DOI: 10.14232/suc.2024.5.303-327

Anne Lanckriet
Ghent University

The Social Category of Courtesans in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*

This article examines the relationship between the individual experiences of literary courtesans and their social category as courtesans in Lucian's Dialogues of the Courtesans. *The relatively limited research that has been done on this dialogue collection has been based on the presupposition that the characters are first and foremost courtesans; the impact of individuality and agency on the experience of the limitations and expectations associated with the social category of courtesans remains unacknowledged. By employing the interpretative model of social dynamics, which offers a way of studying the relationships between individuals and groups, this article demonstrates how Lucian's* Dialogues of the Courtesans *depicts these figures as more complex than what has been assumed thus far, by acknowledging the impact of their social category on their daily lives whilst also highlighting how these courtesans negotiate, experience, reinterpret, confirm, undermine, and reinvent these limitations, expectations, and advantages in their social interactions.*

Keywords: Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, Social Dynamics, Social Category, Courtesan, Agency

According to Glazebrook–Henry research into sex work has been rescued 'from the literature of deviancy and crime' in the past three decades.[1] In the study of prostitution in the ancient Greek world, the courtesan, a high-class Greek sex worker, has received a great deal of interest. The most comprehensive accounts on courtesans have come

[1] Glazebrook–Henry (2011: 3) and Gilfoyle (1999: 120).

to us from the 2nd century AD, more than half a millennium after the heyday of courtesans in classical Athens, and within the context of the Second Sophistic (50–250). One of these works is Lucian of Samosata's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, a collection of fifteen humorous and entertaining dialogues between courtesans (and their maids, mothers, and clients), which has thus far received relatively little scholarly attention. The collection of dialogues has mainly been examined for its reproduction and transformation of the Greek literary tradition or to corroborate historical analyses of courtesans in the classical period.[2] This latter approach however is not unproblematic as it is based on the presupposition that the characters are first and foremost courtesans; the impact of individuality and different intersections of identity on the character's principles, behaviors, and relationships remains unexamined. This presupposition proves to be unstable in general, but in particular for Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* since, as Shreve-Price concludes about the collection: 'Lucian achieves something his predecessors could not: he presents a complex picture of courtesan life in which a reader cannot assume to know everything about the courtesans simply because they are courtesans'.[3] This article aims to tackle this gap in the research by investigating the relationship between the literary courtesans and their social category as courtesans in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* – such an analysis is called social dynamics.

The interpretive model of social dynamics, more commonly used in economics and psychology, offers a way of studying the relationships between individuals and groups.[4] The behavior and social meaning of a group, here of courtesans, is understood as the sum of countless small-

[2] LeGrand (1907), Gilhuly (2007), Cohen (2008), Shreve-Price (2014), Roisman (2015), and Mauritsch (2018).
[3] Shreve-Price (2014: 116).
[4] For an example in economics, see Durlauf–Young (2001: 1–14) and in psychology, see Brown (2000).

scale interactions between individuals.[5] The group's individual interactions, in turn, are shaped by the limitations, possibilities, and expectations that their social category imposes on them. Based on that idea, social dynamics investigates how individuals interpret, reinterpret, confirm, undermine, and reinvent their social category, and how their social category, in turn, influences that process.[6] This interpretative model provides a methodology in line with gender studies' recent interests in recovering not solely gender ideology (gendered limitations, expectations, codes of conduct, etc.) but also gender experience: how the given script played out and was negotiated in everyday existence.

As an analysis of the entire dialogue collection is beyond the scope of this article, I will focus on the second dialogue of the collection. Since the text is relatively unknown, I will first offer the Greek text and my translation before diving into the analysis.[7] I have chosen to include my translation instead of the one offered by MacLeod as its representation of the textual specificities is not always satisfactory for a textual analysis such as this one.[8]

1 **Μυρτίον:** Γαμεῖς, ὦ Πάμφιλε, τὴν Φίλωνος τοῦ ναυκλήρου θυγατέρα καὶ ἤδη σε γεγαμηκέναι
φασίν; οἱ τοσοῦτοι δὲ ὅρκοι οὓς ὤμοσας καὶ τὰ δάκρυα ἐν

[5] Hellström–Russel (2020: 3).
[6] Hellström–Russel (2020: 4).
[7] Edition of the Greek text found in MacLeod (1961: 358-365) which is, as MacLeod (1961: ix) states, largely based on the critical edition made by Mras (1930).
[8] MacLeod (196: 361), for example, translates 'τοῦτο γοῦν καὶ μόνον ἐπριάμην τοῦ σοῦ ἔρωτος', Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 6 as 'all the good I've had from your love'. This translation, however, does not represent the textual specificity of the Greek verb 'πρίαμαι', meaning 'to buy' (LSJ ad πρίαμαι). In my translation, I have attempted to depict this verb more literally: 'that is the only thing I bought with your love' (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 6). This is not to say that I have not taken any freedoms to make the translation more readable, but that my translation has attempted to stay closer to the Greek text where its nuance is important to the textual analysis.

ἀκαρεῖ πάντα οἴχεται, καὶ ἐπιλέλησαι Μυρτίου νῦν, καὶ ταῦτα, ὦ Πάμφιλε, ὁπότε κύω μῆνα ὄγδοον ἤδη; τοῦτο γοῦν καὶ μόνον ἐπριάμην τοῦ σοῦ ἔρωτος, ὅτι μου τηλικαύτην πεποίηκας τὴν γαστέρα καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν παιδοτροφεῖν δεήσει, πρᾶγμα ἑταίρᾳ βαρύτατον· οὐ γὰρ ἐκθήσω τὸ τεχθέν, καὶ μάλιστα εἰ ἄρρεν γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ Πάμφιλον ὀνομάσασα ἐγὼ μὲν ἔξω παραμύθιον τοῦ ἔρωτος, σοὶ δὲ ὀνειδιεῖ ποτε ἐκεῖνος, ὡς ἄπιστος γεγένησαι περὶ τὴν ἀθλίαν αὐτοῦ μητέρα. γαμεῖς δ᾽ οὐ καλὴν παρθένον· εἶδον γὰρ αὐτὴν ἔναγχος ἐν τοῖς Θεσμοφορίοις μετὰ τῆς μητρός, οὐδέπω εἰδυῖα ὅτι δι᾽ αὐτὴν οὐκέτι ὄψομαι Πάμφιλον. καὶ σὺ δ᾽οὖν πρότερον ἰδοῦ αὐτὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἰδέ· μή σε ἀνιάτω, εἰ πάνυ γλαυκοὺς ἔχει αὐτοὺς μηδὲ ὅτι διάστροφοί εἰσι καὶ ἐς ἀλλήλους ὁρῶσι· μᾶλλον δὲ τὸν Φίλωνα ἑώρακας τὸν πατέρα τῆς νύμφης, τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ οἶσθα, ὥστε οὐδὲν ἔτι δεήσει τὴν θυγατέρα ἰδεῖν.

Πάμφιλος: Ἔτι σου ληρούσης, ὦ Μύρτιον, ἀκούσομαι παρθένους καὶ
γάμους ναυκληρικοὺς διεξιούσης; ἐγὼ δὲ ἢ σιμήν τινα ἢ καλὴν νύμφην οἶδα; ἢ ὅτι Φίλων ὁ Ἀλωπεκῆθεν—οἶμαι γὰρ ἐκεῖνον λέγειν σε—θυγατέρα ὅλως εἶχεν ὡραίαν ἤδη γάμου; ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ φίλος ἐστὶν οὗτος τῷ πατρί·μέμνημαι γὰρ ὡς πρῴην ἐδικάσατο περὶ συμβολαίου· τάλαντον, οἶμαι, ὀφείλων γὰρ τῷ πατρὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐκτίνειν, ὁ
δὲ παρὰ τοὺς ναυτοδίκας ἀπήγαγεν αὐτόν, καὶ μόλις ἐξέτισεν αὐτό, οὐδ᾽ ὅλον, ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ἔφασκεν. εἰ δὲ καὶ γαμεῖν ἐδέδοκτό μοι, τὴν Δημέου θυγατέρα τὴν τοῦ πέρυσιν ἐστρατηγηκότος ἀφείς, καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς μητρὸς ἀνεψιὰν

οὖσαν, τὴν Φίλωνος ἐγάμουν ἄν; σὺ δὲ πόθεν ταῦτα ἤκουσας; ἢ τίνας σεαυτῇ, ὦ Μύρτιον, κενὰς ζηλοτυπίας σκιαμαχοῦσα ἐξεῦρες;

Μυρτίον: Οὐκοῦν οὐ γαμεῖς, ὦ Πάμφιλε;

Πάμφιλος: Μέμηνας, ὦ Μύρτιον, ἢ κραιπαλᾷς; καίτοι χθὲς οὐ πάνυ ἐμεθύσθημεν.

Μυρτίον: Ἡ Δωρὶς αὕτη ἐλύπησέ με· πεμφθεῖσα γὰρ ὡς ἔρια ὠνήσαιτό μοι ἐπὶ τὴν γαστέρα καὶ εὔξαιτο τῇ Λοχείᾳ ὡς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, Λεσβίαν ἔφη ἐντυχοῦσαν αὐτῇ—μᾶλλον δὲ σὺ αὐτῷ, ὦ Δωρί, λέγε ἅπερ ἀκήκοας, εἴ γε μὴ ἐπλάσω ταῦτα.

Δωρίς: Ἀλλ᾽ ἐπιτριβείην, ὦ δέσποινα, εἴ τι ἐψευσάμην· ἐπεὶ γὰρ κατὰ τὸ πρυτανεῖον ἐγενόμην, ἐνέτυχέ μοι ἡ Λεσβία μειδιῶσα καὶ φησίν, Ὁ ἐραστὴς ὑμῶν ὁ Πάμφιλος γαμεῖ τὴν Φίλωνος θυγατέρα· εἰ δὲ ἀπιστοίην, ἠξίου με παρακύψασαν ἐς τὸν στενωπὸν ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν πάντα κατεστεφανωμένα καὶ αὐλητρίδας καὶ θόρυβον καὶ ὑμέναιον ᾄδοντάς τινας.

Πάμφιλος: Τί οὖν; παρέκυψας, ὦ Δωρί;

Δωρίς: Καὶ μάλα, καὶ εἶδον ἅπαντα ὡς ἔφη.

Πάμφιλος: Μανθάνω τὴν ἀπάτην· οὐ γὰρ πάντα ἡ Λεσβία, ὦ Δωρί, πρὸς σὲ ἐψεύσατο καὶ σὺ τἀληθῆ ἀπήγγελκας Μυρτίῳ. πλὴν μάτην γε ἐταράχθητε· οὔτε γὰρ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν οἱ γάμοι, ἀλλὰ νῦν ἀνεμνήσθην ἀκούσας τῆς μητρός, ὁπότε χθὲς ἀνέστρεψα παρ᾽ ὑμῶν· ἔφη γάρ, ὦ Πάμφιλε, ὁ μὲν ἡλικιώτης σοι Χαρμίδης

τοῦ γείτονος Ἀρισταινέτου υἱὸς γαμεῖ ἤδη καὶ
σωφρονεῖ, σὺ δὲ μέχρι τίνος ἑταίρᾳ σύνει; τοιαῦτα
παρακούων αὐτῆς ἐς ὕπνον κατηνέχθην· εἶτα ἕωθεν προῆλθον
ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας, ὥστε οὐδὲν εἶδον ὧν ἡ Δωρὶς ὕστερον εἶδεν.
εἰ δὲ ἀπιστεῖς, αὖθις ἀπελθοῦσα, ὦ Δωρί, ἀκριβῶς ἰδὲ μὴ
τὸν στενωπόν, ἀλλὰ τὴν θύραν, ποτέρα ἐστὶν ἡ
κατεστεφανωμένη· εὑρήσεις γὰρ τὴν τῶν γειτόνων.

Μυρτίον: Ἀπέσωσας, ὦ Πάμφιλε· ἀπηγξάμην γὰρ ἄν, εἴ τι τοιοῦτο ἐγένετο.

Πάμφιλος: Ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν ἐγένετο, μηδ᾽ οὕτω μανείην, ὡς ἐκλαθέσθαι Μυρτίου, καὶ ταῦτα ἤδη μοι κυούσης παιδίον.

Myrtion: You are going to marry the daughter of Philo, the shipowner, Pamphilos, and you are already married, so they say. Have all those oaths you swore and all those tears disappeared in an instant? And have you forgotten Myrtion now, Pamphilos, when I am already in my eighth month of pregnancy? That is the only thing I bought with your love: that you made my belly so big and that I will soon have to raise a child. That is a very difficult situation for a courtesan. Because I am not going to abandon the child, especially if it is a boy. Then I'm going to call him Pamphilos. Then he can be a consolation for me and my heartbreak, and one day he will then scold you for your unfaithfulness to his unhappy mother. You're not even going to marry a beautiful girl. I recently saw her at the Thesmophoria with her mother, but I didn't know then that she would be the reason that I would no longer be able to see Pamphilos. You should look at her yourself before you marry, look at her face and her eyes. I don't want

you to be shocked when you see her incredibly grey eyes and how they are distorted and cross-eyed. Or even better, you have seen Philo, the father of your bride, if you know what his face looks like, then you don't even need to look at his daughter.

Pamphilos: How much longer am I going to have to listen to your nonsense about girls, Myrtion, and your chatter about marriages to shipowners? Do I even know nubile girls with flat noses or beautiful ones? Or did I know that Philo of Alopeke – I think you are talking about him – has a daughter who is already of marriageable age? He's not even friends with my father because I remember that he recently had to go to court because of a contract with him. Because he owed my father a talent, I think, and he wouldn't pay, and my father took him to the nautical court, and in the end, he did pay, but not the full amount, or so my father said. And even if I had decided to get married, would I reject Demeas' daughter, who was a strategist last year, when she is also a cousin on my mother's side, and marry Philo's daughter instead? Where did you hear that? Or what empty jealous ideas have you convinced yourself of, Myrtion, that you're getting so riled up?

Myrtion: So you're not getting married, Pamphilos?

Pamphilos: Are you crazy, Myrtion, or do you have a hangover? Although, we didn't even drink that much yesterday.

Myrtion: It was Doris here that upset me so much. Because when she was sent to buy wool for my baby and to pray for a smooth delivery for me, she met Lesbia, who said – but it is better that you tell him, Doris, what you have heard, at least if you didn't make this all up.

Doris: You may destroy me, mistress, if I have lied at all. For when I was at the Prytaneion, I met the smiling Lesbia and she said: 'Your beloved, Pamphilos, is going to marry the daughter of Philo.' If I ever didn't believe her, it would seem to me to be a good idea to step aside and look down your alley at all the crowned people and the flute girls and the commotion and the people singing a wedding hymn.

Pamphilos: And? Did you step aside, Doris?

Doris: Yes, and I saw everything as she said.

Pamphilos: I understand everything now. Not everything Lesbia, Doris, said to you was a lie and what you told Myrtion was true. But you are upset for no reason because the wedding was not at our house. After all, now I remember what I heard from my mother when I returned from your place yesterday. For she said: 'Pamphilos, Charmides, the boy about your age, the son of our neighbor Aristainetos, is about to be married. He is sensible. How long are you going to stay with a courtesan?' While I was listening to those things she said, I fell asleep. And then this morning I left home early, so I didn't see anything of what Doris saw later. If you don't believe me, go outside again, Doris, and look carefully not only at the street but also at the door and at the one who is crowned. Because you will see that it is the neighbor's door.

Myrtion: You saved me, Pamphilos. For I would have hanged myself if such a thing had happened.

Pamphilos: But that wouldn't have happened. May I never be so crazy that I completely forget Myrtion, especially now that she is pregnant with my child.

1. Myrtion, Pamphilos and Doris

In the coming analysis, I will explore the dynamic in the second dialogue of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* between the individual interactions of the literary courtesans and their social category as courtesans.

1.1 Confrontation by Myrtion (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 1–19)

The beginning of the dialogue centers the perspective of the courtesan and emphasizes, through intertextual parallels, the limitations that courtesans face in their daily lives. Myrtion, the courtesan, delivers the longest uninterrupted speech of this dialogue to confront her client and lover Pamphilos with his alleged marriage. The name Pamphilos (ὦ Πάμφιλε, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 1) combined with an unwanted marriage as the main conflict in the dialogue, calls to mind Menander's *The Maiden of Perinthus* and/or *The Maiden of Andros* (4th or early 3rd century BC).[9] These comedies have only survived fragmentarily, but the Latin adaptation, Terence's *The Girl of Andros* (166), luckily gives us a good indication of their content.[10] In the comedy of Terence, Pamphilus, a young Athenian, has entered, without his father's knowledge, into a romantic relationship with Glycerium, a girl he cannot marry since she is not of Attic descent. The main conflict arises when Pamphilus' father arranges a marriage for his son to Chremes' daughter (the girl a certain Charinus wants to marry). Pamphilus does not want to marry Chremes' daughter, so he says to Charinus: 'I am keener to avoid this marriage than you are to achieve it. [...] Do whatever you can [...] plot, scheme, contrive to have her given to you. I'll do the same to have her not given to me' (Ter. *An.* 332–335).[11] At the end of the comedy, it is revealed that Glycerium,

[9] Bartelink (1971: 69) and Shreve-Price (2014: 118).
[10] Bartelink (1971: 170).
[11] This is Barsby's (2001) translation.

contrary to what everyone thought, is of Attic descent, which makes a happy ending through marriage possible for Pamphilus, Glycerium, and the baby that is born to them during the comedy.

The many similarities between the second dialogue and the comedies of Menander and Terence provide us with sufficient arguments to label this an explicit intertextual reference that an educated reader would have picked up on; among the most important parallels: the name Pamphilus/Pamphilos, the presence of a courtesan (the sister of Glycerium), the unsustainable relationship (because of legal and social regulations), the pregnancy, and the social pressure from family to marry. The places where the dialogue diverts from the comedies (and the readers' expectations) thus become all the more productive in generating meaning and emphasis. Although Glycerium and Myrtion experience a similar social exclusion (they can not marry [Attic men]), the basis of their exclusion is different: Glycerium is not a sex worker like Myrtion, but a free non-Attic woman. This difference proves to be critical at the end of the comedy: Glycerium's exclusion can be resolved through a revelation of information (she is of Attic origin); Pamphilus and Glycerium's relationship can thus be legitimized through marriage, which shifts Glycerium from the social margin to the center (Ter. *An.* 904–951). Myrtion's exclusion, on the other hand, as it stems from the irreparable staining of her social identity by her profession/actions, can never be resolved. [12] The unfulfillment of the reader's expectations of a happy ending through marriage thus emphasizes the impact of the social category on Myrtion's life and relationship with Pamphilos: Myrtion will never be able to marry Pamphilos, the relationship is thus necessarily temporary and Pamphilos and Myrtion will have to be separated once he gets married.

[12] Gilhuly (2007: 65).

It is thus under the influence of this limitation (exclusion of marriage) imposed on her by her social category, that Myrtion confronts Pamphilos with the rumor that he is getting married (γαμεῖς, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 1) or that he has already married (ἤδη σε γεγαμηκέναι, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 2). The denotation of this limitation in and of itself, however, tells us little about how this was experienced as it fails to take into account how these social codes could be negotiated, how individual agency could come into play, and if (and how) these limitations could be turned into potential sites of power – this is where social dynamics can offer a potentially fruitful approach. [13]

Myrtion, as the example in this article, does not fold to her exclusion but negotiates it. Through rhetorical persuasion, she attempts to postpone the abandonment and secure a dependable source of income for her future. She starts by exploiting the formulaic discourse of love, loyalty, and affection, typical of relationships between courtesans and their clients: οἱ τοσοῦτοι δὲ ὅρκοι οὓς ὤμοσας καὶ τὰ δάκρυα ἐν ἀκαρεῖ πάντα οἴχεται καὶ ἐπιλέλησαι Μυρτίου νῦν [...]?, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 3–4 ('have all those oaths you swore and all those tears disappeared in an instant? And have you forgotten Myrtion now […]?').[14] Later on, once again in line with a discourse of love, she states: καὶ μόνον ἐπριάμην τοῦ σοῦ ἔρωτος, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 6 ('the only thing I bought with your love') and ἄπιστος, Luc. *DMeretr*. 2, 11 ('unfaithful'). Myrtion thus uses this discourse specific to her social category (and contrary mainly to other types of sex work) as a potential site of power to play into Pamphilos' value of virtues such as sincerity, honesty, and loyalty.

Secondly, she appeals to her biggest asset in maintaining the connection with Pamphilos: her pregnancy. She emphasizes this asset rhetorically when she states:

[13] Arnold (2009: 176).
[14] Davidson (1977: 120–121; 125–126).

> καὶ ἐπιλέλησαι Μυρτίου νῦν, καὶ
> ταῦτα, ὦ Πάμφιλε, ὁπότε κύω μῆνα ὄγδοον ἤδη;
>
> And have you forgotten Myrtion now, Pamphilos, when I am already in my eighth month of pregnancy? (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 4–5).

'Now' (νῦν, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 4) is emphasized by 'καὶ ταῦτα', Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 4–5, and the tension is built up by making 'ὦ Πάμφιλε', Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 5, postpone the reveal of why now is such poor timing: ὁπότε κύω μῆνα ὄγδοον ἤδη, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 5 ('when I am already in my eighth month of pregnancy?'). If that isn't bad enough on its own, she then adds:

> τοῦτο γοῦν καὶ μόνον ἐπριάμην τοῦ σοῦ ἔρωτος, ὅτι μου τηλικαύτην πεποίηκας τὴν γαστέρα καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν παιδοτροφεῖν δεήσει, πρᾶγμα ἑταίρᾳ βαρύτατον·
>
> That is the only thing I bought with your love: that you made my belly so big and that I will soon have to raise a child. That is a very difficult situation for a courtesan. (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 6–8).

Myrtion tries to invoke both a feeling of guilt and pity in Pamphilos by blaming him for being ungenerous and putting her in a tough situation: she loses her lover/customer from whom she hasn't gotten anything financially and, as a consequence of her work for him, she'll be put in a situation where she can't earn money as a courtesan for some time. Myrtion once again utilizes the specificities and vulnerabilities of courtesan life (dependence on a client for income, the possibility of becoming pregnant as a result of work, and then temporarily losing your ability to work) as potential sites of persuasion in her negotiation of the courtesans' exclusion of the social domain of marriage.

A similar situation (an ungenerous client) can be found in dialogue 7. Mousarion, the courtesan, is lectured by her mother for keeping Chaireas as a client even though he never 'pays' her. Mousarion explains to her mom that Chaireas promised he would marry her. Unlike Mousarion and Chaireas, Pamphilos never promises Myrtion that he will marry her and Myrtion never asks for marriage. Thus, although both courtesans' interactions with their clients are determined by their social category (the exclusion results in the relationships (almost) necessarily becoming temporary and unsustainable in the long run), the way they approach this limitation is very different. Mousarion does not seem to experience the exclusion as absolute and resists the social and legal regulations. It is unlikely, however, that this approach will have worked out in her favor, as her mother also remarks in Luc. *DMeretr.* 7, 59–65. Myrtion, on the other hand, does not resist the exclusion, but negotiates the specificities of their relationship to try and delay or eliminate the effects it has on their relationship: postponing its end (e.g. through rhetorical persuasion) and investing in its durability (e.g. by carrying his child).

This persuasion and investment are simultaneously present in the continuation of her speech:

> οὐ γὰρ ἐκθήσω τὸ τεχθέν, καὶ μάλιστα εἰ ἄρρεν γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ Πάμφιλον ὀνομάσασα ἐγὼ μὲν ἕξω παραμύθιον τοῦ ἔρωτος, σοὶ δὲ ὀνειδιεῖ ποτε ἐκεῖνος, ὡς ἄπιστος γεγένησαι περὶ τὴν ἀθλίαν αὐτοῦ μητέρα.
>
> Because I am not going to abandon the child, especially if it is a boy. Then I'm going to call him Pamphilos. Then he can be a consolation for me and my heartbreak, and one day he will then scold you for your unfaithfulness to his unhappy mother. (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 8–12)

This imagined future shows striking parallels with Dido's plea to Aeneas in book four of Vergil's *Aeneid* (1st century BC):

> At least, if before your flight a child of yours had been born to me, if in my hall a baby Aeneas were playing, whose face, in spite of all, would bring back yours, I should not think myself utterly vanquished and forlorn. (Verg. *A.* 4, 327–330).[15, 16]

Both Dido and Myrtion emphasize in their pleas that they will be in danger when their loved one leaves them (Verg. *A.* 4, 322–326) and imagine that a son of their loved one could comfort their heartbreak. This parallel brings to light another commonality: Aeneas and Dido's relationship, similarly to Pamphilos and Myrtion's, is characterized as only a temporary delay on the way to the man's ultimate goal (for Pamphilos marriage, for Aeneas Italy and marriage [Lavinia]). This intertextual parallel, which an educated reader might have picked up on but is hard to prove as definitively intentional, emphasizes the temporary character of the client-courtesan relationship that Myrtion tries to extend and the liminality of courtesans, as they function in the social world but are not allowed to ever truly become a part of it.

Myrtion, lastly, attempts to change his course of action: not by convincing him to stay with her or not to marry, but by specifically convincing him not to marry Philo's daughter. Myrtion employs the only assets she has here: the invisibility of a 'potential wife' and her visibility as a courtesan; as Davidson argued, the degree of visibility ancient Greek women are exposed to is complacent in determining their status:

[15] This translation is Fairclough's (2001).
[16] DNP (*ad* Vergil).

> The sight of a woman [...] has a charge, a specific symbolic value. All but the most invisible women are revealing something. All but the most completely naked and exposed have something more to reveal. [...] The extreme exposure of the brothel prostitute and the complete invisibility of the decent lady force all other women to dance a striptease on points in between.[17]

Thus, when Myrtion states: γαμεῖς δ᾽ οὐ καλὴν παρθένον, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 10–11 ('you're not even going to marry a beautiful girl'), she cleverly employs a characteristic of Philo's daughter that overall makes her a good match (her invisibility correlates to her status as a free Attic woman of certain wealth) to induce anxiety and aversion in Pamphilos' mind. Pamphilos might not know what his future wife looks like. Myrtion creates this anxiety about the unknown (and in turn, highlights the ease of the known) by repeatedly emphasizing seeing/not seeing (and the corresponding knowing/not knowing) in Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 12–19: εἶδον ('I [...] saw'), οὐδέπω εἰδυῖα ('I didn't know then'), οὐκέτι ὄψομαι ('I will no longer be able to see'), σὺ δ᾽ οὖν [...] ἰδοῦ ('you should look at her yourself'), τὸ πρόσωπον ('her face'), τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ('her eyes'), ἰδέ ('look'), 'ὁρῶσι' ('look'), ἑώρακας ('you have seen'), τὸ πρόσωπον ('his face'), οἶσθα ('you know') and ἰδεῖν ('to look'). Although Myrtion tries to use her rival's invisibility to her advantage, it is precisely that (in) visibility that ensures that she can never really compete with her rival, or at least not in any sustainable or legal way.

1.2 Pamphilos' response (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 20–36)

In his answer to her speech, Pamphilos emphatically denies the accusation that he is married to or will be marrying Filo of Alopeke's daughter. He does this by first dismissing the girl in question: she would not be

[17] Davidson (1997: 128).

a good marriage candidate because her father is in a legal dispute with his father, and he continues by attempting to deny the accusation that he has decided to get married:

> εἰ δὲ καὶ γαμεῖν ἐδέδοκτό μοι, τὴν Δημέου θυγατέρα τὴν τοῦ πέρυσιν ἐστρατηγηκότος ἀφείς, καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς μητρὸς ἀνεψιὰν οὖσαν, τὴν Φίλωνος ἐγάμουν ἄν;
>
> And even if I had decided to get married, would I reject Demeas' daughter, who was a strategist last year, when she is also a cousin on my mother's side, and marry Philo's daughter instead? (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 28–31).

He hides his denial in the conditional clause of a rhetorical question. In this, he claims that it is 'evident' that he would choose Demeas' daughter as a bride rather than Philo's daughter if he had decided to marry. To emphasize that he has not decided to get married, he uses a conditional, concessive clause introduced by 'εἰ (...) καί' which expresses that the condition (that he would be married) is 'exceptional or unlikely'.[18] Although he emphasizes that it would be 'exceptional or unlikely', he frames that emphasized negated answer in a rhetorical question, which means that the answer remains ambiguous. His words are anything but reassuring, as Gilhuly notes: 'In denying his intention to marry Philon's daughter, he emphasizes the compelling attributes of Demeas' daughter'.[19] She is an excellent marriage candidate because of her father's high status (τὴν τοῦ πέρυσιν ἐστρατηγηκότος, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 29–30 ('who was a strategist last year')) and their family connections (πρὸς μητρὸς ἀνεψιὰν οὖσαν, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 30–31 ('when she is also a cousin on

[18] CGCG (49.19–21).
[19] Gilhuly (2007: 65).

my mother's side')); she is, as Gilhuly notes: 'prestigious and socially connected in spheres from which the courtesan is excluded'.[20] The same goes for his rejection of Philo's daughter: by explaining that he could not marry her because of the legal dispute between their fathers, he ends up painting her father as a 'worthy legal opponent' and 'an antagonistic equal'.[21] Thus, in Pamphilos' attempt to reassure Myrtion that he is not getting married, he ends up highlighting how the girls he 'rejects' are worthy candidates, and thus, in contrast, how Myrtion, as a courtesan, is not and could never be. Marriage to clients with whom she has romantic, sexual, and in this case also parental relationships is strictly impossible for a courtesan. This restriction guides the conversation: Myrtion wants Pamphilos not to leave her but knows that she cannot ask him to give her that security (by marriage), and Pamphilos in turn wants to reassure Myrtion, without claiming that he will never leave her to marry a potential wife.

Finally, in the way that Pamphilos addresses Myrtion, we can discern the unequal power dynamics of their relationships: particularly in ἔτι [...] ἀκούσομαι, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 20 ('how much longer am I going to have to listen'), σου ληρούσης, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 21 ('your nonsense'), and his accusations of irrationality (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 21–22; 2, 32–33; 2, 35). These accusations are not unique to courtesans, but are, as Sweet argues, a consequence of an unequal power relationship (legal, economic, gender, and social inequality).[22]

1.3 I'll believe it when I see it (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 37–48)

After enduring these accusations of irrationality, Myrtion diverts the blame onto someone else: ἡ Δωρὶς αὕτη ἐλύπησέ με, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2,

[20] Gilhuly (2007: 65).
[21] Gilhuly (2007: 65).
[22] Sweet (2019: 852).

37, ('It was Doris here that upset me so much'). Doris is a common name in Attic inscriptions for women of the lower social class and in comedies for female slaves.[23] Other indications of her status are that Myrtion gives Doris orders (πεμφθεῖσα, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 37 ('when she was sent')), does not address her directly, but instead speaks about her to Pamphilos, and that Doris calls Myrtion 'ὦ δέσποινα', Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 41 ('mistress'). From this, I argue, we can conclude that the relationship has an unequal power dynamic. This enables Myrtion to blame Doris without expecting her to resist that accusation.[24] Additionally, when Myrtion calls on Doris to recount how she heard the rumor, she explicitly diverts the burden of responsibility for the correctness of the story to Doris: Λεσβίαν ἔφη ἐντυχοῦσαν αὐτῇ—μᾶλλον δὲ σὺ αὐτῷ, ὦ Δωρί, λέγε ἅπερ ἀκήκοας, εἴ γε μὴ ἐπλάσω ταῦτα**,** Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 39–40 ('she met Lesbia, who said – but it is better that you tell him, Doris, what you have heard, at least if you didn't make this all up'). By doing this, she avoids being reproached for irrationality and a lack of common sense by Pamphilos by making use of her power over Doris. This is particularly striking when Myrtion directs the same reproach she received from Pamphilos, (that what she says is nonsense that she has made up herself) (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 20; 2, 32–33) to Doris (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 40). Myrtion's ability to be in a position of power in relation to Doris, indicates, contrary to what she implied before (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 5–8) that she is financially prosperous or accommodated by financially prosperous people.

Myrtion can thus, despite her social and legal marginalization due to her social category, gain power through her social category over others such as Doris, who are marginalized not only socially and legally,

[23] Mras (1954: 336).

[24] However, due to the limited information in this text and the limited knowledge about the lives of slaves in antiquity, it cannot be definitively concluded whether or not Doris was a slave or a free maid or in some other way associated with Myrtion (Forsdyke 2021: 7).

but economically as well. This economic prosperity, moreover, can raise her social status by enabling her to distinguish herself even further from lower types of sex work, particularly the πόρνη ('prostitute'): through conspicuous consumption (e.g. clothing and jewelry), by decreasing her visibility by sending out Doris to run her errands, and by allowing her to be more selective about her customers which can, in turn, increase her social opportunities (by climbing her way into the higher elite through careful selection).[25] Myrtion's social category can thus become a site of potential power.

However, the denotations of these advantages only give us a part of the picture, when we look, using social dynamics, at how these advantages play out in daily life, we can see that they are not unambiguously positive. As a result of her financial situation, Myrtion can increase her social status by decreasing her visibility (she sends out Doris to run her errands). This, however, also limits her freedom of movement as she has to stay secluded inside to decrease her visibility. In this dialogue then, Myrtion not only gives Doris the floor to shift the blame and responsibility for the correctness of the rumor away from herself but also because she cannot act as an epistemic agent; she is dependent on Doris to hear what is going on 'outside'.

This results in Myrtion becoming noticeably less present in the remainder of the dialogue. Myrtion is spoken about as if she is not there (Μυρτίῳ, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 50), only Doris is addressed (ὦ Δωρί, ὦ Δωρί, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 49; 2, 58), and it is no longer about the concerns she expressed in the beginning. This, however, must also be nuanced because Pamphilos does address them together (ἐταράχθητε, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 51 ('you are [...] upset'), παρ᾽ ὑμῶν, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 53 ('from your place')) and Doris is also spoken of (directed at Myrtion) as if she is not there (ὧν ἡ Δωρὶς ὕστερον εἶδεν, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 57 ('what Do-

[25] Davidson (1997: 125–128) and Kurke (1999: 178; 184–185).

ris saw later')). Myrtion will also respond spontaneously to Pamphilos' speech, unlike Doris who in this dialogue only speaks when she is addressed. So, although we see Doris coming more into the foreground and Myrtion sliding more into the background, a complete inversion cannot take place here due to the legal and hierarchical differences between Doris and Myrtion.

By looking at how Myrtion's economic prosperity, an advantage of her social category, plays out in her social interactions we can thus see that it is not unambiguously positive and it affects the interaction on multiple levels (e.g. Myrtion needs to rely on Doris since she prevents herself from being an epistemic agent to gain a higher social status). Additionally, it shows us that identifying solely how Myrtion as a courtesan is limited, disregards how she is benefitting or, more neutrally, affected in her daily life by the specificities of courtesan life.

1.4 Social Expectations (Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 49–64)

Pamphilos responds confidently to Doris' 'verification' of the rumor and reveals what he learned from his mother: οὔτε γὰρ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν οἱ γάμοι, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 51 ('because the wedding was not at our house'). This interaction is the only other reference in *Dialogues of the Courtesans* (apart from Myrtion and her imagined son) to a mother-son relationship. Pamphilos' mother is directly involved in his life, especially in his future marriage. This was also evident earlier in the dialogue, viz. Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 30–31. This mother-son relationship emphasizes through contrast how Myrtion's social category estranges her from the social role of a mother: she will not be able to marry 'her son' off to potential wives, despite his father's social status and origin.

Although his mother's words acquit him of the accusation that he is married, they are not reassuring. Pamphilos' mother emphasizes the similarities between Charmides, the boy who got married, and her son:

particularly ἡλικιώτης σοι, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 53 ('the boy about your age') and τοῦ γείτονος Ἀρισταινέτου υἱὸς, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 54 ('the son of our neighbor Aristainetos'). They differ in one crucial respect from each other, however: Charmides γαμεῖ ἤδη, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 54 ('is about to be married') and therefore Charmides, unlike Pamphilos, σωφρονεῖ, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 55 ('is sensible'). The social expectation for Pamphilos is thus that he, like Charmides, marries a potential wife. This is so obvious to his mother that she does not ask whether he will stay with a courtesan, but μέχρι, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 55 ('how long'). Myrtion can only temporarily enter Pamphilos' life. Gilhuly concludes:

> Taken together with his earlier statement to the effect that, if he were to get married, he has an excellent match in mind, it seems that the prospects of Myrtion and her baby-to-be are not good. Myrtion is blind to these implications. She is reassured by the knowledge that Pamphilos is not getting married today. Her comprehension does not seem to extend beyond that.[26]

Myrtion, however, I argue, never seems illusioned in the dialogue that she will be able to stay with Pamphilos forever. She attempts to extend the temporary nature of their relationship by investing in their relationship by carrying his child and by arousing pity, guilt, and anxiety about his potential wife in her speech. At the end of the dialogue, Myrtion indeed seems reassured by Pamphilos: not because she lives under the illusion that he will never get married, but because she knows that he has to get married but shows no interest in it yet: ἐς ὕπνον κατηνέχθην, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 56 ('I fell asleep'). In the meantime, she can try to strengthen her bond with Pamphilos so that he will also protect and support her and their 'son' in the future. Her response at the end of the dialogue

[26] Gilhuly (2007: 66).

is in line with these tactics to bind him to her: although she responds relieved (ἀπέσωσας, ὦ Πάμφιλε, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 61 ('you saved me, Pamphilos')) she also includes a threat for the future: ἀπηγξάμην γὰρ ἄν, εἴ τι τοιοῦτο ἐγένετο, Luc. *DMeretr.* 2, 61–62 ('for I would have hanged myself if such a thing had happened').

2. Conclusion

This article aimed to tackle the gap in the existing research on Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* by investigating the relationship between the literary courtesans and their social category as courtesans. The second dialogue of this collection illustrates how acknowledging the limitations, advantages, and expectations of a social category, only uncovers part of the story. A look at how those characteristics play out in more concrete situations, reveals a broader complexity and potential sites of agency and power for figures who are so often considered to be victims of their social category.

This article illustrates how the use of the social dynamics methodology, or comparable methodologies that focus on the relationship between an individual and the cohesion of the group(s) to which they belong, can contribute to a richer interpretation of literary texts, and particularly of characters belonging to marginalized groups. It is these characters par excellence who are in danger of being reduced to their marginalization. This transformative approach thus allows us not to define the marginalized characters exclusively in terms of their object status (how they are or are not limited by institutions and systems), but to approach them as possible subjects in their own right. In more concrete terms, in this article, courtesans are not subjects who were defined in advance based on their social category and whose 'status' and 'position' were therefore already determined in advance, but as characters in unique, local, and

concrete contexts within which they are socially shaped by the structures and relationships in which they function. In this way, a distinction is made between the representation of the social category and the possible individual reality and experience of persons belonging to it.

Primary Sources

Arnott 1997 — W. G. Arnott (ed.–trans.): *Menander: Heros. Theophoroumene. Karchedonios. Kitharistes. Kolax. Koneizomenai. Leukadia. Misoumenos. Perikeiromene. Perinthia.* LCL. Cambridge 1997.

Barsby 2001 — J. Barsby (trans.): *Terence: The Woman of Andros. The Self-Tormentor. The Eunuch.* LCL. Cambridge 2001.

Fairclough–Goold 2001 — H. R. Fairclough (trans.) – G. P. Goold (ed.): *Vergil: Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid I–VI.* LCL. Cambridge (MA) 2001.

Kovacs 1994 — D. Kovacs (ed.–trans.): *Euripides: Cyclops. Alcestis. Medea.* LCL. Cambridge (MA) 1994.

MacLeod 1961 — M. D. MacLeod (ed.–trans.): *Lucian: Volume VII.* LCL. Cambridge 1961.

Mras 1930 — K. Mras (ed.): *Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen.* Berlin 1930.

Secondary Sources

Abramson 2014 — K. Abramson: *Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting.* Philosophical Perspectives 28 (2014) 1–30. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.12046

Arnold 2009 — J. Arnold: *Gender and Sexuality.* In: C. Lansing – E. English (eds.): A Companion to the Medieval World. Hoboken (NJ) 2009, 161–184. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444324198.ch8

Bartelink 1964 — G. J. M. Bartelink: *Geschiedenis van de Klassieke Letterkunde.* Utrecht 1964.

Brown 2000 — R. Brown: *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups.* (2nd ed.). Malden 2000. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118719244

CGCG 2019 — E. van Emde Boas – A. Rijksbaron – L. Huitink – M. de Bakker (eds.): *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek.* Cambridge 2019. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139027052

Cohen 2008 E. E. Cohen: *Free and Unfree Sexual Work: An Economic Analysis of Athenian Prostitution.* In: C. A. Faraone, C.A. – L.K. McClure (eds.): Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World. Wisconsin (WI) 2008, 95–124.

Davidson 1997 J. Davidson: *Courtesans and Fishcakes. The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens.* London 1997.

DNP 2006 J. Cancik H. (ed.): *Der Neue Pauly.* 2006. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/der-neue-pauly. 2021. 10. 12.

Durlauf–Young 2001 S. N. Durlauf – H. P. Young (eds.): *Social Dynamics.* Cambridge (MA) 2001.

Forsdyke 2021 S. Forsdyke: *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greece.* Cambridge 2021. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139505772

Gilfoyle 1999 T. J. Gilfoyle: *Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity.* The American Historical Review 104 (1) (1999) 117–141. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/104.1.117

Gilhuly 2007 K. Gilhuly: *Bronze for Gold: Subjectivity in Lucian's 'Dialogues of the Courtesans'.* The American Journal of Philology 128 (1) (2007), 59–94. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2007.0015

Glazebrook–Henry 2011 A. Glazebrook – M. M. Henry (eds.): *Greek Prostitutes in the Ancient Mediterranean 800 BCE–200 CE.* Madison (WI) 2011.

Hellström–Russel 2020 M. Hellström – A. Russell (eds.): *Introduction.* In: A. Russel – M. Hellström (eds.): The Social Dynamics of Roman Imperial Imagery. Cambridge 2020, 1–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108891714

Kurke 1999 L. Kurke: *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold.* Princeton (NJ) 1999. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv182jtfx

Legrand 1907 P. Legrand: *Les Dialogues des Courtisanes Comparés avec la Comédie.* Revue des Études Grecques 20 (88) (1907) 176–231.

Mauritsch 2018 P. Mauritsch: *Lebensunterhalt(ung): Lukians Hetärengespräche als Mikroökonomische Fallstudien.* In: K. Schnegg – B. Truschnegg – M. Pohl (eds.): Antike Welten: Althistorische Forschungen in Österreich. Innsbruch 2018, 187–206.

Roisman 2015 H. M. Roisman: *Lucian's Courtesans: Vulnerable Women in a Difficult Occupation.* In: C. A. Clark – E. Foster – J. P. Hallett (eds.): Kinesis: The Ancient Depiction of Gesture, Motion, and Emotion. Ann Arbor (MI) 2015, 188–206. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1586369

Shreve-Price 2014 S. S. Shreve-Price: *Complicated Courtesans: Lucian's Dialogues of the Courtesans*. Ph.D. diss. Iowa State University 2014. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.xh0yeszn

Sweet 2019 P. L. Sweet: *The Sociology of Gaslighting*. American Sociological Review 84 (5) (2019), 851–875. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419874843