

# Alciphron's Erotic Vocabulary used as evidence of (dis)unity of his work

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## ABSTRACT

Alciphron's letter collection consists of four books, named after its correspondents: 'Letters of fishermen', 'Letters of farmers', 'Letters of parasites' and 'Letters of courtesans'. The collection seems like a medley of separate worlds loosely joined into a four-piece collection, while each of the books functions as a miniature letter-collection within. However, even though it seems that the features interconnecting the books are scarce, they are present: courtesans appear throughout the collection, some letters are 'sent' to recipients outside the 'domicile' book, some correspondents dream of 'escaping' from their books by attempting a change of occupation (and they all fail), erotic letters appear in all books, etc.

This research attempts to investigate possible similar connections (or the lack of them) between books I - IV. The focus is on Alciphron's erotic vocabulary: first the lexical origin of his erotic expressions is scrutinized (by introduction of so called 'fields or origin') and later the very usage of those expressions (i.e. the meanings achieved in contexts of their letters).

The results of both analyses - prospective concordances or discrepancies discovered throughout books - will be used as tools for resolving the dilemma given in the title of the paper.

*Key words: Alciphron, erotica, Greek fictional epistolography, erotic vocabulary, erotic expressions*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Alciphron and his letter-collection

Beyond the existence of his letter-collection,<sup>1</sup> almost nothing is known about the author named Alciphron, as Treu summarizes (Treu 1982, 11). Curiously, he is not mentioned by

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<sup>1</sup> Although the term 'letter collection' makes us think immediately of later editors' choices of materials that are included into a unity, while 'letter book' does not (Hodkinson 2009, 30-32), the term will be used because the term 'book' is already applied to indicate parts of this collection and using it twice would lead to unnecessary confusion.

any of the authors of antiquity until Aristaenetos (probably in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.).<sup>2</sup> He belonged to a popular and productive subgenre, Greek fictional epistolography, that flourished from 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. onwards and is considered its most valued representative.<sup>3</sup> Most scholars agree that he lived in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.<sup>4</sup>

There is only one extant literary work attributed to him - a peculiar collection of 123 fictional letters that was published for the first time in Venice in 1499.<sup>5</sup> The collection depicts Greek world of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in miniature, from the perspective of uneducated characters.<sup>6</sup> These sketches are seldom accompanied by the additional information in a 'reply'.<sup>7</sup> The fictional correspondents are of both genders,<sup>8</sup> mostly named in the *tituli* of the letters and they are a peculiar mixture of real historical figures, characters borrowed from other works of literature and obviously fictional 'speaking names'.<sup>9</sup> Of course, neither the events narrated nor the characters involved in the letters are real, even in the case when the

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<sup>2</sup> Alciphron is one of his (fictional) correspondents in I.5, I.22.

<sup>3</sup> Others known to us were: Lesbonax (probably the earliest one, 2nd c.), Aelian (2nd or 3rd c.) Philostratus (2nd or 3rd c.), Zoneus and Melesermes (both mentioned only by Suda, unknown time of life), Aristaenetos (probably 6th c.) and Theophylact (7th century), as Lesky summarized (2001), 844-845. Collections that came down to us are: Alciphron's, Aelian's, Philostratus', Aristaenetos' and Theophylact's, all with various lacunas.

<sup>4</sup> This opinion is based primarily on his similarity to Aelian, Lucian and Longus. Cf. an overview of parallels and scholars' opinions in Benner and Fobes (1949), 7-18.

<sup>5</sup> Marcus Musurus edited a large edition of letters of various authors entitled Ἐπιστολαὶ διαφόρων φιλοσόφων, ῥητόρων, σοφιστῶν ἐξ πρὸς τοῖς εἴκοσι. Alciphron's, Philostratus' and Aelian's were included. For the purpose of this paper I find it unnecessary to offer the insight into the gradual growth of the corpus of the collection and the differences between its individual manuscripts. An excellent scheme is given in the edition of Benner and Fobes (1949), 18-31.

<sup>6</sup> The exception: courtesans in book IV. When members of the educated elite are introduced into letters, they are depicted as boring and unimpressive (cf. philosophers in some letters in book IV). Of course, Alciphron is not the only author of the time focused on the lower class of society: e.g., Lucian wrote Dialogues of the Courtesans and Aelian his Letters of the Farmers. Also, the characters portrayed in this collection (fishermen, farmers, parasites and courtesans) as types are very well represented in comedy (in Menander's plays as well as in Plautus' and Terence's adaptations), Lucian's works and Hellenistic poetry (cf. Rosenmeyer 2001, 256).

<sup>7</sup> Letters of book IV are often replied or otherwise interconnected: Menander and Glycera write to each other (18 and 19), Bacchis sends three letters (3, 4 and 5) and receives two (2 and 14), Thais sends letter 7 and 8, and one event (the circumstances surrounding Mirrhina's trial) is described from different perspectives in letters 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Although, just like in the other collections of the same (sub)genre, letters sent and received by males are far more common. The exception is Alciphron's book IV, where 16 out of 19 letters are written by women and also feature predominant erotic contents. It seems probable that these two factors are interconnected, as suggested by Rosenmeyer (2001), 277.

<sup>9</sup> These names are forged to fit perfectly with the theme of the letter in question. For example, they anticipate or sum up the events that are described in the letter, point to the occupation of the correspondents etc.

correspondent is a famous writer; the purpose of these letters (and all the fictional letters in general) is not to give a glimpse into a historical situation.<sup>10</sup>

In modern editions the letters are divided into four separate books that are named according to the profession of the correspondents: 'Letters of fishermen', 'Letters of farmers', 'Letters of parasites' and 'Letters of courtesans'.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, after the initial, superficial reading, the reader is under the impression that the collection is a curious medley of four completely separate, different and independent letter-books, each depicting its own little world with its own small group of mutually similar characters. Considering the scarcity of information regarding the original manuscript,<sup>12</sup> this obvious disunity makes us wonder: is it possible that these four books were actually meant to be just that, four books, which ended up together much later, by chance or by some mistake of an inattentive copyist? On the other hand, more detailed reading reveals some features interconnecting the letters of the collection, even in its popular, four-part division. These connections go way beyond the most obvious one; that some characters dream of moving upwards in society, i.e. of becoming someone who is typically a correspondent in the letter book that follows (Hodkinson 2009, 99-137).<sup>13</sup> These dreams never become a reality; an aura of pessimism appears throughout the collection and its characters are constantly hardworking or afraid of poverty (as in books I and II), they complain about their hunger or suffer insults (cf. book III) or emphasize the insecurity of their income and bad reputation in society (as courtesans in book IV). The erotic/amatory theme, since it appears in all four books of the collection, also serves the same unifying purpose (Rosenmeyer 2001, 277).

So, a question emerges: is it possible to find more of these features and 'defend' the collection's unity in such a way? Since most of my previous work on Alciphron was focused on erotic aspects of his work (Hajdarević 2013, 2016a and 2017), an idea occurred that the careful analysis of his erotic expressions and their usage throughout books I to IV might be quite important and promising because of its potential to contribute to the dilemma.<sup>14</sup> The research of this kind hasn't been conducted yet (to my knowledge). On the other hand, similar research of the erotic expressions (and their usage) conducted on fictional letters of other authors, i.e. Philostratus and Aristaenetos, proved that their collections were probably originally intended to be a unity,<sup>15</sup> since the distribution of their erotic expressions

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<sup>10</sup> Most characteristics mentioned here are apparent in all letter collections of this kind.

<sup>11</sup> The popular edition of Benner and Fobes (1949) uses that kind of arrangement, following almost precisely the two made by Shepers in 1901. and 1905.

<sup>12</sup> Although it is quite possible that this division was not the author's idea but a later re-arrangement, the thematic connections between groups of letters and other features that place them in the same category would be obvious in any arrangement and the joint analysis would impose itself as a logical choice (König 2007, 272).

<sup>13</sup> E.g. some fishermen from book I want to become farmers, a girl from the country in book II wants to move to the city and parasites of book III often dream of wealth and dinner parties of their own.

<sup>14</sup> The question of unity (or disunity) of Alciphron's collection was in the focus of the International Classics Conference The Letters of Alciphron: To be or not to be a Work, held in Nice (10-11 June 2016.). A concise version of this this paper was presented there.

<sup>15</sup> The unity of these collections wasn't ever questioned, to my knowledge; the research in question was conducted with other goals in mind.

throughout the collections did not point to important anomalies nor direct connections between the choice of expressions (or their usage) and e.g. the occupation of the correspondents or the themes of the letters (cf. Hajdarević, 2013 and 2016a).

## **1.2. The aim of the research**

Love and/or erotica emerge as a theme sporadically throughout the collection. As expected, since they deal with the courtesans and their clients, all of book IV letters are like that, but also some of books I, II and III.

The conventions of Greek fictional epistolography usually exclude (porno)graphic descriptions of sexual desires or their fulfilment. That fact is primarily the result of the origin of the subgenre; it has developed gradually from the use of letters as rhetorical exercises in composition in Greek schools. Also, since the collections of this kind flourished during the period of Second Sophistic and later, we cannot exclude the impact of new cultural streams on their characteristics (both in form and content). Finally, it is possible that even the authors' personal ethical reasons influenced the subgenre and made it quite polite (Arnott 1982, 312).

However, erotic descriptions could not be removed entirely from the letter-books of Alciphron (nor could they be removed from his colleagues', Philostratus, Aelian and Aristaenetus), since the very choice of erotica as his central theme in (some) letters leads the reader to expect at least some descriptions of nudity or innuendos of seduction and sexual intercourse. Therefore, the author had the obligation to avoid impropriety of a direct portrayal, but, at the same time, his letters had to provoke imagination and satisfy their readers' curiosity. As a result, the metaphorical, metonymical and euphemistic vocabulary, a powerful instrument of any work of literature,<sup>16</sup> became even more important and emphasized, while the stylistic devices used for erotic allusions had to be numerous, vivid and of various origin (Hajdarević 2017).

The aim of the paper is to analyse the overall erotic vocabulary (e.g. erotic metaphors, metonymies, allusions, similes etc.) in Alciphron's letter-collection. Of course, the focus will be on the letters with erotic themes,<sup>17</sup> while the others will be excluded.

## **1.3. The methodology of the research**

It is understood that the first important task must be the very detection of suitable examples, i.e. the choice of erotic expressions that will be taken into consideration; the letters of the collection must be carefully scrutinized with that goal in mind.

As a next step, the examples will be divided (according to their lexical origin in Greek language) into various categories, i.e. lexical domains, named 'fields of origin' further on in this paper (e.g. fields of joy, mistake, violence and warfare, fire, liquids etc.).

After that, it is necessary to carefully analyse the context in which these expressions appeared, determine the meaning they accomplished (such as desire, foreplay or intercourse) and investigate their expectedness and prospective co-dependency of their appearance or origin (e.g. their connection with the contents or the tone of the letter, occupation of its correspondents etc.).

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<sup>16</sup> And any language in general, I would add.

<sup>17</sup> I.e. all of book IV and a few scattered throughout books I, II and III.

Finally, a careful and thorough comparison of the overall usage of erotic expressions in Alciphron's four books should point to the unity (or disunity) of his literary work; any uncovered similarities or divergences will be put into a wider context and explained, if possible.

Throughout the paper the edition of Benner and Fobes will be followed regarding the arrangement of Alciphron's letters. However, for the sake of convenience, the examples (i.e. short passages taken from letters) will be copied directly from TLG (Dumont and Smith 2002) and therefore the numeration of lines will be taken from there, not from Benner and Fobes' printed edition.<sup>18</sup>

Some examples, by the shift of the emphasis from one word to another, might belong to two different categories and are therefore mentioned twice.

## 2. Erotic expressions and their origin

As stated in the Introduction, the idea is to distribute the previously detected examples into groups, according to their origin.

A total of 153 examples will be placed into one of 10 categories (9, plus an extra one that gathers miscellaneous examples that do not belong to any one of them). Every category will contain a short explanatory discussion of the data obtained.

### 2.1. Arrangement of examples

#### 1. Field of joy, pleasure and mutual amusement

Gathered here are the various sub-fields of lexical origin (as seen above: joy, pleasure, amusement etc.) that have an important common characteristic: some kind of a positive approach to desire or its fulfilment (as a pleasurable and welcome emotion or activity). Erotic expressions originating from this field consider the actual physical contacts of lovers during foreplay or during the sexual act itself. One would expect to find even more, since the physical act of love-making (or just carousing) is as a fact an enjoyable experience.

Foreplay is described as enjoyment in cuddling (e.g. ἵνα μικρὰ κραιπαλήσαντες (IV.7.8.5-6) and μετὰ γὰρ τῶν ἐραστῶν κραιπαλήσομεν (IV.14.8.6-7)) or as a fun game (καὶ πρὸς Διονύσῳ ἐπαίζομεν (IV.13.13.3)).

Correspondingly, a step further, the sexual act itself, is perceived as time spent in pleasure (e.g. μετὰ Θεττάλης... ἀπολουμένου (IV.10.2.3) and τὰς... μεσολαβούσας χάριτας (IV.16.6.8-9)) or the final and the most valuable delight (τὸ καλὸν τέλος τῆς ἡδονῆς (IV.7.8.5-7), οὐδὲ... διανυκτερεύσει τοῖς ἡδίστοις ἐκείνοις ἀπολαύσασιν (IV, 11, 6, 3) and τῆς ἀπολαύσεως ὑπερτιθεμένας (IV.16.6.2-3)).

Sex is also implied, but in an indirect fashion in the following examples: πρὸς πᾶσαν ἡδονὴν ἀφροδίσιον κεχυμένος (I.6.2.2), κωμάζουσι γὰρ εἰς αὐτήν... νεολαία (I.6.2.5-6), χάριν... σπουδάζεσθαι βουλόμενος (IV.4.3.1-2), διηγού τοῖς νῦν μὲν μακαριωτέροις ἡμῶν (IV.8.3.7-8) and ἀπέλαυνεν ἀγαθῶν ἔχων ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ ἐμέ (IV.17.9.3). A curious example is III.5.3.7-8: οἱ γὰρ παράκλησιν εἰς εὐποιάν μὴ ἀναμείναντες, which can be literally translated as 'those who do not wait for the invitation to do a good thing'. The 'good thing'

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<sup>18</sup> However, the concordance of lines taken from these two editions is significant, since the electronic database mostly follows the edition of Shepers, M. (1905) as well.

implied here is actually a very bad thing; an abduction of a courtesan and her deliverance to a man who is in love and wants to have sex with her!

## 2. Field of mistake, sin, disgrace, misfortune, madness and silliness

This category contains various sub-fields of lexical origin that have some kind of a negative approach to desire or its fulfilment. This category is therefore, in a way, a complete opposite to the previous one and gathers examples that perceive erotic emotions or physical contacts as undesirable, offensive to one of the lovers or a person related to one of them in some way (a husband, wife or another lover), shameful, morally wrong and potentially dangerous.

Three examples portray a person's desire as a negative and unwelcome emotion. In passages I.6.4.2 (καὶ θηλυμανῆς ἀπόσχου) and I.12.2.2 (τὸ κακὸν ἐξωθοῦσα τῆς διανοίας) it endangers a marriage,<sup>19</sup> and in III.28.3.3 (εἰς ἔρωτα... κατολισθήσας) a young man's education and finances.

As expected, most of the examples featuring sexual act as a sin are found in the letters that portray adultery. Two husbands are cheaters neglecting their wives, first in I.6.2.2 (ἀτιμάσας ἐμὲ) and the other one in II.31.2.1 (ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ἀτιμάζομαι), while five letters portray promiscuous wives: χρώμενοι τῷ τολμήματι (III.16.3.7), ἢ μιαρὰ δὲ γυνὴ τίσει τὴν ἀξίαν τῆς ἀκολασίας δίκην (III.26.4.4-5), ἡμᾶς... ἀνάγκη κρύπτειν τὸ κακὸν (III.27.1.8-9), Ἐξηγόρευσα Μνησιλόχῳ... τὴν τῆς γαμετῆς ἀσέλγειαν (III.33.1.2) and probably οὐχὶ τῶν κατ' ἀγρὸν πόνων ἀφείσαι ἀεργὸς τὴν ἀηδίαν πορισάμενος (II.7.2.1-2).<sup>20</sup> A curious case is IV.16.4.3-4 (μηδὲν ἀνάξιον τῶν σῶν ἀγαθῶν... πεποιηκυῖα); a courtesan's fidelity to one lover makes their relationship a peculiar one. Three examples (ἐλάνθανον δὲ ὑβριστὴν ὑμέναιον ἀναμένουσα (II.35.2.4-5), καὶ ἔχω τὸν ἐξ ὑβρεως ἄνδρα (II.35.3.3-4) and κρύπτειν τὴν συμφορὰν ἀναγκαῖον (II.35.3.7)) portray a rape of a woman. Since the story is told from her point of view, it is only logical that it is perceived as an unwanted act.

Terms originating from this lexical field are used in two instances to point to results of sexual rejection (ἐγὼ δὲ [οἴσω] βαρέως μὲν, οἴσω δὲ ὅμως τὴν ἀτιμίαν (II.6.2.4-5) and δὴ σοι ταῦτα ἡδονὴν φέρει, ἀπόλαυε τῆς ἡμετέρας μερίμνης (IV.8.3.6-7)).

## 3. Field of violence, warfare, resistance or submission, possession and slavery<sup>21</sup>

Gathered here are the examples depicting erotic emotions or situations seen as battles (in progress, won or lost) or results of them: wounds, defeat, enslavement etc. The person in love is conquered or enslaved either by passion (καὶ ὁ ποτε γελῶν τοὺς... πάθει δουλεύοντας (I.16.2.5-6) and ἠττημένος μου πάθει καὶ ἔρωτι (IV.19.12.13)), by Eros himself (θεῶ... πειθόμενος (I.22.1.3-4)), by the very person he/she is in love with (δουλεύειν κατηνάγκασας (II.6.2.2-3)) and as struck by Eros' arrow (as in II.22.2.2: βληθεὶς τὴν

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<sup>19</sup> In I.6 a wife considers her husband's infidelity madness and in I.12 a mother talks some sense into her daughter who is engaged, but in love with another man. In the first case the marriage endangered is an existing one and in the other the one arranged by the parents.

<sup>20</sup> I follow the opinion of Benner and Fobes (1949), 96, footnote a, who consider the disgrace mentioned here to be taken *sensu obsceno*. The disgrace in question was probably an act of adultery (that took place on the country estate) of this man and the owner's wife.

<sup>21</sup> A more detailed analysis of the following examples can be found in Hajdarević (2017).

καρδίαν). In I.16.2.6 (ὅλος εἰμι τοῦ πάθους) a man in love is perceived as belonging to passion. Additionally, women keep their lovers under siege (σήμερον αὐτὸν τοῖς αὐλοῖς ἐκπολιορκήσω (IV.16.3.8)), conquer them (ταῖς ἐλπίσι διακρατεῖν τοὺς ἐραστάς (IV.16.6.3)) and rule over them (εἰμι παρὰ σοὶ βασιλικωτέρα (IV.19.18.3)) by their charms.<sup>22</sup> In this category, curiously, all the ‘victims’ of sexual desires or love are men!

Two examples portraying foreplay contain terminology of violence, but used in a non-violent meaning: Menander is deeply in love with Glycera and the verbs used illustrate his passion, not aggression towards her (cf. ἐὰν δὲ διοργισθῇ τί μοι Γλυκέρα, ἅπαξ αὐτὴν ἀρπάσας κατεφίλησα in IV.18.14.1-3 and ἂν ἔτι ὀργίζεται, μᾶλλον αὐτὴν ἐβιασάμην in IV.18.14.3).

On the contrary, three examples containing terminology of this kind describe an actual violence. A rape of a woman is planned twice (ὀλίγου ὁ Πᾶν ἐδέησεν... ἐπὶ τὴν πυγὴν αὐτῆς ἐξάλλεσθαι (IV.13.12.3) and ἀναφαίνεται νέων ἀγερώχων ἐπ’ ἐμὲ συντεταγμένων (II.35.1.4-5)) and executed once (αἰδοῦμαι εἰπεῖν... τί παθεῖν ἐπηνάγκασε (II.35.3.3-4)). Other instances depict a persistent and successful male adulterer (μοιχὸς πολιορκεῖ τὴν οἰκίαν (III.26.2.5)) and a courtesan rejecting a potential client (τῷ μειρακίῳ δὲ ἔτι ἀντιτίθεται (III.28.3.4-5)). The two remaining examples containing verbs of possession are applied to the sexual availability of courtesans - cf. τὰς ἐταίρας δὲ δεῖν εἶναι πάντων ἀναφανδὸν καὶ πᾶσιν ἐκκεῖσθαι τοῖς βουλομένοις in III.22.2.1-3 and ὡς αἰεὶ τοῦ διδόντος in IV.11.3.3.

#### 4. Field of fire and heat

Field no. 4 contains somewhat monotonous usage of terminology connected to flame and fire; burning repeatedly denotes distress and torture by sexual desire. In six instances desire resulted in the entire person’s conflagration (ἴσα τοῖς πλουσίοις καὶ ὠρικοῖς νεανίσκοις φλέγομαι (I.16.2.4), σὺ δὲ οὐδεμίαν ὥραν ἔχεις ἐμοῦ διακαῶς φλεγόμενου (II.6.2.3-4), φλέγεται (III.28.3.3), ἠσθημένη τῷ πόθῳ τυφόμενον (III.28.3.5), ἐξεκαύθην εἰς ἔρωτα (III.31.1.6) and με καιομένην ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (IV.10.5.1-2)), on one occasion only souls of lovers are in an inferno (ἵνα μᾶλλον ἐξάπτωνται... αὐτῶν αἱ ψυχαί (IV.16.6.9-10)) and in four examples the person’s desire/love is represented as ignited or ablaze (ἠσθημένη γὰρ τὸν ἔρωτα ἐκκεκαυμένον τοῦ μειρακίου (III.5.2.2-3), ἐπὶ πλέον ἐκτύφεσθαι τὸν ἔρωτα (III.14.1.5), ἀνερρίπισε γὰρ μου τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν (IV.8.2.4-5) and τὰς [δὲ] ὄπωσοῦν ἄλλως ταχὺ μαραιομένης μεσολαβούσας χάριτας (IV.16.6.8-9)). Slightly different is an example that features only the result of an internal flame; the warmth, representing sexual interest (that is actually absent in our example): ἐμὲ γὰρ οὐδὲν θάλπει ἡ δόξα (IV.17.6.9).

Only one example from this field of origin is used for describing foreplay: θερμότερόν σε κατεφίλησα in IV.19.2.1-2.

#### 5. Field of liquids and food or their consumption

This field offers a (short) list of examples that represent desire and physical contacts of lovers as dealing with something liquid; so, in a way, this category is the opposite to no. 4. In two cases Eros or passion are poured into or around a person in love (cf. ἐντακεῖς in I.16.2.3

<sup>22</sup> It is no coincidence that all three of these warrior-like women are courtesans; throughout Alciphron’s collection they are portrayed as more assertive and dangerous than other women. Cf. Hajdarević (2017).

and τὸ νῆφον ἐν ἔμοι συνεχῶς ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους βυθίζεται in I.16.1.7-8), in another a woman's saliva is metaphorically called 'a dripping nectar', beverage of the gods (ἡδύ τι καὶ ἀκήρατον ἀπὸ τῶν φιλημάτων νέκταρ ἔσταζεν (IV.11.7.4)), and in the third instance a cheating husband is 'soaked by every possible erotic pleasure' (πρὸς πᾶσαν ἡδονὴν ἀφροδίσιον κεχυμένος (I.6.2.2)); in the latter case the (repeated) sexual act with a courtesan is seen as a potentially dangerous liquid, since the sender of the letter is a cheated wife, afraid for her marriage. Since 'nectar' in IV.11.7.4 introduced a notion of the possibility of consumption of a liquid, the pun in II.31.2.3-4 (ὄλον σε αὐτοῖς ἀγροῖς καταπιῶσα) seems quite similar, with the obvious shift of the meaning achieved; a man involved with a courtesan and his gifts to her are liquid offerings to a greedy, monster-like woman. Since the previous example of consumption was included in this category, it was only logical to include the analogous one in I.6.2.7 as well: ἀναλοιὶ Χαρῦβδεως δίκην. The latter quotation does not refer to drinking but devouring, while all the other circumstances are identical: both letters are written by cheated wives, portraying the 'other woman', a courtesan, as an insatiable beast of monstrous (sexual) appetite endangering their marriage and financial existence, while the men involved in the extramarital affairs are seen as naive victims. Quite similar is the euphemism for sexual act in III.16.2.3-4: καὶ οὐκ ἀρκοῦνται τῇ τῶν ἀφροδισίων ἀθέσμῳ πλησμονῇ, but in this case we are dealing with a woman's infidelity. As we can see, all the examples allude to the connection between satisfying one's hunger/thirst and desire, i.e. mutual interconnectedness of consumption and sexual consummation.

There is another, a more complicated example, found in IV.13.2.6, where food (figs) is used to mean something obscene: μακάριον ἐκεῖνο τὸ χωρίον ὅποι βαδίζετε, ὅσας ἔξει συκᾶς (in literal translation: 'Lucky is the estate you are about to visit, there will be a lot of figs there!'). Figs mentioned here are euphemisms for female genitals.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, since the women on their way to a picnic in the country estate are courtesans, the entire relative clause must be understood as a metaphor for (future) sex. There is a proof of that assumption; it is implied by a phrase - 'our thoughts turned to... you know what I mean' in IV.13.13.1 and then partly described in the lines that follow.

## 6. Field of approach, attempt and success (to be lucky, to seize the opportunity)

The following category gathers examples that portray physical contact as an attempt or achievement. Typical vocabulary of sexual advances (always of a man!) includes euphemistic expressions such as: trying one's luck with someone (e.g. ὑποπειρῶσι γὰρ τὴν παλλακὴν τοῦ τῆς οἰκίας δεσπότητος (III.16.2.1-2) and οὐ παύση...πειρῶν τὰς ἐφ' ἡλικίας ἀνθούσας ἡμᾶς (II.7.1.5-6)), trying to get someone to bed (e.g. βουλόενος ἐντυχεῖν (IV.7.3.1), τοῖς διδοῦσιν [αἰ] τυγχάνουσαι (IV.3.1.6), μὴ δὴ κρείττονος εἶη σοι τυχεῖν ἐραστοῦ (IV.5.1-2)) or going around one's house (e.g. οὐ προσέχει μοὶ τὸν νοῦν ὁ Δ[ι]ίφιλος (IV.10.1.1), ἦδεν εἰς τὸν οὐκέθ' ἡμῖν προσέχοντα ἐραστήν (IV.6.3.5-6), μὴ πρόσιθι Λεοντίῳ (IV.17.7.7), 'σὺ μὲν οὖν μὴ πρόσιθι τῇ ἐμῇ' (IV.17.7.7-8), οἰκίαν...

<sup>23</sup> Probably because of the similarity between a fig when sliced in half and the female vulva. This euphemism is also used by other Greek authors, the most famous example being Aristophanes' *Peace*, 1351-1352.



παρέορη (IV.7.1.5-6) and ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας φοιτᾶν (IV.8.1.3-4)).<sup>24</sup> As expected, sexual act is described as a success when actually achieved (e.g. ἡ πρῶξις εἰς τὴν ἀκμὴν προκεχώρηκε (III.16.2.2-3) and ὀλίγοι τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων σοι (IV.8.1.8)) and as an unattainable goal when it is out of the question: καὶ τῶν ἀνεφύκτων ἐρᾶν (III.31.2.3).

### 7. Field of acceptance and unity (mingling, sleeping together)

Given that foreplay and sexual act imply some physical contact of limbs of lovers, a vast number of passages containing expressions originating from this field are expected. Foreplay is alluded to by expressions like: to recline together in bed with someone (cf. ἵνα ἐν... μετ' ἀλλήλων κατακλινωμεν (IV.1.1.10-11)),<sup>25</sup> ἔδει γὰρ αὐτῇ συγκατακεῖσθαι με καὶ νῦν ὡς τότε (IV.11.5.7-8) or καὶ νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν ἐμοὶ προσκειμενον (IV.19.7.1)), to embrace (γυμνὴν περιλαβεῖν ἐκείνην οἶόν ἐστιν (IV.12.3.2-3), καὶ ὅταν περιπλακείς με καταφιλήσῃς (IV.16.3.2), περιβάλλουσά σε (IV.19.5.6) and σὲ γὰρ περιβάλλουσα κοιμᾶσθαι μᾶλλον ἐβουλόμην (IV.7.3.3-4)), to fondle a woman's breasts (μασταρίων ἐφήκεν ἄψασθαι (IV.13.13.4)) and to cuddle with someone: σὺ δ' ἡμῖν μόνη τὸν Ἄδωνιν περιέψυχες (IV.14.3.1-2).

Since the very nature of socialising with a courtesan automatically implies sexual favours, it was necessary to include in this category a lot of examples portraying men spending time with them or entering their homes. Permission to enter is a frequent euphemism for sexual acceptance and entering a home is a pun anticipating man's penetration into courtesan's body (e.g. ἡ δὲ εἰσδέχεται (I.6.2.7), ὑποδέξομαι αὐτὸν (IV.7.3.6) and ὑποδέξομαι δὴ σε ἐπαφροδίτως (IV.16.4.1-2)). Correspondingly, a man left outside is a man sexually rejected (cf. τὸ μειράκιον οὐ προσιέμην (IV.6.1.7-8), μὲν οὖν αὐτὸν οὐ προσιέμην (IV.7.3.2-3), 'ἀπόκλεισον' φησὶ 'καὶ μὴ προσίτω σοι' (IV.17.5.6), ὅμως ἦκοντα αὐτὸν οὐ προσίετο (IV.11.4.5), λοιπὸν οὖν ἀποκλείειν (IV.10.3.1) and τὸν Αἰγύπτιον ἔμπορον ὡς ἀπεσκοράκισεν (IV.11.5.1-2)).<sup>26</sup>

As in any modern language, the sexual act is often implied by various euphemisms, e.g. sleeping or spending the night with someone (cf. πάντα ὑπομένειν οἷα τέ εἰμι πλὴν τοῦ σοὶ συγκαθεύδειν (II.25.1.1-2), ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἔγνω τὸν ἑαυτῆς ἄνδρα προσκειμενον (III.36.2.1-2), καθεύδειν ἂν εἰλόμην (IV.12.3.5), σὺ μετὰ τούτου καθεύδεις (IV.16.2.2-3), ποτε πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ κοιμησόμενος ἐφοῖτα (IV.10.1.4-5), καὶ ἔλθη ποτὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς κοιμη[θη]σόμενος (IV.10.3.1-2), οὐδὲ... διανυκτερεύσει τοῖς ἡδίστοις ἐκείνοις ἀπολαύσμασιν (IV.11.6.3) and ἐλεῶ σε... οἷα πάσχεις μετ' ἐκείνης καθεύδων τῆς χελώνης (IV.12.1.3-5)). Similar euphemistic expressions denoting sexual acts include being or spending time with someone (e.g. ὑπετόπησεν ἐμὲ πρόξενον εἶναι τῆς κοινωνίας (III.36.2.5)),<sup>27</sup> οὐδὲ εἷς ἑταῖρα ὀμίλων

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<sup>24</sup> The contexts of letters leave no doubt that these examples must be considered as erotically charged; going around a courtesan's house (all examples are from book IV) is an obvious sign of a sexual interest in her.

<sup>25</sup> This example can be seen as an invitation to objectophilia; Phryne, the famous courtesan from the 4<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. regrets that her lover, sculptor Praxiteles, is not embracing the statue that was made after her.

<sup>26</sup> The *exclusus amator* theme we encounter here was well attested in earlier Greek and Latin literary elegy, which had a huge influence on the entire epistolary (sub)genre.

<sup>27</sup> This woman is not a courtesan but a wife with extra-marital sexual activities.

τυραννίδας ὄνειροπολεῖ (IV.7.6.1-2) and τρυφερόν γὰρ ἦν καὶ πρόπον ἐρωτικῆ ὁμιλία (IV.13.19.2-3)) and mingling or pairing with someone (cf. οὐδ' ἀξιοῦμεν ἀδελφαῖς καὶ μητράσι μίγνυσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας (IV.7.5.1-2)), while one example denotes the opposite; the absence/refusal of sexual act (cf. ἀμίκτως πρὸς ἑτέρους in IV.16.4.6-7). A bed itself is used once as a metonymy for sexual acts (non-existing, in this case): οὐκέτι σοι μέλει οὔτε τῆς εὐνής ἡμῶν (II.8.1.1-2).<sup>28</sup>

Although the following passages contain the verbs τυγχάνω and πειράω, found also in the previous category (no. 6), the contexts of their letters shifted the meanings from 'trying to achieve a sexual act' to 'spend time, sexual act included', so they are added here: πειραθεῖσα τοῦ Γοργίου (III.2.3.2), ταύτη ποτὲ ἐντυγχάνειν ἐδόκει (IV.6.1.7), σοὶ δὲ... ἐντυγχάνουσα ἀδημονῶ (IV.9.2.4), τίνος γὰρ οὐκ αἴτιαι κακοῦ τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι (IV.11.3.3-4) and οὐχ ἡγησάμενος δεινὸν ἐντυγχάνειν τοῖς ἑμοῖς γραμμασιν ὄλη μοι ἐντυγχάνων (IV.16.1.4-5).

### 8. Field of offering and usage

Voluntary sexual act can be euphemistically described as offering oneself or one's body to someone (e.g. οὐ φησιν ἑαυτὴν ἐπιδώσειν (III.5.2.5) and οὐ... φησιν ἐπιδώσειν ἑαυτὴν (III.28.3.5-6)) or as the usage of the body (ὅπως ἂν βούλωμαι χρῆσθαι τῷ ἐμῷ σώματι (IV.16.4.5-6) and λαβέτω καὶ ἀγῶ ἔχω (IV.17.6.8)). In all detected cases the body in question is female's.

### 9. Vocabulary of various occupations

The most unusual examples are the ones connected with various occupations. In one case, maritime terminology is found: a man in love is 'diverted from his (right) course' (cf. ἔρωσ με οὐκ ἔᾶ παρεμπροσθὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ λογισμοῦ κυβερνᾶσθαι in I.16.1.6-7) and Eros is perceived as turning the rudder of the ship (a metaphor for this man's life). The other instance is: μή... γένηται σοὶ τὸ τῆς ψαλτρίας καταγώγιον) [ὁ] Καλυδώνιος κόλπος ἢ [τὸ] Τυρρητικὸν πέλαγος (I.21.3.2-5). In literal translation, the quotation means: 'Don't let this musician's room become your Calydonian gulf or the Thyrrenian Sea.' The passage must be understood as a combination of a metonymy and a metaphor: the location where sexual act takes place also denotes the sexual act itself, and the notorious geographical locations mentioned denote the life-threatening danger both in the fisherman's life at sea and his life in general (i.e. the financial 'shipwreck' at land, since he spends too much on gifts). As we can see, love is in both cases perceived as a (mortal) danger.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> There are more examples similar to the ones mentioned before, but the sexual act itself, although implied, is not as prominent or important as in previous cases; in the cases of courtesans the accent is on their relationship with their lovers, not the sex itself (ικανὴν τιμωρίαν δώσει τῆς σῆς ὁμιλίας στερούμενος (IV.4.2.2), σε ἀποτρέπειν ἔοικε τῆς μεθ' ἡμῶν συνηθείας (IV.7.3.6), πεπαῦσθαι κρεῖττον ἡμῖν τοῦ βίου τούτου καὶ μηκέτι ἔχειν πράγματα μηδὲ τοῖς ὁμιλοῦσι παρέχειν (IV.3.1.7-9), μεμνησθαι... τῆς συνηθείας ἔχειν καλῶς ἐρεῖ (IV.10.5.2-4), 'ἀλλ' Εὐθείας σοὶ... συγκαταβίωη (IV.5.1.1-4), βούλει σοὶ τὴν ἐρωμένην διαλέγεσθαι (IV.9.3.5-6). So, these examples should be regarded as a separate sub-category and excluded from the final analysis).

<sup>29</sup> It is no surprise that both examples are taken from book I, whose correspondents are fishermen.

Two examples describe sexual advances as activities of a huntress/hunter, and the corresponding vocabulary is used. The first example represents a group of courtesans praying for a client, perceived as prey: *ίκετεύομεν διδόναι τινά ἡμῖν ἐρωτικὴν ἄγρην* (IV.13.5.6-7). This representation of courtesans as huntresses resembles the previously interpreted quotations in categories of violence and warfare (no. 3) and liquids, food and their consumption (no. 5). The other one is in a way the opposite: a woman is perceived as a pray in this man's hunting ground and he wants another man to get away from her/it: *ἔξελαθε' φησὶν ἕκ τῆς ἐμῆς μοναγρίας* (IV.17.7.6).

In one instance a friend of a man in love with a musician teases him using musical terminology: *πόθεν οὖν... μουσικῆς σοι ..... διάτονον καὶ χρωματικὸν καὶ ἐναρμόνιον γένος ἐστίν* (I.21.2.3-4). The literal translation would be: 'How come you suddenly know so much about diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic?', which obviously makes no sense unless we discover the puns (based on auditory similarities) intended here; *διάτονον* might allude to *διατείνω* (to embrace), *χρωματικὸν* to *χρῶμα, ατος, τό* (naked skin) or *χροίζω* (to touch the skin) and, finally, *ἐναρμόνιον* sounds quite like *ἐναρμόζω* (to insert, to poke).<sup>30</sup>

Similar pun is probably intended in the following case, the difference being that the expression originates from philosophical terminology: *τὴν ψάλτριαν... ἐνηγκαλίζετο... λέγων τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ τῆς σαρκὸς ἀόχλητον καὶ τὴν καταπύκνωσιν τοῦ ἠδομένου* (III.19.8.2-4).

In III.31.2.4-5 a man uses legislative terminology while describing his fear that passion might endanger and 'convict' him: *πρὶν ἢ <ἐ>κρι<νη>θῆναι τοῖς πόθοις*.

Finally, a woman describes her first sexual intercourse as her first 'erotic lesson' learned: *καὶ τὴν πρώτην ἀφροδίτην ἔμαθον παρ' αὐτοῦ* (IV.17.4.6-7); she is seen as a pupil, and her lover as a teacher.

## 10. Miscellaneous examples

This category gathers various examples not belonging to any other or, in some cases, belonging simultaneously to two of them.

Twice the very locations metonymically denote the sexual acts taking place there. The first example describe a man visiting parts of Athens known for its brothels (see *ἀκούω γὰρ σε τὰ πολλὰ ἐπὶ Σκίρου καὶ Κεραμεικοῦ διατρίβειν* in II.22.2.3-4) and in the other case the brothels are even mentioned (*καὶ περὶ χαμαιτυπεῖα εἰλούμενον* (III.28.2.6-7)).

Furthermore, various logical allusions can denote that the sexual act actually took place. It is implied by euphemisms like 'he took my virginity' (*οὗτος γὰρ με διεπαρθένευσεν* (IV.17.4.7-8)), 'five months after the wedding a baby is born premature' (*μηγὶ πέμπτῳ μετὰ τοὺς γάμους τέτοκεν αὐτῷ τὸ γύναιον παιδίον* (III.27.1.4-5)), a courtesan hopes that her lover will not sleep with another while away, i.e. that he will 'return unchanged' (*ἐὰν δ' ἐπανέλθῃ μοι οἶος ὄχρετο* (IV.2.5.4-5)), Pan and Priapus are portrayed as 'favourably looking' at a group of men and women, which insinuates that they had sex (*καὶ οὐκέθ' ἡμῖν ἐδόκουν προσβλέπειν ὡς πρότερον αἱ Νύμφαι, ἀλλ' ὁ Πάν [καὶ ὁ Πρίαπος] ἤδιον* (IV.13.16.3-4)) and sexual fidelity is described as 'the use of body in the proper way' (*ἀλλὰ κέχρημαι καλῶς* (IV.16.4.6)).

<sup>30</sup> Suggestions of Wright, F. A., gathered in Benner and Fobes (1949) 80-81, footnote c.

Also, the sexual act can be replaced by various nouns, such as: ‘the thing(s)’ (ἡ πράξις (III.16.2.2) and πράγματα παρέχων (II.35.1-2)) or ‘the thing that happened’ (cf. εἴσεται τὸ γεγονός (III.27.2.4)) and various pronouns in neuter (e.g. ταῦτα (III.26.4.3), τᾶλλα σιωπῶ (IV.17.5.3-4) and οἶδας ὃ τι λέγω (IV.13.12.6)). The most interesting example of this kind is the innuendo of men’s erection in IV.13.14.1-3: διανίστατο δὲ ἤδη ἡμῶν μὲν τῶν γυναικῶν τὰ πάθη, τῶν ἀνδρῶν δὲ ἐκεῖνα (in literal translation: ‘the passion of women began rising, and ‘the men’s things’ as well).

The name of Aphrodite, the goddess of love herself, is used three times as a metonymy for the sexual act (παρεμπορευσαμένα<ς> τῆς ἀφροδίτης (IV.13.16.1-2), μηδὲ αἰδουμένως τῆς ἀφροδίτης παρακλέπτειν (IV.13.18.4-5) and τῆ τῶν ἀφροδισίων ἀθέσμῳ πλησμονῇ (III.16.2.3-4)). Additionally, one more derivative of her name is used in the similar meaning: πρὸς πᾶσαν ἡδονὴν ἀφροδίσιον κεχυμένος (I.6.2.2).

A few examples remained unclassified for various reasons. The phrase ἔρωσ ἐνέσκηψε (I.16.2.3) belongs either to category no. 4 (field of fire) or 9 (terminology of hunting) and Δωρίδα τὴν μουσουργὸν οἶος ἦν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀπάντων [ὀρώντων] ἐνεργεῖν (III.19.9.4) either to no. 3 (violence and warfare) or no. 6 (attempt and success). Finally, the opinion of Benner and Fobes, who consider the passage II.7.2.2-3 (οὐ τοῦπτανίου καὶ τῆς ἐσχάρας ὡς ἀδύνατος ὢν ἐξέωσαι) a pun with a sexual connotation seems probable, but the example does not fit any of my categories (see Benner and Fobes 1949, 96, footnote a).

**Table 1. Distribution of examples according to their origin**

Field of origin	Total: 153	Book I (Total: 19)	Book II (Total: 17)	Book III (Total: 31)	Book IV (Total: 86)
1. Joy, pleasure	14	2	-	1	11
2. Mistake, disgrace, sin, misfortune	16	3	6	5	2
3. Violence, warfare, slavery	18	4	3	3	8
4. Fire and heat	13	1	1	5	6
5. Liquids, food and consumption	8	4	1	1	2
6. Attempt and success	14	-	1	3	10
7. Acceptance and unity	37	1	2	3	31
8. Offering and usage	4	-	-	2	2
9. Various occupations	8	3	-	2	3
10. Miscellaneous examples	21	1	3	6	11

As we can see from Table 1, the total of all examples, 153, is quite unevenly distributed throughout books I-IV, book IV containing the vast majority of them (86, more than all other books combined). That fact can be easily explained: since they contain erotic themes, all letters of IV were included in the analysis, which was not the case with the letters of I-III. Besides, one might expect erotic vocabulary to be used frequently in the world where sexual act and relationships are achieved more often than in other letters of the collection.

The fields of origin are unevenly used as well. An abundance of expressions is placed in categories no. 7 (acceptance and unity, 37 examples), no. 10 (passages that could not be

included into other categories, 21 examples) and no. 3 (violence, warfare and slavery, 18 examples).<sup>31</sup> Frequent use of category no. 7 is quite logical and expected in the letter-collection with so many erotic letters, since both foreplay and sexual act require some amount of physical contact between lovers. However, an obvious discrepancy can be detected when we observe the distribution throughout books; a vast majority of examples is in book IV (31 of 37). Further analysis reveals that vocabulary from this field of origin is almost exclusively connected with courtesans; all passages but one (from book II) present relationships with them! That can hardly be a coincidence. Part of the explanation might be a simple fact that physical contact (practically a prerequisite for the existence of examples of this field) is more easily accomplished with them than with other women (in this collection and, as we know, in real Greek society as well).

A seemingly vast number of uncategorized cases (category no. 10, with 21 examples) can be considered an unfortunate outcome that could have been easily avoided by the introduction of additional categories, given that a certain sub-categorization is already introduced within the category itself. However, an increased number of categories would make the analysis more difficult (and the table somewhat overcrowded as well), so the decision was made not to act in that direction.<sup>32</sup> 11 examples (i.e. half of the total quantity) are found in book IV. The explanation is probably the nature of the book itself; sexual encounters, most frequently implied by various phrases originating from this field (see Table 2), are achieved more often (or are at least more likely to be attempted) with courtesans than with other women.

The category of violence, warfare and slavery (no. 3) contributed with 18 examples. The quantity is in concordance with my expectations; previous similar research of Philostratus', Aelian's and Aristaenetos' letters revealed that this category is an important one in the subgenre in general (Hajdarević 2013, 258-259 and 262-263 and especially Hajdarević 2017).<sup>33</sup> It is clear that 8 examples (i.e. all from book IV) imply relations with courtesans, but, unlike category no. 7, expressions of this kind are not reserved for describing only these (i.e. 10 other examples from book I-III do not portray courtesans).

Given that seven letters portray adulterers (two husbands and five wives), one a raped woman (with three examples extracted), another a girl in love with a man she cannot have (since her father promised her to someone else) and yet another a young man crazy in love with a courtesan, the 16 examples gathered in category no. 2 (mistake, disgrace and sin) seem like a logical result; the contexts of letters make these sexual relations as a fact both morally wrong and potentially dangerous.

Two categories deserve additional attention because they display a diverse distribution of examples throughout books. The best part of examples placed in categories 1 (joy and pleasure) and 6 (attempt and success) come from book IV; 11 out of 14 and 10 out of 14, to be exact. In both cases the explanation is the same as before: courtesans are more available and

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<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the sum of examples belonging to these three categories adds to approximately one half of all erotic examples found in this collection.

<sup>32</sup> Additionally, each of the sub-categories introduced in no. 10 contains only a few examples, and they could not contribute to the resolution of the dilemma of unity or disunity anyway.

<sup>33</sup> On the contrary, the heavy reliance on category no. 9 seems to be Alciphron's most important feature, while that category is far less used by Aristaenetos and almost neglected by Philostratus (cf. Hajdarević 2013, 258-259 and 262-263).

approachable than other women, the attempt to achieve relationships with them is far more likely (so we expect various examples from category no. 6) and the sexual encounter itself is far more accomplishable (hence the examples from category no. 1).

### 3. Distribution of examples according to their meanings achieved

After they are placed into their matching categories (cf. the previous chapter and Table 1), the very usage of the examples will be analysed and the exact meaning in the context of their “domicile” letter will be determined. Examples describe one of the following: sexual desire/being in love, foreplay or sexual intercourse.

**Table 2. Arrangement of examples according to their meanings achieved**

Field of origin	Sexual desire or being in love	Foreplay	Sexual intercourse
1. Joy and pleasure	-	3 (all in IV)	11 (book I: 2, book II: 1, book IV: 8)
2. Mistake, sin, and misfortune	3 (book I: 2, book III: 1)	-	13 (book I: 1, book II: 6, book III: 4, book IV: 2)
3. Violence, warfare and slavery	9 (book I: 4, book II: 1, book IV: 4)	2 (both in IV)	7 (book II: 2, book III: 3, book IV: 2)
4. Fire and heat	12 (book I: 1, book II: 1, book III: 5, book IV: 5)	1 (in IV)	-
5. Liquids, food and consumption	2 (both in I)	1 (in IV)	5 (book I: 2, book II: 1, book III: 1, book IV: 1)
6. Attempt and success	-	-	14 (book II: 1, book III: 3, book IV: 10)
7. Acceptance and unity	-	9 (all in IV)	28 (book I: 1, book II: 2, book III: 3, book IV: 22)

8. Offering and usage	-	-	4 (book III: 2, book IV: 2)
9. Various occupations	2 (book I: 1, book III: 1)	-	6 (book I: 2, book III: 1, book IV: 3)
10. Miscellaneous examples	1 (in I)	-	20 (book II: 3, book III: 6, book IV: 11)

Nowhere in Alciphron's collection is the sexual desire/being in love described as something positive and welcome; not even one person considers the sentiment pleasurable or describes e.g. the exciting butterflies in his/her stomach. This contributes to the overall pessimistic tone and in a way unifies the books.<sup>34</sup> However, as expected, descriptions of foreplay and intercourse contain expressions connected to this domain and most of them are found in book IV (11, describing foreplay in 3 instances and sexual act in another 8). As a matter of fact, further scrutiny of the contexts of the remaining 3 examples revealed that they too are found in letters dealing with courtesans, which can be seen as another feature interconnecting the books (probable reason for the association of pleasure and courtesans in particular is obvious, as explained previously, in the analysis of Table 1).

Both sexual desire and the sexual act are occasionally perceived as something wrong. However, characters of books II and IV never consider their sentiments to be a mistake or a sin. While courtesans are described as mostly unemotional (except Glycera in IV.19), the emotions towards them are often considered wrong, usually by the person(s) endangered by the relationship with them (cf. the cheated wife in I.6) or by those worried about men socializing with them (cf. a friend's warning in II.28). A similar tendency exists in further two examples (cf. the other example of I.6 or the one in II.31). Cheaters portrayed as sinners actually appear in all books, if we count IV.8.3.6-7 also (from an ex lover's point of view, a courtesan's loss of interest and finding a new client is seen as her infidelity). Other than that passage, female adulterers are found in 4 letters in book III; their sins are revealed and discussed by parasites (who are as a fact most likely to be up to date with all sorts of domestic affairs, since they spend a lot of time inside other people's houses). Women in book I and II have similar opportunities, since their husbands are away (fishermen in book I are at sea most of the time, while farmers of book II work in their fields), but they are more likely to be cheated (cf. I.6 and II.31) than to cheat. A logical explanation is that their poor homes are seldom visited by anyone (unlike rich men's in III) and therefore their prospective affairs would be easily detected by their neighbours (although it is possible that one of them succeeded; cf. II.7). Three examples (cf. II.35) portray an actual immoral and wrong sexual event, a rape.

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<sup>34</sup> Although the characters often portray their lives as extremely hard and dream of becoming someone else, they are either disappointed or it seems that they are going to be (cf. Rosenmeyer 2001, 270).

Vocabulary of violence appears in erotic contexts in all the books, but more frequently in book IV. This fact is closely connected with the display of power and dominance surrounding courtesans, as mentioned before. Additionally, three times is the violence indicated literally violence (a plan of a rape in IV.13 and its achievement in II.35 (two examples)).

The field of fire and heat is used throughout the collection, but far more often in book IV (6 times) and III (5 times), while books I and II contain only two examples. Additionally, besides 6 examples from book IV that are obviously connected with courtesans, extra three in book III are as well (III.5, 14 and 28). Hence, there is a tendency of connecting the courtesans' trade (and relationships with them) and the terminology of fire, but it is not found in books I and II, so further conclusions, pointing to the unifying effect, are out of the question. On the other hand, never in this collection is the sexual intercourse described by terms of fire and heat.

Terms connected with liquids, food and consumption are rarely used in Alciphron's collection. As expected, half of them concerning liquids are found in book I.<sup>35</sup> Sexual act perceived as consumption seems to be closely associated with courtesans; the connection is found in I.6, II.31 and also IV.13. Furthermore, although III.16 does not portray a courtesan, the licentious woman described is closely related to them twofold. To begin with, she is described as sexually insatiable, since her adultery concerns a group of men, not only one of them, so in that way she resembles courtesans who rarely have only one lover. Besides, she is called a concubine (cf. *παλλακὴν* in III.16.2.2), in Greek society usually a slave, an ex-courtesan, or both. Therefore, this example closely resembles the other ones.

Three subsequent fields, no. 6 (attempt and success), no. 7 (acceptance and unity) and no. 8 (offering and usage), share extremely similar features and can be analysed together. The dominance of book IV is almost absolute: 10 out of 14, 31 out of 27 and 4 out of 4 examples are detected there. Since the explanation was offered previously (availability of courtesans and a real chance of gaining their favours), there is no need to accentuate it further.

Fields 9 and 10 gather diverse and imaginative examples. Other than their increased appearance in book IV, no significant features that could be used as arguments pro or contra unity of this collection are found.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of Alciphron's erotic vocabulary produced somewhat contradictory and (unfortunately) inconclusive results.

First the arguments that can be used as evidence of the unity of his collection will be listed. More persuasive and important ones will be introduced first:

- Throughout the collection courtesans are repeatedly represented as dominant and potentially dangerous. The most important illustration of that fact we find in field no. 5: examples of sexual act connected with vocabulary of food, liquids and their consumption in all books portray

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<sup>35</sup> Two extra examples could be added here, since they also portray a connection with water: I.16.1.6-7 and I.21.3.2-3. However, they portray a wider picture, the everyday fishermen's life taking place in the realm of water, not only water itself, so they are added to a separate category (no. 9).



insatiable courtesans drinking or devouring (like beasts or monsters) both their lovers and the presents they bring. Furthermore, the pun (consumption: sexual consummation) is always presented to us by a worried or/and offended bystander, usually a wife or, in one instance, a friend.<sup>36</sup>

- Sexual desire/being in love and sexual intercourse are repeatedly quite similarly presented as violence, warfare and slavery in all books.
- Furthermore, in all examples but one (III.26.2.5) the casualties are men.
- Examples from field no. 7 (acceptance and unity) are connected exclusively with courtesans in all books.
- Field no. 2 (mistake and sin) is almost equally represented by examples in all books.
- Six categories are represented in all books by at least one example (categories no. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 10).
- Cheaters, either male or female, are regularly presented as sinners and perils to their marriages or to themselves in all books.
- A complete lack of terminology from field no. 1 (joy and pleasure) in descriptions of desire/being in love in all books seems a little surprising, since this field is neglected even when existing relationships or mutual love is described.
- Terminology of fire is present in all books (however, it is used heavily only in books III and IV).

On the other hand, there are some compelling arguments for disunity as well. As before, arguments that are considered more convincing are at the top of the list:

- Distribution of examples (cf. Table 1) shows significant discrepancies in field no. 1 (joy and pleasure), no. 3 (violence and warfare), no. 6 (attempt and success), no. 7 (acceptance and unity) and no. 10 (miscellaneous examples); in all cases book IV prevails significantly. The explanation lies in the nature of socializing with courtesans (easier access, availability, more chance of achieving sexual contacts with them than with other women etc.) and the representation of that contact (often seen as a real relationship, not just a client: prostitute exchange).

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<sup>36</sup> This kind of portrayal relies heavily on the characteristics of the relations themselves and the real features of lives of Greek courtesans. In a way they did have more power and freedom than other women in Greek society, as well as the opportunity to spend time with men and treat them as they pleased, endangering wives or finances of their clients. Besides that, it is important to stress that this representation belongs to commonplaces of Greek literature in general, and it is not surprising nor is it purely Alciphron's original and deliberate contribution (cf. for example Hajdarević 2013, 246-249 about Greek courtesans in general and about their portrayal by Aristaenetos 249-255, by Alciphron 259-260 and by Philostratus 263).

- Books IV and III dominate completely in category no. 8 (offering and usage; in this case books I and II offer no examples whatsoever) and almost completely in category no. 4 (fire and heat), while book II contains no examples in category no. 9 (various occupations).
- Erotic expressions connected with water (or other liquids) are used far more often in book I than in others; the theme of the book itself (i.e. its correspondents - fishermen and their wives) obviously influenced the author's choice of vocabulary used in metaphors and metonymies. Of course, this fact came as no surprise.
- When various meanings achieved are considered (cf. Table 2), four categories are not at all represented by examples in some books, while similar passages abound with others (cf. no. 1, 6, 8 and 9; it is important to notice that category no. 8 lacks examples from two books, I and II).
- Terminology of fire is firmly connected with courtesans only in books III and IV.
- Most examples of field no. 3 (violence and warfare) are found exclusively in book IV (the explanation being the representation of courtesans, as before).

When everything is taken into consideration, there remains an impression that the dilemma announced in the title of this paper cannot be resolved without a shadow of a doubt by the use of the results obtained by analyses conducted here.

However, the arguments leaning towards the unity of the collection slightly prevail and seem more convincing, especially when combined with the ones previously acknowledged (cf. introductory chapter of this paper).

The potential evidences for its disunity, listed above, might be explained as logical consequences of the author's (deliberate) choice of including four various themes and groups of correspondents into one letter-collection. So, in a way, any discrepancies detected could be observed also as his deliberate variations and adjustments, both on lexical and stylistic level.

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