὰ Μοίσα κατὰ στόματος χέε νέκταρ, “Because of which the Muse poured sweet honey on my lips” (7.82, my tr.).
In this example, Thaïs is made by Alciphrôn to describe a version of persuasion that is unambiguously gendered. Having them give voice to such distinctions confirms that Alciphrôn is actively seeking to construct the gender of his courtesans.

Gossip is yet another form of speech commonly associated with women in the ancient Greek imagination. Semonidês' fragment 7 picks up on this concept. In his poem, he lists various types of women (as identified with different animals), and criticizes most of them for all kinds of offences. The dog woman is the busy-body exemplar, who cannot stay out of others' affairs:

\[
\text{τὴν δ’ ἐκ κυνὸς λιτοεργών, αὐτομήτορα,}
\]
\[
\text{ἡ πάντ’ ἁκούσαι, πάντα δ’ εἰδέναι θέλει,}
\]
\[
\text{πάντη δὲ παπταίνουσα καὶ πλανωμένη}
\]
\[
\text{λέλικεν, ἢν καὶ μηδὲν ἀνθρώπων ὀρᾷ.}
\]
\[
\text{παύσει δ’ ἂν μιν οὐτ’ ἀπειλήσας ἀνήρ}
\]
\[
\text{οὐδ’ οἰ χολοθεῖς ἑξαράξειν λίθω}
\]
\[
\text{ὁδόντας, οὐτ’ ἂν μειλίχως μυθεύμενος,}
\]
\[
\text{οὐδ’ οἰ παρὰ ξείνοισιν ἡμένη τύχη}
\]
\[
\text{ἀλλ’ ἐμπέδως ἀπρήκτων αὐσωήν ἔχει.}
\]

One type is from a dog— a no-good bitch, a mother through and through; she wants to hear everything, know everything, go everywhere, and stick her nose in everything, and bark whether she sees anyone or not.

A man can’t stop her barking; not with threats, not (when he’s had enough) by knocking out her teeth with a stone, and not with sweet talk either; even among guests, she’ll sit and yap; the onslaught of her voice cannot be stopped. (frag. 7. 12-20, tr. Svarlien)

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146 Semonidês is uncertainly dated to sometime after the mid-seventh century BCE. However Hubbard (1994) suggests that he could range in time anywhere from that point up to the mid-sixth century BCE based on similarities with several other ancient texts.
In sharp contrast to the dog woman is the bee woman, who does not indulge in gossip:

τὴν δὲ ἐκ μελίσσης· τὴν τις εὐτυχεὶ λοβών·
κείνη γὰρ ὁι μῶμος οὐ προσιζάνει,
θὰλλει δ’ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς καπαξέται βίος·...
kαρπιπεπής μὲν ἐν γυναιξὶ γίγνεται
πάσηςι, θείη δ’ ἀμφιδέδρομεν χάρις·
οὐδ’ ἐν γυναιξίν ἤδεται καθημένη,
όκου λέγουσιν ἀφροδισίους λόγους.

Another type is from a bee. Good luck in finding such a woman! Only she deserves to be exempt from stinging blame. The household she manages will thrive...
...she herself shines bright among all women. Grace envelops her. She doesn’t like to sit with other women discussing sex. (frag. 7.84-90, tr. Svarlien)

Simonidēs presents the bee woman as an ideal, because she alone among all women does not participate in gossip.

McClure draws on the propensity of Athenian drama to perpetuate the stereotype of the gossipy woman (McClure 1999: 59-60). In Euripidēs’ Hippolytus, Phaedra includes long, gossipy, leisurely talks among the pleasures of a woman’s life: εἰσὶ δὲ ἡδοναὶ πολλαὶ βίου μακραὶ τε λέσχαι καὶ σχολῆ “Life’s pleasures are many long leisurely talks” (383-4, tr. Kovacs). At Phoenician Women 198-201, the female chorus is introduced by the Pedagogue with a reference to their gossipy nature:

147 At 645-56 of Euripidēs’ Trojan Women, Andromachē is positioned in a manner comparable to Simonidēs’ bee woman (North 1977: 38).
The noble among women are fond of scandal, and if they get minor occasions for talking, they make them major; for there is some pleasure for women in speaking poorly of one another. (198-201, my tr.)

Lastly, at Ecclesiazusae 120, as the women prepare to take over the Assembly, after Praxagora has proposed that they rehearse what they will say, Woman A responds: τίς δὲ μέλες ήμων οὐ λαλεῖν ἐπίσταται; “Who among us doesn’t know how to gossip?” (my tr.)

Letters of Courtesans are particularly well-suited to present instances of gossip among the hetairai as these women are part of a small, female-dominated circle.148 We can assume that the courtesans’ world is small enough that they all know one another, which is evidenced by the list of women attending the same party together in 4.14.149 These examples further indicate that Alciphron purposely manipulates received cultural ideas concerning women in his assumption of the female epistolary voice. Letter 4.6 is one such sample of woman-to-woman gossip, in which Thaïs complains to her fellow courtesan Thetталē about their fellow-courtesans Megara and Euxippē. A quarrel has arisen between Thaïs and Euxippē over a lover, and Megara has become involved. Megara and Euxippē show their ill-will toward Thaïs by insulting her and openly gossiping:

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148 This builds on Fulkerson who uses the model of a female community of writers as one method of analyzing the Heroides (2005: 6 and 67).

149 The attendees of the party in 4.14 are listed as Thetталē (addressee of 4.6), Moscharium, Thaïs (writer of 4.6 and 4.7), Anthracium, Petalē (addressee of 4.8, writer of 4.9), Thryallis, Myrhinna (addressee of 4.5, writer of 4.10), Chrysium, Euxippē, and Philumenā (writer of 4.15).
Well, I thought she was doing nothing surprising in saying mean things about me...she showed her ill-will first by giggling with Megara and making fun of me; then she openly sang some verses on the lover who was no longer attentive to me...I've told you the story so that you won't blame me. (4.6.2-5, tr. Benner and Fobes, adapted)

Three aspects of this passage characterize it as an example of gossip: the insults directed at Thaïs, the mention of her former lover, and the closing imprecation to Thetталé that she take Thaïs’ side in the matter. It is due to the epistolary format that Thaïs can actively shape her discourse as the correct version of the encounter.

The accounts of parties in letters 4.13 and 4.14 are also examples of gossip. In these letters, there is no lining up of allies against personal slander, but rather a chatty recounting of the events at hand. After relating all the events of the party in the countryside to her friend, the anonymous letter-writer concludes by telling her addressee that the others present at the party urged her to pass on an account of what happened:

ἐδεὶ ἀπολαύσαι σε τῆς ψωφὸς ἀκοῆς τοῦ συμποσίου τρυφερὸν γὰρ ἦν καὶ πρέπον ἐρωτικὴ ὁμιλία εἰ καὶ μὴ τῆς παροινίας ἐδυνηθης ἐβουλόμην οὖν ἀκριβῶς ἐκαστα ἐπιστείλαι καὶ πούτραίπην.

It was only proper that you should have at least the pleasure of hearing about the party (since it was luxurious and suitable for a group of lovers) even if you couldn’t be there. And so I wanted to write an exact account of everything, and they urged me to do so. (4.13.19, tr. adapted)

As in letter 4.6, the letter-writer reminds her addressee that she is presenting a correct account. Whether this is true or not is unimportant. The epistolary format allows her to shape her discourse specifically for her addressee. Letter 4.14, from Megara to Bacchis similarly recounts
the events of a party from which the addressee was absent. Its tone is partially mocking, partially teasing Bacchis for missing out on the fun:

Σοι μόνη ἔραστης γέγονεν, διὶ φιλεὶς οὕτως ὡς τε μὴ ἀκαρῆ πῶς αὐτοῦ διαζευχθήσεις δύνασθαι. τῆς ἀνδρᾶς, δέσποινα Ἀφροditή, κληθείσα ὑπὸ Γλυκέρας ἐπὶ θυσίαις εἰς τοσοῦτον χρόνου ἀπὸ τῶν Διονυσίων γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐπηγγείλειν σὺν ἥκεις, οἴμαι δὲ ἐκεῖνον οὐδὲ τὰς φίλας ἰδεῖν γυναικῶν ἀνασχομένης, σώφρον γέγονας σὺ καὶ φιλεῖς τὸν ἔραστήν, μακαρία τῆς εὐφημίας· ἡμεῖς δὲ πόρναι καὶ ἀκόλαστοι...οργίζομαι γὰρ νὴ τὴν μεγάλην θεὸν...σὺ δ’ ὑμῖν μόνη τοῦ Ἀδωνί περιεψιχεῖς, μὴ ποὺ καταλείψατε αὐτὸν ὑπὸ σοῦ τῆς Ἀφροditῆς ἡ Περσεφόνη παραλάβῃ.

You’re the only woman who has a lover, and you love him so much that you can’t be separated from him, even for a moment! How nauseating of you, by Aphrodite!

You were invited by Glykera to her sacrificial feast so long beforehand (in fact it was back at the time of the Dionysia that she gave us our invitations), yet you didn’t come, I think because of him you couldn’t bring yourself to see even your girlfriends! You have become a virtuous woman and love your lover—congratulations on your good reputation! But we are whores and not virtuous...Yes, you make me angry, I swear by the Great Goddess....You were the only one who stayed to cuddle with her Adonis; I suppose you were afraid that, if you, his Aphrodite should leave him alone, Persephonē might get hold of him.

(4.14.1-3, tr. adapted)

When Megara chides Bacchis that they are merely whores, she uses the term πόρνη, which is commonly used to denote the type of prostitute who charges per act, a distinct step away from the income by gift exchange of the hetaira.¹⁵⁰ She is self-deprecatingly making fun of herself here too. This is, in fact, the only mention of the word πόρνη in Letters of Courtesans, which is all the more important because it occurs in a letter from courtesan to courtesan. The hetaira

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¹⁵⁰ Davidson distinguishes between the hetaira as paid for an evening’s entertainment and the pornē as paid for a specific sexual act (1997: 95). See page 31.
never identify themselves as anything but hetairai to their lovers, yet they can jest about their status amongst themselves.  

The passage from 4.14 contains another element of Alciphron’s ventriloquism of the hetairai, the use of oaths. (For the purposes of this investigation, an oath will be considered any reference to a divinity in the vocative case, or with νί, μά, or πρός.) Such an analysis is easily quantifiable along the lines of gender, as evidence from the Greek epistolographers shows that women do not swear by Athena, Apollo, or Heracles, and men do not swear by Artemis (Wright 1918: 73). In Old Comedy, gender inversion is enhanced by the use of the other gender’s common oaths (Dillon 1995: 138). In the passage quoted above, Megara invokes two deities specifically important to women, Aphroditē and Cybelē (the “Great Goddess”). The first, Aphroditē, has special significance to the courtesans, as a goddess of love and sexuality. Bacchis makes this connection clear when she qualifies the hetairai as πάσαι ἡμεῖς οἱ τῆν φιλανθρωποτέραν Ἀφροδιτὴν πρωτιμῶσαι, (“all of us who hold in chief honour the more humane Aphroditē,” 4.5.3). The same invocation of the love-goddess occurs two more times in courtesan-authored letters at 4.5.1 and 4.9.3, and all three oaths are phrased identically: δέσποινα Ἀφροδιτη (Mistress Aphroditē). At 4.12.1, Leaena uses the goddess’ name to

151 At 4.11, Phrynē refers to herself as Praxiteles’ own courtesan (ἡ σεισμοῦ ἡταῖρα), and Bacchis mentions that all the hetairai (πάσαι οἱ ἡταῖραι) are grateful to Hypereides for his defence of Phrynē at 4.3.1. For a courtesan to refer to herself as anything but hetaira to her lover would damage a relationship based on gift exchange.

152 Out of twenty-five instances of courtesans making oaths, Aphroditē is invoked nine times, Artemis four times, Zeus four times, Nemesis twice, and Cybele, the Muses, Kalligeneia, Demeter, Persephonē, and all the gods once. The structure of these oaths and the deities sworn by are by and large consistent with their use in the Menander available to Wright (1918: 72).

153 The gender-bending examples Dillon gives are Agathōn in Thesmophoriazousai and the women who take over the assembly in Ecclesiazousai.

154 The existence of the temple of Aphroditē at Corinth, served by up to a thousand hierodoules (temple prostitutes), also testifies to the connection between Aphroditē and prostitutes. See Strabo 8.6.20.
enhance her insult of her lover's wife: ἡλεώ σὲ νη τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, ταλαιπώρε, κοιναὶ πᾶσχεισ μετ' ἐκείνης καθεύδων τῆς χελώνης, ("By Aphrodite, I pity you, for what you must suffer, sleeping with that tortoise"). The same invocation is made at 4.16. by Lamia, as she tells Demetrius how she trembles in his presence, and Leontium both at 4.17.2 and at 4.17.6, when she complains about her aged lover.

The courtesans also swear by Artemis. As opposed to the oaths to Aphrodite, referring to Artemis is a way to show a courtesan’s seriousness in the claim she is making. Lamia invokes her as a guarantee of her fidelity to Demetrius at 4.16.5:

οὐ ποιήσω τὸ ἑταρικόν, οὔδὲ ψεύδομαι, δέσποτα, ῥώς ἄλλας ποιοῦσιν. ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἐξ ἐκείνου, μὰ τὴν Ἀρτέμιν, οὔδὲ προσέπεμψαν ἐτί πολλοὶ οὔδὲ ἐπείρασον.

I will not play the courtesan, nor, my lord, will I lie, as other women do. From that time, by Artemis, few people have even sent me a message or made approaches. (tr. adapted)

She names Artemis again in the same letter at 4.16.8, although this time the oath is made in passing as she is talking about the banquet she is arranging, and is no vow of trustworthiness. At 4.17.6, Leontium also invokes Artemis, once more bewailing her relationship with the elderly Epicurus. Glykera does the same thing at 4.19.5, as she expresses her excitement at watching a performance of Menander’s plays, and again at 4.19.5 when she tells him of her shame at being compared to him intellectually.

Alciphrôn and Lucian

Alciphrôn’s appropriation of the female voice can be further examined by juxtaposing *Letters of Courtesans* with Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, a work with similar subject matter. These dialogues are the best and closest point of comparison for *Letters of Courtesans*. 102
Lucian is also a Second Sophistic writer, who uses many of the same mimetic techniques as Alciphrōn, and the dialogues, much as in the case of the epistolary format, allow for use of first-person discourse. Aristaenetus’ letters between Lucian and Alciphrōn testify to the perceived resemblance between these two authors in late antiquity.\textsuperscript{155} Despite these similarities, Lucian’s courtesans are more contrived than those of Alciphrōn. Their voices are more artificial, and their personalities correspond more to the broad stereotypes of prostitutes found in New Comedy.\textsuperscript{156}

Because of the use of these New Comic characters, \emph{Dialogues of the Courtesans} have a mercenary tone that is more consistently present than in \emph{Letters of Courtesans}. In my comparison of the appropriation of the female voice in these two works, I shall be using the same categories that were applied to Alciphrōn’s ventriloquism, looking for examples of bilateral desire (as originally portrayed by Sappho), \textit{peithō}, gossip, and the use of oaths.

Desire in which the beloved can cause the lover a host of physical symptoms, as found in Sappho’s fragment 31 and Alciphrōn’s letter 4.17, is not found in anywhere in the \emph{Dialogues of the Courtesans}. Dialogue 3, a conversation between Philinna and her mother, shows that in Lucian, professional, economically-motivated jealousy is the common reaction to one’s lover being with another. Philinna has angered her lover Diphilus by kissing his friend Lamprias, to which Diphilus responded by being attentive to another courtesan. While Philinna is angry at this, her mother isolates the source of such jealousy. Rather than anger caused by desire, Philinna’s response to Diphilus’ actions comes because she is financially dependent on him, as her mother reminds her:

\textsuperscript{155}See Aristaenetus 1.5 and 1.22 (Mazal 1971).

\textsuperscript{156}Out of thirty-five speaking characters in the \emph{Dialogues of Courtesans}, eight names come from extant Menander (Glykera, Thaïs, Philinna, Doris, Krobylē, Pamphilus, Polemōn, and Pythias). Of these eight names, three (Glykera, Doris, and Polemōn) come from \emph{Perikeiromenen}.
Do you forget how much he has given us, and how we’d have had to pass the last winter, if Aphrodite hadn’t sent him to us?...Remember the proverb, and take care that we don’t strain the rope to the breaking point. (3.283-92, tr. Harmon)

The only mention in *Dialogues of the Courtesans* of the symptoms caused by desire is in reference to a man’s reaction to his beloved. In dialogue 8, Ampelis explains these effects to her fellow courtesan Chrysis:

'Am.—"Ostis dé, o χρυσά, μήτε ζηλοτυπε μήτε ὀργίζεται μήτε ἔπαπισέ ποτε ἤ περιέκειρεν ἤτα ἰματία περιέσχεσεν, ἐτί ἐραστής ἐκεῖνος ἔστιν;

Χρ.—Ούκοιν ταύτα μόνα ἐρώντος, ὅ α' ἀμπελί, δείγματα;

'Am.—Ναι, ταύτ' ἀνδρός θερμοῦ ἐπεὶ τάλλα, φιλήματα καὶ δάκρυα καὶ ὁπκοι καὶ τὸ πολλάκις ἥκειν ἀποχμένου ἔρωτος σημεῖον καὶ φυομένου ἔτι.

Am.- If a man isn’t jealous or angry, Chrysis, and never hits you, cuts your hair off, or tears your clothes, is he still in love with you?

Ch.- Are these the only sure signs of a man’s love, then?

Am.- Yes, these are the signs of a burning love. All else, the kisses, the tears, the vows and the frequent visits are the signs of a love that is beginning and still growing. (8.300-306, tr. Harmon)\(^{157}\)

This shows that in Lucian’s appropriation of the courtesans’ voices, female desire is less of an issue than it is for Alciphrôn.

In *Alciphrôn* 4.7, Thaïs argues that courtesans’ erotic *peithō* is equally persuasive to that of sophists, and has a mollifying effect on men. In Lucian, however, when *peithō* makes its appearance, it is a manly trait, less persuasion than outright force. Dialogue 10 provides a clear

\(^{157}\) Dialogue 8 betrays the influence on Lucian of Roman love elegy, particularly Ovid *Amores* 1.7, in which Ovid abuses his beloved. Further evidence of this influence can be found in dialogue 6, in which one of the courtesans is named Corinna, who is Ovid’s mistress in the *Amores*. 
counterpoint to letter 4.7, with its almost identical plot and inclusion of a letter in the dialogue. Drosis is complaining to her fellow courtesan Chelidonium, that her young lover, Clinias, has abandoned her for philosophy, under the tutelage of the philosopher Aristaenetus. After seeing Drosis’ serving girl in the agora, Clinias sends a note to Drosis, which Chelidonium reads to her: 158

ώστε ἀνάγκη πείθεσθαι αὐτῷ παρακολουθεῖ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς παραφυλάσσαν, καὶ ὅλως οὐδὲ προαλέπτειν ἄλλω οὐδενὶ ἔξεστιν ὅτι μὴ ἐκεῖνῳ· εἰ δὲ σῳφρονοῖμι καὶ πάντα πεισθείν αὐτῷ, ὑποσχέεται πάνυ εὐδαιμόνα ἔσεσθαι με.

So I must obey him; for he follows me while keeping a very close eye on me. In fact, I’m not allowed even to look at anyone but him. If I live a sober life, and obey him in everything, he promises me I’ll be completely happy. (8.3.15-20, tr. Harmon)

This passage proves that peithō is not the powerful force that it is in the Letters. Lucian has replaced persuasion with obedience. Unlike Thais of letter 4.7, Drosis makes no suggestion that she will use her own peithō to lure her lover back, and instead plots to have some slanderous graffiti written about Aristaenetus. When persuasion is credited to a woman at dialogue 5.2.5, she is the transgressive Megilla, who lives as Megillus in a same-sex relationship with Demonassa, whom she calls her “wife.” Peithō in Dialogues of the Courtesans, therefore, is of little importance to the construction of either the courtesans’ relationships with their lovers or the presentation of their gendered voices.

Dialogues of the Courtesans do not depict the same kind of close-knit demimonde seen in Alciphron’s Letters. This can be attributed to the fact that none of the dialogues have overlapping or intersecting plots and the only name that occurs in more than one dialogue is Thais (in

158 Unlike the courtesans of Alciphron, who can presumably read and write (as there is never any mention of an intermediary slave in the Letters), Drosis is illiterate, and dependent on her friend to read Clinias’ note.
dialogues 1 and 3), a repetition that has no effect on the storyline. Gossip in *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, however, bears much of the burden of moving the plot along in the individual dialogues, and is therefore one of the aspects of Lucian’s construction of the female voice that stands out most. Dialogue 1, two courtesans insulting and sharing rumours about a rival, is a reversal of letter 4.6, in which the letter-writer is the object of her antagonists’ jibes. Thaïs and Glykera compare notes on Gorgona, who has taken Thaïs’ lover:

\[ Θα. – ἀτὰρ ἐκεῖνο θαυμάζω, τί καὶ ἔπημεσεν αὐτῆς ὁ στρατιώτης οὗτος, ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ παντάπασι τυφλὸς ἦστιν, ὃς οὐχ οὐράκει τὰς μὲν τρίχας αὐτῆς ἀφαίρεσις ἔχοσαν καὶ ἔπι πολὺ τοῦ μετώπου ἀπηγιμένας· τὰ χείλη δὲ πελίδνα καὶ τραχιόσ每当 λεπτός καὶ ἐπίσημοι ἐν αὐτῷ αἰφλὲβες καὶ ρίς μακρά. ἐν μόνων, εὐμὴχα ἐστὶ καὶ ὀρθῇ καὶ μειδιατάπαν ἐπαγωγόν. \]

\[ Γλ. – Οἱ ἔριε γὰρ, ὃ Θαῖ, τῶν κάλλει ἠράσθαι τοῦ Ἀκαρνάνα; οὐκ οἴσθα ὁς φαρμακίς ἢ Χρυσάριῶν ἦστιν ἢ μὴπρι αὐτῆς, Θεσσαλὸς τίνας ὁδὸς ἐπιστάμενη καὶ τὴν σελήνην κατάγοσα; ἠμιὶ δὲ αὐτῇ καὶ πέτεσθα τῆς νυκτὸς. \]

**Th.**- But I do wonder what this soldier man found in her, unless he’s absolutely blind and hadn’t noticed that her hair is thin on top and receding a long way in front; her lips are livid and her neck’s scraggy with the veins all standing out, and what a long nose she’s got! Her only good point is that she’s tall and has a good carriage and a very attractive smile.

**Gl.**- Why, Thaïs, you don’t think the Acarnian has fallen for her beauty? Don’t you know that her mother, Chrysarium, is a witch who knows Thessalian spells, and can bring the moon down? Why, they say she even flies at night. (1.2.1-13, tr. Harmon)

Not only do the courtesans mock Gorgona’s appearance, but they also add the rumour of witchcraft.\(^\text{159}\)

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\(^{159}\) The rumour about Chrysarium is part of the same tradition of the hag with the ability to do magic, as found in Ovid *Amores* 1.8.
The use of oaths is the fourth and final category I shall employ in my analysis of Lucian and Alciphron’s ventriloquism. The oaths of Lucian’s courtesans include two invocations of Aphrodite, although she is referred to by epithets rather than by name. At 5.1.8, Clonarium refers to her as ἵ κουροτρόφος (“boy-rearing”), while later in the same dialogue Leaena calls her ἰ oὐρανία (“the heavenly one”). At 13.4.12, Hymnis invokes the Graces (αἱ Χάριτες), a trio of goddesses closely associated with Aphrodite. In a clearer analogy with Alciphrôn’s courtesans, Crobylê calls on Nemesis twice in dialogue 6, using the epithet Ἀδραστεία at 6.2.16 and 6.3.26. Calling on Nemesis in this context is apotropaic; Crobylê has been telling her daughter about her prospects as a courtesan and does not want to jinx them.

* * *

Dialogues of the Courtesans make use of cultural associations with feminine communication in a different manner than Letters of Courtesans do, with the result that Lucian’s ventriloquism takes a form unlike that of Alciphrôn. Looking for techniques of ventriloquism in an author as similar as Lucian allows us to see more clearly how Alciphrôn assumes the female voice. In establishing his mimetic technique, Alciphrôn goes beyond the names and places of Hellenistic Athens to represent a feminine voice that conforms to ancient conceptions of women. He has drawn on culturally received ideas of what it means to talk, or rather write, as a woman. This in turn erases his own authorial voice. His active construction of gender in the Letters of Courtesans is “obscured by the credibility of its own production” (Butler 1988: 522). His

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160 κουροτρόφος is also used of Aphrodite at Hom. Epigr. 12, while Xenophon refers to her as oὐρανία at Symposium 8.9.

161 Alciphron’s courtesans invoke Nemesis by name at 4.6.5, 4.10.4, and 4.12.3.

162 The chorus of Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound calls on Nemesis for a similar purpose at 936.
audience, however, never loses sight of Alciphron's device of epistolarity. This is where Alciphron succeeds in his mimetic writing. For ventriloquism to be truly successful, "it must at once convincingly sustain the illusion of the dummy's speech, while never letting us lose sight of the art by which this illusion is sustained" (Aczel 2001: 704). The illusion of the courtesans' voices are sustained by the epistolary format.
Conclusion

This study has presented several ways of reading Alciphrôn’s *Letters of Courtesans*. It began by outlining how the epistolary format shapes first-person discourse and the content of a letter. It followed this with a discussion of the four books of *Letters* as a Second Sophistic text, considering the process of mimesis that arose out of this nostalgic period. Next, it described the influence of Menandrian New Comedy on the characters and vocabulary of Alciphrôn as an extension of his mimetic process. It then detailed the presence of historical courtesans in the text, as yet another aspect of Alciphrôn’s recreation of a generically Hellenistic Athens.

The most important readings to my study are sexuality and gender. By charting out trends in the contemporary discourse of sexuality, particularly as influenced by Michel Foucault, I have shown that it is possible to examine the female sexuality portrayed in *Letters of Courtesans* using theory that was originally applied to male sexuality. I have demonstrated in this process that the courtesans have a distinct sexual agency, and that even though they are objects of desire for their lovers, they are equally active in their own desire. In my chapter on ventriloquism, I established that Alciphrôn drew on ideas of the feminine in ancient Greek culture that were found in literature. Through a comparison with Lucian, I demonstrated that Alciphrôn used these tropes in a manner unique to his own work.

Alciphrôn’s portrayal of the courtesans’ sexuality and gender in the epistolary format makes *Letters of Courtesans* a work in which the author’s mimetic techniques are apparent. Because of this, it is possible to see precisely where and how Alciphrôn chooses to construct the *hetairai* as desiring female subjects. I believe that it is this which makes *Letters of Courtesans* an important work in our understanding of sexuality and gender in the ancient world.
Fig. 1. Aphrodite of Knidos (Roman Copy). J. Paul Getty Museum
Fig. 2. Lateran-Menander Relief. c. 1st cent. BCE. Vatican Museums.

Fig. 3. Floor Mosaic of Menander, Glykera, and Comedy. 250-275 CE. The Art Museum, Princeton University.
Fig. 4. Eurymedon Vase. ca. 460 BCE. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg.
Fig. 5. Aphrodite Kallipygos. National Museum, Naples.
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Durham, Donald Blythe. 1913. The Vocabulary of Menander Considered in its Relation to the Koine. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.


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### Appendix 1: Structure of the Courtesans’ Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number in Loeb</th>
<th>Author and Addressee</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Linked Letters</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 (fragment)</td>
<td>Phryne to Praxitelēs</td>
<td>Aphroditē of Knidos</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Glykera to Bacchis</td>
<td>Menander’s trip to Corinth</td>
<td>3, 14, 18, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bacchis to Hypereidēs</td>
<td>Phryne’s court case</td>
<td>1, 4, 5, 11, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bacchis to Phryne</td>
<td>Phryne’s court case</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 11, 13, 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bacchis to Myrrhina</td>
<td>Phryne’s court case</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thaīs to Thettalē</td>
<td>professional/personal competition</td>
<td>7, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Thaīs to Euthydēmus</td>
<td>sophists vs. courtesans</td>
<td>6, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Simaliōn to Petalē</td>
<td>Simaliōn’s paraclausithyron</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Petalē to Simaliōn</td>
<td>Petalē’s denial of Simaliōn</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Myrrhina to Nicippē</td>
<td>love philtre</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Menecleidēs to Euthyclēs</td>
<td>death of Bacchis</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (fragment)</td>
<td>Leaena to Philodemus</td>
<td>courtesan vs. wife</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (fragment)</td>
<td>Courtesan to Female Friend (no names given)</td>
<td>rural party with courtesans and lovers</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Megara to Bacchis</td>
<td>courtesans’ beauty contest</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 15, 18, 19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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163 The letters are presented in the same order as in the 1949 Loeb edition.

164 This category refers to letters that continue a narrative from another letter, that are written by the same author, that are written by the addressee of another letter, or that feature characters from other letters.
<table>
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<td>Philumena to Crito</td>
<td>money</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Lamia to Demetrius</td>
<td>Lamia’s love for Demetrius</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Leontium to Lamia</td>
<td>old lover vs. young lover</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Menander to Glykera</td>
<td>invitation to Egypt</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Glykera to Menander</td>
<td>response to invitation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frag. 5</td>
<td>Courtesans in Corinth to Courtesans in Athens</td>
<td>Laiš</td>
<td>-</td>
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Appendix 2: The Manuscript History of Alciphrōn’s *Letters*

Independent or Uncertain Position in the Stemma:

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<tr>
<td>B-Vindobensis phil. 342</td>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent.</td>
<td>2.1-4, 6-39</td>
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<td>Neap. Neapolitanus III. AA. 14</td>
<td>14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent.</td>
<td>1.1-12&lt;sup&gt;166&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>N- Parisinus suppl.grec 352</td>
<td>13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent.</td>
<td>Book 1, 3.1-4, 5 (το ἐξ οὗ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F-Parisinus 3054</td>
<td>15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent.</td>
<td>4.2, 18-19&lt;sup&gt;167&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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Family I:

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<tr>
<td>Harl.- Harleianus 5566 (part of x)</td>
<td>14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent.</td>
<td>1.1-13, 15-22; 2.2-30; 3.1-7, 9-35, 37-39, 42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neap. Neapolitanus III. AA. 14</td>
<td>14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent.</td>
<td>3.14, 6-7, 9-13, 16-19 ordered as 1, 17, 2-4, 6-7, 9-13, 16, 18-19</td>
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</table>

<sup>165</sup> Letters are referenced by their numbers as found in Schepers’ 1905 edition.

<sup>166</sup> May be related to Vaticanus 140 and x<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>167</sup> In this manuscript, the letters are in the order 18-19, 2. These are the letters of Glykera and Menander.
### Family 2:

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<td>Parisinus 1696</td>
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<td>2.2-28, 30 ordered as 2-15, 17-27, 16, 28, 30; 3.1-39, 41-42</td>
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<td>Vat.1</td>
<td>Vaticanus 140</td>
<td>14th</td>
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<td>Vaticanus 1461</td>
<td>14th-15th</td>
<td>1.1-10, 11 (through ἐνορχείσθαι τάς), 13 (beginning with ἰδιών οὖν)-22; 2.2 (beginning with ἔσκειν δὲ) -7, 8 (beginning with ἑυλὴν κοινούμενος)-41, 4.1-19, frag. 5</td>
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<td>Flor.-</td>
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<td>Parisinus 3021</td>
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### Appendix 3: Editions of Alciphrōn’s *Letters*

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<td>1499</td>
<td>1-10, 14-22</td>
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<td>37-40</td>
<td>2-11, 14-19</td>
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<td>3-7</td>
<td>37-40</td>
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<td>Bergler</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>1-22(^{170})</td>
<td>1-28, 30-39</td>
<td>1-40</td>
<td>2-11, 14-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wagner</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>1-22</td>
<td>1-39(^{171})</td>
<td>1-41</td>
<td>1-19, frag. 5(^{172})</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seiler(^{173})</td>
<td>1853 and 1856</td>
<td>1-22</td>
<td>1-39</td>
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<td>1-39</td>
<td>1-42</td>
<td>1-19, frag. 5</td>
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<td>Hercher</td>
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<td>1-22</td>
<td>1-39</td>
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<td>Schepers</td>
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<td>1-22</td>
<td>1-39</td>
<td>1-42</td>
<td>1-19, frag. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schepers</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1-22</td>
<td>1-39</td>
<td>1-42</td>
<td>1-19, frag. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benner and Fobes</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1-22</td>
<td>1-39</td>
<td>1-42</td>
<td>1-19, frag. 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{168}\) Letter numbers and book divisions are taken from Schepers’ 1905 edition.

\(^{169}\) *Editio Princeps*.

\(^{170}\) Represents complete *Letters of Fishermen*.

\(^{171}\) Represents complete *Letters of Farmers*.

\(^{172}\) Represents complete *Letters of Courtesans*.

\(^{173}\) Represents complete current collection.

\(^{174}\) Represents complete *Letters of Parasites*.