

RESEARCH PAPER

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ATTEMPTS AT RECONCILIATION IN ARISTAENETUS' *EROTIC LETTERS*

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Even though scholars are yet to agree on the authorship of the epistolary collection *Erotic Letters*, it is usually ascribed to Aristaenetus and it was probably written in the 6th century AD. The letters of the collection mostly depict extramarital affairs (with *hetairai*, slaves or married women), often accompanied by conflicts fuelled by (sometimes justified) jealousy or either partner's lack of interest because there are better options: e.g. a *hetaira* gets a richer client, a client is seduced by a younger or better-looking girl, etc. Therefore, most reconciliation efforts in the *Letters* are in fact the lovers' attempts to either get back together and improve their relationships or to end them in a civilised manner or otherwise. The focus of the research is on the analysis of the protagonists' reconciliation strategies and methods (such as verbal persuasion, lying, causing sympathy, projecting guilt onto somebody else, letter-writing, the use of male or female mediators, etc.) and their effectiveness. The final goals are: to point out the most common reconciliation methods employed, to investigate whether or not the men and women use similar methods, to check which gender is more likely to choose indirect reconciliation methods, such as the use of mediators or writing and sending letters, and to examine which gender is generally more successful at reconciliation (as well as to explain why that is so). Additionally, the author's depictions of reconciliation and his use of reconciliation as a narrative tool are put into a wider context through a comparison with other epistolary collections of this type, the originality of these depictions is scrutinised and probable models (within and outside of the subgenre) are proposed.

Keywords: Aristaenetus, reconciliation, reconciliation methods

1. INTRODUCTION

The epistolary collection entitled *Erotic Letters*, usually ascribed to Aristaenetus (circa 6th c. AD),¹ belongs to the subgenre of Greek fictional epistolography and

¹ See more about the manuscript in Bianchi 2008. Some scholars reject the possibility that the author and the sender of 1.1 have the same name (Arnott 1982: 293). However, Zanetto claims

is one of only five such collections to survive to this day.² It consists of 50 letters divided into two books, the first containing 28 of them and the second 22. The letters are not accompanied by replies.³ Some depict relationships between spouses, but most of them include extramarital affairs with courtesans, other people's wives or female slaves.⁴ The author focuses mainly on sexual relationships, so the letters abound with conflicts caused by jealousy or simply by the fact that one of the lovers has lost their interest in their partner. The conflicts are mostly verbal⁵ and are caused by the lovers' moods and/or complicated situations in which they find themselves. It is not surprising that clashes between rivals, jealousy, break-ups and revenge, all stemming from bruised egos and broken hearts, are mostly to be found in the letters portraying relationships with *hetairai* (courtesans), as these are fertile ground for both gossip and machinations. Some conflicts are never resolved, but several letters depict the protagonists making attempts at reconciliation. Their methods and the outcomes of their efforts vary: while some lovers resolve their issues and get back together, others part their ways.

Although conflicts between lovers and attempts at reconciliation are one of the focal points of Aristaenetos' letters, his portrayal of conflict resolution, i.e. reconciliation, as a narrative tool has not been analysed by scholars. The need for such research becomes even more evident when one takes into account the fact that Aristaenetos' predecessors (Alciphron, Aelian and Philostratus) only rarely include detailed depictions of conflicts between lovers in their letters, while recon-

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it would make sense for the author to include himself as a correspondent in the collection (as he included for example Alciphron in letters 1.5 and 1.22, Philostratus in letter 1.11, and Aelian in 2.1) in order to show his affiliation to the literary subgenre (Zanetto 1987: 197). The author of this paper believes that Zanetto's idea should be explored even further: it might have been the author's intention to have his readers wonder whether he was indeed the sender of letter 1.1 or whether the name should be associated with the content of the letter as a *speaking name*. On the problems of authorship and dating the collection, cf. Mazal 1971: I–VIII, Burri 2004 and the summary of the views of various scholars in Drago 2007: 16–36 or Gallé Cejudo 1999: 13–22.

² The collections of Alciphron, Aelian and Philostratus originate from the 2nd or 3rd c. AD, and the one by Theophylactus from the 7th (Rosenmeyer 2001: 255–340).

³ Letters 1.5 and 1.22 have the same correspondents (Alciphron and Lucian), but 1.22 is not a reply to 1.5. However, they form a thematic diptych; cf. Zanetto 1987: 198 and my own analysis of both letters later in the text.

⁴ The senders and addressees are both male and female. The situations described can be relevant to one of the correspondents or both of them, but not necessarily; a number of letters contain nothing but gossip about third parties (cf. Zanetto 1987: 196–197 and Hajdarević 2013: 45–77).

⁵ There are notable exceptions: 1.15 mentions a political uprising and the ensuing war, while 1.2 and 2.12 allude to physical violence (in both cases the victims are male).

ciliation is almost completely absent as a motif.⁶ Also, it is important to deal with the question of Aristaenetos' *originality* in his depictions of sexual conflicts and reconciliation methods. The rich intertextuality of the collection makes us expect that several genres apart from Greek fictional epistolography (esp. New Comedy, Lucian, the novels and Latin epistolographers, esp. Cicero and Ovid) might have influenced Aristaenetos in his depictions of conflict and reconciliation attempts.⁷ This paper builds on several other research contributions dealing with the topic of interpersonal conflict and reconciliation in various Greek and Latin literary texts.⁸ These, as well as several papers and monographs on the reconciliation motif in other literatures (e.g. English),⁹ inspired this research and its methodology. The

⁶ Various conflicts and advice on *existential matters* are depicted (esp. in Alciphron's books 1–3), but some of Alciphron's and Aelian's letters served as models for Aristaenetos' reconciliation methods. For Alciphron and Aelian, the Benner and Fobes 1949 edition was used.

⁷ Where applicable, Aristaenetos' probable models for his depiction of reconciliation will be identified (and accompanied by additional information if they have been identified by other scholars).

⁸ “Interpersonal reconciliation has been an abiding literary theme from... the reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon in *The Iliad*...” (Van Dijkhuizen 2019: 2). Naturally, some Greek and Latin literary genres focus on the potential of interpersonal *conflict* primarily (e.g. tragedy, with rare exceptions, such as the reconciliation finale in *Hippolytus*), while in others *reconciliation* seems to be of pivotal importance (the repentance of the offender and interpersonal instances of reconciliation are typically involved in the resolutions of comedies; cf. Gutzwiller 2012: 61), as in Aristaenetos' letters.

⁹ A general overview of the depictions of reconciliation in Greek literature can be found in Konstan 2007. On reconciliation in Homer see Lentini 2021 and DuBois 2012. On typical instances of reconciliation in Menander's comedies see Traill 2021 and Gutzwiller 2012. Latin epistolography abounds with depictions of interpersonal conflicts and attempts at reconciliation (esp. Cicero's letters) and the influence of these will be assessed in this paper. On reconciliation in Cicero cf. Evangelou 2020a. The author of this paper attended several conference presentations by this scholar; see Evangelou 2020b, 2022a and 2022b; his (so far unpublished) results and methodology presented there were used in this paper with the author's permission. The 2019 monograph by Van Dijkhuizen (dealing with the motif of reconciliation in English literature) was also particularly helpful in terms of the general research idea and methodology. Since all interpersonal conflicts in Aristaenetos' collection arise from the lovers' emotions (such as love, jealousy, envy, shame, fear [of abandonment], hatred etc.), the monographs on emotions in ancient Greece and in Greek literature were of great importance for the subject matter of this paper; cf. esp. Konstan and Rutter 2003, Konstan 2006, Konstan 2010, Konstan 2011, Ure and Frost 2014. On reconciliation in general cf. also Moloney and Williams 2017 and Raaflaub 2007. Lakoff's analysis of apology as a case study in Discourse Analysis proved to be applicable as well; elements of his scheme of typical ways of apologizing (e.g. “the expression of regret, a claim of responsibility by the wrongdoer, and some potential commitment to future actions that provide appropriate remedies”) have been identified among reconciliation strategies employed by some of Aristaenetos' protagonists (cf. Lakoff 2015: 301).

letters of the collection will be thoroughly analysed with a special focus on the search for elements involved in the process of reconciliation.¹⁰ The prerequisites for reconciliation are: a conflict for which somebody is to blame and an initiator willing to make an attempt at reconciliation, who thus has to choose the method(s) by which to achieve it.¹¹

Furthermore, the author of this paper considers it important to investigate if the gender of the correspondents, protagonists or mediators makes any difference. Several recent papers point to highly unusual gender construction in Aristaenetos' work; assertiveness of women is highlighted throughout the collection, and the men are perceived as weak and emasculated by their devious and cruel female lovers prone to infidelity (Hajdarević 2018 esp. 10–12 and Hajdarević 2019). Therefore, the additional aim of this paper is to provide answers to the following questions: which gender causes conflicts more frequently, who and by which means initiates attempts at reconciliation, how successful are they, and, if mediators are involved, are they male or female?¹²

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2. ATTEMPTS AT RECONCILIATION; EXAMPLES

Twelve letters are relevant for this paper: 1.2, 1.5, 1.14, 1.15, 1.22, 1.24, 1.28, 2.1, 2.3, 2.9, 2.13 and 2.14. The variation in the amount of relevant information in them is interesting: some depict the whole story, starting at the beginning of the conflict and revealing what happens in the end, some focus on the act of reconcil-

¹⁰ The following definition (and understanding) of the term “reconciliation” is implied: “Reconciliation... refers to any scenario in which parties that were formerly in conflict with each other arrive – or attempt to arrive – at some form of peaceful coexistence, and commit themselves – or try to commit themselves – to sustaining this coexistence in the future. Such a state of reconciliation can entail a renewal of friendly relations, or even of love; we might refer to this as ‘thick reconciliation.’ Yet it can also take on a more minimalist character, for example when two parties agree not to pursue their conflicts in the future yet do not seek further rapprochement. This can be seen as a form of ‘thin reconciliation,’ as when spouses forgive each other but still decide to separate. In many of the literary examples which I will examine, the reconciliation is between two characters, one of whom has wronged or been wronged by the other – or at least feels that this is the case” (Van Dijkhuizen 2019: 3).

¹¹ The term “reconciliation” covers the outcome of the process and the process itself (Bloomfield 2006: 6–7).

¹² The initial impression, created by previous analyses of gender roles as displayed in the letters, is that the women might be responsible for most of the conflicts, while the men might be the initiators of most reconciliation attempts.

iation without providing any reasons behind it or revealing who the guilty party is, and sometimes we are provided with a detailed account of the conflict, while the outcome of the attempt at reconciliation is to be guessed at. The relevant examples will be grouped into two categories (A and B), according to the act of reconciliation. Category A consists of the letters presenting successful reconciliation attempts, the letters in which reconciliation has been achieved *and* the lovers are reunited fall into subcategory A1, while subcategory A2 contains letters which depict reconciliation with no reunion.¹³ The letters in category B do not provide the whole story, but all the conditions for successful reconciliation have been met, so there is a chance it could happen.¹⁴

2.1. SUCCESSFUL RECONCILIATION ATTEMPTS – CATEGORY A

Subcategory A1: Reconciliation and reunion

Four letters – 1.2, 1.5, 1.15 and 1.22 – provide us with a full account of the conflict, including the reasons for it and its resolution, while an additional letter, 2.14, informs us only that reconciliation has been achieved.

In letter 1.2, a youth on his way to his lover is approached by two girls fighting for his attention. The plot is “a witty rewriting of the Judgment of Paris” (Bing and Höschele 2014: 106). The youth refuses to choose between them, but the girls are so adamant that in the end he agrees to engage in a threesome. Thus, reconciliation between the girls was forged out of a compromise of sorts – the man stopped resisting and the girls were granted their wishes. On the other hand, the letter abounds with phrases describing physical “violence” and sexual objectification of the man. Cf.: “... [T]hey grabbed me and I was forced (to comply) in a pleasant way.” (1.2.21–22).¹⁵ The context *excludes* the possibility of an actual rape having taken place, but we are led to believe that the sexual climax ends an additional conflict – the one between the genders, depicting the youth as being “dominated” by women. The implication in this case is threefold. Firstly, the story is told from the perspective of its protagonist, who is perhaps trying to reduce his

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¹³ According to Van Dijkhuizen's definition (see footnote 10), examples in subcategory A1 would be considered “thick reconciliation”, and those in A2 “thin reconciliation”; they seem incomplete and resemble cases of mere peaceful coexistence. Cf. the distinction between the terms “reconciliation” and “peaceful coexistence” in Bloomfield 2006: 13–16.

¹⁴ Mazal's edition of Aristaenetus' *Erotic Letters* was used (Mazal 1971). The Greek text of Aristaenetus' passages quoted in this paper can be found in the footnotes. The translations of Greek quotes, as well as all italics used throughout this paper, are my own.

¹⁵ Cf.: “... προσείλκον, ἐγὼ δὲ πῶς ἠδέως ἠναγκαζόμεν.”

responsibility for this sexual escapade. We never find out if the man was on his way to his *hetaira* or if he was about to cheat on his wife. On the other hand, in addition to the *threesome* itself, the phrases describing the girls' desire for the youth and their determination to "take advantage of him" validate his sexual appeal and are a welcome element which he will include in his boasting to a male friend.¹⁶ Finally, the inverted gender roles add a comic twist, and Aristaenetos tends to play with the expected behaviour of men and women, which makes several letters (including this one) far more interesting.¹⁷ Thus, this letter includes two conflicts (the verbal conflict between the girls themselves, and the other, referred to as the "wrestling match", between them and the man), both of which are caused by women. Both instances of reconciliation happen at the same time and in the same manner: through a sexual encounter. The girls' wishes are fulfilled through this reconciliation, and the words coming out of the man's mouth reveal that he wishes to be perceived as a victim. No mediators are involved, but it is the girls who, having failed at their strategy to persuade him into reconciliation verbally, lead him into stopping their bickering physically. Whether this reconciliation was a permanent one remains unrevealed – we do not know if the rivalry between the girls continued. The conflict and its resolution through a sexual encounter are both borrowed from Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* 893–923.¹⁸ Aristaenetos changed the number of the women involved (there were three of them in the *Eccl.*) and turned them into young *hetairai* (in *Eccl.* they are old, probably widows).

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The conflict in letter 1.5 happens between a jealous husband and his wife, who is having fun at a party with somebody else: "There was also a woman there (no need to give her name here) who was 'fished' by Charidemos as she was walking across the square..." (1.5.3–6).¹⁹ Several elements suggest that the woman is prone to affairs and that one would have taken place at the party, had it not been for the presence of her husband.²⁰ She flees the party in panic, worrying her husband might have recognised her cloak. He storms into their home, yelling. The way Aristaenetos phrases the husband's utterance indicates that this is not their first such fight: "...

¹⁶ The *titulus* was lost, but we can suppose that the addressee is the protagonist's male friend. Cf. 1.16, which contains similar boasting of a man about his sexual adventures, and the addressee is indeed male (Hajdarević 2013: 113).

¹⁷ Cf. 1.16, 1.20, 2.3, 2.7, 2.15 and 2.22.

¹⁸ Henderson's edition of *Eccl.* was used (Henderson 2002).

¹⁹ Cf.: "ἐνθα καὶ γυνή τις παρῆν (ὀνόματι γὰρ οὐδὲν δέομαι λέγειν), ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ Χαριδήμος... ἐν ἀγορᾷ προϊούσαν ἰδὼν ἀγκιστρῆει..."

²⁰ In Greek society it was considered scandalous for a married woman to be at a party with other men (Dover 2002: 21–23). This is why the sender is reluctant to mention her name (see 1.5.3).

my marital bed will not be disgraced without punishment *anymore!*" (1.5.21–24).²¹ Although it seems that the row might escalate into physical violence, the woman was sly enough to stop along the way and "lend" her cloak to a neighbour, who then timely shows up and pretends to return it. The use of deception seems to be an efficient strategy in this case (the two women's collaboration ends with the adulteress being provided with an alibi), with the mediator having a crucial role in the process of reconciliation. The plan is actually so successful that the husband ends up apologising for his "false" accusations, thinking that the real mediator is someone else, i.e. that "some benevolent god has sent her (sc. the neighbour) as a saviour" (1.5.34–35).²² This particular reconciliation seems superficial and unlikely to last: considering the gullibility of the husband, as well as the wife's deceptiveness and absence of remorse, it feels like the road is paved for more adultery and perhaps another conflict (possibly with a similar outcome). The portrayal of conflict and reconciliation in this letter was not taken directly from any known source, but certain elements *were* borrowed. The use of *female deception* as a strategy for the resolution of the conflict was probably inspired by Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Assemblywomen*, and Greek mimes (cf. Drago 2007: 613). Numerous intertextual links with Menanders' *Samia* exist as well (cf. Arnott 1973: 203). There are several other similar portrayals of female adultery and *tricked husbands* in Aristaenetos' collection (e.g. letters 1.22 and 2.22; cf. the analysis of letter 1.22 below). On the other hand, the analysis revealed that these are extremely rare in other collections of this subgenre (Alciphron's 3.33 being a notable exception).

Only in letter 1.15 do we find a depiction of a *political* conflict: the towns of Miletus and Myus have been at war for years and Aphrodite decides to interfere. She is both the initiator and the mediator of reconciliation.²³ The method of reconciliation is mentioned in the text: she makes the king of Miletus fall in love with a girl from Myus, whereupon he does everything in his power to get her into his bed. Reconciliation happens verbally – the woman asks her husband for peace as a wedding gift (cf. 1.15.49–52). This reconciliation is likely to be long-lasting. The king and the girl are Aphrodite's mere pawns: she comes up with a plan of increasing the seductive powers of the woman, thus making the king fall in love with her, which reaches a climax in the sexual act, and he grants his wife her wishes.

²¹ Cf.: "... τὴν ἐμὴν εὐνήν οὐποτε χαίρουσα καθυβρίσεις."

²² Cf.: "... θεός τις εὐμενής εἰς κοινήν σωτηρίαν φιλανθρώπως ἀπέσταλκε ταύτην..."

²³ The reconciliation itself is mentioned in the text (Cf.: "τούτους Ἀφροδίτη κατέλεοῦσα διήλλαξεν" in 1.15.21–22). The sender in 2.1 is also the initiator and the mediator. However, 1.15 is the only case of a deity assuming this role in the collection.

Several other historical or fictional/mythological military conflicts between Greek *poleis* were sometimes portrayed in Greek literature (in addition to historiography, obviously), especially in tragedies (see Konstan 2007: 191–205). This particular one is mentioned in Callimachus' *Aetia* and Plutarch's *Mulierum virtutes* (see Drago 2007: 274–276), but only Aristaenetos emphasized the *sexual core* of the reconciliation process. This can be considered his original contribution to the story (and the reconciliation). The emotions of the female protagonist are not mentioned in this letter at all, so the sexual encounter and the consequent marriage might be seen as this girl's willing self-sacrifice for the benefit of her city, just like those of other women (although not as severe) in similar military contexts, e.g. Iphigenia in *IA* or Heracles' daughter Macaria in *Children of Heracles*.²⁴ These might have been used as models in this case as well.

A *hetaira* in 1.22 decides to teach her arrogant lover a lesson: she and her slave/procurer invent a new lover for the *hetaira*, thus arousing jealousy towards this fictional rival and the fear of abandonment in her lover.²⁵ The purposefully initiated argument results in the correction of the lover's behaviour. Since it was exactly attention and appreciation that the *hetaira* craved, reconciliation takes place quickly: "... [S]he *reconciled* with the youth." (1.22.43).²⁶ The quality of the relationship has reached a new level – the *hetaira* has got what she wanted and the youth has learned his lesson, so this reconciliation may well last. The depiction of both the conflict and the reconciliation is somewhat of a mixture: several models were used. In Lucian's *Dial. Mer.* 8 manipulation and provoking jealousy are presented as means of reigniting interest in lovers and as reconciliation methods.²⁷ Moreover, this letter forms a thematic diptych with 1.5, whose correspondents are also Alciphron and Lucian (see the analysis above). In both letters, a woman regains the attention of her lover with the help from a female accomplice. Thus, Aristaenetos is using his own previous depiction of reconciliation. Furthermore,

²⁴ "These stories of human sacrifice often begin with the gods" and, as in this case, their will does not have to be communicated to the maidens (Traill 2021: 41). Just as tragic heroines achieve public recognition – κλέος and τιμή – so does the maiden in 1.15 (Pieria), as we find out from the closing sentence of the letter.

²⁵ The sly plan is concocted by two women, as in 1.5; the protagonist of 1.5, however, is married, and the one in 1.22 is a *hetaira*.

²⁶ Cf.: "... πρὸς τὸν νέον ξυνέβη ταχύ". Both συμβάσεως (1.22.36) and ξυνέβη ταχύ (1.22.43) are *double entendres*: allusions refer to reconciliation and the sexual act prompted by the desire of the woman (cf. 1.22.43–45).

²⁷ These parallels are expected; the letter's sender is Lucian himself. Throughout this paper Macleod's edition of Lucian's *Dialogues* was used (Macleod 1961).

numerous intertextual links with Menander exist:²⁸ the protagonists' names are reminiscent of his comedies (Drago 1997: 179–186), and in *Perikeiromene* jealousy because of (non-existing) infidelity on the part of the woman and the actions of the mediator result in a very similar correction of the youth's behaviour and the couple's reconciliation (see Traill 2021 and Gutzwiller 2012: 68–72, cf. the similarities, but also some important differences in the treatment of the reconciliation motif in this letter and in Menander in Hajdarević 2024).

Letter 2.14 offers no insight into the conflict at all, which makes it different from all the previous examples.²⁹ The sender blames unnamed envious conspirators: "Those who envy our love rejoiced in vain and their attempt at machinations was fruitless" (2.14.5–7).³⁰ Is she merely projecting her own guilt onto someone else? A similar strategy of blaming unidentified "other people" for one's own doings can be found elsewhere in the epistolary genre, e.g. in Cicero's letters to Crassus and Pompey (Evangelou 2020: 113–114). These letters might have been Aristaenetos' models. Even if we think the women might be telling the truth, the names, number and gender of the guilty parties are unspecified,³¹ as is their connection to this couple (rivals or former partners?). What is also unknown is how this reconciliation came about. The sender states that the gods of love interfered.³² The letter describes the state of affairs *after* the conflict and once the reconciliation has already taken place. The woman dares not believe that the conflict has been resolved until the man makes a gesture with his finger (see 2.14.16–17), which finally convinces her of his affection. So, we never find out the reason for the conflict, we have no idea who started it – one or several parties – or whether someone's envy is the actual reason for the temporary coldness between the lovers. Furthermore, although the sender considers Eros and Aphrodite to be the mediators, we cannot know for certain if there were any *actual* mediators.³³ Nor do we have any insight into the

²⁸ Throughout this paper Arnott's edition of Menander's comedies was used (Arnott 1979–2000).

²⁹ The sender summarises the reconciliation and reunion with her lover, which seems redundant (as we would expect the incident to be retold to a third party).

³⁰ Cf.: "μάτην ἐπέχαιρον οἱ βασκαίνοντες ἡμῖν τῆς φιλίας, καὶ εἰς κενὸν αὐτοῖς ἀπέβη τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς ὁ σκοπός."

³¹ Although 2.14.5 reads οἱ βασκαίνοντες, it does not necessarily refer to a number of men; the male gender would have been used even if a number (or a couple) of people involved were of different sexes.

³² See "Ἔρως καὶ Ἀφροδίτη" in 2.14.2 and "χάρις τοῖς φίλοις θεοῖς" in 2.14.18.

³³ The notion of Eros and Aphrodite being the mediators could be considered a figure of speech (meaning "our love has brought us back together"). I thank Gabriel Evangelou for pointing this out to me.

methods and strategies employed during the reconciliation process. The sender regards both the conflict and the reconciliation as results of external forces. The reader is under the impression (purposefully?) that the lovers were mere objects of turbulent events. There are two reasons to question the sincerity of the woman's words. In letter 1.5 (discussed above), in which the husband also attributes the process of reconciliation to a "benevolent god" (see 1.5.34), the actual mediator is a friend of his lying wife. Since we are dealing with a carefully devised deceit in letter 1.5, this one might be following suit.³⁴ Also, the impression we are left with, that everything happened without the woman's will and culpability, reminds us overwhelmingly of letter 1.2, in which the sender attempts to portray himself as a victim (cf. the analysis of letter 1.2 above). Since the woman is obviously pleased with the reconciliation and since we also witness the joyous gesture of the man when he encounters her for the first time after the conflict, there is a feeling of lasting potential for this reconciliation.

Subcategory A2: Reconciliation without a reunion

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In letters 1.24, 1.28 and 2.9 the senders declare they will no longer invest any time or emotions in relationships they are not happy with and thus they choose to end them. This means that the conflict has also ended, whether it was between the lovers themselves (as in 1.24 and 2.9) or between one of the lovers and their rival (1.28). Contrary to the letters in subcategory A1, where reconciliation entails a reunion between the lovers, these letters show reconciliation only as a means of removing the conflict and the negative emotions associated with it, but the reunion never takes place.

In letter 1.24 a *hetaira* is admonished by a group of lovers because she repeatedly has sex with only one of them. Despite their jealousy directed at the rival in question, the men are not aggressive but seek to end the conflict through communication: "Tell us clearly, would you rather have him instead of all of us? We will not stand in the way of the one you love." (1.24.17–19).³⁵ The *hetaira* makes it clear that she loves only one person and begs the others for forgiveness. The letter defines the reason for the conflict and reveals who the guilty party is: from the men's perspective, the "offender" is the *hetaira* with monogamous tendencies. The method of

³⁴ There is also a substantial difference: in 1.5 *the victim* of the deception is under the impression that gods were involved, and in 2.14 it is *the female deceiver* who could be using gods as a way to disguise her own scheming.

³⁵ Cf.: "λέγε σαφέστερον, εἰ τοῦτον ἔχειν ἀντὶ πάντων ἐθέλεις· οὐ γὰρ ἀντιστατοῦμεν τῷ ποθομένῳ."

reconciliation is direct and verbal, and mediators are not used. The context leads us to conclude that the reconciliation has a lasting potential; the group of men have stated their condition for the resolution of the conflict with the *hetaira* (i.e. their withdrawal from the game), and the condition is met (she is in love). It is worth noting that this reconciliation takes the *hetaira's* relationship to a whole new level, as it becomes monogamous from her side (as well).³⁶ No other model for the reconciliation presented in this case can be found except in Aristaenetos himself. The conflict is a reversal of the one in 2.13 (see the analysis of 2.13 below), and this diptych presents the paradox of relationships with *hetairas*: both exclusivity and the lack of it can be expected from them.

One of *hetaira's* clients writes the letter 1.28 to another, complaining about how difficult she is. She ignores or rejects him one day and she is interested in him the next. Several letters of the collection mention similar behaviour displayed by *hetairai* to keep or provoke interest in their lovers (e.g. 1.17 and 1.22): it serves as a means of seduction,³⁷ which leads one to assume that the behaviour of this particular *hetaira* was deliberate in order to achieve a similar effect. It is evident that she has crossed the line,³⁸ so this turbulent relationship is over – the breakup in Alciphron's 2.6 could be the model for this. At the same time, the rivalry between the sender and the addressee, which was the obstacle to their friendship, is over too. Reconciliation with a friend is *not* the main reason for ending the relationship with the *hetaira*, but it is surely a welcome benefit. At the very end of the letter, the sender expresses his good-hearted wishes for the friend to be happier than he was as her lover,³⁹ which sounds sincere. However, there is a reference to the *hetaira's* problematic nature in the same sentence, leading one to read the ending of the letter as a warning: "I wish you happiness. You are going to need it."⁴⁰ Therefore, there are two intertwined conflicts in the letter. The first is the one between the sender and his (former) lover, where the reasons for the conflict and the culprit behind it are clearly defined (the *hetaira's* behaviour). The second conflict is the

³⁶ Monogamous *hetairai* existed both in reality and in Greek literature; e.g. Menander's long-lasting relationship with Glykera, depicted in Alciphron's 4.18 and 4.19 was famous.

³⁷ Pretending to be in love is also a successful seduction tactic (e.g. 2.13), as well as rejection (1.21, 2.16 and 2.20; see also the analysis of 2.1 further below). However, several letters depict clients in love with *hetairai* who are pleasant (e.g. 1.1, 1.3, and 1.12). It is possible that the author thought of these differences in the behaviour of *hetairai* as indicative of *the phases* in their relationships – from initial bliss to boredom (of either lover).

³⁸ Cf. "Thus she... managed to push me away..." ("ὅθεν... με λειπὸν... ἀποτρέπει") in 1.28.21–23.

³⁹ See "... καὶ γένοιτο φίλος μακρῶ γε μᾶλλον εὐτυχέστερος ἐμοῦ" in 1.28.28–29.

⁴⁰ The notion of a wicked *hetaira* as a worthless reward is probably a paraphrase of Alciphron's 4.8.37–8.

one between the sender and his friend/rival, and the reason for this conflict (from the perspective of the other man) is the sender's relationship with the *hetaira*. The mending of the former relationship is out of the question (a reunion is not even planned), and the subsequent breakup will enable the reconciliation between the two friends, which is the *actual* focus of the letter. The method of reconciliation is simply ending the relationship with the *hetaira*. There were no mediators and the letter served as a hand proffered, as it was used to communicate the sender's decision for ending the relationship. This make-up letter has its direct opposite within the collection: Aristaenetus might have used the aggressive letter 2.6 as his model here (obviously, he chose to *reverse* the lover's reaction).⁴¹

In 2.9 we find out about the sender's broken heart: his *hetaira* has obviously left him for another lover, and he writes the letter to tell her he is over it. The reconciliation is not a reunion, but the letter's tone is quite friendly, which even the sender finds unusual under the circumstances: "So help me, Zeus, would anyone write kinder (sc. than me) after being a victim of so much injustice?" (2.9.18–19).⁴² The resolution of this conflict is based upon Alciphron's 4.8, but the possibility of the additional influence of Aristaenetus' 2.16 should not be dismissed.⁴³ A more serious conflict is in fact avoided because of the mild nature of the sender, who withdraws, and his friendly tone seems sincere.⁴⁴

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⁴¹ Both letters are sent by men to their rivals, but, unlike the friendly sender in 1.28, the one in 2.6 means to insult: he makes fun of the rival's origins (2.6.4–5) and physical appearance (2.6.10) and considers the new lovers punished by being in a relationship with each other (2.6.9). Several reasons could account for his aggressive tone: he did not withdraw willingly from the unhappy relationship with the *hetaira* (as did the sender of 1.28), and friendship between the rivals is not mentioned, but the rival's insults are (cf. 2.6.12–16). Letter 1.17 can also be considered a kind of pair to 1.28. In both letters the rivals are friends in a relationship with the same difficult *hetaira*. However, they react differently: the sender in 1.17 decides to continue trying, whereas the one in 1.28 has given up.

⁴² Cf.: "τίς ἂν οὖν, πρὸς Διός, εὐφημότερον ἐπέστειλεν ἀδικούμενος".

⁴³ There are both similarities and differences between this letter and 2.16. Both are an exchange between partners, who comment on the "affair" of the other. While 2.9 was sent by an abandoned lover, willing to accept the *hetaira*'s lack of exclusivity peacefully, 2.16 was written by an enraged *hetaira* who leaves her lover so that she would not be left herself (her letter is filled with insults directed at her competitor; cf. 2.16.13–14). Aristaenetus seems to have thought of these letters as a diptych, since they end in exactly the same manner (cf. ἔρωσο in 2.9.17 and 2.16.25), aggressively alluding to the end of both further communication and the relationship. However, we must ask ourselves if this was written in order to provoke reaction and regret, i.e. if this could be a trick the senders employ in order to produce the opposite psychological effect.

⁴⁴ The sender mentions a possibility of a god's punishment for her wrongdoing; it might be "... a calculated attempt... to both scare the girl and present himself in a good light" (Bing and Höschle 2014: 131).

2.2. RECONCILIATION AS A POSSIBILITY; CATEGORY B

There are four letters (1.14, 2.1, 2.3 and 2.13) which share this feature: the correspondents involved try to reach reconciliation, but since the collection does not contain replies to these letters, we never find out if it is achieved. Still, the circumstances leave us under the impression that reconciliation is a possibility.

In letter 1.14 the conflict is about the method of seduction. A man is trying to seduce a *hetaira* by playing an instrument, while she wants money (cf. 1.14.2–3) and suggests he give her more of it: "I know of no other proof of true love more important than gold" (1.14.17–18).⁴⁵ Her words, naturally, imply a threat that if he does not comply, she might turn to more generous clients. We know nothing of the youth's reaction to this ultimatum, but at least he was duly informed, so he has a chance to adapt accordingly. The lack of a client's generosity (or his poverty) is a common issue in relationships with *hetairai* throughout Greek literature, as well as in fictional epistolography. Compare Aristaenetos' letter 1.23 or warnings similar to this one in Alciphron's 4.9 and 4.15 or Aelian's 8. These letters probably inspired the idea for the conflict presented in this letter.

Letter 2.1 is the only example in the collection where the sender is also the mediator, trying to end the fight between a *hetaira* and his acquaintance.⁴⁶ It was not by accident that Aristaenetos chose Aelian to be the fictional sender of this letter – if anyone should be asked to mediate by means of letters, it should be an epistolographer, experienced in the art of letter writing and rhetoric.⁴⁷ Hence, this reconciliation happens verbally – by persuasion – and carefully selected and thematically grouped arguments are used. The mediator opens with the mention of the youth's repentance for some offence (2.1.4–7),⁴⁸ followed by a kind of *captatio benevolentiae*: he says that the *hetaira* is right to be angry (cf. 2.1.10–11), and then continues to praise her charms (especially 2.1.14–15, but also 2.1.37–38). Once the addressee's heart has been melted, the sender proceeds to give advice: he approves of the *hetaira*'s shifty behaviour (when used in moderation) as a strategy of seduction (2.1.19–37), but also warns her about her approaching old age, reminding her that not many people will be interested in her then (cf. 2.1.40–52 and

⁴⁵ Cf.: "χρυσίου γὰρ μείζον τεκμήριον τοῦ κομιδῆ φιλεῖν οὐκ οἶδα ἕτερον."

⁴⁶ There is no mention of anybody's asking for help to which the mediator responded and subsequently wrote the letter. It is clearly stated that the letter is a means by which reconciliation is to take place (see 2.1.1–2). Also, the sender is aware of his role as a suppliant; see 2.1.17–18.

⁴⁷ Aelian (2nd or 3rd century AD) was a rhetoric teacher and the author of *Letters of Farmers* (cf. Benner and Fobes 1949: 344–249 about Aelian and his *Letters*).

⁴⁸ Probably sexual relations with another *hetaira* or the lack of attention towards this one.

56–57). The letter ends with a repeated request for the youth to be forgiven and a proclamation that the conflict can come to an end once all three parties involved in the reconciliation process get together (2.1.59–60). A positive outcome of this mediation seems probable because the arguments presented are so carefully chosen and arranged.⁴⁹ An intertextual analysis reveals that Aristaenetos' depictions of conflict and reconciliation are influenced by several models. The *reconciliation methods* presented in the letter are similar to those in Pliny's letter to Sabinianus (9.21): both Aelian and Pliny act as supplicants on behalf of youths who made unspecified mistakes and regret them deeply (they even cry). Furthermore, in both cases the addressees' anger towards the youth is perceived as justified and both senders rely on the mild tempers of the addressees as "allies" who would help in ensuring that reconciliation takes place.⁵⁰ Obviously, the themes of the letters differ. Pliny's letter has nothing to do with sex, since it is sent to a friend (cf. the analysis of Pliny's letter in Konstan 2010: 87). The influence of Menander is evident as well. The letter opens with a quote from *Epitrepontes*, and plot parallels can be drawn with *Perikeiromene*: a youth makes a mistake, his lover is angry and a male mediator has to intervene by the method of persuasion. Pataikos' persuasion technique used for the mediation in *Perik* (see Traill 2021: 48–50 and Gutzwiller 2012: 69–70) bears obvious similarities to Aelian's in this case. Both mediators consider the women's behaviours justified, blaming the other side for the conflict. The comparison of the descriptions of the youths' despair and repentance reveal parallels as well. Aristaenetos' depiction of the *conflict* was probably influenced by letters 7 and 8 from Aelian's collection; a youth's offence is mentioned (in Aristaenetos' letter it remains unspecified, while Aelian's courtesan is angry at her lover because he keeps sending her cheap presents), there are various intertextual links, including similar connotations of the women's names (see the intertextual analysis in Drago 2007: 415).

The female sender in 2.3 also turns to a third party for assistance. An imbalance between sexual appetites is presented in this case: the husband works too hard and he is seen as being responsible for the conflict. His sexually neglected wife turns to her cousin for mediation,⁵¹ leaving the choice of the appropriate method

⁴⁹ Note that five (of six) Lakoff's types of apology are present in this letter. The mediator communicates the offender's: a) expression of regret, b) claim of responsibility for the quarrel, c) admittance of guilt, d) awareness that the *hetaira* is hurt, and e) promise to mend his behaviour (cf. Lakoff 2015: 315). The sheer number of (carefully crafted) apologetic elements makes us believe that this letter will serve its purpose.

⁵⁰ Walsh's edition of Pliny's *Letters* was used (Walsh 2009).

⁵¹ The cousin in question was also once her matchmaker, but obviously not a very good one.

of reconciliation to her. The imbalance between sexual appetites as a reason for conflict is borrowed from Aristophanes' *Nubes* 49–52 (the husband's name, Strepsiades, is taken from that comedy as well), while the theme of the dissatisfied wife probably comes from New Comedy, e.g. *Plokion* (as suggested by Arnott 1973: 203). The idea of including a female mediator is probably Aristaenetos' (women turn to other women for help in 1.5 and 1.22 as well). We do not find out whether reconciliation is ever achieved and whether the problem is solved. The sender mentions the possibility of finding a lover: "... [A]nother rhetor will handle my case." (2.3.13–14).⁵² However, the fact that she engages a mediator proves that she would prefer to solve the problem and reconcile with her husband.⁵³

It seems that reconciliation is also a possibility in 2.13. The culprit and the reason for the conflict are defined: the *hetaira's* lover is angry because she is sleeping with other men. All the effort put into this reconciliation is her own. In the apology letter, she reminds her lover that, by definition, her trade includes having sexual relationships with several men and quickly adds that she is not sincere with the others: "Since I am a *hetaira* and sleep with men for money, I *pretend* to love those I sleep with so as to entice their desire more" (2.13.15–17).⁵⁴ The persuasive potential of the letter is intensified by gestures that suggest "redemption" in order to melt her lover's cold heart. The *hetaira* declares her love for him (cf. esp. 2.13.25–26), she mentions that she cried because of him (cf. 2.13.9), that she lost sleep over the affair (2.13.10), put his letter in her bosom (2.13.10–12), enclosed tears of regret in her letter (2.13.19–20 and 28) and sighed and sobbed while writing it (2.13.27–29). She promises to change and to give up other clients in order to keep him. Since the lack of exclusivity is the only problem in this relationship, the pre-conditions for a successful reconciliation are present. Interestingly, the situation in this letter is *initially* the exact opposite of the one in 1.24, where a *hetaira* decides to have only one lover and reject the others (see the analysis of this

⁵² Cf.: "ἕτερος ῥήτωρ τῆς ἐμῆς ἐπιμελήσεται δίκης."

⁵³ This letter shares something with 2.12: inverted gender roles. Namely, the wife in 2.3 is interested in sex, while her husband is not. The wife in 2.12, on the other hand, completely breaks the norms of typical female behaviour and her husband might even be a victim of domestic violence (cf. 2.12.11–12). The finale of the letters supports the assumption that they were written as a diptych: the woman in 2.3 plans to fight for her marriage, while the husband in 2.12 plans to get a divorce and expel his wife from his house (cf. the analysis of gender roles in these letters in Hajdarević 2019: 32). Letter 2.12 is closely related to the topic of this paper because it mentions how much (fruitless) effort was put into trying to change the behaviour of the woman and to stop fighting with her.

⁵⁴ Cf.: "ὡς ἑταῖρα διὰ κέρδος ὀμιλοῦσα τοῖς νέοις ὑποκρίνομαι τῶν συνόντων ἑρᾶν, ὅπως ἂν μείζονα τούτοις ἐρεθίσω τὸν πόθον."

letter above). However, three interesting parallels can be drawn: a) in both letters the women proclaim love only to the recipient of the letter,⁵⁵ b) letter 1.24 depicts a monogamous relationship with a *hetaira* and the relationship in 2.13 is going to become monogamous, and c) both letters contain apologies: in 1.24.30–31 the *hetaira* begs a group of potential lovers for forgiveness for rejecting them and the one in 2.13 apologises for *not* doing that. Even though the senders are different women, it is highly likely that Aristaenetus intended for these letters to be perceived as a diptych and that we should try to imagine such conflicts between exclusivity and income happening in the course of any *hetaira's* career.

3. INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

Once all the relevant letters were analysed in detail, all the data was organized into a table (see Table 1 below). The following questions are to be addressed: which gender is to blame for conflicts more often and which is more likely to initiate reconciliation, who the mediators are, and, finally, how successful an instance of reconciliation is and whether it has potential to last.

Table 1: An overview of the results

The element of the reconciliation process		Subcategory A1	Subcategory A2	Category B
The person responsible for the conflict	Male	1.22	1.28	1.14, 2.1, 2.3
	Female	1.5, 1.2	1.24, 2.9	2.13
	Unknown	1.15, 2.14	–	–
The initiator of reconciliation	Male	1.22	1.24, 1.28, 2.9	2.1
	Female	1.2, 1.5, 1.15	–	1.14, 2.3, 2.13
	Unknown	2.14	–	–
The mediator	Male	–	–	2.1
	Female	1.5, 1.15, 1.22	–	2.3
	Unknown	2.14	–	–
Positive outcome of the reconciliation		All	All	Unknown

⁵⁵ However, their sincerity is quite questionable.

The lasting potential of the reconciliation	Lasting	1.15, 1.22, 2.14	Lasting	Unknown
	Temporary	1.5		
	Unknown	1.2		

Surprisingly, the results reveal that both men and women were equally to blame for the conflicts (five examples of each). The women depicted in the collection cause conflicts mostly by lack of exclusivity (1.5, 2.9 and 2.13), sometimes also by being jealous of each other (1.2), or by being picky about their clients (1.24). Men cause conflicts by being stingy (1.14), by not showing interest in sex with their partners (2.3), by cheating (2.1), by disinterested behaviour (1.22) and by being jealous of another man's relationship with a *hetaira* (see the rivalry between friends in 1.28). The women cause conflicts which tend to be resolved, with or without a reunion (four examples), while the men more often cause conflicts which are only *likely* to be resolved (see Category B).

The women are slightly more likely to take initiative and put effort into reconciliation (six instances compared to five).⁵⁶ Their initiative is stronger in the letters which also involve a reunion of the couples, originally placed into subcategory A1 (1.2, 1.5, and 1.15), while all the instances of reconciliation which do not include reunions (subcategory A2) are initiated by men (see 1.24, 1.28 and 2.9). Moreover, men also write reconciliation letters to their rivals (see 1.28), which is something women are never shown to do, and this is directly related to the number of relationships with the *hetairai* depicted in the collection: it makes little sense for *hetairai* to be friends with their female rivals or with their former clients, but they are certainly interested in hanging on to their love and income. So, in general, the men tend to be slightly more successful at achieving reconciliation than the women (four successful examples versus three), but the women are more skilful and motivated when it comes to repairing *sexual* relationships.⁵⁷

The mediators are female in four cases (1.5, 1.15, 1.22 and 2.3). Aphrodite, of course, acts of her own accord (1.15), while in the other examples the mediators were approached by women. A man is a mediator only in letter 2.1 and he is

⁵⁶ There are instances where men put *a lot of effort* into reconciliation, but their success is highly unlikely, so such examples were not included in the analysis (cf. 1.17 and 2.12).

⁵⁷ It is very difficult to assess the existence or the level of *forgiveness* in the instances of reconciliation within the collection; in antiquity (and in Greek and Latin literature) forgiveness does not necessarily accompany reconciliation and it was usually not emphasised as being crucial for the reconciliation process or viewed in the same moral sense as it is today (see Konstan 2011: 17–30 and Konstan 2010: 22–90).

helping another man. So, it seems that both men and women turn to their own gender when requiring mediators.⁵⁸ Women are far more successful in this role (3:0). We know nothing about the results of mediation in the case of one female and one male mediator, but success seems the most probable outcome in both cases (cf. 2.1 and 2.3).

As for the letters in subcategory A1, one permanent reconciliation was achieved by a man (1.22) and one by a goddess (Aphrodite in 1.15). The reconciliation in 2.14 is also potentially long-lasting, but we do not know to whom to ascribe this success (probably to a woman). One instance of reconciliation, ensured by a woman, does not give an impression of being long-lived (cf. 1.5). In subcategory A2 all instances of reconciliation have the potential of being permanent (they are all achieved by men). The realisation and the lasting potential of instances of reconciliation in category B can only be guessed at.

Interesting cases are the ones in which reconciliation efforts are accompanied by letters: see 1.28, 2.1, 2.9 and 2.13. In 1.28 a man makes peace with his rival and in 2.1 a letter is the mediator's method of persuasion. In 2.9 a man forgives a *hetaira* who was entertaining other clients as well, while 2.13 is written by a *hetaira*, begging her lover to forgive her. In two instances, men manage to achieve reconciliation through letter-writing (1.28 and 2.9). Since the collection does not provide replies to the letters, the outcomes of the two mediations which include writing letters (2.1 and 2.13) are only to be guessed at, but they seem to have been successful.⁵⁹

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4. CONCLUSION

The focus of the research was on 12 letters of the collection, since they highlight reconciliation as a motif and as Aristaenetos' narrative tool. These letters are: 1.2, 1.5, 1.14, 1.15, 1.22, 1.24, 1.28, 2.1, 2.3, 2.9, 2.13 and 2.14. The letters were grouped into two categories, A and B. Category A includes the letters presenting successful

⁵⁸ The man in 1.17 also turns to a male mediator for help (the success is doubtful). In 1.15.62–63 there is mention of unsuccessful male mediators who were also probably employed by other men.

⁵⁹ In other collections of the subgenre, letters usually provide us with insufficient information about the possibility of reconciliation, although they aim at eliciting *desired behaviour* (cf. Alciphron's 1.4, 16, 1.11, 2.8, 2.13, 2.22, 2.31 etc. or the vast majority of Philostratos' letters). A notable exception is Alciphron's 4.8, an amicable reconciliation letter sent by a former lover, comparable to Aristaenetos' 2.9. Some models for Aristaenetos' successful reconciliation letters are to be found outside the subgenre, e.g. Pliny's 9.21 and Cicero's letters to Crassus and Pompey (their influence on Aristaenetos is suggested in the analyses of 2.1 and 2.14; see above).

reconciliation processes: subcategory A1 encompasses five letters in which the lovers are both reconciled and reunited (1.2, 1.5, 1.15, 1.22 and 2.14), while the three letters in subcategory A2 depict instances of reconciliation without reunions (1.24, 1.28 and 2.9). Category B includes four letters in which reconciliation was not achieved, but there is a real chance it could have happened, since all the conditions for an effective reconciliation process were met (1.14, 2.1, 2.3 and 2.13).⁶⁰

As expected, sex is often the cause of conflicts; people choose other lovers (which is what most letters are about) or refuse to have sex. Other problems are closely related: jealousy, not showing interest or not paying enough money for a *hetaira's* services. Reconciliation is more frequently initiated by the person who is also to blame for the conflict. Still, in several examples, reconciliation is initiated by individuals who have been wronged (1.28, 2.3, 2.9) or by the mediators (Aphrodite in 1.15, the sender in 2.1). The common method of reconciliation is that of verbal persuasion, often accompanied by an apology or admission of guilt, suggestions of punishment, promises to correct one's behaviour and professions of love (cf. esp. 2.13 and 2.1). The arguments are most carefully presented in 2.1. Interestingly enough, sex can also occasionally be a means of reconciliation (1.2 and 1.15) or a way to cement it (2.14). Naturally, reconciliation is often accompanied by joy of the reconciled lovers or friends, and in one instance reconciliation is confirmed by a gesture (the raising of a finger in 2.14.16–17). Reconciliation as a term is even mentioned in several passages of the collection: cf. *συμβάσεως* (1.22.36) and *ξυνέβη ταχύ* (1.22.43) or *ἀφορμὴν εἰς σύμβασιν* (1.15.21–22).

The letters of the collection depict instances of reconciliation that could be long-lasting (half of the studied examples),⁶¹ but also those that will not last (1.5), while in some cases reconciliation appears possible (1.14, 2.1, 2.3 and 2.13). We are left frustrated by the latter category because the author does not provide replies to the letters, so the situations are left unresolved. For this reason, such examples are the most interesting. In several cases, the letters are used as a means to aid reconciliation (cf. 1.28, 2.1, 2.9 and 2.13), and their success is relatively high: reconciliation is accomplished through two letters (their senders are men), and in the other examples reconciliation remains a possibility. In 2.1 the mediator chooses persuasion via a letter as his method.

⁶⁰ In this paper, only the letters in which reconciliation has been achieved or is at least possible have been analysed in detail. Naturally, there are numerous letters in which reconciliation never happens (1.7 and 2.20) or it is made clear that what could ensue is an *escalation of the conflict* (1.17, 1.25, 2.7 and 2.12), whereas in some the conflict is avoided at the last minute; as a result, there is no need for reconciliation in these cases (see 2.15 or 2.22).

⁶¹ Also, reconciliation sometimes improves the overall quality of the relationship (cf. 1.22 or 1.24).

The analysis revealed that most of Aristaenetos' depictions of reconciliation were actually *borrowed* from previous authors. This fact should not be considered a flaw of Aristaenetos' collection. Both intertextuality and *imitatio cum variatione* were common features of Greek fictional epistolography (and of Hellenistic and Imperial literature in general); exploitation of previous authors "was a mark rather of sincere homage than of plagiaristic deceitfulness" (Arnott 1982: 303). Menander and Lucian were extensively used. Given the plot parallels and these authors' frequent choice of *hetairai* as protagonists, the result is not at all surprising. Echoes of (and quotations from) Menander's depictions of conflict and reconciliation in *Perikeiromene* and *Epitrepontes* were found in as many as three letters in Aristaenetos' collection – 1.5, 1.22 and 2.1. The correspondents of these are Lucian (sender in 1.22, addressee in 1.5), Alciphron (sender in 1.5, addressee in 1.22) and Aelian (sender in 2.1). It is safe to assume that the intertextual links these letters establish with Menander prove Aristaenetos' awareness of the importance of New Comedy as a source for both fictional epistolography and Lucian's dialogues. Other important models for his depiction of reconciliation are Alciphron, Aelian, Cicero and Pliny. Interestingly, Aristaenetos often "quotes" himself as well; several letters can be found to have their own "pairs" and antitheses within the collection. This should not be perceived as evidence of the author's lack of imagination. Since all other authors use quotes from their own literary oeuvre when they appear as senders/addressees of Aristaenetos' letters, it makes perfect sense that Aristaenetos would do the same (through the voices of his fictional protagonists). It is important to stress that the author's focus on lovers' petty quarrels and his frequent use of reconciliation as a narrative tool represent a novelty within the subgenre; the conflicts in other collections of the type (if portrayed at all) usually revolve around *existential matters*. The difference can be easily explained: only Aristaenetos chose erotica as the central theme of his collection, while the other epistolographers sporadically include erotic letters in theirs.

There are some gender-related features in the instances of reconciliation depicted in the letters. Aristaenetos' attempt at gender ventriloquism was successful; the reconciliation strategies and methods of his male and female protagonists differ. Although the culprits for the conflicts are men and women to an equal degree and although both genders cheat on or reject their partners equally, women seem to be more prone to cheating when it comes to married couples.⁶² While women tend

⁶² We lack information on the marital status of many clients of the *hetairai*, so we have no idea if they are cheating on their wives. Also, the frequency of female adultery in this epistolary collection should not be defined as a sign of an increase in this type of sexual behaviour in Aristaenetos' time.

to put more effort into reconciliation, men are generally more successful at it. All instances of reconciliation (with either former lovers or rivals) which do not lead to reunion are initiated by men, while women are more skilled at reigniting sexual relationships. Since the women of the collection are mostly *hetairai*, they are not interested in friendships, but are primarily trying to find a profitable source of income. In several letters the mediator is employed as a go-between (both sexes choose one of their own gender). In two cases the protagonists believe gods to be their mediators (1.5 and 2.14), and in one case the mediator actually is a deity (1.15). Female mediators are more numerous (the ratio is 4:1). Their mediation is successful in three cases,⁶³ and their typical method includes deception (1.5 and 1.22),⁶⁴ while male mediators try their luck with persuasion (2.1).⁶⁵ The women are represented as smart and devious. Their attempts at reconciliation are often insincere and some kind of humiliation of the men is involved: e.g. they conceal their infidelities by scheming (usually aided by female accomplices), their interest in their lovers is usually money-related (in the case of the *hetairai*), and their apologies and tears are merely a means of manipulation. Therefore, the depictions of reconciliation initiated and achieved by women make us sympathise with their naïve "victims" and they contribute to the overall misogynistic atmosphere of the collection.

Aristaenetus depicts a wide variety of possible outcomes and many differences in the characters of his male and female protagonists, who have been cheated on, left and hurt. That is why, alongside with those who gracefully move on, we also see those who write offensive letters in bursts of rage, thus leaving the door open for the conflict to escalate. Apart from protagonists fighting for their marriage, there are also those who divorce. Some romantic relationships end forever, while other lovers weather love storms and after their reconciliation achieve romantic bliss.⁶⁶ I consider these varied reactions, as well as numerous possible outcomes of conflicts, both important and intentional variations Aristaenetus chose to employ

Rather, it is the result of his intertextual borrowings from genres that tend to depict women as prone to infidelity: Aristophanes' comedies, Greek mime, erotic epigrams etc. In general, the conventions of literary genres (e.g. exaggeration or humour) prevent us from drawing any conclusions about the prevalence of adultery in Greek society of any period, although the very existence of laws prescribing punishment might be considered a sure sign that adultery at least occasionally occurred. Cf. an overview of relevant passages in Plutarch (*Lives; Solon* 23.1–2), Lysias (1.32–33) and Demosthenes (23.53) in Dover 2002: 21–23.

⁶³ No successful reconciliation is the result of mediation by a man.

⁶⁴ In the third successful case (1.15) Aphrodite makes the couple her pawns.

⁶⁵ Unsuccessful male mediators are mentioned in 1.15 and 1.17.

⁶⁶ The variety is a reflection of the wide array of Aristaenetus' intertextual sources and their reconciliation paradigms.

in order to avoid repeating the same resolutions and the predictability of happy endings, thus raising the quality and appeal of the collection to another level.⁶⁷

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⁶⁷ Variations have been observed in the levels of mimesis of the epistolary form and the display of erotica, in the choice of gender and the names given to the correspondents, in the choice of sources for intertextual references and their usage etc. Cf. the analyses of these variations in Hajdarević 2013.

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S a ž e t a k

POKUŠAJI POMIRENJA U ARISTENETOVIM *EROTSKIM PISMIMA*

24

Iako među znanstvenicima ne postoji konsenzus oko autorstva zbirke naslovljene *Erotska pisma*, ona se uobičajeno pripisuje Aristenetu, a pretpostavlja se da je nastala tijekom 6. stoljeća nove ere. Pisma iz Zbirke prikazuju većinom izvanbračne odnose s kurtizanima, robinjama i udanim ženama. Ti su odnosi često praćeni sukobima potaknutima (ponekad sasvim opravdanom) ljubomorom ili gubitkom interesa jednog od partnera; kurtizana uspijeva osvojiti bogatijeg klijenta, klijenta zavodi mlađa ili zgodnija djevojka, itd. Stoga su pokušaji pomirenja u Zbirci većinom ustvari stremljenja ljubavnika da ostvare ponovno ujedinjenje s bivšim ljubavnicima/ljubavnicama i poprave postojeće odnose ili pak da ih prekinu, po mogućnosti na civiliziran način. Fokus istraživanja je na analizi strategija i metoda za pomirenje koje protagonisti pisama biraju (verbalno uvjeravanje, laganje, izazivanje sažaljenja, prebacivanje krivnje na nekog drugog, pisanje i slanje pisama, upotreba posrednika/posrednica i sl.) uz procjenu njihove učinkovitosti. Konačni ciljevi su: odrediti najuobičajenije metode za pomirenje koje protagonisti koriste, provjeriti biraju li muškarci i žene slične metode, otkriti koji je spol skloniji korištenju indirektnijih metoda pri pokušajima pomirenja, poput slanja pisama ili upotrebe posrednika, provjeriti koji je spol uspješniji u pokušajima pomirenja i ponuditi pojašnjenje zašto je tome tako. Autorovi prikazi pokušaja pomirenja među protagonistima i njegova upotreba pomirenja kao narativnog sredstva stavljeni su u širi kontekst usporedbom s drugim zbirkama istoga tipa, provjerena je originalnost tih prikaza te su ponuđeni pojedini mogući modeli za njih (unutar podvrste kojoj zbirka pripada i izvan nje).

Ključne riječi: Aristenet, pomirenje, strategije pomirenja