Laughter in the Exchange: Lucian’s Invention of the Comic Dialogue

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

Anna Irene Peterson, M.A.

Graduate Program in Greek and Latin

The Ohio State University

2010

Dissertation Committee:

Tom Hawkins, Advisor

Fritz Graf

Richard Fletcher
Abstract

My dissertation examines Lucian’s claim to have invented the comic dialogue. For Lucian, this new generic category resolves the quarrel between Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue, which he imagines arose from Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates in the Clouds and the subsequent blame that Socrates directs at Aristophanes in Plato’s Apology. Through a study of specific texts such as the Fisherman and the Nigrinus as well as broader categories within Lucian’s corpus, I argue that Lucian rescues Old Comedy from the attacks of Plato and his successors by attributing philosophical value to it. My work stands in contrast to recent scholarship on Lucian, which has focused on his relationship to the historical and cultural debates surrounding the Second Sophistic and the Cynic tradition. While these approaches have contributed substantially to our understanding of Lucian’s cultural and philosophical identity, I want to extend its implications to articulate the significance of Lucian’s characterization of his writings as the union of the comic and philosophic traditions.

The first half of my dissertation is devoted to examining the different ways in which Lucian characterizes his literary project. In chapter one, I focus on the category of texts generally referred to as Lucian’s prologues. While scholars have tended to view these texts as sophistic showpieces, I argue that Lucian’s use of complex intertextual
references to respond to his rivals and critics, whether real or imagined, betrays a debt to the Aristophanic parabasis and as such characterizes the programmatic statements found within these works are far from straightforward. As I show through a close analysis of several of these texts, Lucian’s manipulation of the traditionally serious genres of epic, tragedy and philosophy within these texts provides us with a methodology with which to approach his overall literary project.

In my second chapter, I turn to the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted*, two texts that are, in effect, apologies for Old Comedy. By imagining that he is on trial for his comic reinvention of the philosophical dialogue, Lucian engages with the critique of the genre put forth by Plato and his followers and reinvents the philosophical apology as an apology for Old Comedy. Through his reworking of this genre, Lucian attributes philosophical value to Old Comedy by arguing that the socio-political focus of the genre is necessary to save philosophy from becoming corrupted by the charlatan philosophers that Lucian sees plaguing society.

These first two chapters contend that Lucian’s comic dialogues are more than humorous works written in dialogue format; they reinvent Old Comedy as a species of philosophy. In my third and fourth chapters, I consider how this understanding of Lucian’s literary style reveals new layers of meaning in a variety of different texts. In my third chapter, I explore how Lucian enacts this literary and philosophical program by staging (and thereby attempting to resolve) through different comic sources, drawn not just from Old Comedy, the sectarian debates of the philosophical schools in four key texts: the *Menippus*, the *Icaromenippus*, the *Parasite*, and the *Hermotimus*. Closely
connected with this problem is that of philosophical education, an issue that is rooted in the *Clouds* and Plato’s discussions of the sophists. As I suggest, Lucian fuses both comic and philosophical approaches to this problem so as to develop and enact his comic dialogues. By calling into question the established philosophical schools, these texts demonstrate the different ways in which Lucian employs his new hybrid genre and, more importantly, how he uses it to establish his own comedic-philosophical approach as a return to the Socratic search for knowledge before it came to be reinterpreted by the different schools.

In contrast to the broad focus of my third chapter, my fourth and final chapter examines the *Nigrinus*, a text traditionally deemed to be one of Lucian’s few positive portrayals of a contemporary philosopher. Applying the methodology established in the first two chapters to this text, however, I argue that an initial invocation of Platonic *eros*, as well as a double allusion to the *Clouds* and the *Phaedrus* found in the description of Nigrinus reveals that the *Nigrinus* is in fact a critique of the type of philosopher portrayed in this text. By undermining Nigrinus in such a way, Lucian establishes himself as the true philosophical writers deeply indebted to both the comic and Platonic traditions. As the *Nigrinus* reveals, Lucian’s comic dialogues refer not just to works written in dialogue form, but rather more broadly to his philosophic approach.
For my Mother, Father, and Steve
Acknowledgements

It is impossible to properly thank everyone who has helped me in the process of composing my dissertation. First and foremost, I owe the greatest debt to my advisor, Tom Hawkins, whose continued intellectual support, guidance, and encouragement have helped me at every step of the way. It is impossible for me to put into words what his enthusiasm, wit, keen eye for detail, and enduring patience have meant to me over the past few years. From the inception of this project in his Lucian seminar to its final stages, Tom has improved almost every page of this dissertation and in doing so, has made me a more careful reader of literature. Without him, this project would not have been possible.

I thank Fritz Graf, who has been both a guide and a paradigm of scholarly excellence throughout my graduate career. I am very grateful to Fritz for agreeing to be part of this project, despite the fact it stands outside the scope of his recent scholarly interests. His invaluable comments on my various drafts have revealed new connections and overall have made me a better writer.

I thank Richard Fletcher, who is both a teacher and friend, for all of the generous help that he offered on each of the chapters. Richard has always inspired me to ask
overarching, difficult, and at times unanswerable questions about the material covered in my dissertation. These questions have often pushed me beyond what I thought were my limitations and I believe that Richard’s input have truly made this a better and more fulfilling project.

I thank all of my friends, in particular Kira, Todd, Lindsay, and Molly, for the emotional support that you have offered me through this long process. You have helped me to keep focused on what is truly important and without you, I am not sure I would have stayed sane.

I would also like to thank my parents for instilling in me the importance of hard work and for the help and encouragement that they have always offered me. Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé, Steve, who has been my rock during this entire process, offering assistance at every step of this process, from my oral exams to my final revisions. It is to them that I dedicate my dissertation.
Vita

July 13, 1982......................................Born, Hamilton, NY

May, 2004...........................................B.A. Classics, Mount Holyoke College

May, 2006...........................................M.A. Greek and Latin

The Ohio State University

September 2004-present......................Graduate Teaching Associate

Major Field: Greek and Latin
# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... ii
Dedication ....................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ vi
Vita ..................................................................................................................................... viii
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
  1. Discussions of Old Comedy in Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides ......................... 7
  2. Lucian and Old Comedy ...................................................................................... 29
  3. Some Terminology Defined .................................................................................. 31
Chapter 1 Defining the Syrian: the Prologues as Comic Parabases .................... 33
  1. Lucian’s Prologues as Comic Parabases ............................................................. 37
  2. The Heracles ..................................................................................................... 42
  3. The Dionysus ..................................................................................................... 62
  4. The Literary Prometheus .................................................................................... 85
  5. Conclusions ....................................................................................................... 104
Chapter 2 Lucian on the Defensive: the Fisherman and Twice Prosecuted
  as Apologies for Old Comedy .................................................................................. 106
Introduction

As one of the most elusive authors of the Imperial period, Lucian is difficult to pin down on nearly every front: political, cultural, philosophical, and literary. He tests his readers with a myriad of allusions to the Greek Classical tradition and confounds them with a variety of different authorial personae that result in a complex array of narrative layers. In an attempt to better define him as an author, many recent discussions have tackled him in terms of his complex cultural identity as a Syrian writing in Greek under the Roman Empire.1 Others have focused on specific aspects of his work, in particular his portrayal and discussion of philosophers, and this approach has led some scholars to classify Lucian’s philosophical affiliation as Cynic, Epicurean, or Skeptic.2 Although these discussions have revealed different and important facets of Lucian’s writings, especially how he manipulates his cultural identity and his serious engagement with philosophy, they almost universally ignore Lucian’s own accounts that appear in the Literary Prometheus, Fisherman, and Twice Prosecuted: the union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue. Moreover, there has yet to be a discussion of these passages both in light of

---

2 For discussion of Lucian’s portrayal of and relation to the different philosophical schools, see Branham (1989) for connections to the Cynics, Clay (1992) for those to the Epicureans, Nesselrath (1992) for those to Skepticism, and Dolcetti (1998) for a general summary of his portrayal of the different philosophical schools. Dolcetti’s discussion is divided based on the different schools and in each section she evaluates Lucian’s connections to the respective schools. Her conclusion is ultimately similar to that of Clay.
one another and in terms of the rest of the corpus. This dissertation will offer a new view of Lucian by focusing on this single, recurring motif within Lucian’s writings: his claim to have invented the comic dialogue through the resolution of the generic conflict between Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue that arose from Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Plato’s *Apology*. In exploring this theme in his writings, I will argue that Lucian rescues Old Comedy from the attacks of Plato and his successors by attributing philosophical value to it. As I will contend, recognition of this aspect of Lucian’s writings provides a new methodology for approaching his philosophical affiliation, his relationship to the literary tradition, and ultimately his treatment of his contemporary intellectual society.

Lucian carves out a place for his literary creation by honing in on what he sees as the problematic relationship between comedy and philosophy. In his accounts of this hybrid genre, however, we find Lucian defending his use of Old Comedy against charges that it has corrupted philosophy. At the heart of these attacks staged by Lucian is the fact that Aristophanes’ mockery of Socrates sparked Plato to characterize comedy as hostile to philosophy. Although Aristophanes plays a central role in the *Symposium*, Plato’s Socrates paints comedy as a potentially problematic and dangerous genre. For the purposes of our discussion, the most notable example of this appears in the *Apology*, where Socrates groups the poet’s portrayal of him in the *Clouds* among his first and more dangerous accusers:

> Ἀναλάβομεν οὖν ἐξ ἄρχης τῆς ἡ κατηγορία ἔστιν ἐξ Ἡς ἡ ἐμὴ διαβολὴ γέγονεν, ἦ δὴ καὶ πιστεύων Μέλητος με ἐγράψας τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην. εἶεν· τί δὴ λέγοντες διέβαλλον οἱ διαβάλλοντες; ὡσπερ οὖν κατηγόρων τὴν ἀντωμοσίαν δεῖ ἀναγώναι αὐτὸν. “Σοκράτης ἄδικεν καὶ περιεργάζεται ζητῶν τά τε ὑπὸ γῆς καὶ

---

3 See Nightingale (1996) for a discussion of the generic play at work in Plato’s dialogues
οὐράνια καὶ τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιῶν καὶ ἄλλους ταῦτα ταῦτα διδάσκων." τοιαύτη τίς ἔστιν· ταῦτα γὰρ ἐσωρᾶτε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀριστοφάνους κομῳδίᾳ, Σωκράτη τινα ἔκει περιφερόμενον, φάσκοντά τε ἀεροβατεῖν καὶ ἄλλην πολλὴν φλαριαν φλαροῦντα…

Let’s take up from the beginning the content of the charge that has brought about this slander against me. Meletus believed it and then brought this indictment against me. What is it that they say when they slander me, those slanderers? Now I must read aloud my accuser’s affidavit, as it were. “Socrates does injustice and is a busybody by studying the things above and below the earth, by making the weaker argument the stronger, and teaching others these same things.” It’s something like this. You saw this for yourselves in the comedy of Aristophanes that a certain Socrates was swinging around up there in the basket, claiming to walk on air and spouting all sorts of other nonsense… (19a-b)

In this passage, Socrates refers to Aristophanes by name, blaming him for his current legal troubles and effectively casting the genre of comedy as hostile to philosophy. This view of comedy is reinforced in the tenth book of the Republic, where comedy is banned alongside tragedy from the city, and in the Laws, which declare that no citizen should study it (VII.816 e) and that it is only permissible if it is not inspired by anger (XI.935D). The discussions of comedy in these dialogues consequently characterize it as a dangerous genre because its attacks are ad hominem and can raise an entire population unfairly against one individual, as in the case of Socrates.

In his accounts of his comic dialogue form, Lucian defends his reliance on comedy against the attacks of Plato and his followers by arguing that comedy can have philosophical value when applied to the problems plaguing contemporary times. By invoking Aristophanes and the other poets of Old Comedy as important components of his literary creation, Lucian draws on earlier representations of Socrates than that of Plato, suggesting that he considers their authority to be equal or potentially more than
Lucian thus bills himself as the successor to Aristophanes and the other poets of Old Comedy and, in doing so, creates a version of the genre that could withstand the criticism leveled against it by Plato and his successors. In considering Lucian’s debt to Old Comedy, my approach will not to be to catalogue the comic allusions found within Lucian’s corpus but rather to explore how Lucian presents his defenses of comedy as programmatic statements for reading and understanding his whole corpus. By disentangling Lucian’s self-representation as the sole heir to Old Comedy and consequently to Socrates, I will argue that we can see Lucian resurrecting comedy to serve a philosophical purpose.

This, I believe, both builds upon and profitably redirects previous discussions of Lucian, in particular Branham’s groundbreaking approach. For Branham, Lucian’s generic outlook is defined by its combination of humorous and serious elements (spoudogeloion), an outlook which, he argues, situates Lucian within the seriocomic tradition that arose from Plato’s depiction of Socrates in such dialogues as the Euthydemus and the subsequent Cynic revaluation of the Socratic persona. Yet in his discussion of Lucian’s serious use of humor, Branham downplays Lucian’s debt to Old Comedy in favor of connecting Lucian’s serious use of humor to that found in Plato’s writings and among the Cynics. Although this approach has significantly demonstrated that Lucian is a serious author in his own right—and, as a result, should be the object of continuing study—it ignores, for the most part, Lucian’s discussions of his craft, which

---

4 For comic representations of philosophers, see Webster (1953: 50-6, 110-113) and Galy (1979: 109-30). For a collection of the comic fragments that reference Socrates and other philosophers, see Olson (2007: 227-255).
highlight not only his debt to Old Comedy, but how his own literary creation, the comic
dialogue, represents his philosophical reinvention of that genre. As I will argue, Lucian’s
descriptions of his literary style, in which he claims to have coaxed dialogue and comedy
to cooperate in remarkable synergy, provide us with a framework for analyzing Lucian’s
unique writing style and, more specifically, his treatment of philosophy.

Lucian’s interest in philosophy and the resulting portrayals of philosophical sects
has prompted scholars to classify Lucian philosophically. While Clay and Dolcetti have
highlighted Lucian’s Epicureanism through such texts as the *Alexander*, Nesselrath has
contended that Lucian’s mockery of philosophers in the *Hermotimus* proves a connection
to Skepticism.⁶ These attempts to pin down Lucian philosophically, however, fail to take
into account Lucian’s own theoretical discussions of his approach to philosophy and the
emphasis that he places on the role played by comedy. In considering Lucian’s claim to
have united Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue, I will approach his treatment of
philosophy from the vantage point of comedy. As I will argue, Lucian’s comic dialogues
represent his philosophical reinvention of Old Comedy and, as such, serve as the means
by which he attacks and undermines the established philosophical schools. Although
strictly speaking Lucian is not a philosopher, I will contend that understanding how he
envisions the different components of his comic dialogues allows us to view Lucian not
simply as a topical satirist but instead as a philosophical writer. In their attacks on
dogmatism, Lucian’s comic dialogues do not call into question the existence of
knowledge, as a Skeptic might, but rather the current means by which one obtains a

⁶ Cp n.2.
philosophical education, specifically the following of a single school or philosopher. For Lucian, his union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue calls for a return to the Socratic search for knowledge in its purest form. As I will argue, Lucian achieves this not by turning to Plato and philosophy but to Old Comedy, thus establishing Old Comedy as an important philosophical tool.

To fully understand the significance of Lucian’s elevation of Old Comedy to the status of a philosophically valuable genre, it is necessary to first consider this in terms of contemporary literary trends. As Swain and Whitmarsh have respectively demonstrated, the Greek authors of the imperial period carved out a Hellenic identity for themselves in contradistinction to the political power represented by Rome through an imitation of the language, literature, and tropes of Classical Athens. This trend appears most clearly in their adoption of Attic Greek and frequent citation of the great works of Greek literature. Lucian’s debt to Old Comedy thus seems to bear witness to this trend, yet his repeated need to defend his reliance on it raises questions about its reception at this time. Is Lucian merely responding to Plato in his defense of Old Comedy? Or did Plato’s attacks on the genre have a lasting effect on how it was viewed? To address these questions, I will first examine how several of Lucian’s near contemporaries viewed Old Comedy, specifically Aristophanic Comedy, both in terms of its value as a genre from the Classical period and, more specifically, its representation of Socrates. Since Lucian locates the problem faced by his new genre in the tension between Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Plato’s *Apology*, I will, for the most part, limit my focus to discussion of Aristophanes and comic

---

representations of Socrates, at the expense of the other comic poets.\textsuperscript{8} Although my discussion is not intended to be an exhaustive study of Old Comedy’s reception during the Imperial period, it will provide a useful point of comparison for Lucian’s treatment of Old Comedy, which we will explore in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{9}

**Discussions of Old Comedy in Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides**

In a recent article, Bowie has suggested that Old Comedy rose in popularity during the Second Sophistic because of its status as an example of Classical Attic Greek, while New Comedy remained the preferred comic genre for educational purposes, symposia, and perhaps even performance.\textsuperscript{10} Though Bowie presents comparisons of the frequency of comic allusions found in the works of Dio Chrysostom, Maximus of Tyre, and Aelius Aristides, his discussion focuses largely on the influence of Old Comedy on Lucian's writings and does not take into account the fact that Lucian defends his very use of it, suggesting that the genre was not entirely well-accepted during Lucian's time.\textsuperscript{11} In considering how Plato’s criticism of Old Comedy (specifically Aristophanes) colored how the authors of this period viewed the genre, I will build on Bowie’s discussion of learned citations by examining extended discussions of the specific merits and pitfalls of

---

\textsuperscript{8} Besides Aristophanes’ plays, it is unclear whether the plays of such poets as Eupolis or Cratinus survived in their entirety or in excerpted form. Bowie writes that “it is clear that in this period such educated Greeks (for whom the term *pepaideumenoi*, ‘educated,’ was widely used) were aware what Old Comedy was, knew that Aristophanes, along with Cratinus and Eupolis, was one of its major exponents, and had read enough, whether in complete texts or anthologies, to quote, to refer to, and to recognize the titles of plays and lines from them, (2007:33). In contrast, Anderson (1976D) suggests that Lucian was working not from actual texts but from information that would have been commonly known about Eupolis, (63-5). See also Storey (2003: 37-40).

\textsuperscript{9} There still remains a need for a thorough study of Old Comedy during the Imperial period, a project I hope to undertake in the future.

\textsuperscript{10} Bowie (2007: 33). For further discussion of the influence of Menander, see Fantham (1984).

\textsuperscript{11} We get a similar sense of Aristophanes’ reception during his own time, see the parabasis of the *Clouds.*
Old Comedy found in the writings of Plutarch, Dio, and Aelius Aristides, all of which question the role of Old Comedy in society, either in terms of a sophist’s education or in relationship to philosophy.\textsuperscript{12} Since the purpose of this section is to contextualize Lucian’s repeated defense of Old Comedy, I have limited my discussion only to these authors at the expense of others, such as Athenaeus, in whose writings we find also frequent citation of the comic poets.\textsuperscript{13} In examining the influence of Old Comedy on these writers, however, we must first distinguish between direct allusions or references to Aristophanes, which illustrate Bowie’s point that Old Comedy was included among the canon of literature cited by the authors of this period, and more lengthy discussions of the merits and pitfalls of the genre. As I will argue, although Old Comedy provided fodder for imitating the Attic style, its treatment of Socrates and base tone led some to label it as inappropriate for the \textit{pepaideumenos} to study, meaning that its popularity was tied in part to its reputation as a problematic genre as established by Plato in the \textit{Apology}, \textit{Republic}, and \textit{Laws}.\textsuperscript{14} For Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides, the problem with Old Comedy is thus not humor per se, but the low-register tone it espouses which stands in direct contrast to the higher register of philosophy. This is striking when we consider that Socrates himself is

\textsuperscript{12}A more complete study would include such figures as Athenaeus, Maximus of Tyre, and Pausanias. For a chart of the comic allusions found within these writers, see Bowie (2007: 44-9). As Bowie acknowledges, an exhaustive study would also require the inclusion of the lexicographers and scholars, Moeris, Pollux, and Philetaerus. For a comparison of Old Comedy in Lucian and Athenaeus, see Sidwell (2000).

\textsuperscript{13}For a discussion of comic citations in Athenaeus, see Sidwell (2000). According to Sidwell, Athenaeus’ interest in Old Comedy can be divided into six categories: biographical information, the history of comedy, persons subjected to comic treatment, disputed authorship or revision, aesthetic judgments, and description of plots and characters (139).

\textsuperscript{14}I am here following Swain (1996) and Whitmarsh (2001) in adopting the term \textit{pepaideumenos} to refer to the Greek educated elite of this period.
at times depicted as a low-register figure. Lucian's approach to Old Comedy therefore can be read as a critical response to both the longstanding charges leveled against the genre and the more current ones voiced by his near contemporaries.

Old Comedy’s status as a problematic genre initially becomes apparent when we consider that the only positive discussion of the genre found among the writings of Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides appears in Dio’s thirty-second discourse. At the opening of this speech, Dio asks the Alexandrians to listen to him as he chastises them for their love of laughter, pleasure, and complete lack of seriousness (32.1). According to Barry, this speech was delivered during the reign of Vespasian to an audience composed not of the elite but of the general population of Alexandria. Though Dio admits that it would be impossible to deter the Alexandrians from going to the theater, he asks that they listen to his honest and frank speech, (οὕτω καὶ λόγου χρηστοῦ ποτε ἄκούσαι καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τῷ συμφέροντι δέξασθαι παρρησίαν, 32.5-6). This reference to his own Cynic parrhesia sparks Dio to recall the poetic license of Old Comedy as an attempt to lend further authority of the criticism that he is about offer the Alexandrians:

```
ἀλλὰ τοῦτο γε ἐκεῖνοι καὶ πάνυ καλῶς ἐποίουν, ὦτι τοῖς ποιηταῖς ἐπέτρεπον μη μόνον τοὺς κατ’ ἄνδρα ἐλέγχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κοινῆ τὴν πόλιν, εἰ τι μὴ καλῶς ἔπραπτον· ὅστε σὺν πολλοῖς ἐπέροις καὶ τοιαύτα ἐν ταῖς κωμῳδίαις λέγεσθαι·
δήμος πυκνίτης, δύσκολον γερόντιον, ὑπόκωφον, καὶ
tί δ’ ἐστ’ Ἀθηναίοις πράγμα ἀπώμοιτον;
καὶ ταῦτα ἢκουόν ἐορτάζοντες καὶ δημοκρατούμενοι, καὶ οὐ μόνον τῶν σφετέρων πολιτῶν, εἰ τινα ἠθελον πρὸς ὀργὴν ἀπολέσαι τῶν ταυτα
```

On the contrary, at least this custom of theirs [the Athenians] was very much to their credit—that they gave their poets license to question, not only individuals, but even the state at large, in the event that they were acting badly. Accordingly, among many other examples that might be cited, they said the following things in comedies:

Old Demos of Pynxtown, testy little old man, and rather deaf.

and

What deed is there that Athens would deem impossible?

They heard these things when they were celebrating a festival and while in the process of doing democracy. In addition to this, if they wanted to destroy someone out of anger because they were saying such things, they not only exerted their authority over their own citizens, but also over the other Greeks. And if they so desired, they were able to hear nothing unpleasant. (32.6)

Dio here characterizes Old Comedy as performing the type of elenctic questioning (ἐλέγρεηλ) usually attributed to Socrates. This questioning took place under the sanction of a festival and was closely connected to the democratic process, as the participle δημοκρατούμενοι suggests. Although he characterizes the genre largely as a tool for checking on the performance of the officials of the polis, Dio’s reference to the Athenians’ ability to “destroy someone out of anger” and refusal to hear anything displeasing raises the possibility that comedy’s corrective power could be misused. The potential problem, however, is not necessarily with Old Comedy per se, but with extreme democracy and the role that Old Comedy played in it. Moreover, Dio’s praise in this speech for the parrhesia inherent in Old Comedy is noteworthy because of the way he connects it to Cynic parrhesia, a connection that we will see Lucian similarly make in the

---

17 All translations of Dio are adapted from Cohoon (1940).
18 In his discussion of this speech, Barry argues that it depicts Dio’s aristocratic viewpoint, an interesting idea when read in light of this passage since Old Comedy was a genre typically associated at this time with the masses (1993: 83). For further discussion of this speech, see Borthwick (1972) and Jones (1978).
Fisherman. Yet this view of comic parrhesia is striking when read alongside the far more critical view of it presented in the 1st Tarsic oration, where it is connected to comedy's mistreatment of Socrates. This opinion of Old Comedy, as well as the view that it is stylistically inappropriate for an educated person to study, pervades the discussions of the genre at this time. By undermining Old Comedy’s status as an important Athenian genre for writers of the Imperial period, these attacks suggest that it has no place in contemporary society, a view that we will see Lucian attempt to refute in the Fisherman and Twice Prosecuted.

To begin with critiques based on Old Comedy’s problematic relationship with philosophy, in his 1st Tarsic discourse Dio chastises the people of Tarsus for their love of sophistic performances as opposed to Dio’s more serious speeches. In his description of how audiences tend to disregard the philosopher because he does not flatter them, Dio presents his audience with the following account of the relationship between Old Comedy and Socrates:

Ἀζελαῖνη γὰξ εἰσζόηεο ἀθνύεηλ θαθ῵ο, θαὶ λὴ Δία ἐπ” αὐηὸ ηνῦην ζπληόληεο εἰο ηὸ ζέαηξνλ ὡο ινηδνξεζεζόκ ελνη, θαὶ πξνηεζεηθόηεο ἀγίλα θαὶ λίθελ ηνῖο ἄκεηλνλ αὐηὸ πξάηηνπζηλ, νὐθ αὐηνὶ ηνῦην εὑξόληεο, ἀιιὰ ηνῦ ζενῦ ζπκβνπιεύζαληνο, Ἀξηζηνθάλνπο κὲλ ἤθνπνλ θαὶ Κξαηίλνπ θαὶ Πιάησλνο, θαὶ ηνύηνπο νὐδὲλ θαθὸλ ἐπνίεζαλ. ἐπεὶ δὲ Σσθξάηεο ἄλεπ ζθελῆο θαὶ ἰθξίσλ ἐπνί ηὸ ηνῦ ζενῦ πξόζηαγκα, νὐ θνξδαθίδσλ νὐδὲ ἐθεῖλνη κὲλ γὰξ ὑθνξώκελνη θαὶ δεδηόηεο ἡὸλ δῆκνλ ὡο δεζπόηελ ἐζώπεπνλ, ἠξέκα δάθλνληεο θαὶ κεηὰ γέισηνο, ὥζπεξ αἱ ηίηζαη ηνῖο παηδίνηο, ὅηαλ δέῃ ηη η῵λ ἀεδεζηέξσλ πηεῖλ αὐηά, πξνζθέξνπ ζη κέιηηη ρξίζαζαη ηὴλ θύιηθα. ηνηγαξνῦλ ἔβιαπηνλ νὐρ ἧηηνλ 19 There is much debate among scholars about how to interpret this speech. For a good summary of the interpretations that have been proposed, see Kokkina (2007), who herself asserts that what Dio is chastising in this speech is the Tarsian’s flatulence. Bost-Pouderon (2006) also surveys the various interpretations and concludes that Tarsus likes Asiatic oratory too much.
The Athenians were accustomed to be abused and, I swear, they went to
the theater for the following reason: to be reproached. And they set up a
contest with a prize for the victor. They didn’t just happen upon this on
their own, but did so in consultation with the God. And they often listened
to Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Plato [Comicus] and didn’t punish them.
But when Socrates without the stage and benches tried to perform the task
set before him by the god, not dancing the chorus nor singing those silly
songs, they would not put up with him. And the comic poets were
distrustful and afraid, and they flattered the people as if they were
flattering a master. They stung gently by adding laughter, just as nurses
do to children, whenever it is necessary for them to drink something bitter,
they offer a cup smeared with honey. So they did no less harm than good,
when they filled the city with arrogance, jokes, and buffoonery. But the
philosopher was always critical and rebuked his listeners. (33.9-10)

In contrast to the complimentary view of the parrhesia of Old Comedy found in his
address to the Alexandrians, Dio here presents a negative view of that freedom. Dio’s
language in this passage suggests that not only were the Athenians threatened by
Socrates, who questioned them outside the theater, but by the comic poets as well. This
fear of Socrates, according to Dio, led to the degradation of Old Comedy as a genre.20
Comedy was no longer good and free-speaking but corrupt and interested only in flattery.
Such flattery diminished the value of Old Comedy to the point that it was in fact harmful
to the Athenians because it instilled in them arrogance, jokes, and buffoonery, (ἀγεροχίας
καὶ σκομμάτων καὶ βωμολογίας). Dio here creates a dichotomy between the divine
inspiration that sanctioned comic festivals and Socrates’ own personal god who incited
him to philosophy. As Dio recasts the relationship between Old Comedy and Socrates,

20 Plato Comicus’ dates are somewhat uncertain. We know that he won his first victory at the City
Dionysia c.410 BCE and seems to have been active in the late fifth and early fourth centuries.
the Athenians had a choice between the two and were led astray by the flattery of Old Comedy. Dio breaks off here and we are left to consider how the poets of Old Comedy exerted undue influence on the people of Athens and the role that that influence played in the conviction of Socrates.

We can find similar views expressed in Plutarch's *On the Education of Children*. In this text, Plutarch relates an anecdote about Socrates to illustrate why children should be taught to restrain their anger. According to Plutarch, Socrates had the following reaction to Aristophanes’ *Clouds*:

> Ἀριστοφάνους δὲ, ὅτε τὰς Νεφέλας ἔξεφερε, παντοίως πᾶσαν ὥριν αὐτοῦ κατασκευασθήτως, καὶ τινὸς τῶν παρόντων “κατὰ τοιαῦτ’ ἀνακομιδήτως οὐκ ἁγανακτεῖς” εἰπόντος “ὅ Σώκρατες;” “μὰ Δί’ οὐκ ἔγγυς;” ἔφησεν. “ὡς γὰρ ἐν συμποσίῳ μεγάλῳ τῷ θεάτρῳ σκόπτομαι.”

And when Aristophanes brought out the *Clouds*, and sprinkled out all sorts of abuse on Socrates in every possible way, someone who had been present said to Socrates, “Are you not indignant, Socrates, that he used you as he did in the play? “No indeed,” he replied; “when I am mocked in the theater I feel as if I were at a big party of good friends.” (10C-D)²¹

Although the focus of this tale is ultimately Socrates’ ability to rise above anger, this passage nonetheless expresses a view of the *Clouds* that is indebted to the characterization of the play as one of Socrates’ initial accusers found in Plato’s *Apology* (18a-c). Socrates is able to laugh off Aristophanes’ portrayal of him, yet Plutarch is not so kind as he describes the play as committing every kind of *hubris* against Socrates (παντοίως πᾶσαν ὥριν αὐτοῦ κατασκευασθήτως). Plutarch’s anecdote about Socrates presumably took place around 423, when the *Clouds* was performed and consequently years before Socrates’ trial and execution. His comments thus suggest that perhaps

²¹ All translations of Plutarch’s *The Education of Children* are adapted from Babbit (1927).
Socrates should not have overlooked Aristophanes’ portrayal of him so readily. As this passage indicates, reading the *Clouds* through the lens of sympotic teasing does not in fact translate well into a large scale theatrical performance. In other words, mockery in the hands of the masses can be dangerous.

Both of these discussions reveal Plutarch and Dio to be drawing on Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates in the *Clouds* and Plato’s subsequent reaction to it as a tool for considering the societal role assumed by comedy. In addition to these examples, we also find several discussions in this period that question the stylistic merits of Old Comedy in comparison to those of New Comedy. Of these discussions, the most notable and explicit examples appear in the eighth book of Plutarch’s *Table Talk*, Dio’s discourse *On Training*, and the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* usually attributed to Plutarch. In his account of Old Comedy at this time, Bowie argues that it was precisely Old Comedy’s style of language that led to its popularity during this time, while Menander tended to be more popular in the contexts of education and symposia.\(^{22}\)

Though the preference for Menander in these works is not surprising because of its popularity in the latter category of contexts, it nonetheless reveals a view that Old Comedy was a stylistically unappealing and immoral genre that should be held at arm’s length. In other words, while it might be acceptable to cite a line or two of Aristophanes or another comic poet to demonstrate the extent of one’s *paideia*, to fully embrace and imitate the genre as Lucian does was something to be avoided.

\(^{22}\) Bowie (2007: 33).
The unifying thread between these discussions is that Old Comedy is in some way inappropriate for the *pepaideumenos*. In the eighth book of Plutarch’s *Table Talk*, for example, a question arises as to what type of entertainment is appropriate at a symposium. Though an anonymous sophist suggests dramatizations of Plato’s dialogues, this answer is rejected on the grounds that such performances would denigrate Plato’s works (711C). Another participant in the dialogue, Diogenianus, then proceeds to discuss the pros and cons of more traditional genres including tragedy and comedy. While Diogenianus dismisses tragedy because its tone is unsuitable for a sympotic context, he discards Old Comedy because of its generally inappropriate and obscure subject matter:

As for comedy, Old Comedy is, because of its unevenness, unsuitable for men who are drinking. For example, the seriousness and *parrhesia* in the so-called parabases is very strong and intense, and its indifference regarding jokes and buffoonery is terribly immoderate, explicit, and loaded with disorderly and licentious words. What is more, just as a special waiter stands by each guest, at the banquets of the great, so everyone would need his own scholar to explain the allusions: who is Laespodias in Eupolis, and Cinesias in Plato, and Lampon in Cratinus, and so on with all the persons satirized in the plays. Our dinner party would turn into a schoolroom, or else the jokes would be without meaning or point. (711F-712A)
Diogenianus’ initial rejection of Old Comedy as being far too serious in the parabases and overly crude in the rest of the play suggests a view that comedy should be more homogenous in nature. His further denunciation of the genre because of its obscure references consequently paints an image of it as too recondite to be a form of entertainment. In other words, Diogenianus seems here to worry that the jokes of Old Comedy would be too opaque and laborious for the participants of a symposium. While Diogenianus considers Old Comedy to be completely inappropriate for a symposium, he presents New Comedy as perfectly suitable for it. Where Old Comedy’s style is uneven, New Comedy is pleasant, prosaic, and neither too crude for those who are sober nor too difficult for the more inebriated crowd to understand, (ἡ ηε γὰξ ιέμηο θαὶ πεδηέζπαξηαη η῵λ πξαγκάησλ, ὡο κήζ" ὑπὸ λεθόλησλ θαηαθξνλεῖζζαη κήη" νἰλσκέλνπο ἁληᾶλ· 712).  

The reasons behind Diogenianus’ preference for New Comedy are not unique, but appear as well in Dio’s On Training. In this text, however, there is the sense that Dio’s preference goes against popular opinion. Designed as an instructional guide for a would-be sophist, On Training discusses at length which authors a would-be sophist should study. When he comes to the genre of comedy, Dio suggests that Menander is in fact a better choice than any of the poets of Old Comedy:  

τὸν μὲν δὴ ποιητῶν συμβουλεύσαιμ’ ἁν σοι Μενάνδρῳ τε τῶν κωμικῶν μὴ παρέργως ἐντυγχάνειν καὶ Εὐριπίδη τῶν τραγικῶν... καὶ μηδεῖς τῶν σοφωτέρων αὐτάσηται μὲ ὡς προκρίναστα τῆς ἀρχαίας κομῳδίας τὴν Μενάνδρου ἢ τῶν ἀρχαίων τραγῳδῶν Εὐριπίδην· οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ ιατροὶ τὰς πολυτελεστάτας τροφὰς συντάττουσι τοῖς θεραπείας δεσμένοις, ἀλλὰ τὰς  

---

23 This passage would also seem to suggest that Old Comedy was a good source for the pepaideumenos eager to showcase his knowledge through obscure references.
I would advise you to read Menander of the comic poets quite carefully, and Euripides of the tragedians...And let no one of the more ‘advanced’ critics chide me for selecting Menander’s plays in preference to the Old Comedy, or Euripides in preference to the early writers of Tragedy. For physicians do not prescribe the most costly diet for their patients, but that which is advantageous. Now it would be a long task to enumerate all the advantages to be derived from these writers; indeed, Menander’s portrayal of every character and every trait surpassed all the skill of the early writers of comedy. (18.7)

Dio’s insistence here that the aspiring sophist have Menander’s poetry read to him indicates a preference for Menander’s language and style. Yet unlike the example from Plutarch’s Table Talk, Dio’s reference to the objection that his “wiser” critics might raise suggests that his opinion goes against a more popular elitist preference for Old Comedy.

The inclusion of this contrary view establishes a dichotomy between the poets of Old Comedy who are labeled by Dio as πολυτελεστάται or “very expensive” and Menander who is ὠθειίκνηται or “advantageous,” partly because of his style and partly because of his skill at depicting character types. As the metaphor of the doctor suggests, Dio views the education that his would-be sophist might derive from Old Comedy as potentially detrimental, though he leaves it up to his audience to infer how.

We find this concern for the educative value of Old Comedy expressed in even greater detail in the fragmentary epitome, A Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander, which was transmitted among Plutarch’s works.24 Written apparently as a comparison of the two comic poets, this text argues that the language and overall poetic style of

Aristophanes’ plays make them unappealing and even inappropriate for an educated person (πεπαιδευμένος).\textsuperscript{25} While Aristophanes’ language is described as coarse, vulgar, and bawdy (φορτικόν, θυμελικόν, and βάναυσον), this text establishes Menander’s as the ideal. Aristophanes’ faults ultimately lie in his word choices and his overuse of such stylistic devices as antitheses and puns, to name just a few. Menander, by contrast, employs these devices in moderation (853b).\textsuperscript{26} Besides his overuse of rhetorical tropes, Aristophanes is further censured for the heterogeneous quality of his writing:

Moreover, in his diction there are tragic, comic, pompous, and prosaic elements, obscurity, vagueness, dignity, and elevation, loquacity and sickening nonsense. And with all these differences and dissimilarities his use of words does not give to each kind its fitting and appropriate use… (853D)

Like the arguments expressed by Diogenianus in Plutarch’s Table Talk, Aristophanes’ poetry is here described as too uneven in tone in comparison to Menander’s language.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} As Hunter notes, “the categories of humor appropriate to the educated man were a major topic of Hellenistic ethical discussion, much of it taking its cue from Aristotle, and were a fundamental part of newly emerging ideas about the truly “free” (ἐλευθέρος) man.” (2000: 269)

\textsuperscript{26} The initial comparison goes as follows: Τὸ φορτικόν, φησίν, ἐν λόγοις καὶ θυμελικόν καὶ βάναυσον ὃς ἐστιν Αριστοφάνη, Μενάνδρῳ δ’οὐδάμωρ. καὶ γὰρ ὁ μὲν ἀπαίδευστος καὶ ἰδιώτης, οἷς ἐκείνος λέγει, ἀλάζκεηαι· ὁ δὲ πεπαιδευμένος δεσποτανεῖ· λέγω δὲ τὰ ἀντιθέτα καὶ ὁμοιότατα καὶ παρανομίας, τούτους γὰρ ὁ μὲν μετὰ τὸν προσηκόντος λόγον καὶ ὀλιγάκις χρήσις ἐπιμελείας αὐτὰ ἄξιον, ὁ δὲ καὶ πολλάκις καὶ οὐκ ἐυκαίριος καὶ ἡγαροῦ· (“Coarseness,” he says, “in words, vulgarity and bawdiness are present in Aristophanes, but not at all in Menander; obviously, for the uneducated, ordinary person is captivated by what the former says, but the educated man will be displeased. I refer to antitheses and similar endings and plays on words. For Menander uses theses with proper consideration and rarely, believing that they should be treated with care, but Aristophanes employs them frequently, inopportune, and frigidly, 853b)."

\textsuperscript{27} Menander’s language is characterized in the following way: Ἡ δὲ Μενάνδρου φράσεις οὕτω συνεξεται καὶ συμπεπεπένευκε κεκραμένη πρὸς ἑαυτήν, ὡστε διὰ πολλῶν ἡγομένη παθῶν καὶ ἰδίων καὶ προσόπως ἐφαρμότουσα παντοτόπως μια τε φαίνεσθαι καὶ τὴν ὁμοιότητα τιρεῖν ἐν τοῖς κοινοῖς καὶ συνήθεια καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν χρεῖαιν ὀνόμασθαι: (But Menander’s diction is so polished and its ingredients mingled into so consistent a whole that, although it is employed in connection with many emotions and many types of...
Unlike Dio’s discussion of comedy in *On Training*, this preference for Menander does not seem to be limited to the realm of education, but rather indicates a more general preference for Menander’s style of poetry that extends even into the realm of the theater (854b).

Any interpretation of this text, however, is complicated by its status as a fragmentary summary of a longer work. As the editor of the Loeb edition notes, this text is “at best” a summary of a lost essay by Plutarch, implying of course that someone else could have just as easily composed it. Even if we accept Plutarch as the original author, a question about the text’s original format still remains. Was this text originally an essay or a dialogue, such as the discussion of comedy found in *Table Talk*? Recent scholarship has accepted Plutarch as the author of the original text and focused on why Plutarch would have portrayed Aristophanes in such a negative light. Hunter, for example, argues that Plutarch’s critique of Aristophanes stems from Plutarch’s interpretation of “what constitutes Greekness” and *paideia*. For Hunter, Plutarch’s attack on Aristophanes is itself traditional because it draws its inspiration from Homer’s portrayal of Thersites, Thucydides’ account of Pericles’ funeral oration, Socrates discussion of democracy in *Republic* 8, and even the parabasis of the *Clouds*.\(^28\) In contrast to Hunter’s approach, Dobrov and Riu both see this text as revealing Plutarch’s poetic preferences. While Dobrov argues that Plutarch’s partiality for Menander over Aristophanes ultimately derives from the presence of the authorial voice in the latter’s plays, Riu argues that the

Comparison bears witness to a fundamental difference in how literature, in particular comedy, was conceptualized in Aristophanes’ and Plutarch’s respective times. For as Riu contends, the poetry of fifth-century Athens, in particular comedy, was incomprehensible to the audiences of Plutarch’s day.\footnote{Dobrov writes that “the contrast drawn by Plutarch may be seen to imply the process of depersonalization (with respect to the poet and his voice) through which the stage figures of New Comedy acquire a more clearly defined and realistic verbal mask as the “personality” of the Creator fades from His work.” Dobrov (1995: 54). In contrast, Riu argues that “Plutarch’s text is illustrative of a change in the history of Greek literature that I increasingly tend to see a deep cut which, at long last (i.e. in Plutarch’s time) made poetry up to the end of the 5th century incomprehensible to these later readers.” Riu (2005: 426).}

While it is tempting to follow the recent scholarship and attribute the views expressed in this text to Plutarch, the uncertainty about the original text’s format means that they could also have been expressed by a character within a dialogue and it is possible that we have only one side of the argument.\footnote{Riu in particular wants to read the views expressed in this text as Plutarch’s views of comedy.} Though there is too little evidence to determine a definite answer, this summary’s stylistic critique of Old Comedy as well as its overall preference for Menander is similar enough to the views expressed by Diogenianus that the association of the original text to Plutarch is not unreasonable. Since there has already been several discussions of why Menander might be stylistically preferable to Aristophanes for a writer such as Plutarch, I will focus my discussion on a particularly striking comparison of Aristophanes to an aging prostitute found at the end of this fragment, which I will argue addresses Aristophanes’ status as a classic work among the authors of this time.

Among the points of comparison drawn between Aristophanes and Menander is a question of audience. Though Plutarch acknowledges that it is difficult to write
something enjoyable for both an uneducated and educated audience, he declares that Aristophanes’ poetry pleases neither:

Ἀριστοφάνης μὲν οὖν οὕτε τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀρεστοῖς οὕτε τοῖς φρονίμοις ἀνεκτοῖς, ἄλλ’ ὀσπερ ἑπάρας τῆς ποίησεως παρηκμακυίας, εἶτα μενομνήμης γαμετὴν, οὖθ’ οἱ πολλοὶ τὴν αὐθάδειαν ὑπομένουσιν οἳ τε σεμνοί βδελύπτονται τὸ ἁκόλαστον καὶ κακόθες.

Now Aristophanes is neither pleasing to the many nor endurable to the thoughtful, but his poetry is like a prostitute who has passed her prime and then takes up the role of a wife, whose presumption the many cannot endure and whose licentiousness and malice the dignified abominate. (854a)

In his discussion of this metaphor, Hunter argues that this image “confirms that Plutarch’s literary concerns are at base social and moral ones.”31 The image drawn here, however, is not simply one of Aristophanes as a prostitute, which might be enough to express the moral concerns noted by Hunter, but a more elaborate one of an aging prostitute pretending to be a married woman. Aristophanes’ depiction as an old prostitute fits well with the overall characterization of the long dead genre as low class and inappropriate for a pepaidumenos. What is striking about this metaphor, however, is the fact that this aging prostitute is attempting to seem respectable by pretending to be a married woman. As this passage indicates, this pretense of respectability is unbearable and I would argue that this passage reveals a concern about the current status of Aristophanes’ poetry. The arguments expressed here and in the rest of the text thus attempt to counteract the popularity that his poetry may have been enjoying among the educated elite. I would consequently like to suggest that this text does not so much indicate Plutarch’s poetic preferences as it expresses a concern, like that of On Training,

about which texts the *pepaideumenoi* are studying.

The preference expressed for Menander in this text seeks to prove that despite not being written at the height of Athens’ literary golden age, Menander’s plays are preferable to Aristophanes’. If Aristophanes, as an aged prostitute pretending to be a married woman, appeals to no one, Menander represents the comic ideal throughout all of Greece:

> ὁ δὲ Μέλανδρος μετὰ χαρίτων μάλιστα ἐαυτὸν αὐτάρκη παρέσχηκεν, ἐν θεάτροις ἐν διατριβαῖς ἐν συμποσίοις, ἀνάγνωσμα καὶ μάθημα καὶ ἀγώνισμα κοινότατον ὅλῳ Ἑλλάδω ἑνήλογω καλῶν παρέχον τὴν ποίησιν, δεικνύος δὲ τι δὴ καὶ ὁποῖον ἦν ἀρα δεξιότης λόγου, ἐπιών ἀπανταχόσα μετά πείθος ἀφόκτου καὶ χειρούμενος ἀπασαν ἀκοήν καὶ διάνοιαν Ἑλληνικῆς φωνῆς.

But Menander, along with his charm, shows himself above all satisfying. He has made his poetry, of all the beautiful works Greece has produced, the most generally accepted subject in theaters, in discussions, for readings, for instruction, and for dramatic competitions. For he shows, indeed, what the essence and nature of skill in the use of language really are, approaching all subjects with a persuasiveness from which there is no escape, and controlling every sound and meaning which the Greek language affords. (854B)

The virtues of Menander’s comedies are thus not limited to educational use (μάθημα), but extend to discussions at symposia (ἐν διατριβαῖς ἐν συμποσίοις) and theatrical contests (ἀγώνισμα). In many of the texts that we have discussed so far, the problem of Old Comedy has been approached from the standpoint either of its quarrel with philosophy or the question of which comedic style is more appropriate for an educated person to study. This reference to theatrical contests, however, suggests that the arguments expressed in this comparison are directed not just at someone reading the two poets, but perhaps also watching performances of their plays. Though little is known about the performance of
comedy at this time, the implication here seems to be that Menander’s comedies, at least, are being performed in a theatrical context.

This hypothesis is supported by several rhetorical questions found in the ensuing discussion of Menander’s poetry. As “Plutarch” continues to harp on Menander’s superiority as a comic poet, he argues that only Menander’s plays draw an educated audience to the theater: ηίλνο γὰξ ἄμηνλ ἀιεζ῵ο εἰο ζέαηξνλ ἐιζεῖλ ἄλδξα πεπαηδεπκέλνλ ἡ Μενάνδρου ἕνεκα; πότε δὲ θέατρα πίμπλαται ἄνδρων φιλολόγων, κωμικοῦ προσώπου δειρθέντος; (“For what reason in fact, is it truly worthwhile for an educated man to go to the theatre, except to enjoy Menander? And when else are theatres filled with men of learning, if a comic character has been brought on stage?” 854b). If Menander’s comedies alone attract an educated audience, the implication seems to be here that there are other comedies, perhaps those of Aristophanes, that draw a less urbane crowd.

The emphatic nature of this preference for Menander suggests that the arguments expressed in the original text addressed Aristophanes’ popularity among the pepaideumenoi. An educated person should prefer Menander not only because he is linguistically superior but also because he is stylistically superior: αἱ Μελάλδξνπ θσκῳδίαη ἀθζόλσλ ἁι῵λ θαὶ ἱιαξ῵λ κεηέρνπζηλ, ὥζπεξ ἐμ ἐθείλεο γεγνλόησλ ηῆο ζαιάηηεο, ἐμ ἧο Ἀθξνδίηε γέγνλελ, (Menander’s comedies have a salty wit that is without envy and joyous, just like from the sea from which Aphrodite was born, 854C). If Menander’s comedies come from the same salt as Aphrodite, Aristophanes’ represent something far more sinister and dangerous:

οἱ δ’ Ἀριστοφάνους ἄλες πικροί καὶ τραχεῖς ὄντες ἐλκωτικὴν δριμύτητα καὶ δηκτικὴν ἔχουσι: καὶ οὐκ οἶδ’ ἐν οἷς ἐστιν ἡ ὑβρισκόμενη δεξιότητις ὑπ’
αὐτοῦ, ἐν λόγοις ἢ προσώποις· ἀμέλει καὶ τὰ μεμιμημένα πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον μεμίμηται· τὸ γάρ πανοδύργον οὐ πολιτικὸν ἄλλα κακοήθες, καὶ τὸ ἁγροικῶν οὐκ ἀφελές ἄλλ’ ἠλίθιον, καὶ τὸ γελοῖον οὐ παιγνιώδες ἄλλα καταγέλαστον, καὶ τὸ ἑρωτικὸν οὐχ ἔλαφρον ἄλλ’ ἀκόλαστον. οὐδενὶ γὰρ ὁ ἄθροισς ἐσχάτες μετρῶ τὴν ποίησιν γεγραφέναι, ἄλλα τὰ μὲν αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀσέλγη τοῖς ἀκολάστοις, τὰ βλάσφημα δὲ καὶ πικρὰ τοῖς βασκάνοις καὶ κακοήθεσιν.

But Aristophanes’ jokes are mean spirited and rough and possess a sharpness that wounds and bites. And I do not know where his commonly accepted cleverness is, in his words or in his characters. And he does not care that what he imitates he imitates for the worse. For his cleverness is not political but malicious, and his rusticity is not simple but silly, his humor is not playful but ridiculous, and his erotic material not joyous but licentious. For the man seems to have written poetry not with a decent person in mind, but the indecent and outrageous material for the licentious, the slanderous and bitter passages for the envious and malicious.

Though this passage marks the conclusion of what we have of this summary, its overly negative characterization of Aristophanes provides us with a sense of what Aristophanes was known for at this time, namely his cleverness (ἡ ἠριστομηνή δεξιότης), which was political (πολιτικόν) in nature. Furthermore, his works appear to have been known for having a simple rustic quality (τὸ ἁγροικῶν), for their humor (τὸ γελοῖον), as well as erotic jokes (τὸ ἑρωτικῶν). This characterization of Aristophanes’ poetry, like that of Diogenianus’ in Plutarch’s Table Talk and that of Dio in On Training, reveals an opinion of Old Comedy that seems to contradict the view that Aristophanes and the other poets of Old Comedy belong among the great author’s of Greece’s past. Old Comedy’s rise in popularity at this time thus stemmed not only from its status as an important source of Attic style and wit, as Bowie has suggested, but also from the view, established by Plato, that it represents a danger to society, or, at the very least, that emphasizing the potential pitfalls of the genre became a kind of rhetorical trope or exercise.
As we have seen, the *Comparison* raises the issue of which type of comedy is more appropriate for a *pepaideumenos* to watch. In *On the Prohibition of Comedy*, Aristides likewise addresses this question and concludes that all comic performances are problematic and dangerous. Delivered sometime around 157-165 CE at Symrma, this oration argues against either a real or imagined suggestion that comic performances be allowed during a celebration of Dionysus.\(^\text{32}\) For Aristides, there are two main reasons why comedy as a genre should be banned: comedy is inappropriate for a festival context and is a useless and potentially dangerous genre. In terms of the first reason, Aristides offers the following explanation:

> ἐν δὲ τούτως ὅ πρόσεστι τοῖς μὲν πολλοῖς ἐπιεικῶς κεχαρισμένον, τοῖς δ᾽ ἐπιεικέσι πάντων ἀνιαρότατον, τοῦτ᾽ ἐκποδῶν ἄνελείν, λέγω τάς βλασφημίας καὶ τοὺς κόμους τουτουσὶ τοὺς μεθημερίνους, καὶ νὴ Δία γε τοὺς ἐπὶ ταῖς παννοχίας, καὶ μήτε ποιητὰς εἰναι τούτων μήτε ἄγωνιστὰς, μηδὲ παίζειν ἢ μὴ βέλτιον.

But one practice which is included in these [festivals], reasonably pleasant to the masses, but most painful of all to reasonable men, this I ask you to remove, I mean the defamation and these daytime revels, and by Zeus, those at the night festivals as well, and I ask that there be neither poets nor actors of these works, and no jokes which were better not made. (29.4)

Like Plutarch’s view of Old Comedy, comedy for Aristides is a genre associated with the lower classes, not with the educated elite.\(^\text{33}\)

As Behr has noted, Aristides’ criticism of comedy has its origins in Plato’s critique of the genre.\(^\text{34}\) In fact, many of the faults that Aristides finds with comedy are reminiscent of Socrates’ critique of mimetic poetry in *Republic 3*. To briefly summarize

---

\(^{32}\) Behr (1981: 389).

\(^{33}\) Aristides’ concern here that at a festival people properly reverence a god seems to be in line with the religious fanaticism found in such texts as the *Sacred Tales*.

\(^{34}\) Behr (1981: 388).
a complex set of arguments, for Socrates, poets such as Homer are unsuitable for young children because they present the gods in an unfavorable light. As Socrates explains to Adeimantus:

Καὶ μὴν τοῖς γε ἀκούουσιν βλαβερά· πᾶς γὰρ ἐαυτῷ συγγνώμην ἐξει κακῷ ὄντι, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα τοιαῦτα πράττουσιν τε καὶ ἐπραττόν καὶ—
οἱ θεοὶ ἀγχίσποροι,
oὶ Ζηνὸς ἐγγὺς, ὅν καὶ Ἰδαῖον πάγον
Διὸς πατρόφου βομός ἐστ’ ἐν αἰθέρι,
kαὶ—
oὐ πώ σφιν ἐξίτηλον ἀύμα δαμόνων.
ἐν ἄνεκα παντεῖον τοὺς τοιούτους μύθους, μὴ ἠμῖν πολλὴν εὐχέρειαν ἐντίκτωσι τοῖς νέοις πονηρίας.

Moreover, these stories are harmful to people who hear them, for everyone will be ready to excuse himself when he’s bad, if he’s persuaded that similar things both are being done now and have been done in the past by “Close descendants of the gods, those near to Zeus, to whom belongs the ancestral altar high up on Mount Ida, in whom the blood of gods has not weakened.” For that reason, we must put a stop to such stories, lest they produce in the youth a strong inclination to do bad things (3. 391e-392a)

Likewise, Aristides argues that not only do performances of comedy at festivals defame the god, but they also go against what society teaches its children:

καὶ τοὺς μὲν παιδὰς κελεύομεν εὐστομεῖν, κἀν τοῖς διδασκάλειοι καὶ κατ’ οἶκιάν προδιδάσκοντες ὡς ἂ ποιεῖν αἰσχρὸν οὐδὲ λέγειν καλὸν, πάλιν δὲ εἰς ταυτὸν ἀθροίσαντες παιδᾶς καὶ γυναῖκας καὶ πάσαν ἥλικιαν κακηγορίας ἅθα τίθεμεν, καὶ τοῖς ἁριστὰ ἐκμελετήσασιν ὅπως εἰς κέρδος ἔσται παρασκευάζομεν.

And we order our children to use good language. And we teach them both at school and in their homes that it is not proper to say what it is shameful to do. Yet when we have gathered together our children, wives, and every age group, we offer prizes for slander and we make it profitable for those who have trained with the best success. (29.13)

Comedy should thus be banned from a festival because it sanctions behavior otherwise deemed inappropriate.
After laying out his basic arguments, Aristides turns to address the belief that it is a good thing to have sanctioned comic freedom (16). For Aristides, the freedom associated with comedy is dangerous because the less educated people are in charge, and consequently there is no limit on who is ridiculed (20-22). Furthermore, Aristides charges that such comic contests are corrupt:

ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς ἔχθραν καὶ πρὸς χάριν τὴν ἔτέρων, τὸν μὲν ἀργύριον αἰτήσαντες οὐ τυχόντες, τοῦ δ’ ἐρασθέντες οὐ πείσαντες, οὕτω ψέγουσι, καὶ πάλιν ἀν ἰσωπώσι διὰ θάτερα, ὥστε οὐ τοὺς αἰσχρὸς ζῶντας φανεροὺς καθιστάσι. σκέψασθε δ’ οὕτω, τίνας μάλιστ’ εἰκός ἐξωνείθαι τὰς κακηγορίας; ἄρ’ οὐ τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα συνειδότας εαυτοῖς φαίητ’ ἄν; τίνας δ’ ὡς ἠκιστα τούτων φροντίζειν; ἄρ’ οὐχ οὕτως αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς βεβιωμένοις θαρροῦσι; δὴ λόγῳ πω. οὐκ οὐν τάναντι τῆς ὑποσχέσεως γίγνεται, οἱ μὲν ἄσελγεῖς καὶ αἰσχροὶ ἀθῶοι τῷ λόγῳ, κυμαδοῦνται δ’ οὕς ἠκιστα δεῖ.

But their criticism is conditioned by their hatred or by their desire to please other men, depending on whether they have asked for money and not received it, or have fallen in love with someone and not persuaded him; and again they are silent for the opposite reason, with the result that they do not make a public display for those who live shamefully. Consider the matter in the following way. Who most likely buys off slander? Would you not say those who are conscious of having committed such acts? But who likely cares least of all about these matters? Is it not those are confident in themselves and their manner of life? Clearly. Therefore the opposite of what they promised occurs. The wanton and the shameful are immune to their regard, those are satirized who least should be.

As Aristides goes on to argue, the reputation of a city lies in that of its citizens. In other words, public attacks on the characters of individuals are also attacks on the city itself.

In light of the flaws that Aristides sees in the overall genre of comedy, we might expect his speech to include a specific attack on the genre of Old Comedy. Yet in the midst of these arguments, Aristides laments that comedy is no longer what it once was in fifth-century Athens: καὶ ὃςον μὲν, ὁ γῆ καὶ θεοῖ, τὸ μέσον τῆς τε νῦν κιβδηλίας καὶ
(And, O earth and gods, I forbear to say how much difference there is between the present counterfeit form of comedy and all of the admonition and education which was contained in what was called the parabasis, 28). Whereas Diogenianus in *Table Talk* regarded the parabasis as overly serious and not in line with the rest of the play, Aristides here praises it for its educative values. This critique of contemporary comic performances, however, does not provide us with much information about what form comedy had taken at this time. Like Old Comedy, this comedy seems to be performed within the context of a festival of Dionysus and to mock contemporary figures. This would seem to indicate that, much to Aristides’ displeasure, new comedies are being written and performed.

For the purposes of our discussion, Aristides’ speech is interesting because it suggests not only that comedies continued to be written and performed, but also that there was concern regarding the appropriateness of the genre as whole. These concerns are in large part traditional ones that have their roots in Plato. As the critiques of comedy found in Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides suggest, Old Comedy’s popularity stemmed not only from its Attic language and style, but also from the fact that Plato critiqued the genre. In other words, Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides’ concerns regarding the value of comedy are indebted to Plato’s hostility to the genre. Read in light of these texts, it is now possible to see how Lucian’s assertion that he has brought together Old Comedy and Platonic Dialogue likewise engages in this debate, only from the opposite side. In
championing the side of comedy, Lucian engages not simply with the literary tradition but his contemporaries as well.

**Lucian and Old Comedy**

In approaching Lucian’s treatment of Old Comedy, I will divide my discussion into two halves: the first examines Lucian’s theoretical definitions of his comic dialogues and the second considers how he enacts this hybrid genre. In chapter one, I study the category of texts generally referred to as the prologues. While scholars have tended to view these texts as sophistic performance pieces, I argue that Lucian’s use of complex intertextual references to respond to his rivals and critics, whether real or imagined, betrays a debt to the Aristophanic parabasis and as such characterizes the programmatic statements found within these works as far from straightforward. Through a close analysis of the *Heracles, Dionysus,* and *Literary Prometheus,* I show that Lucian’s manipulation of the traditionally serious genres of epic, tragedy, and philosophy provides us with a methodology with which to approach his overall literary project.

In my second chapter, I turn to the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted,* two texts that are, in effect, apologies. In them, Lucian imagines that the likes of Socrates, Plato, and even the personification of Dialogue are suing him for degrading philosophy by uniting it with comedy. These defenses of comedy, as I argue, represent Lucian’s response to the hostility towards Old Comedy voiced by Plato and his followers. By imagining that he is on trial for his comic reinvention of the philosophical dialogue, Lucian engages with this view by reinventing the philosophic apology as an apology for
Old Comedy. In doing so, these texts attribute philosophical value to Old Comedy by arguing that the socio-political focus of the genre is necessary to save philosophy from becoming corrupted by the charlatan philosophers that Lucian sees plaguing society.

These first two chapters argue that Lucian’s comic dialogues are more than humorous works written in the dialogue form; they reinvent Old Comedy as an important tool for conducting philosophy. These discussions are significant because they provide us with a sense of what Lucian hopes to achieve through his new genre. Yet, this focus leaves several questions unanswered: how does Lucian enact this new genre? And does it always take the same form? In an attempt to address these questions, the second half of my dissertation considers how understanding Lucian’s new generic hybrid helps us read his corpus as a whole by exploring the fluidity of the comic dialogue genre. In my third chapter, I explore how Lucian enacts this literary and philosophical program by staging (and thereby attempting to resolve) through different comic sources, drawn not just from Old Comedy, the sectarian debates of the philosophical schools in four key texts: the Menippus, the Icaromenippus, the Parasite, and the Hermotimus. Closely connected with this problem is that of philosophical education, an issue that is rooted in the Clouds and Plato’s discussions of the sophists. As I will suggest, Lucian fuses both comic and philosophical approaches to this problem so as to develop and enact his comic dialogues. By calling into question the established philosophical schools, these texts demonstrate the different ways in which Lucian employs his new hybrid genre and, more importantly, how he uses it to establish his own comedic-philosophical approach as a return to the Socratic search for knowledge before it came to be reinterpreted by the different schools.
Whereas the third chapter considers a variety of different dialogues largely from the perspective of the comic tradition, the fourth and final chapter focuses solely on dialogue, both Platonic and Lucianic, in the *Nigrinus*, a text traditionally deemed to be one of Lucian’s few positive and serious portrayals of a contemporary philosopher. Applying the methodology established in the first two chapters to this text, however, I argue that an initial invocation of Platonic *eros*, as well as a double allusion to the *Clouds* and the *Phaedrus* found in the description of Nigrinus reveals that the *Nigrinus* is in fact a critique of the type of philosopher portrayed in this text. By undermining Nigrinus in such a way, Lucian establishes himself as the true philosopher deeply indebted to both the comic and Platonic traditions. As the *Nigrinus* reveals, Lucian’s comic dialogues refer not just to works written in dialogue form, but rather more broadly to his philosophic approach.

Some Terminology Defined

In examining Lucian’s “comic dialogues,” it is important to first consider what is meant by the term “comic.” Although often taken by scholars of Lucian to refer simply to the humorous elements of Lucian’s writings, which are admittedly numerous, I will interpret this term as referring to the Greek comic tradition and specifically Old Comedy. Moreover, as I discuss Lucian’s debt to the comic tradition, I will use, whenever possible, the name of the specific poet he is indebted to. When that is not

35 The ambiguity in this term can be seen in Branham’s interpretation of the comic elements of Lucian’s writings as deriving largely from the Socratic and subsequent Cynic traditions.
possible or in cases of more general discussions, I will use Old Comedy to refer to comic the poets of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, but I will follow Bowie in assuming that during the imperial period Aristophanes had become the figure head of the genre, with Cratinus and Eupolis as its other main poets. In the case of “dialogue,” I will use this term to refer specifically to Platonic dialogue, unless otherwise noted. From these attempts at specificity, this dissertation will aim to provide a clearer understanding of how Lucian envisions his relationship to the literary tradition, both comic and philosophical, and the literary trends of his period.

Chapter 1
Defining the Syrian:
The Prologues as Comic Parabases

At the end of the prologue, So You Think I’m a Literary Prometheus, Lucian expresses concern that his new hybrid genre, the comic dialogue, has diminished the beauty (κάλλος) of its two components, comedy and philosophical dialogue (Lit. Prom. 5). As Lucian explains, the two genres were once polar opposites. Whereas Dialogue was a private genre that spent time either at home or with a few companions in the shaded walks, (ὁ μὲν οίκοι καθ’ έαυτόν καὶ νῆ Δία ἐν τοῖς περιπάτοις μετ’ ὀλίγων τάς διατριβάς ἐποιεῖτο, Lit. Prom. 6), Comedy used to be found in public, devoting herself to theater, jokes, and poetry, (ἡ δὲ παραδοσία τῷ Διονύσῳ ἐστὶν θεάτρῳ ὡμίλει καὶ ξυνέπαιξε καὶ ἐγελωτόποιει καὶ ἐπέσκωπτε καὶ ἐν ῥυθμῷ ἔβαινε πρὸς αὐλὸν ἔνστε καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἀναπαίστοις μέτροις ἐποχουμένη τὰ πολλά., Lit. Prom. 6). In addition to this, Comedy mockingly labeled Dialogues’ followers as “deep thinkers” (φροντιστα), “high-talkers (μετεωρολέσχας), and “air-walkers” (ἀεροβατοῦντα), hanging out in the clouds (νεφέλαις), and measuring the sandals of fleas (ψυλλῶν πηδήματα διαμετροῦντας, Lit. Prom. 6).
As this description of the two genres makes clear, they differ not just in form and content but also in how Lucian conceptualizes them. Dialogue, on the one hand, is described in general philosophical terms with phrases such as ἐν τοῖς περιπάτοις and τὰς διατριβάς, while the description of Comedy’s portrayal of Dialogue’s followers as φροντιστάς, ἀεροβατοῦντα, and ψυλλὸν πηδήκας διαμετροῦντας directly recalls not only Aristophanes’ *Clouds* but also the quarrel between philosophy and comedy initiated by that play and reaffirmed in Plato’s *Apology*.¹ Similar to what we saw in our brief examination of Plutarch’s, Dio’s, and Aristides’ discussions of Old Comedy, Lucian’s language pinpoints the seeds of the problem that he now faces in the *Literary Prometheus*, namely how to harmoniously blend the two genres, in Old Comedy and specifically Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates in the *Clouds*. Unlike the attacks on Old Comedy discussed in the introduction, however, Lucian turns to the comic portrayal of Socrates to inform his audience’s understanding of his literary craft. In this chapter I will explore how Old Comedy and the problems associated with it serves as an important tool by which Lucian defines his literary style in three of his prologues: the *Heracles*, the *Dionysus*, and the *Literary Prometheus*.

In each of these prologues, Lucian expresses anger towards previous audiences, who have scorned his literary hybrids because of their comic nature and thus denied their merit. As these prologues make clear, Lucian’s comic approach to traditionally serious genres is regarded as an affront to the literary tradition and inherent in these texts is a conflict between author and audience, comedy and other more serious genres, and

¹ For the allusion to the *Clouds*, see Sidwell (2005:353).
tradition and innovation. In other words, Lucian believes that his audiences will overlook his work because of its comic aspects and novel approach to the more traditional genres of rhetoric, tragedy, and philosophical dialogue. His previous audience’s failure to recognize the complexity of his works sparks Lucian to instruct his current one in how to properly appreciate different aspects of his literary style. In the *Heracles*, this takes the form of a reevaluation of the role of rhetoric through a comically incongruous image of a Celtic Heracles, while in the *Dionysus* and the *Literary Prometheus* Lucian explores more specifically the problem of uniting comedy with the serious genres of tragedy and philosophical dialogue. Although these prologues differ in their subject matter, they share the presumed goal of creating an ideal audience who will not fail to appreciate Lucian’s writings in all of their complexities. These texts are therefore significant for our discussion because the tension between innovation and tradition found in them presents us with a paradigm for understanding Lucian’s merging of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue, namely that he regards his literary achievement as the union of opposites.

Lucian’s annoyance at his audience’s ignorance, however, has the added effect of not only boasting about his literary achievements but also challenging us as his audience to notice the complexity of his work. Though it is tempting to interpret these prologues as programmatic statements, Lucian frustrates our expectations by concluding each text with a final, paradoxical image that forces us to reevaluate everything that has preceded it. These images reveal further complexities that mockingly defy the audience and even Lucian’s own previous attempts to classify his work in terms of one particular genre. The goal of this chapter is thus not to pin down Lucian’s sources but to illustrate how Lucian
uses generic tensions to define his literary project for his audience as bridging the divide between tradition and innovation and comedy and philosophy. As I will argue, Lucian's descriptions of his craft in these texts begin to provide us with a methodology for how to approach his union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue and, as such, are essential to understanding Lucian as an author. To better understand what is at stake in these texts, I will propose a new way of approaching the generic category of the prologue as a whole that attempts to situate these texts not in terms of contemporary sophistic performances but rather the tradition of the comic parabasis. Read in light of the parabases of Old Comedy, the programmatic statements found in these prologues are not straightforward statements of intent, but deeply ironic moments of self-characterization that engage not only with the comic tradition but also with the more serious pursuit of philosophy.

My analysis of Lucian’s description of his craft in the *Heracles, Dionysus*, and *Literary Prometheus* will therefore begin with a discussion of how Lucian’s prologues share core similarities with an Aristophanic parabasis, such as the presence of an ironic critique of the author and an engagement in a poetic or, in the case of Lucian, sophistic rivalry. I will demonstrate that these elements of Lucian’s self-characterization challenge us as his audience to uncover not only the ways in which he imitates traditional genres, such as rhetoric, philosophical dialogue, and comedy, but also the novel ways he melds them with other genres and consequently changes them. To better illustrate this point, I will therefore begin my discussion with the *Heracles* and the image of Lucian’s rhetoric that it presents. Though the text does not overtly address Lucian’s union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue, it nonetheless presents us with one of the few times that
we can see Lucian fully embrace the novelty and mixed nature of his literary approach. Often read as a counterpart to the *Heracles*, the *Dionysus* similarly addresses the hybridity of Lucian’s writing but from the standpoint of melding tragedy and comedy. As I will argue, Lucian here engages directly with the hypothesis made by Socrates at the end of Plato’s *Symposium* that the same poet could compose tragedy and comedy. Lucian’s fusion of serious and comic elements as well as his engagement with Plato thus puts us in mind of his claims to have united comedy and dialogue found in the *Literary Prometheus*. These statements, however, suggest something far from a straightforward literary hybrid and point to something more akin to the type of provocative questioning associated with the Socratic method.

I. Lucian's Prologues as Comic Parabases

Though Lucian’s prologues are a diverse group of texts, certain patterns can be discerned. As a whole, they are characterized by an engagement with the traditional generic categories such as epic, tragedy, and history, to name just a few. Within this context, we often find Lucian responding to the criticism of his audience or presumed sophistic rivals, who are never named, but seem to represent the view that one should display one’s *paideia* through frequent learned citations. In this section, I will suggest that Lucian adopts the Aristophanic parabasis as a model for deploying the intertextuality and rivalry that pervades his self-presentation in the *Literary Prometheus*.

---

2 For a brief discussion of the generic category of “prologue,” see the attached appendix.
3 Lucian often introduces these views either as commentary on his innovation, such as in the *Zeuxis* 1-2, or as a response to his audience’s disdain of him, for example *Dionysius* 5-6.
Before examining how Lucian imitates the Aristophanic parabasis, however, we must first briefly define its core characteristics. The role of the parabasis in a comedic performance has long troubled scholars of Old Comedy. For the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on its most basic definition as a “choral digression” from the action of the play that typically comments on certain social or political issues as well as lauding the virtues of the poet in comparison to his comedic rivals.\(^4\) Hubbard argues that the parabasis is also a highly intertextual speech in which the poet typically offers an ironic critique of the poet himself.\(^5\) This “self-criticism” noted by Hubbard appears in discrepancies between the assertions of the parabasis and the action of the play. To cite just one example of this, in the parabasis of the *Clouds* Aristophanes expresses his frustration that an earlier version of the play failed, despite his assumption that both the play and his audience are wise (σοφός, 520-22). Yet as the parabasis continues, Aristophanes blames his audience for the failure of his play (εἴτ’ ἀνεχόρουν ὑπ’ ἀνδρῶν φορτικόν / ἣττηθείς οὔκ ἄξιος ὡν. ταῦτ’ οὖν ὑμῖν μέμφομαι / τοῖς σοφοῖς, 524-6). As Major notes, Aristophanes “knowingly attempts the impossible,” in that he boasts about his own wisdom at the same time as he insults that of his audience.\(^6\) For Aristophanes’ audience, who are unlikely to agree with his decision to blame them for his loss, there is a disparity between the parabasis’ assertions and how the audience interprets their role in the poet’s loss that causes the parabasis’ boasts to appear ridiculous. Such self-mockery

\(^6\) Major (2006: 139).
reveals the parabasis to be as much a source of comedy as the characters within the play proper.\textsuperscript{7}

Although there are admittedly essential differences between a comic parabasis and Lucian's prologues, the most obvious being the differences in the performative contexts, Lucian's prologues nonetheless share certain core characteristics with an Aristophanic parabasis.\textsuperscript{8} For example, like Aristophanes’ parabases Lucian’s prologues exist outside the main performance. Whereas a parabasis offers commentary in the midst of the play, Lucian’s prologues illustrate beforehand the novelty of Lucian’s work and in particular his complex use of intertextual references. This intertextuality, however, extends beyond allusions to specific authors to include a reliance on multiple genres simultaneously.

Closely intertwined with the issue of intertextuality in Lucian's prologues is his characterization of his writing as both innovative and traditional. Such comments reveal that Lucian’s self-criticism works on two levels. On the one hand, many of these texts respond to his audience’s criticism of Lucian’s literary innovation. While scholars have long looked to Aristophanes’ parabases for evidence of poetic rivalries among the poets

\textsuperscript{7} As Hubbard (1991) argues, the self-mockery found within this parabasis and as well as others exemplifies the type of humor that Socrates will later use to define τὸ γεῖνα ὁν in the Philebus, (28-30). For as Socrates argues, what makes a person funny is a recognizable lack of self-awareness, or in other words, a failure to follow the Delphic injunction to “know thyself,” (γνῶθι σαυτόν, Plutarch The E at Delphi 385D). The lack of self-awareness must be recognizable because otherwise the person would appear to be powerful and consequently would be feared and hated (48C). Aristotle later develops this theory into his two comic figures, the boaster (ἀιαδώλ) and its opposite, a person who possesses εἰσα λεία, (Nicomachean Ethics 4.8). Hubbard argues that such figures can already be noted in Aristophanic comedy, in particular in the parabasis (2-11). Building on this theory, Major (2006) argues that the parabasis of the Clouds represents an example of an ἀιαδώλ figure.

\textsuperscript{8} Hubbard (1991) says explicitly that a prologue is a different entity from a parabasis, which he says is “in a sense standing outside of the dramatic enactment,” (1). Hubbard here is referring presumably to a prologue that would have been part of a play, rather than a separate text.
of Old Comedy, little is known about who Lucian’s rivals may have been, real or imagined, and it is possible that such criticism is itself a rhetorical trope. This criticism, however, is not the full story. As I will argue in my discussion of the Literary Prometheus, Lucian initially sets out to respond to such criticisms only to conclude the text by comparing his writing to Prometheus' sacrifice trick, a destabilizing image that forces us to re-critique his response. Lucian’s prologue thus mocks any attempts made by his rivals, his audience members, and, for that matter, himself to categorize his style of literature.

The connection that I have drawn here between Lucian's prologues and Aristophanic parabases highlights Lucian's attempts to position his works within a larger comedic tradition. Read as such, we can begin to see how Lucian's prologues, and in particular the Literary Prometheus, depict in miniature the important role that Old Comedy plays in Lucian's “comic dialogues.” My interest in this group of texts consequently begins from the same point as Branham in that I view them as an important window into understanding Lucian’s style and, as I will contend, his “comic dialogues.” For Branham, the serious role that Lucian attributes to humor allows us to categorize his works in terms of the Bakhtinian notion of the “seriocomic.” While Branham's characterization of Lucian as “seriocomic” is by no means inaccurate, it does not capture the complex generic manipulation found in these texts, a significant part of which is

---

9 For a discussion of Aristophanes and his rivals, see Heath (1990), Sidwell (1993), Harvey and Wilkins (2001), and Biles (2002).

Lucian's imitation of the Aristophanic parabasis. In his discussion of Lucian’s overall style, for example, Branham asserts the following:

His [Lucian’s] works are best approached as “complex refinements and recyclings of previous [literary] forms, borrowing a device here, polishing or discarding a style there, artfully recombining elements from a number of discrete sources.” The relative importance of any one form—Old Comedy, Socratic dialogue, or Cynic diatribe or parody—is far less significant than the fact that rhetorical strategies dependent on intricate comic structures, particularly those of parody, were a conscious technique of exoteric philosophical literature, as well as of dramatic comedy; thus it was recognized in practice, if not in theory, that the power of humor to alter our perceptions by exposing latent incongruities is a means of generating critical thought from a new perspective.11

Branham’s arguments regarding the fragmented philosophical role that humor can play within Lucian’s writings are well founded, but he discounts the significance that Lucian himself places on how his work unites serious and comic genres, in particular that of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue. This is largely because, like Bakhtin before him, he views Lucian’s seriocomic style as derived mainly from Plato, Menippus, and the Cynics, and though he notes the influence Old Comedy, its significance is discounted.12 While I do not want to deny the serious role that philosophic humor can play, it is my contention that the similarities between Lucian’s prologues and the Aristophanic parabasis bear witness to the influence that the tradition of Old Comedy had on Lucian’s writings. His claims to have joined Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue suggest that we should not privilege one over the other, but instead regard it as a unified whole. As we will see in the following section, Lucian signals this desire to his audience in the Heracles by

12 Recently scholars have suggested that despite Bakhtin’s exclusion of Old Comedy from his formula of carnival and the seriocomic, the genre possesses many of the characteristics he lays out. For the most recent discussion of this see Platter (2007), as well as A. Edwards (1993).
describing for his audience a painting of a Celtic Heracles, an image that unites the incongruous images of Greek and Barbarian and tempts us to regard it as analogous to our author. This prologue will then set the stage for tackling his union of Old Comedy with the serious genres of tragedy and philosophical dialogue in the Dionysus and Literary Prometheus.

II. The Heracles

For the sophists of Lucian’s day, a familiarity with the great works of Greek literature was presupposed not only among the audiences of sophistic performances but also among the viewers of the plastic arts. In the Heracles, Lucian describes for his audience a painting of a “Celtic Heracles” that is at odds with the traditional Greek portrayals of the hero. This Heracles or Ogmios, as the Celts call him, is characterized not by physical strength, courage, and sexual prowess, but by his old age and the power of his tongue (Her. 2). Initially befuddled by such a representation of the hero, Lucian turns to a Celt who explains that, unlike the Greeks, the Celts equate Heracles, not Hermes, with λόγος and consequently portray him as old not young. This emphasis on old age is subsequently mirrored in the dramatic context of the prologue itself. For as Lucian reveals, the Heracles represents his return from retirement, which he had initially hesitated to do until he remembered this Celtic image of Heracles. To further illustrate

14 ἐμοὶ δὲ ἡνίκα περὶ τῆς δεύτερος παρόδου ταύτης ἐσκοπούμην πρὸς ἑμαυτῶν, εἰ μοι καλός ἦσσε τῆλικόντε ὡς τὸν ἐκκάλους νεκροὺς ἐκάλεσεν ὑπὲρ ἑμαυτοῦ ψήφον διδόναι τοσοῦτος δικαιώσεως, καὶ καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ άναγνωρίσθην τῆς εἰκόνος (And when I was debating with myself on the question of appearing here, considering whether it was proper for a man of my age, who had long ago given up lecturing in
his point that old age is not a disadvantage but an advantage, Lucian concludes the prologue with a quotation from the *Odyssey*: “ὁ οἴην ἐπὶ ῥακέον ὁ γέρων ἐπιγονίδα φαίνει, (Will you look at the knee that the old man reveals from his rage! *Ody.* 18.74). Taken from the quarrel between the beggar Irus and the disguised Odysseus, this line was originally spoken by one of the suitors as a warning to his fellow suitors not to fight with Odysseus. Like the suitor, who recognizes from the disguised Odysseus’ thighs that he is not who he appears to be, this Homeric allusion serves as a warning to us that the Lucian before us is not who he seems. Lucian thus equates himself and his work with the disguised Odysseus, a point to which we will return at the end of the section. For now it is enough to say that the original cautionary tone of the line carries over into Lucian’s prologue and serves as a warning to us as his audience not to discount the power of his work.

Despite the prologue’s conclusion, most scholars have taken this text at face value, arguing that the *Heracles* is a later work intended to showcase the author’s rhetorical brilliance. More recently, Georgiadou and Larmour have suggested that the painting of Heracles should be read as an allegory for Lucian himself:

The crux of the riddle of the painting in the *Her.* is the fact that the Celts identify eloquence not with Hermes, as the Greeks do, but with Heracles. The hero is shown as an old man, because eloquence shows its full vigour in old age (cf. *Dion.* 7-8). This looks like a direct reference to Lucian himself: the *VH* was probably written towards the end of his career. Other old men remarkable for their eloquence are cited, such as Nestor. Eloquence is Heracles’ (and hence Lucian’s) most effective weapon. 

public, once more to subject himself to the verdict of so large a jury, it chances in the nick of time that I remembered the picture (*Her.* 7)).


16 This argument is made in the course of their overall argument that the *Heracles* could have served as an introduction to one of the books of the *True Histories*. Georgiadou and Larmour (1995:111).
Despite their suggestion that we read the painting as emblematic of Lucian, there has been little in depth discussion of the specific imagery of the painting, the figure of the Celt, and how this prologue relates to his overall literary project. Lucian’s portrayal of Heracles as a novel and foreign hero thus begs the question that if Georgiadou and Larmour are right in identifying the figure of Heracles with Lucian, and I think they are, what does this prologue reveal about Lucian’s literary innovation?

The *Heracles* ostensibly expresses Lucian’s concern about his rhetorical abilities following his return from retirement. In this section, I will explore how Lucian uses the Celtic painting of Heracles to characterize his approach to rhetoric as a novel blend of incongruous images and themes. While I agree with Georgiadou and Larmour that Lucian’s description of Heracles evokes his own rhetorical performance, the structure of the prologue does not immediately support this conclusion. As I will argue, Lucian shapes the characters of the Celtic Heracles and the Celtic sophist in such a way that they each initially appear to symbolize the author himself. Whereas the aged Heracles, who leads his captives by his tongue, at first seems to be a metaphor for Lucian’s own rhetorical prowess, the Celtic sophist similarly evokes an image of our author through his use of Homeric and Euripidean allusions to explain the meaning behind the painting. Read as such, Lucian presents his audience with two figures, both potentially evocative of himself, but each embodying a different view of rhetoric. While the painting of Heracles depicts it as something strange and powerful, the figure of the Celt portrays a more traditional image of a sophist. These images thus beg the question of which one, if
either, should we regard as representative of Lucian’s own performance? I would like to propose here that the *Heracles* can be read as signifying two different paths to achieving rhetorical success and as such potentially plays with Xenophon’s and later Dio’s version of Prodicus’ “Choice of Heracles.” As I will argue, the question of which figure is representative of Lucian is not ultimately resolved until the final Homeric quotation, which reveals Lucian’s approach to in fact be a mixture of the two styles embodied by Heracles and the Celt.

Before turning to Lucian’s manipulation of the popular hero, we must first contextualize Heracles in the Second Sophistic. Lucian’s selection of Heracles directly engages with a popular trend among Greek writers of this period of invoking Heracles as a paragon of moral virtue at the same time as it speaks to Lucian’s own fusion of literary genres. For authors of this period, Heracles became a figure evocative of their own specific ideals. In his life of Herodes Atticus, for example, Philostratus describes a companion of Herodes called either Heracles or Agathion. Although not the hero per se, this Heracles, not unlike Lucian’s Heracles, is described as being as big as a Celt, as well as wearing wolf-skins, and speaking in a pure Attic dialect:

> “τὴν δὲ δὴ γλώτταν” ἐφη ὁ Ἡρώδης “πῶς ἐπαιδεύθης καὶ ύπὸ τίνων; οὐ γὰρ μοι τῶν ἀπαιδεύτων φαίνη.” καὶ ὁ Ἀγαθίων “ἡ μεσογεία” ἐφη “τῆς Ἀττικῆς ἄγαθο διδασκάλειον ἀνδρὶ βουλομένῳ διαλέγεσθαι, οὐ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἄστει Αθηναίοι μισθὸν δεχόμενοι Ὀράκλει καὶ Ποντικὰ μειράκαυ καὶ ἐξ ἄλλων ἐθνῶν βαρβάρων ξυνεργηκότα παραφείρονται παρ’ αὐτῶν τὴν φωνὴν μᾶλλον ἢ ξυμβάλλονται τι αὐτοῖς ἢ εὐγλωττίας, ἡ μεσογεία δὲ ἀμφότερος οὔσα υψαίνει αὐτοῖς ἢ φωνὴ καὶ ἡ γλώττα τὴν ἄκραν Ἀτηίδα ἄπουσάλλει.”

17 For discussions of Atticism during the Second Sophistic, see Swain (1996: 14-43).
“And what about your speech?” asked Herodes. “How were you educated, and by whom? For you do not seem to be an uneducated man.” Agathion replied, “The interior of Attica educated me, a good school for a man who wishes to be able to converse. For the Athenians in the city admit as hirelings youths who come in like a flood from Thrace and the Pontus and from other barbarian peoples, and their own speech deteriorates from the influence of these barbarians to a greater extent than they can contribute to the improvement of the speech of the newcomers. But the central district is untainted by barbarians, and hence its language remains uncorrupted and its dialect sounds the purest strain of Atthis. (Lives of the Sophists 553)

As this passage indicates, this Heraclean figure represents a “noble savage,” who is a pure Greek, untainted by external influences.\(^\text{18}\)

In addition to purity of Attic style, Heracles also symbolized physical strength and consequently for authors of the Second Sophistic enacted the tension between manliness and culture.\(^\text{19}\) As Connolly has shown, rhetoricians and sophists walked a fine line between cultivating their paideia and not appearing overly effeminate.\(^\text{20}\) To cite just one example of this, Dio Chrysostom invokes Prodicus’ “Choice of Heracles” in his first Kingship oration, which was purportedly performed in front of the Emperor Trajan. In Xenophon’s account, Heracles, who is on the verge of adolescence, is faced with a choice between two paths for his life: one that leads to vice and one to virtue. While the path to

\(^{19}\) As Gleason notes, it was not unusual for the sophists of this period to adopt the voice of a historical or mythological figure: “Every veteran of sophistic training had extensive practice speaking the voice of another—this was, after all, the essence of declamation—and those who aspired to the status of philosopher were acutely conscious of the need to harmonize their self-presentation with the great paradigms of the philosophic pantheon.” As examples of this, Gleason notes that Dio Chrysostom turned to such figures as Diogenes, Socrates, and Odysseus, while Favorinus invoked Diogenes, Odysseus, and Heracles, (1994: 151). For a discussion of the effeminacy of Classical sophists, see Mossman (2007).  
\(^{20}\) See Connolly (2003: 285-90) whose work I follow in the ensuing discussion. The figure of Heracles appears in the first and fourth of Dio’s Kingship orations, as well as his Isthmian oration. For Xenophon’s account of Prodicus’ “Choice of Heracles,” see Memorabilia 2.1.21-34. For Dio’s account of the tale, see Dio Orat. 1: 69-84.
vice is an easy one, that to virtue is much more difficult. In Dio’s version, however, the two paths are reversed and it is the path to virtue that is easy, perhaps implying that the virtuous life comes with little difficulty to rulers such as Trajan. As Connolly explains in her discussion of this speech, Heracles represented for Dio both “the crudest kind of physical strength” and “the civilizer and moral arbiter of Greek and barbarian society.”

Like the Heracles in Philostratus’ life of Herodes Atticus, Dio’s Heracles is a decidedly Greek figure that “expresses an ideal kind of andréia that acts in the service of civilization and right thinking.” Lucian’s portrayal of Heracles, however, lacks the moral aspects of Dio’s hero, but, not unlike Herodes’ companion, is Celtic and a symbol of eloquence. In selecting Heracles as his subject matter, Lucian recasts a standard figure from Greek mythology and, more importantly for our discussion, one that was particularly relevant to his contemporary sophists.

In addition to what it reveals about how Lucian differentiates himself from his contemporaries, Lucian’s Heracles embodies his fusion of opposing genres. In her analysis of the play of genres found in the Pseudo-Lucian Amores, Mossman argues that the figure of Heracles invokes the type of generic interplay she sees throughout that text: “Heracles has an unusual status as a character who features in many contradictory literary genres, not only serious epic, lyric, and tragedy, but also in comedy and indeed philosophy.” Yet in Dio’s and Philostratus’ representations of the hero discussed

---

23 It should also be noted that Lucian’s contemporary, Aelius Aristides, wrote a prose hymn dedicated to Heracles in which he likewise extols the hero’s manly courage. See Aristides Orat. XL. In addition to this, Plutarch may have also written a life of Heracles that has been lost. See Lamberton (2001:23).
above, Heracles’ comic side is notably absent. As Kirkpatrick and Dunn note, within the realm of Classical Greek drama, Heracles appears most often in comedies or satyr plays that exploited certain episodes of his mythology, in particular his enslavement by Omphale or his encounter with the Cercopes. Such portrayals reveal a lighter side to the hero, who is depicted as dressed in women’s clothing or suffering the mockery of the Cercopes for having thick, black hair on his buttocks. In Lucian’s representation of Heracles, he is a figure that is surprisingly old, barbarian, and a symbol of eloquence not strength. Like the earlier comic portrayals of the hero, Lucian’s appears to subvert the contemporary view of Heracles as a serious symbol of manliness and Greek culture.

As a figure that is described as both old and a barbarian, this portrait of Heracles presents immediate similarities with Lucian himself that encourage us as his audience to view it as a metaphor for the rhetorical performance that this text may have introduced. In his description of the painting, Lucian’s emphasizes how this Heracles does not conform to the Heracles of Greek mythology, and it is through the divergences from the standard image of the hero that we get a sense of Lucian’s innovation. Besides his age and nationality, this Heracles is bald and has dark sunburned skin similar to that of an old sailor (οἱ θαλαττουργοὶ γέροντες). The darkness of Heracles’ skin inspires Lucian to

---

26 “Τὸν Ἡρακλέα Οἰκτόι Ὄμψαν ὀνομαζοντας φωνῆ τῇ ἐπιχωρίῳ, τὸ δὲ εἴδος τοῦ θεοῦ πάντων ἄλλοκτον γράφουσι.” (The Celts call Heracles Ogmios in their native tongue and they paint the god’s form in a very strange way, Her. 1).
27 ἡ γέρων ἐστιν αὐτός ἐς τὸ ἔσχατον, ἀναφαλαιάτας, πολλός ἁκριβῶς ὅσιο λουπαὶ τῶν τριχῶν, ῥωσὸς τὸ δέρμα καὶ διακεκαμένου ἐς τὸ μελάντατον οὕτω εἰσὶν ὁι θαλαττουργοὶ γέροντες.” (In their minds he is very old, bald, except for a few remaining hairs that are very grey, his skin is wrinkled, and he is sunburned to the point of being black, similar to that of an old sailor, Her. 1).
comment that this Heracles is more similar to Charon or an underworld Iapetus than Heracles (μᾶλλον δὲ Χάρωνα ἢ ᾿Ιαπετόν τινά τῶν ὑποταρταρίων καὶ πάντα μᾶλλον ἢ ᾿Ηρακλέα εἶναι ἂν εἰκάσειας, Her. 1). Given the hero’s connection to Hades as both a visitor and an inhabitant whom Odysseus meets in book eleven of the Odyssey, Lucian here attempts to familiarize the strangely dark Heracles by describing him as belonging in the underworld.

Despite looking nothing like the familiar representations of the hero, Lucian explains to his audience that he was able to recognize it as a painting of Heracles through the inclusion of the traditional iconography of the lion skin, club, and quiver (Her. 1). The impression of the painting given thus far is one of a figure that is dressed up like Heracles, and as such recalls the opening of the Aristophanes’ Frogs and Heracles’ laughter upon seeing Dionysus dressed like him (45-8). Lucian’s creation of a surprising image out of the familiar trappings of a barbarian and Heracles has at its heart a comic scenario, further reinforcing the sense that Lucian’s praise for this barbarian Heracles is parodying the more serious interpretations of the hero as an ideal of Greek culture.

According to Billaut’s characterization of this prologue, the Heracles “develops according to a genuine plot which consists of a series of revelations.”29 As I will suggest, Lucian’s “series of revelations” allows him to shape his audience’s response to the painting and ultimately to his own rhetorical performance.

The image of Heracles drawn thus far is one that unites the familiar with the

28 In Euripides’ Alcestis, for example. Heracles journeys to the underworld to return Alcestis to her husband. In addition to this, at the opening of Aristophanes’ Frogs, Dionysus goes down to the underworld dressed as Heracles. For Odysseus’ encounter with Heracles, see Ody.11.601-25.
unfamiliar and we can begin to see how this might be applicable to Lucian’s own literary style. In his focus on the oddity of the image, Lucian recreates for his audience his experience of seeing it for the first time. Lucian thus guides his audience’s response to it not only through his description of the painting but his own reaction as well. For as he admits to his audience, he initially believed that the painting was intended as an insult to the hero:

ομην ο刁ν ἐφ’ ὄβρει τόν Ἐλληνίων θεῶν τοιαύτα παρανομεῖν τοὺς Κέλτοὺς ἐκ τὴν μορφὴν τὴν Ἡρακλέους ἀμυνομένους αὐτὸν τῇ γραφῇ, ὅτι τὴν χώραν ποτὲ αὐτῶν ἐπήλθεν λείαι ἐλαύνων, ὅπως τὰς Γερύνον ἀγέλαις ζητῶν κατέδραμε τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ἐσπερίων γενών.

I thought, therefore, that the Celts had committed this offence against the good-looks of Heracles to spite the Greek gods, and that they were punishing him through the picture for having once visited their country on a cattle-lifting foray, at the time when he raided most of the western nations in his quest of the herds of Geryon. (Her. 2-3)

As this passage indicates, Lucian first attempted to interpret the painting based on what he knows about the hero from Greek mythology, and this perspective presumably mirrors that of the audience who is hearing the painting described to them for the first time.

According to Georgiadou and Larmour, Lucian “defamiliarizes” Heracles in this prologue and “engages the reader in the process both of interpreting the painting and of reinterpreting traditional representations of Heracles.”30 While I agree that Lucian’s emphasis on the peculiarity of the image incites the audience to think not only about the painting but also about what they know of Heracles, it is my contention that Lucian draws a comparison here between the Heracles of the painting and that of Greek mythology not

---

to expand the audiences’ understanding of the hero per se but rather of Lucian’s own work. If we take the painting as a potential metaphor for Lucian’s own rhetorical performance, the image of Lucian’s rhetoric presented thus far is as something strange and foreign yet with a few familiar trappings, i.e. Heracles’ lion skin and club. Read as such, this extended ekphrasis potentially reflects how Lucian imagines he must appear to an audience viewing him for the first time. As I continue my analysis of Lucian’s description of the painting, I will focus my attention on how the progressive peculiarities reflect Lucian’s own rhetorical performance. I will argue that such images lead us to ultimately reject the painting as a metaphor for Lucian’s rhetorical style in favor of an image of rhetoric that is a mixture of traditional and novel features.

The oddity of Lucian’s “Celtic Heracles” lies primarily in the imagery associated with him. As Lucian continues his description, each feature of the painting is described as more peculiar than the last as the following passage demonstrates:

καίτοι τό παραδοξότατον οὐδέπω ἔφην τῆς εἰκόνος· ὁ γὰρ δὴ γέρων Ἡρακλῆς ἐκείνος ἀνθρώπων πάμπολοι τι πλήθος ἐλκεί ἐκ τῶν ὸτῶν ἀπαντας δεδεμένους. δεσμὰ δὲ εἴσιν οἱ σειραὶ λεπταὶ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἠλέκτρου εἰργασμέναι ὤρμοις ἐοικούσας τοῖς καλλίστοις.

But I have not yet mentioned the most surprising thing in the picture. That old Heracles of theirs drags after him a great crowd of men who are all tethered by the ears! His bonds are delicate chains of gold and amber, resembling the prettiest of necklaces. (*Her.* 3)

Lucian’s description of the gold and amber bonds combines imagery that evokes something fine or delicate with the more martial imagery of a group of captives. While this account of Heracles’ captives engages, on the one hand, with the contemporary interpretation of the hero as symbol of manliness, Lucian’s description of the bonds as
made of gold and amber suggests that the beauty of Heracles’ eloquence, and for that matter potentially Lucian’s as well, conceals a power to enslave the audience.

According to Lucian, however, Heracles’ words do not simply enslave the group of men following him; they make them actually desire their captivity:

καὶ ὁμοὶ ὑφ’ οὕτως ἀσθενῶν ἀγόμενοι οὐτε δρασμὸν βουλεύομεν, δυνάμενοι ἄν εὑμαρὰς, οὐτε ὄλως ἀντιτείνουσιν ἢ τοῖς ποσίν ἀντερείδουσι πρὸς τὸ ἐναντίον τῆς ἀγωγῆς ἐξουπτάζοντες, ἀλλὰ φαιδροὶ ἔπονται καὶ γεγηθότες καὶ τὸν ἄγοντα ἑπανοῦντες, ἐπειγόμενοι θότες καὶ τὸν ἄγοντα ἑπανοῦντες, ἐπειγόμενοι ἄπαντες καὶ τῷ φθάνειν ἐθέλειν τὸν δεσμὸν ἐπιχαλῶντες, ἔοικότες ἀχθεσθησομένοις εἰ λυθήσονται.

Yet, though led by bonds so weak, the men do not think of escaping, as they easily could, and they do not pull back at all or brace their feet and lean in the opposite direction to that in which he is leading them. In fact, they follow cheerfully and joyfully, applauding their leader and all pressing him close and keeping the leashes slack in their desire to overtake him; apparently they would be offended if they were let loose! (Her. 3)

Thus far our discussion of the *Heracles* has focused on a moment of ekphrasis, a rhetorical trope that, as Whitmarsh defines it, is “an evocative description designed to make the reader or listener experience the phenomena described as though actually present.” Lucian, however, takes this technique a step further and places his audience into the mindset of Heracles’ captives, who, apparently ignorant of their captivity, strive to be closer to their captor. To an audience listening to Lucian’s description, Heracles’ captives begin to look analogous to their own position as Lucian’s audience. Read as a potential metaphor for Lucian and the rhetorical performance he is engaged in, this image suggests that Lucian’s eloquence has the power to captivate his audience to the point of

---

obsession. Lucian here appears to tease his audience that not only will he win them over, but he will also turn them into truly devoted fans.

As Lucian reveals to his audience, this Heracles’ power lies in his tongue:

οὐ γὰρ ἔχον ὁ ζωγράφος θέθειν ἐξάψειε ταῖς σειραῖς τὰς ἄρχας, ἀτε τῆς δεξιᾶς μὲν ἦδη τὸ ῥόπαλον, τῆς λαιᾶς δὲ τὸ τόξον ἔχος ὑσὶς, τρυπῆσας τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν γλῶτταν ἀκραν ἐκεῖνης ἐλκυμένους αὐτοὺς ἐποίησεν, καὶ ἐπέστραται γε εἰς τοὺς ἄγομένους μειδιῶν.

But let me tell you without delay what seemed to me the strangest thing of all. Since the painter had no place where he could attach the ends of the chains, as the god’s right hand already held the club and his left the bow, he pierced the tip of his tongue and represented him drawing the men by that means! Moreover, he has his face turned toward his captives, and is smiling. (Her. 3)

Although Lucian will go on to describe how he was initially confused by this painting, its imagery is not subtle, and the fact that Heracles leads his captives by his tongue confirms Georgiadou and Larmour’s interpretation of the painting as an allegory for eloquence.32

The image of eloquence presented here, however, is mysterious and foreign, and Lucian heightens this mysteriousness by describing in the final lines of his account how Heracles is smiling at his captives, (ἐπέστραται γε εἰς τοὺς ἄγομένους μειδιῶν). Though the portrayal of Heracles as old and a barbarian lacks a clear precedent in the comic tradition, this final image suggests a mocking tone to the painting. For an audience that recognizes Lucian in the figure of Heracles and themselves in his captives, this painting represents Lucian’s boast that not only will he captivate them with his words but he will also mock them should they follow him heedlessly.

To sum up our discussion of the painting, as I mentioned above, Georgiadou and Larmour have suggested that this painting symbolizes Lucian’s rhetoric and its imagery would initially seem to support this interpretation. Like the Celtic Heracles, Lucian’s status as an eastern sophist in the Greek world makes him similarly foreign and as he reveals at the end of the prologue, he is likewise an old man. Furthermore, the final image of Heracles smiling over his captives evokes Lucian’s own satiric mockery. Yet if we accept Branham’s view that Lucian’s prologues serve as important introductions to Lucian’s style of writing, what does the Heracles reveal about Lucian’s craft? Read as a foil for Lucian, this painting characterizes his rhetorical approach as one that reinvents traditional subject matter in such a way that it is almost unrecognizable to a Greek audience. For though it depicts a Greek hero, this painting represents a barbarian reinterpretation of that hero and as such has little connection to the Greek literary tradition. While certain aspects of this painting recall our author, it is my contention that it is not until the end of the prologue and the final Homeric quotation that Lucian reveals his rhetorical style to be equally grounded within the literary tradition.

As Lucian concludes his account of the painting, he summarizes his initial reaction to it in the following statement: “Ταῦτα ἔγαρ μὲν ἐπὶ πολὺ εἰστήκαιν ὁρῶν καὶ θαυμάζων καὶ ἀπορῶν καὶ ἀγανακτῶν.‖ (I had stood for a long time looking at it, wondering, feeling at a loss, and getting annoyed, Her. 4). Lucian’s annoyance upon seeing the painting is striking and perhaps intended to mirror the potential reaction of his

33 One prominent example of Lucian’s self-characterization as Syrian appears in the Twice Accused, in which Lucian entitles his persona ΣΥΡΟΣ, a characterization that is confirmed by Rhetoric’s reference to Lucian’s Ἀσσύριον τρόπον (27).
own audience. Although the question of how to react to a work of art is not specifically addressed in this prologue, Lucian discusses this issue in another of his works, *On the Hall.*\(^{35}\) Comprised of two speeches, *On the Hall* debates whether it is beneficial to deliver a speech among beautiful surroundings with the first speaker arguing for its merits and the second against them.\(^{36}\) As Newby has pointed out, the first speaker uses the visual beauty of the hall to “evoke desire” among his listeners, a desire that must itself be articulated in words. “The latter precept is particularly aimed at a certain section of the viewing public—the educated *pepaideumenoi*—for whom, we later find, it is shameful not to give some verbal response since it suggests that they have been overpowered by sight.”\(^{37}\) In the *Heracles*, then, we may surmise that Lucian’s earlier frustration at the painting is thus not directed at the image per se but at his initial inability to respond to it. Lucian’s acknowledgment of his initial frustration, a perspective potentially analogous to the audience’s own experience with Lucian’s prologue, connects him to his audience and, thus, allows them to undergo the same process of enlightenment that he is about to depict himself as experiencing.

Lucian’s ironic pose of frustration, however, is short lived as an unnamed Celt steps in to explain the painting to him. As Lucian describes the Celt, he emphasizes the Celt’s Greekness in spite of his actual ethnicity:

\begin{quote}
Κελτός δέ τις παρεστώς οὐκ ἀπαίδευτος τὰ ἡμέτερα, ὡς ἔδειξεν ἀκριβῶς
\end{quote}

\(^{35}\) As Anderson has noted, Lucian employs ekphrasis in several of his prologues (1977: 314). While Anderson (1977), Branham (1985), and Nesselrath (1990) do not include *On the Hall* in their discussions of Lucian’s prologues, Newby (2002) labels it as such.

\(^{36}\) For a discussion of the role that ekphrasis plays in *On the Hall*, see Newby (2002) whose work I follow here.

A certain Celt who was present and not unlearned in our culture, as he showed by his fluency in the Greek language, a philosopher, I think, of our customs, said: “I will explain the riddle of the painting, stranger, since you seem to be very troubled by it. (Her. 4)

While Heracles’ age, barbarian status, and grin initially implied a connection to Lucian, the fact that the Celt is decidedly not Greek, yet possesses paideia, is fluent in Greek, and has philosophical interests (φιλόσοφος τὰ ἐπιχώρια) indicates the he is another potential foil for our author. Yet, unlike the novelty of Heracles, these same features cast the Celt in the familiar mold of a sophist.\footnote{For discussions of what meant to be a sophist, see Swain (1996: 17-101) and Whitmarsh (2001: 41-133).} As a potential foil for Lucian, the Celt symbolizes a more traditional path to rhetorical success than that of Heracles. By creating another image evocative of himself, Lucian presents his audience with a choice of two different rhetorical approaches with which to associate him: one that is strange and novel or one that is more traditional. As I will argue, Lucian characterizes the Celt’s approach to rhetoric as flawed and easily rejected. Read as such, it is the painting of Heracles that represents a better, though not exact, foil for the author.

According to the Celt, the apparent strangeness of the painting can be explained by the fact that the Celtic view of Heracles differs from that of the Greeks in one key respect:
We Celts do not agree with you Greeks in thinking that Hermes is Eloquence: we identify Heracles with it, because he is far more powerful than Hermes. And don’t be surprised that he is represented as an old man, for eloquence and eloquence alone is wont to show its full vigor in old age, if your poets are right in saying ‘A young man has a wandering mind’ and ‘Old age has wiser words to say than youth.’ (Her. 4)

As this passage suggests, the fact that the Celts equate Heracles, not Hermes, with λόγος is the crux of the painting and the source of Lucian’s confusion. As Fowden explains in his discussion of Hermes Trismegistus, the connection between Hermes and λόγος is a Hellenistic development, stemming from his reputation for being an inventive trickster and his role as the messenger of the gods. By connecting a painting of Heracles with λόγος, Lucian here hints at the power that λόγος can have over the plastic arts.

While the Celt’s reference to this specific tradition initially seems to shed light on the connection between Heracles and rhetoric, his explanation does not address the complex imagery found throughout the painting. Instead, it appears designed to showcase his paideia, a characterization that is furthered through the Celt’s use of quotations from Greek poets to support his arguments. As he continues his explanation, he argues that eloquence in fact increases with age:

εἴ γε ἀληθῆ ύμῶν οἱ ποιηταὶ λέγουσιν, ὅτι αἱ μὲν τῶν ὀπλοτέρων φρένες ἠρέθονται, τὸ δὲ γῆρας ἔχει τι λέξα τῶν νέων σοφότερον. οὕτω γέ το καὶ τοῦ Νέστορος ύμῶν ἀπορρεῖ ἐκ τῆς γλώττης τὸ μέλι, καὶ οἱ ἁγορηταὶ τῶν Τρώων τὴν ὁπα ὑφισθὲν εὐανθὴ τινα· λείρια γὰρ καλεῖται, εἴ γε μέμνημαι,

[39] The two poetic quotations found in the passage are drawn from Homer Iliad 3.108 and Euripides Phoen. 530 respectively.
[40] As Fowden notes, the Stoics took this association with λόγος a step further, assigning Hermes an important function in their theology, expanding it from a creative and expressive one to viewing him as λόγος itself and a demiurge, (1986: 23-4).
If your poets are right in saying ‘A young man hath a wandering wit’ and ‘Old age has wiser words to say than you.’ That is why your Nestor’s tongue distils honey, and why the Trojan counselors have a voice like flowers (the flowers mentioned are lilies, if my memory serves. (Her. 4-5)41

The Celt here seamlessly strings together four allusions to emphasize his point and, as if these allusions were not enough to showcase his paideia, he goes so far as to remind Lucian what types of flowers Homer used to describe the voice of the Trojan counselors. While his initial explanation that the Celts equate Heracles, not Hermes, with λόγος may have begun to elucidate the image, he here appears more interested in showcasing his own knowledge than exploring the details of the painting. This, however, is not what in the end makes his approach to rhetoric problematic, rather, as Lucian demonstrates in the conclusion of this prologue, it is the ease with which an enemy of Lucian’s could rebut the Celt’s Homer-based arguments.

As Lucian concludes this prologue, he ceases to discuss his experience in Gaul and begins to imagine what his would-be detractors might say to him now that he has returned from retirement to the stage. Like the figure of the Celt, Lucian’s detractors invoke Homer to argue that eloquence is at its fullest not in old age but in youth:

τά ἄνθη.

41 The lines quoted are respectively Iliad 3.108, Eur. Phoen. 530, Iliad 1.249, and Iliad 3.152.
Until then I had been afraid that some of you might think I was doing an altogether boyish thing and at my age showing the rashness of youth; and that then some young fellow full of Homer might rebuke me by saying “Your strength is gone” and “Bitter old age has you in his clutch” and “Your squire is feeble and your steeds are slow,” aiming the last quip at my feet. But when I remember that old Heracles, I am moved to undertake anything, and am not ashamed to be so bold since I am no older than the picture. (Her. 7)

By lending a voice to his would-be detractors here, Lucian demonstrates that the problem of turning solely to the poetic tradition as support for your argument is that someone can easily cite a contradictory passage. The Celt and his detractors thus appear to be playing the same rhetorical game. Read as such, it becomes clear that this approach to rhetoric will not help his audience understand the painting of Heracles and consequently does not represent Lucian’s style of rhetoric.

As the prologue draws to a close, Lucian further reinforces this point by trumping the Homeric arguments of the Celt and his detractors with a comparison between himself and Odysseus:

Ὁξᾶο ὅπσ ὅπαξακπζνῦκαη ηὴηθίαλ θαὶ ηὸ γῆξαο ηὸ ἐκαπηνῦ. θαὶ δηὰ ἐηόικεζα πάιαη λελεσιθεκέλνλ ηὸ ἀθάηηνλ θαηαζπάζαο θαὶ ἐθ ηῶλ ἐλόλησλ ἐπηζθεπάζαο αὖζηο ἀθεῖλαη ἐο κέζνλ ηὸ πέιαγνο. εἴε δ’, ὦ ζενί, θαὶ ηὰ παξ’ ὏κῶλ ἐκπλεῦζαη δεμηά, ὡο λῦλ γε κάιηζηα πιεζηζζινῦ ἑηαίξνπ ἀλέκνπ δεόκεζα, ἵλα, εἰ ἄμηνη θαηλνίκεζα, θαὶ ἡκῖλ ηὸ Ὀκεξηθὸλ ἐθεῖλν ἐπηθζέγμεηαί ηίο, νἵελ ἐθ ῥαθέσλ ὁ γέξσλ ἐπηγνπλίδα θαίλεη.

You see what encouragement I apply to my age and my infirmities. This is what gave me heart to drag my ship, long ago laid up, to the water, provision her as best I could and set sail on the high seas once more. Be it your part, gods, to blow me fair if ever do I need a breeze “that fills the sail, a good companion.” If anyone thinks me worthy, I would have him apply to me the words of Homer:

“Will you look at the thigh on that man!”
The characterization of himself as an old sailor calls to mind the opening of the speech and his description of Heracles as similar to oĩ θαλαττουργοι γέροντες. As this connection suggests, Lucian intends his audience to go back and reconsider his painting of Heracles in light of this final Homeric comparison. Lucian here unites the familiar Odysseus with an unfamiliar Heracles and in so doing rebuts the arguments of his detractors. This final analogy between Lucian and Odysseus reveals Lucian’s rhetorical approach in all its complexity. Although there are clear affinities between the novelty of the painting and Lucian himself, Lucian’s choice to conclude the prologue with a Homeric quotation indicates that his craft is also deeply indebted to the more traditional approaches. This prologue would thus seem to suggest that Lucian’s problem is ultimately with the choice between novelty and tradition, since individually each approach has the potential to leave one open to criticism from one’s competitors. As this prologue suggests, it is Lucian’s clever manipulation of the tradition, rather than a slavish following, that gives his case for returning from retirement added strength. Unlike his detractors who begin to look more and more like Heracles’ captives, Lucian does not merely quote the great authors of literary past but uses them to create something new and unique.

Moreover, the final Homeric quotation also illustrates for Lucian’s audience how they can avoid becoming like Heracles’ captives. Taken from a moment in book 18, in which Odysseus, on the verge of fighting Irus, reveals his true heroic nature in the form of his thigh, this line warns Lucian’s audience to not be like the Celt and Lucian’s detractors, who judged the painting and Lucian respectively by what they saw on the
surface. Lucian here reveals to his audience that the way in which they protect themselves from becoming Heracles’ captives (or, in other words, Lucian’s) is to actively engage with and question what Lucian is about to present them. As I have already mentioned, the *Heracles* is generally accepted to be a later work of Lucian. Though I do not want to enter into a debate about the chronology of his writings, I would like to suggest that we need not read Lucian’s reference to age so literally. By characterizing himself as old in this text, Lucian indicates that while on the surface he may appear weaker or inferior to those around him, the true strength of his work lies hidden beneath the surface.

Unlike the Celt and the unnamed detractors, Lucian focuses on a strange and novel topic yet presents it in the traditional format of ekphrasis. He appears proud of his innovation and the fact that he is not the slavish follower of tradition that his detractors are. In the choice between literary innovation and filling the standard mold of a sophist, Lucian here picks innovation with a traditional twist. As I will suggest in my discussion of the *Dionysus* and the *Literary Prometheus*, Lucian’s insistence that his audience notice the traditional nature of his writing style is not simply referring to his ability to speak in pure Attic Greek or use obscure literary quotations. Instead, as I will argue, he is asserting that his work directly engages with the Greek literary canon, in particular Plato and Aristophanes, and as such should be viewed as a continuation of those traditions.

As Lucian teases his audience at the end of the *Heracles*, his work contains a hidden strength, one that could take them captive if they are not careful. Since Lucian cannot physically capture his audience like the Heracles of the painting and would in fact
presumably want to enthrall them with his speech, this boast serves a moment of self-referential humor that appears to mock Lucian’s apparent lack of self-confidence. On a more serious note, however, the final image of Odysseus also exhorts the audience to be a careful audience, or in our case, to be careful readers. To fully understand Lucian we must look beyond the surface of the text and examine such features as the literary sources he invokes and how he manipulates them to fit his purpose. This concern that his audience properly appreciates his work is a common theme of his prologues and one that I will continue to explore in my discussion of the *Dionysus*. In that text, Lucian’s anxiety regarding his age has been replaced with a concern that the comic features of his work are causing audiences to overlook and scorn him. While scholars such as Branham have pointed to this prologue as proof of the central role that laughter and comedy plays in Lucian’s works, I would like to suggest that it also illustrates the complex view of the way in which he melds the comic and the serious. While he does not refer to specific genres, the way in which he characterizes his literary approach in this text sets the stage for his union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue.

III. The *Dionysus*

Typically regarded as a pair of texts, the *Dionysus* and the *Heracles* both invoke mythological figures as vehicles for discussing the role that innovation plays in Lucian’s texts. Like Heracles, the figure of Dionysus spans multiple genres, in particular tragedy

---

42 The *Heracles* and the *Dionysus* are often read in tandem with one another based on arguments that these prologues served as introductions to the *True Histories*. For the most recent arguments about the
and comedy, two genres that will be especially relevant to this discussion of the prologue. Whereas we saw Lucian embracing the novelty of his literary creation in the *Heracles*, the *Dionysus* portrays Lucian as concerned that the comic features of his work have led audiences to disregard them as mere trifles similar to the views we saw expressed in the introduction. To combat this, Lucian relates to his current audience two tales designed to instruct them in the finer points of his literary style. Though initially connected only by their Dionysiac theme, these tales demonstrate Lucian’s ability to recast traditionally serious topics in a comic light and thus to engage directly with the issue of uniting the seemingly opposing literary genres.

In the first, Lucian describes for his audience Dionysus’ invasion of India and the Indians’ subsequent reaction to him. Upon first seeing the god, the Indians make the fatal mistake of laughing at Dionysus’ band of Bacchants and Satyrs. As Lucian explains, the Indians’ reaction to Dionysus is analogous to that of previous audiences who have scorned his work for its comic (κωμικά) and strange (παραδόξος) features. Lucian’s first tale thus appears designed to warn his audience not to dismiss him because of the comic nature of his writing style. In contrast to these sharp warnings, Lucian’s second tale describes a spring dedicated to Silenus and the miraculous effects it has over the old men who drink from it. Unlike the first tale, however, Lucian offers no explanation and, as Nesselrath notes, this second tale is attested nowhere else in Greek and Roman

connection of these prologues with the *True Histories*, see Georgiadou and Larmour (1995). In addition to this, Lucian refers in both texts to his advanced age.
literature. What then is Lucian’s purpose in telling this tale? And what can it reveal, when read alongside the first, about Lucian’s union of serious and comic genres?

Lucian’s explanation for Dionysus’ invasion of India, however, has meant that these questions are largely unanswered due to the fact that it reveals key components about his literary project. In his analysis of this prologue, Branham argues that the Dionysus is “the only prologue in which the μῦθος is told to explicate the function of comedy and novelty in his works.” For Branham, the initial tale of the Dionysus illustrates for Lucian’s audience the serious purpose that comedy and laughter can have or, put differently, Lucian’s seriocomic style. As I discussed in the introduction, Branham’s definition of Lucian’s writings as seriocomic is based largely on Bakhtin’s account of this genre, in particular his location of its origins in the Socratic dialogue and Menippean satire. Yet in this prologue and in other texts as well, Lucian draws our attention to the influence of Old Comedy on his writings. Branham’s approach, while fruitful, consequently privileges Lucian’s philosophical sources over the comedic ones and thus simplifies the generic interplay found within this text and others. Although I do not ultimately disagree with his interpretation of the Dionysus as depicting in miniature Lucian’s literary style, I believe that we can profitably expand this paradigm to include not only the serious role that laughter plays in this text but also the way in which

44 Branham (1985: 241). As Branham points out, Lucian often uses words related to paideia to refer to his ideal audience, (1985: 238 n.5). In reference to the presumed audience of this piece, Nesselrath notes that “Lucian seems to address this piece to people he has already visited in earlier times; in fact, he tries to reawaken reminiscences of those times and promise to live up to his former standards,” (1990: 135).
45 Scholars, however, have taken up and challenged Bakhtin’s exclusion of Aristophanes from his discussion of the history of laughter and more specifically seriocomic literature See A. Edwards (1993), as well as Platter (2001), and (2007).
Lucian draws on external genres to achieve this. As I will argue, this approach reveals that Lucian’s brand of humor is not based solely on select passages from Plato, but is firmly entrenched within the tradition of Old Comedy.

The question of Lucian’s sources for this prologue has been addressed only in terms of the first tale, and there are in fact two different opinions regarding its literary inspiration. Nesselrath, on the one hand, has pointed to Diodorus Siculus’ reference to Dionysus’ invasion in his *Bibliotecha Historica* as the basis for Lucian’s version of the story.\(^{46}\) Diodorus’ account, however, is found in his discussion of the different myths regarding the god’s origin and does not offer much detail about his invasion of India. In contrast, Georgiadou and Larmour have suggested that Lucian’s tale is in many ways indebted to Euripides’ *Bacchae* and the struggle that that play depicts between Pentheus and the god.\(^{47}\) According to their interpretation, Dionysus’ respective struggles in these texts signify an “initiation” into the rites of Dionysus or in the case of Lucian’s text, the *True Histories*:

> The action of the *Bacchae* delineates a process of learning; similarly the *prolalia* shows the Indians learning that they should not underestimate the power of Dionysus and his maenads. The *prolalia* also serves to ‘initiate’ Lucian’s audience into the ‘Dionysian’ content of the upcoming work, the *Verae Historiae*.\(^{48}\)

Although the connection of this prologue to the *True Histories* is tenuous, Georgiadou and Larmour’s discussion is significant because it highlights the generic play within this text. In this section, I will suggest that Lucian’s ‘initiation’ of his audience in the

\(^{46}\) Nesselrath (1990:135-6).
Dionysus is not into the “Dionysian content” of the True Histories, but rather into the generic interplay that is characteristic of Lucian’s writing style. In the context of the first tale, this appears not only in its resemblance to the scenario of the Bacchae, but Lucian’s subsequent analysis of it. As I will argue, Lucian’s discussion of his craft in terms of his audience’s failure to appreciate his comic novelties calls to mind Aristophanes’ similar complaints in the parabasis of the Clouds, as well as that of the Wasps. Though Lucian demands that his audience notice the seriousness of his work, the way in which he defends his craft echoes that of Aristophanes in the parabases and thus emphasizes the comic origins of Lucian’s own literary novelties.

The questions regarding the sources and function of Lucian’s second tale, however, still remain. The answer, as I will suggest, lies in the figure of Silenus. Besides images of drunken revelry, the figure of Silenus recalls the comparison drawn by Alcibiades in Plato’s Symposium between Socrates and the clay figurines depicting this mythical figure as seen in the shops of Athens. According to Alcibiades, Socrates’ external appearance evokes images of these comic figures, while his interior reveals the true beauty of his wisdom (Symp. 215b-e). In light of this description of Socrates, it is perhaps not surprising when, at the end of the dialogue, Socrates argues that the same poet can compose comedies and tragedies (Symp. 223c-d). As Clay has argued, this is Plato’s subtle way of suggesting that he is the one who is able to unite and consequently subjugate the two genres with his new brand of philosophy. 49

49 Clay (1975: 252-256). Leslie Kurke (2006) takes a slightly different approach to the image of a Silenic Socrates and suggests that Plato may have been influenced by earlier Aesopic traditions.
My discussion will therefore begin with Lucian’s explanation of the first tale, its thematic similarities to the *Clouds*, and how that affects our understanding of his account of Dionysus’ invasion of India. In regards to the first tale, my focus will primarily be on the role of Euripides’ *Bacchae* in it and how it allows us to expand Branham’s understanding of Lucian’s “seriocomic” style by exploring how Lucian imitates and reworks traditionally serious genres in a comic light. I will then turn my attention to Lucian’s second tale and show how it comically reacts to Plato’s *Symposium*. As I will suggest, Lucian’s instructions to his audience at the end of the first tale create a methodological approach that involves looking beyond the surface of text and noticing the various sources on which he is drawing. Read with this methodology in mind, Lucian’s second tale evokes an image of Plato’s Socrates that reveals how Lucian’s literary approach is not merely a comic means to a serious end, but an engagement with Socrates’ assertion that it is possible for the same person to write comedy and tragedy. As Lucian suggests in this prologue, he is not only able to unite comedy and tragedy, but comedy and philosophy as well.

**Lucian’s Explanation of his Initial Tale**

Before turning to Lucian’s first tale, I will first examine Lucian’s explanation for telling such a tale to his audience and how his reasoning points us toward his generic commitment. At the conclusion of his first tale, Lucian poses a rhetorical question to his audience: “Ἀιιὰ ηί πξὸο ηὸλ Γηόλπζνλ ὁ Γηόλπζνο νὗηνο;” (What has this Dionysus to do with Dionysus? *Dionysus 5*). Similar to what we saw in the *Heracles*, Lucian here invites
his audience to interpret his version of Dionysus by comparing it to what they already
know of the god. For as Lucian goes on to explain, this tale is a metaphor for how
audiences have reacted to his works:

In my opinion (and in the name of the Graces don’t think that I’m in a
corybantic frenzy or downright drunk if I compare myself to the gods!) most people are like the Indians when they encounter literary novelties,
like mine. They think that what they will hear from me will smack of
Satyrs and of jokes, in short, of comedy—for that is the conviction that
they’ve formed, holding I know not what opinion of me—some of them
do not come at all, believing it unseemly to come off their elephants and
give their attention to revels of women and the leaps of Satyrs, while
others apparently come for something of that kind, and when they find
iron instead of ivy, they do not dare to applaud, confused by the
unexpectedness of the thing. (Dion. 5)

Lucian’s annoyance that his previous audiences have snubbed the καινοὺς τῶν λόγων
because of their overtly comic nature recalls Aristophanes’ irritation following the failure
of the first Clouds and the tension between old and new that pervades the play. As I
discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Aristophanes opens the parabasis of the
Clouds by establishing his audience as the ideal, wise audience for his wise play, only to
blame them for its initial failure (519-26). In an Aristophanic ploy, Lucian here mocks
his previous audiences for being ignorant about his work. By revealing the failures of
past audiences to his current one, Lucian establishes them as an ideal audience. As his
ideal audience, they should notice that his work is not merely composed of satyrs and jokes, (σατυρικὰ καὶ γελοῖα τίνα) but contains a serious core, which in this metaphor is the iron of his thrysus. While Branham has taken this to mean that Lucian’s work has a serious purpose, it is also possible to view this metaphor in terms of genre. Whereas satyrs and jokes call to mind images of Comedy as well as Satyr plays, we can read Lucian’s iron in equally generic terms as referring to his inclusion and manipulation of the “loftier” genres of tragedy and philosophical dialogue.

In the *Clouds*, much of Aristophanes’ humor lies in the pervasive tension between old and new, as seen in the generational conflicts between Strepsiades and Pheidippides, the figure of Socrates, the stronger and weaker arguments, and even within the parabasis itself.⁵⁰ For as Aristophanes asserts in the parabasis, the *Clouds* is a novel play because it lacks such traditional features as huge phalluses, jokes about bald men, and people dancing the cordax 537-544): “ἀιι’ αἰεὶ θαηλὰο ἰδέαο εἰζθέξσλ ζνθίδνκαη,‖ (I am always sophisticated by bringing in novel forms, 545).⁵¹ Implicit in Lucian’s characterization of his craft quoted above is a similar tension between what Lucian refers to as his literary novelties (τὸν κανονὸς τὸν λόγον) and more serious literary genres. Whereas Aristophanes characterizes his comedy as new in terms of the style of comedy produced by his rivals, Lucian’s discussion of his craft in the *Dionysus* suggests that his works are original in the very fact that they incorporate traditionally comic elements such as satyrs and jokes. While I do not want to imply here that this passage is at all indicative of the

⁵⁰I am here referring to the fact that this portrayal of Socrates has characteristics derived from both the Pre-Socratics and the sophists. For analysis of Socrates’ character in the *Clouds*, see Dover (1989: xxxii-lvi).

⁵¹ For a discussion of how these claims are not substantiated outside of the parabasis, see Hubbard (1991) and Major (2006).
type of performance pieces composed by Lucian’s literary rivals, it is nonetheless significant that Lucian appears to chafe at the snobbery of past audiences in regards to the comic nature of his works. Though his reference to his iron thrysus attempts to downplay the significance of comedy, this passage indicates that comedy pervades his style of writing.

Besides the thematic similarities between the moral of his first tale and Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, Lucian does not allude to an extant comedy in his initial Dionysiac tale but addresses its influence in general terms. In the context of this initial tale, the figure of Dionysus embodies the comic elements that Lucian regards as the cause of his previous audience’s disregard of his work. Lucian’s reticence to define these comic elements, however, is not surprising given that his subsequent explanation commands his audience to look beyond the ivy and notice the iron of his thrysus.

**Lucian’s First Tale**

Throughout Lucian’s initial tale there is a tension between novelty and tradition, which appears at its most basic level in his selection of Dionysus as his subject matter and the tale that he chooses to tell about him. Yet as Lucian commences his account of the god’s invasion of India, he provides his audience not with a description of Dionysus or the Indians, as we might expect, but rather the Indian’s reaction to seeing the god for the first time:

```
Ὅηε ὁ Γηόλπζνο ἐπ’ Ἰλδνὺο ζηξαηηὰλ ἤιαζε
—κωλύεη γὰξ θσιύεη ν὎δέλ, νἶκαη,
θαὶ κῦζνλ δηεγήζαζζαη Βαθρηθόλ
—θαζὶλ νὕησ θαηαθξνλῆζαη α὎ηνῦ ηὰ πξῶηα ηνὺο ἀλζξώπνπο ηνὺο ἐθεῖ, ὥζηε θαηαγει᾵λ ἐπηόληνο,
κ᾵ιινλ δὲ ἐιεεῖλ ηὴλ ηόικαλ α὎ηίθα κάια ζπκπαηεζεζνκέλνπ ὥπὸ ηῶλ
```

"Ὅτε ὁ Διόνυσος ἐπ’ Ἰνδοῦς στρατιῶν ἠλασε —κωλύει γὰρ οὐδέν, οἶμαι, καὶ μὴθον ὑμῖν διηήσασθαι Βακχικῶν —φασίν οὔτω καταφρονήσαι αὐτοῦ τά πρῶτα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς ἐκεῖ, ὡστε καταγελᾶν ἐπίντος, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐλεεῖν τὴν τόλμαν αὐτίκα μάλα συμπατήθησομένου ὑπὸ τῶν
When Dionysus led his army against the Indians—nothing prevents me, I suppose, from telling you a Bacchic tale—they say that the men there first scorned him, that they laughed at his advance, and even more so, that they pitied him for his daring since he would immediately be trampled by their elephants, if they deployed them against him. (Dion. 1)

Although Lucian sets his tale in the exotic locale of India, it contains certain traditional Dionysiac associations, most notably his characterization of Dionysus as a new and foreign deity.⁵² Lucian here presents us with an innovative take on a traditional tale associated with Dionysus, namely his invasion of a land that focuses our attention away from the god onto the Indian’s reaction to him. In his discussion of this text, Nesselrath argues that Lucian’s tale of Dionysus’ invasion of India was “common and familiar from at least the Hellenistic times” and was probably derived from Diodorus Siculus’ Bibliotheca Historica.⁵³ Yet Nesselrath’s discussion of Diodorus’ account suggests a simpler relationship than in fact exists. In order to understand the influence that Diodorus may have had on Lucian, let us briefly examine his account.

According to Diodorus, while mythographers agree that Dionysus is responsible for such things as the cultivation of the vine and the establishment of mysteries, they disagree whether there was a single Dionysus or several. Those that believe that there are multiple Dionysuses attribute to Dionysus three different origins: the first Dionysus came from India to spread the cultivation of the vine through the known world; the second was conceived by Zeus and Persephone and was responsible for, among other things, the

---
⁵² For a discussion of Dionysus’ characterization as a novel or foreign god, see Riu (1999:54-55).
⁵³ For further discussion of this see Nesselrath (1990: 135-6).
yoking of oxen to a plow; and the third was born from the union of Zeus and Semele and established the mystery rites associated with him (Biblo. 64). Diodorus goes on to explain that though Dionysus (and he seems here to be referring to the third one) treated all men with honor, Pentheus, Myrrhanus, who was the king of the Indians, and Lycurgus scorned him. In some cases, namely that of Pentheus, Dionysus had his maenads rip his enemies limb for limb, while others he defeated with an ivy covered thrysus (Biblio.65.3-4). From this summary, it is possible to see Diodorus as a potential source for the general tale of Dionysus’ invasion of India and the deceptive image of the ivy covered thrysus.

In contrast to Nesselrath’s discussion of Lucian’s possible source material, Georgiadou and Larmour have suggested that Lucian modeled this battle between the Indians and maenads on the quarrel between the god and Pentheus.54 Whereas the connections drawn by Nesselrath with Diodorus’ earlier account are based on the general tale of Dionysus’ invasion of India, the argument that the Bacchae represents a potential source for Lucian is derived from his focus on the Indians’ rejection of the god and their subsequent punishment. While it is impossible to say for certain whether one text had more influence on Lucian than another, what can be determined is that in Diodorus’ account of Dionysus Dionysus’ destruction of Pentheus and the Indian king Myrrhanus are grouped together, suggesting that there was already a connection between these two tales.55 For the remainder of my discussion of Lucian’s initial Dionysiac tale, I will focus

55 Since Lucian never names the king of the Indians, it is impossible to know if this was the king he had in mind.
on the potential connection to the *Bacchae* and how this affects our understanding of the image of his literary craft that Lucian presents us with in this tale.

In both the *Bacchae* and Lucian’s tale, there are two audiences: one embedded within the framework of the work who witness the god for the first time and the external one watching the play or the prologue being performed. Both works portray Dionysus as familiar to the external audience and unfamiliar to the embedded one, namely the Thebans and the Indians. In the context of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus’ foreign status is established from the god’s first words, which establish Thebes as his entrance into the Greek world (Bacchae 14-20). Pentheus fails to recognize and therefore respect Dionysus’ divinity, for which he is eventually punished with dismemberment. As we can see, though Lucian shifts the setting from Greece to India, there are basic similarities in plot between the two works. Like the Dionysus of the *Bacchae*, Lucian’s version depicts the god invading a land in which his divinity is not recognized, and he subsequently punishes the inhabitants for their obstinence. In the course of his tale, Lucian focuses primarily on an Indian scout’s description of the god, which portrays the god as strange and laughable, not unlike what we saw in his description of the Celt’s interpretation of Heracles. The Indians’ description of the god thus presents him in a new and original light, and this new view of the god is, according to Branham, “closely akin to parody” and not surprising in a writer “for whom parody is so important.”

Lucian’s redeployment of the *Bacchae*’s scenario in a new location and from a new

---

56 The exceptions to this are Cadmus and Tiresias who try to warn Pentheus at lines 266-369 not to scorn the god.
57 See Branham (1985: 242) and (1989: 45).
cultural perspective thus becomes symbolic of his own literary endeavors.

Lucian’s parody, however, is not simply in his description of the god, as Branham suggests, but in his portrayal of himself. As I mentioned above, in Lucian’s explanation of this tale Dionysus becomes symbolic of Lucian’s literary style, in particular its comic elements and the scorn they have induced among audiences. Lucian thus selects a scenario in which the Greek god appears in Greece as a foreigner to represent himself, a Syrian writing in Greek and embattling certain generic hierarchies in which the serious genres of tragedy and philosophical dialogue are seen as superior to the comic ones. Yet, while the introduction of Dionysus into Greece would seem a fitting parallel for Lucian’s own literary endeavor, Lucian reverses the scenario. In his tale, Dionysus is no longer a foreigner invading Greece, but a Greek force invading the exotic east. Behind this modification we can not only see a claim on Lucian’s part to Hellenic status, but an ironic joke about his own origins that pervades the tale and highlights its humorous tone.

What was originally Pentheus’ failure to recognize and accept the divinity of Dionysus becomes in the figure of the Indians the humor of Lucian’s tale. This is borne out in the description of Dionysus and his army that Lucian presents through the eyes of an Indian scout:

A few young clodhoppers are with them, dancing the cordax naked; they have tails, and horns like those that start from the foreheads of newborn kids. As for the general himself, he rides on a car behind a team of
panthers; he is quite beardless, without even the least bit of down on his cheek, has horns, wears a garland of grape clusters, ties up his hair up with a ribbon, and is in a purple gown and gilt slippers. (*Dion.* 1-2)

The Indians laugh at this description of the invading army: “Τὰ ὅτα οἱ Ἰνδοὶ καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν ἀκούοντες ἐγέλων, ὡς τὸ εἰκός…” (The Indians and king upon hearing these things laughed, as well they might…*Dion.* 3). Lucian’s inclusion of the almost parenthetical phrase ὡς τὸ εἰκός suggests that the Indian’s reaction to Dionysus is not necessarily unfounded and perhaps even understandable to an audience who is also seeing Dionysus as if for the first time. This phrase implies that it was not simply that the Indians laughed at Dionysus, but that they did not at the same time recognize him as a serious threat that led to their destruction.

In his summary of this tale, Branham notes that this “story does not instruct in addition to being comic, but by means of being comic.”58 Lucian’s imitation of the *Bacchae*, however, in this tale and his subsequent chastisement of audience not only shows the power of laughter, but also demonstrates to his audience that his work is grounded in the Greek literary tradition. While the comic or parodic features of the tale do function as instructional tools, their instruction goes beyond defining the role of laughter and comedy in this tale to emphasize for Lucian’s audience’s that his literary style is not simply Satyrs and jokes, but displays a knowledge of and interaction with the great works of Greek literature. By looking beyond the ivy of this tale, we saw how Lucian draws on and manipulates the scenario of the *Bacchae*. Read as such, the iron of Lucian’s thrysus thus appears to be Lucian’s tragic source material.

---

According to Branham, Lucian’s tale and its subsequent explanation is characteristic of Lucian’s “seriocomic” style. As he explains:

The tale of Dionysus’ invasion is the perfect vehicle for this admonition, for in telling it and interpreting it the speaker gives a demonstration of his seriocomic art on a small scale. The comic narrative is made to apply directly to his artistic intentions and the relationship between the performance and the audience.\(^{59}\)

For Branham, Lucian incites his audience to laugh at the Indians and in doing so demonstrates to them how a comic tale can have a serious purpose. While the serious purpose that Branham attributes to the laughter of this text is certainly one aspect of Lucian’s seriocomic style, it is only one aspect. In his definition of what constitutes a seriocomic work, Bakhtin points to, among other things, the inclusion of multiple voices within a single text, and it is this aspect of his style that I believe Lucian to be highlighting in his critique of his earlier audience.\(^{60}\) In the case of the Dionysus’ opening tale, this comes in the form of something that was traditionally serious, namely the narrative pattern of Euripides’ Bacchae, being recast in a novel and humorous light.\(^{61}\)

While the first tale of the Dionysus is intended as an admonition of sorts, it is not this that defines Lucian’s “seriocomic” style but rather his ability to present typically serious themes as something new and therefore funny. As we will see in Lucian’s second tale, the union of serious and comic tropes in Lucian’s first tale has its roots in one of the final scenes of Plato’s Symposium.

---


\(^{61}\) Lucian’s comic reworking of Euripides calls to mind Aristophanes’ in such plays as the Acharnians, which draws on Euripides’ lost Telephus.
Lucian’s Second Tale

While Lucian offers an explanation of his first tale to his audience, there is no such explanation of the second, and we must consequently follow his previous instructions to his audience and look beyond its Satyrs and jokes. As Lucian explains to his audience, this tale shares the Dionysiac theme and exotic Indian setting of the first: “Εγὼ δὲ, ἐπειδήπεξ ἔηη ἐλ Ἰλνῖο ἐζκέλ, ἐζέισ θαὶ ἄιιν ὏κῖλ δηεγήζαζζαί ηη ηῶλ ἐθεῖζελ, ν὎θ ἀπξνζδηόλπζνλ ν὎δ’ α὎ηό, ν὎δ’ ὧλ πνηνῦκελ ἀιιόηξηνλ.” (Since we are still in India, I want to tell you another tale of those things there, not unconnected to Dionysus, nor irrelevant to our business, Dion. 6.) In the previous tale, Dionysus and his army were analogous to Lucian’s literary style, and the characterization of the tale to come as οὔκ ἀπροσδιόνυσον indicates that his audience should regard the second in a similar light. Unlike the martial theme of the first, however, this tale presents a rather idyllic image of a probably fictitious tribe of Indians referred to by Lucian as the Machleans.62 This tribe, according to Lucian, has a grove sacred to Dionysus in which there are three springs: one dedicated to the Satyrs, one to Pan, and one to Silenus. Once a year the men of the tribe gather in the grove to celebrate the god, and they drink from the springs according to their age, with the boys drinking from the spring of the Satyrs, the men from that of Pan, and the old men from that of Silenus. While time prevents Lucian from relating the effects that these springs have over the boys and men, he provides his audience with a description of what happens to the old men (Dion. 6-7).

When an old man drinks from the spring, the god possesses him to the extent that he immediately becomes mute (ἀφωνός), he appears to be drunk (καρηβαροῦντι) and stunned (βεβαπτισμένω, Dion. 7). The old man’s muteness, however, soon wears off and he begins to speak eloquently and continuously:

εἶτα ἀφωνὸς φωνὴ τε λαμπρὰ καὶ φθέγμα τορὸν καὶ πνεῦμα λιγυρὸν ἐγγίγνεται αὐτῷ καὶ λαλίστατος ἐξ ἀφωνοτάτου ἑστίν, οὐδ’ ἂν ἐπιστομίσας παύσειας αὐτὸν μὴ οὐχὶ συνεχῆ λαλεῖν καὶ ῥήσεις μακρὰς συνείρειν.

Then suddenly the sound of his voice becomes clear, his modulation excited, and his intonation seductive. He is as talkative as he was quiet before, even by gagging him you could not keep him from talking steadily and delivering long speeches. (Dionysus 7)

Such a characterization leads Lucian to liken the old man who has been inspired by Silenus to a cicada: “ἄλλα τεττιγόδες τι πυκνὸν καὶ ἐπίροχον συνάπτουσιν ἄχρι βαθείας ἐσπέρας," (but like cicadas, they spend their time in close and glib conversation till well into the night, Dion. 7). As Lucian concludes this brief tale, he leaves his audience to ponder the connection between what he has just told them and the image of himself drawn earlier in the prologue:

Ταῦτα μοι κατὰ τὸν Μῶμον εἰς ἐμαυτὸν ἀπεσκώφθω, καὶ μὰ τὸν Δί’ οὐκ ἂν ἐπὶ ἐπαγάγομη τὸ ἐπιμύθτων· ὅρατε γὰρ ἤδη καθ’ ὅ τι τὸ μύθῳ ἔοικα. ὡστε ἦν μὲν τι παραπαίομεν, ἡ μὲν ἄιτια· εἰ δὲ πινυτὰ δοξεῖ τὰ λεγόμενα, ὁ Σιληνὸς ἄρα τὴν ἡλεως.

Permit me this joke at my own expense, in the spirit of Momus. I refuse to draw the moral, I swear; for you already see how the fable applies to me. If I make any slip, then, the drink is to blame, but if what I say should seem reasonable, then Silenus has been good to me. (Dion. 8)

While, on the one hand, Lucian’s refusal to provide his audience with an ἐπιμύθθον

63 Lucian’s comparison here of the old men to cicadas recalls Homer’s description of the Trojan old men at Iliad 3.51, as well as Plato’s account of the cicada’s origin in the Phaedrus (259b-c).
incites us to think further about this second tale, his subsequent *captatio benevolentiae* indicates that like the old men of his story, he too is a devotee of Silenus. Whereas in the first tale Dionysus and his army of revelers became a metaphor for Lucian’s literary style, Lucian here likens himself to a specific revealer, namely Silenus.

Though Silenus is never described in the second tale, Lucian provides us with a description of him in the Indian scout’s account of Dionysus’ army:

> ἕνα μὲν τινα βραχὼν, πρεσβύτην, ύπόπαχυν, προγάστορα, ύπνόσιμον, ὅτα μεγάλα ὁρθα έχοντα, ύπότρομον, νάρθηκι ἐπερειδόμενον, ἐπ’ ὅνου τὰ πολλά ἰπεύοντα, ἐν κροκωτῷ καὶ τούτον, πάνυ πιθανόν τινα συνταγματάρχην

One [i.e. Silenus] is a short, thick-set old man with a belly, a flat nose and large, up-standing ears, who is a bit shaky and walks with a staff (though mostly he rides on an ass), and is also in a woman’s gown that is yellow; he is a very appropriate aide to such a chief! (*Dion. 2*)

As this description emphasizes, Silenus is typically portrayed as a rather hideous old man, a fact that has led some scholars to assume that Lucian’s devotion to Silenus at the end of this prologue indicates that, like the *Heracles*, the *Dionysus* must be a work of his later years. The age connection, however, is by no means the only connotation associated with the figure of Silenus. According to the mythology surrounding him, Silenus tutored Dionysus and later became his companion. He is thus often portrayed as drunk and consequently possessed by the god. As Anderson points out, the god’s permanent inebriated state means he is assumed to tell the truth only through riddles.

Lucian’s self-proclaimed Silenic inspiration draws a comparison between the image of his work that he has already drawn for his audience and that of Silenus. Like Silenus’

---

64 Nesselrath (1990: 140).
riddles, Lucian’s first tale characterizes his literary style as a mixture of serious and comic elements not unlike the heterogeneous figure of Silenus who is on the one hand a “grotesque hedonist,” while on the other “an immortal companion to a god.”66 Read in light of Lucian’s instructions to his audience to notice both the comic and serious elements of his work, his final devotion to Silenus calls to mind Alcibiades’ famed comparison of Socrates to a Silenus figure at the end of Plato’s *Symposium*.

As Socrates is finishing his speech on ἔρως, Alcibiades bursts onto the scene, drunkenly shouting, supported by a flute girl, and wreathed in ivy. As Anderson has pointed out about this scene, Alcibiades here recalls Dionysus and his entrance reestablishes the Dionysiac tone of a drinking party at which the participants were abstaining from the overindulgence of wine.67 Such a tone thus sets the stage for Alcibiades’ description of his former teacher as a Silenus figure:

\[
\begin{align*}
\Sigma \omega \kappa \rho \alpha \tau \eta \; \delta' \; \varepsilon \gamma \omega \; \varepsilon \pi \alpha \iota \varepsilon \iota \varepsilon \iota \iota \iota, \; \delta \; \alpha \nu \delta \rho \varepsilon \zeta, \; \omega \tau \omicron \varsigma \omega \; \varepsilon \pi \chi \varepsilon \iota \rho \iota \sigma \iota \omega, \; \delta' \; \varepsilon \iota \kappa \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron. \; \omega \tau \omicron \varsigma \mu \nu \varepsilon \; \omicron \upsilon \iota \zeta \omega \omicron \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma, \; \delta' \; \varepsilon \iota \kappa \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron. \; \omega \tau \omicron \varsigma \mu \nu \varepsilon \; \omicron \upsilon \iota \zeta \omega \omicron \varsigma \varsigma \varsigma, \; \delta' \; \varepsilon \iota \kappa \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron, \; \omicron \iota \chi \zeta \alpha \delta \epsilon \omicron \delta \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron, \; \delta' \; \varepsilon \iota \kappa \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron, \; \omicron \iota \chi \zeta \alpha \delta \epsilon \omicron \delta \omicron \omicron \omicron, \; \delta' \; \varepsilon \iota \kappa \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron, \; \omicron \iota \chi \zeta \alpha \delta \epsilon \omicron \delta \omicron \omicron \omicron.
\end{align*}
\]

I’ll try to praise Socrates, my friends, but I’ll have to use an image. And though he may think I’m trying to make fun of him, I assure you my image is no joke: it aims at the truth. Look at him! Isn’t he just like a stature of Silenus? You know the kind of statue I mean; you’ll find the in any shop in town. It’s a Silenus sitting, his flute or his pipes in his hands, and it’s hollow. It’s split right down the middle, and inside it’s full of tiny statues of gods. (*Symposium* 215a-b)

---

Alcibiades prefaces his description of “Socrates Silenus”, as Clay put it, with the suggestion that while the comparison might appear on the surface to be a joke, this image is his attempt at the truth.⁶⁸ The comic surface of Alcibiades’ description is then mirrored in the image of Socrates as a Silenus figure that he draws. As Alcibiades goes on to explain, it is not just Socrates’ physical appearance that makes him like a Silenus but his style of argumentation:

οἴος δὲ οὕτωσι γέγονε τὴν ἀτοπίαν ἀνθρωπος, καὶ αὐτῶς καὶ οἱ λόγοι αὐτοῦ, οὐδ’ ἐγγὺς ἢν εὕρω τις ζητῶν, οὔτε τὸν νῦν οὔτε τὸν παλαιῶν, εἰ μὴ ἄρα εἰ οἷς ἐγγὺς ἀπεικάζοι τις αὐτῶν, ἀνθρώπων μὲν μηδενι, τοῖς δὲ σιληνοῖς καὶ σατύροις, αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς λόγους. Καὶ γὰρ οὖν καὶ τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς πρῶτοις παρέλθεσον, ὅτι καὶ οἱ λόγοι αὐτοῦ ὡμοίοτατοί εἰσί τοῖς σιληνοῖς τοῖς διοιγομένοις. εἰ γὰρ ἐθέλα τις τὸν Σωκράτους ἀκούειν λόγουν, φανεῖν ἂν πάνυ γελοίοι τὸ πρῶτον· τοιαύτα καὶ ὄντα καὶ ῥήματα μεξωθέν περιαμπέχονται, σατύρου δὴ τινὰ ύβριστοῦ δοράν. οἷος γὰρ κανθάλιως λέγει καὶ χαλκέας τινὰς καὶ σκυτοτόμους καὶ βυρσοδένας, καὶ ἀεὶ διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τὰ αὐτὰ φαίνεται λέγειν, ὡστε ἀπειρος καὶ ἀνόητος ἀνθρωποποιης ἢν τῶν λόγων καταγελάσειν. διοιγομένους δὲ ἰδὼν ἂν τις καὶ ἐντὸς αὐτῶν γιγνόμενος πρῶτον μὲν νοῦν ἐχοντασπένδον μόνος εὐρήσει τῶν λόγων, ἑπεὶ ἡθοτάτως καὶ πλείστη ἀγάλματ’ ἀρετῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐχοντας καὶ ἐπὶ πλείστον τεῖνοντας, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐπὶ πᾶν ὅσον προσήκει σκοπεῖν τῷ μέλλοντι καλὸ κάγαθῳ ἔστησαί.

But this man here is so bizarre, his ways and his ideas are so unusual, that, search as you might, you’ll never find anyone else alive or dead, who’s even remotely like him. The best you can do is not to compare him to anything human, but to liken him as I do, to Silenus and the satyrs, and the same goes for his ideas and arguments. Come to think of it, I should have mentioned this much earlier: even his ideas and arguments are just like those hollow statues of Silenus. If you were to listen to his arguments, at first they’d strike you as totally ridiculous; they’re clothed in words as coarse as the hides worn by the most vulgar satyrs. He’s always going on about pack-asses, or blacksmiths, or cobblers, or tanners; making the same tired old points in the same tired old words. If you are foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him, you’d find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments. But if you see them when they’re open up like statues, if you go beyond the surface, you’ll realize that no other arguments make any

---

sense. They’re truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue inside. They’re of great—no of the greatest—importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man. (Symp. 221d-222a)

Alcibiades here describes how for those who are unfamiliar with Socrates, his style of argumentation can seem strange and, to those who are particularly foolish, comical. Socrates thus potentially endures reactions among his listeners not unlike what Lucian describes in this prologue. As Clay has argued, the end of the Symposium presents Socrates as a simultaneously comic and tragic figure. Socrates consequently becomes the tool by which Plato neutralizes the authority of these genres with his new approach to philosophy. 69Recently, Kurke has furthered Clay’s point by suggesting that among the low-register, comic genres subsumed by Plato’s philosophy are figures such as Aesop. 70

Like the image of Dionysus presented in the initial tale, Socrates crosses generic boundaries and foregrounds Lucian’s program of recasting traditionally serious topics and uniting the once incompatible genres of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue. Yet in Plato’s description of Socrates as a Silenus, the emphasis is placed on his serious role as a philosopher, despite his outward comic appearance. I would like to suggest here that, whereas Plato defuses tragedy and comedy with his new philosophical approach, Lucian incorporates all three genres in his new brand of comedy.

Lucian’s invocation of Silenus at the end of the Dionysus thus evokes Alcibiades’ image of Socrates, which Plato mirrors in Socrates’ concluding arguments that the same

---

69 “It is no accident that the laughter of the Symposium centers on Socrates. In Socrates, Plato discovered an object of imitation that was both comic and tragic. It is a mistake to see in Socrates a tragic and serious figure, and in Aristophanes, or Alcibiades, or the sophists, comic and low characters. Socrates himself was both comic and tragic.” Clay (1975: 255).

70 See Kurke (2006).
He saw that the others had either left or were asleep on their couches and that only Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates were still awake, drinking out of a large cup which they were passing around from left to right. Socrates was talking to them. Aristodemus couldn’t remember exactly what they were saying—he’d missed the first part of their discussion, and he was half-asleep anyway—but the main point was that Socrates was trying to prove to them that authors should be able to write both comedy and tragedy: a skillful tragic dramatist should also be a comic poet. He was about to clinch his argument, though, to tell the truth, sleepy as they were, they were hardly able to follow his reasoning. In fact, Aristophanes fell asleep in the middle of the discussion, and very soon thereafter, Agathon drifted off. (Symp. 223c-d)

Such an ending to the Symposium creates what Clay calls “a Socratic paradox,” since at the time of the Symposium’s dramatic date, 416 BCE, there was no poet in the history of Greek literature who had composed both tragedies and comedies, something that would not happen until the Hellenistic period. For Clay, the solution to this paradox is found neither in Aristophanes nor in Agathon but in Plato and his presentation of Socrates.

---

71 As Clay also points to the change in speaking order that happens due to Aristophanes’ hiccups also emphasizes this point, (1975: 247).
72 See Clay (1975: 240) for further discussion of this.
73 This interpretation is supported not only by the fact that Aristophanes’ hiccups force him to speak before Agathon, but also by Plato’s adoption of a particularly comic image in Alcibiades’ speech and ultimately in the Symposium as a whole. Clay (1975: 255-256). Branham similarly characterizes Socrates of the Symposium as a seriocomic figure, (1989: 51-52).
Lucian’s reference to Silenus at the end of the *Dionysus* thus reminds us of the *Symposium* and the way in which Plato manages to unite comedy and tragedy under the rubric of philosophy. Throughout my discussion of this prologue, I have tried to show how Lucian draws on the genres of Old Comedy, Tragedy, and Platonic dialogue as he weaves his two tales about Dionysus and his follower, Silenus. While Lucian’s Silenic inspiration at the end would seem to emphasize the Platonic influence on his characterization of his literary style, there is a problem with this assumption. For if we are to view Socrates as the main source for Lucian’s new brand of comedy, we must make the problematic assumption that Lucian viewed Socrates as the seriocomic figure that Branham sees him as and ignored the serious portraits of him that appear far more frequently.\(^74\) Since overt portrayals of Socrates among Lucian’s writings are rare, though admittedly funny, I would like to propose here that Lucian’s invocation of Silenus at the end of this prologue is an announcement on Lucian’s part that he too has solved the problem proposed by Socrates, only this time with comedy, and in doing so, he acknowledges the seriousness of comedy in its own right.

A tension exists throughout this prologue between tradition and novelty, and comedy and more serious pursuits such as tragedy and philosophy. As we will see in the *Literary Prometheus*, this conflict is ultimately refined to the longstanding tension between comedy and philosophy initiated by Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and reaffirmed in Plato’s *Apology*. In the following section, I will explore Lucian’s claims to have resolved this problem. As I will suggest, the assertions made by Lucian in this prologue mimic the

\(^74\) See Branham (1989: 46-52).
opening argument structure of the Apology, and as such allow him to establish himself as the literary successor not only to comedy, but Plato as well.

IV. The Literary Prometheus

In the Dionysus we saw that Lucian’s comic reworking of the Bacchae’s plot and Alcibiades’ famous comparison of Socrates to Silenus emphasized the significance of comedy in his writings. Similarly in the Literary Prometheus, Lucian illustrates his complex blend of comedy and philosophical dialogue not only through its arguments but its very structure as well. Written as a response to a comparison drawn between Lucian and the Titan Prometheus, the Literary Prometheus directly addresses and attempts to resolve the longstanding tension between comedy and philosophy. Though the comparison was intended to praise his originality, Lucian rejects this association on the grounds that originality is not enough to merit praise, a point he illustrates with a tale about the ridicule a certain Ptolemy faced for displaying such monstrosities as a jet-black camel and a half-black and half-white man. Instead, Lucian proclaims that he has resolved the standoff between comedy and philosophy by concocting a new genre, the comic dialogue. As he concludes this text, however, he compares his new literary creation to the bones and the fat used by Prometheus to deceive Zeus –only in his case, philosophy represents the fat that conceals the bones of comedy. In light of this final image, what does it mean that Lucian represents his work as a trick? And how does this advance our understanding of the relationship of the two genres within Lucian’s works as well as Lucian’s relationship to the literary tradition?
Despite the fact that the *Literary Prometheus* contains explicit statements regarding Lucian’s craft, it has received little scholarly attention. Branham, for example, focuses on Lucian’s interpretation of the label of Prometheus as an insult and Lucian’s subsequent defense of his craft.\(^{75}\) Whereas Branham firmly establishes this text’s significance, Romm reads it in light of other Lucianic portraits of the titan. As a titan-craftsman, Prometheus is an important mythological precedent for Lucian in that he represents both tradition and innovation. And perhaps more importantly, his creations are made of mud and are therefore malleable, unlike what Romm characterizes as the rigid approaches to the literary tradition of Lucian’s contemporary sophists.\(^{76}\) For Romm, Prometheus’ creation of mankind out of mud serves as a metaphor for Lucian’s “spirit of playful, irreverent nonconformity, in contrast to rigidity of antiquated tradition.”\(^{77}\) This text thus depicts Lucian’s desire to create something new that is not at the same time viewed by his audience as grotesque, making Lucian’s comic dialogue the best of both worlds.\(^{78}\)

In this section, I will build on the work of Branham and Romm to examine more closely Lucian’s claim to have yoked successfully philosophical dialogue and comedy, as well as his choice to portray his literary output as a Promethean trick. In his discussion of this text, Branham characterizes it as Lucian’s “ironic apology” against charges of

---

\(^{75}\) See Branham (1989: 40-43).

\(^{76}\) In his discussion of the role of Prometheus in the *Tragic Zeus*, Romm notes that “in an ironic reversal of chronology a member of the oldest of old guards, the Titan regime, is herein seen as part-author of the new ideas of Epicurean science; and the challenge that authorship poses to Zeus’ power seems to derive, in some unspecified fashion, from his whimsical experiments in clay.” (1990: 81). It should be noted that the characterization of himself as sculptor appears in the *Dream* and is potentially a connection to Socrates, who is also associated with sculpting. See Pausanias *Description of Greece* I.22.8 where he claims to have seen a sculpture made by Socrates.

\(^{77}\) Romm (1990: 82).

\(^{78}\) Romm (1990: 84).
originality. I will suggest that Lucian’s opening arguments recall the exordium of Plato’s Apology and, as such, cast his work as innovatively grounded in tradition. Lucian keys us into this aspect of his work when he compares it to Prometheus’ sacrifice trick, -- a trick that, as I will argue, not only reinforces our characterization of Lucian as a trickster but also once again offers instructions in how to approach his works.

Lucian’s choice to compare himself to Prometheus represents a platform to showcase his own literary accomplishment, calling to mind the literary tradition associated with the titan. There is some scholarly debate, however, over which aspects of Prometheus’ character Lucian is in fact invoking in this brief prologue. Macleod, on the one hand, suggests that during the Antonine period any mention of Prometheus would immediately call to mind Aeschylus’ portrayal of him rather than that of Hesiod or Plato. Macleod supports this argument by pointing to what he sees as Lucian’s irreverent portrayal of the Olympian gods. Romm, on the other hand, argues that Lucian attributes to Prometheus the role of “artistic revolutionary.” While Romm avoids trying to pin down one specific text as the literary precedent for such a version of Prometheus, one aspect of Prometheus’ literary tradition that has been overlooked is Plato’s Protagoras.

79 “A Literary Prometheus is an ironic apology for Lucian’s principal literary innovation, the comic dialogue.” Branham (1989:42). Jones (1986) has argued that the Literary Prometheus is not a speech, but an “open letter.” His arguments are based on the second person address found throughout the text. (15) As Romm points out, however, this is a common feature of Lucian’s style. Romm (1990: 74 n.1). See also Bompaire (1958: 288 n.5).
80 Within Lucian’s corpus, the titan plays a prominent role in two other dialogues: the Prometheus and the fifth dialogue in the Dialogues of the Gods.
81 Macleod (1956: 237).
82 Romm (1990: 81). Sechan suggests that Lucian’s Prometheus is taken from that of Hesiod and Aeschylus (1951: 84), but Romm disagrees with this claim.
83 I am not here trying to suggest that this is the precedent, but rather that it should not be overlooked.
In the *Protagoras*, the sophist attempts to answer through a creation myth Socrates’ famous question: can virtue be taught? According to Protagoras’ version of the myth, the gods fashioned all the various living creatures and entrusted Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus to distribute the appropriate powers to each creature. Prometheus, however, allowed Epimetheus to complete this task and, true to his name, Epimetheus failed to reserve specific powers for mankind. Prometheus subsequently stole two items on behalf of mankind: fire from Hephaestus and wisdom in the practical arts from Athena. This is rather a strange moment in the dialogue since this version of the creation myth does not actually make Protagoras’ case that he has the right to call himself a teacher of virtue. He consequently concludes his tale by describing how man’s lack of the art of politics forced Zeus to step in and distribute it among all of mankind. Protagoras can thus teach his students how to be more virtuous people because Zeus has imbued everyone with an understanding of virtue. As a self-proclaimed teacher of virtue, Protagoras’ role becomes analogous to that of Zeus in his tale.

My interest in the Prometheus myth of the *Protagoras* is not ultimately concerned with the myth itself but the comparison Lucian draws between himself and the titan. In his survey of the figure of Prometheus from Hesiod to Goethe, Wutrich argues that Lucian’s *Literary Prometheus* is the first instance in Greek literature in which there is a comparison between a man and the titan. On the contrary, Socrates represents an important precedent for Lucian’s comparison. As the *Protagoras* concludes, Socrates returns to Protagoras tale of Prometheus:

84 Wutrich sees this as significant due to the ambiguity he sees surrounding Prometheus’ choice to help mankind. (1995:53)
ὦ Πρωταγόρα, πάντα ταύτα καθορῶν ἄνω κάτω ταραττόμενα δεινῶς, πάσαν προθυμιάν ἔχω καταφανῆ αὐτὰ γενέσθαι, καὶ βουλοῦμην ἄν ταύτα διεξέλθοντας ἡμᾶς ἐξελθεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὧτὶ ἐστίν, καὶ πάλιν ἐπισκέψασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ εἶτε διδακτὸν εἶτε μὴ διδακτὸν, μὴ πολλάκις ἡμᾶς ὁ Ὅπις ἔπηκεζεὺς ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ σκέψει σφήλῃ ἐξαπατήσας, ὅσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ διανοομῇ ἠμέλησεν ἡμῶν, ὡς φής σύ. ἤρεσεν οὐν μοι καὶ ἐν τῷ μόνῳ ὁ Ὅπις μᾶλλον τοῦ Ἐπιμηθέως· ὡς ἔβαλεν καὶ προμηθεούμενος ὑπέρ τοῦ βίου τοῦ ἐμαυτοῦ παντὸς πάντα ταύτα πραγματευόμαι, καὶ εἰ σὺ ἐθέλοις, ὅπερ καὶ κατ’ ἀρχὰς ἐλεγον, μετὰ σοῦ ἂν ἴστα σαῦτα ταύτα συνιδαισκόμοιν.

Now, Protagoras, seeing that we have gotten this topsy-turvy and terribly confused, I am most eager to clear it all up, and I would like us, having come this far, to continue until we come through to what virtue is in itself, and then to return to inquire about whether it can or cannot be taught, so that Epimetheus might not frustrate us a second time in this inquiry, as he neglected us in the distribution of powers and abilities in your story. I liked the Prometheus character in your story better than Epimetheus. Since I take Prometheus forethought over my life, as I said at the beginning, I would be pleased to investigate them along with you. (Prot. 361 c-d)

Whereas initially Protagoras’ tale seemed to compare Protagoras with Zeus, here Socrates likens himself to Prometheus. This casts Socrates as a trickster out to dupe Protagoras.

While Socrates’ comparison derives from the forethought he uses to govern his life, for Lucian, the comparison is to the novelty of his works and it is within this context that we discover Lucian’s tricks. Though it is hard to say if the comparison between Lucian and the titan invoked the end of the Protagoras for Lucian’s audience, it does represent a Platonic precedent for Lucian’s comparison and one that, if recognized, recalls Plato as we explore Lucian’s claims to have resolved the generic tension between Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue.

Though initially appearing to be nothing more than a misunderstood compliment,
the comparison to Prometheus is for the most part unacceptable to Lucian.\(^{85}\) While he acknowledges that, like Prometheus, he is a craftsman, he rejects many of the other possible attributes of the titan, in particular the image of Prometheus as a creator. As he explains, originality must be rooted in tradition: “ἐμοί δὲ οὐ πάνω ἵκανόν, εἰ καὶ νοοεῖν δοκοῖν, μηδὲ ἐχοί τις λέγειν ἀρχαίοτέρον τι τοῦ πλάσματος οὐ τούτο ἀπόγονον ἐστιν.” (For me, though, it’s not really enough for someone to think I’m original, and to be unable to point to something more ancient than my creation, of which, as it were, the offspring, \textit{Lit. Prom. 3}).\(^{86}\) As this statement suggests, Lucian’s work is the offspring of two traditions, Old Comedy and that Platonic dialogue, and, as such, it resolves their generic tension –first initiated by Aristophanes’ \textit{Clouds} and reaffirmed in Plato’s \textit{Apology}.

According to Lucian, the two genres were for a long time at odds with one another: \(^{87}\)

\begin{quote}
Οὐ πᾶνυ γοῦν συνήθη καὶ φίλα ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἢν ὁ διάλογος καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία, εἰ γε ὁ μὲν οἶκοι καθ’ ἐαυτόν καὶ νὴ Δία ἐν τοῖς περιπάτοις μετ’ ὀλγον τὰς διατριβὰς ἔποιητο, ἡ δὲ παραδόσα τῷ Διονύσῳ ἐαυτὴν θεάτρῳ ὁμίλει καὶ ξυνέπαιξε καὶ ἐγελωτοποίει καὶ ἐπέσκοπτε καὶ ἐν ρυθμῷ ἐβαίνε πρὸς αὐλὸν ἐνίοτε καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἀναπάστος τοῖς ἐποχομένης τὰ πολλὰ. τοῦ δὲ τοῦ διάλογον ἐταῖρος ἐχλεύαξε φροντιστὰς καὶ μετεωρολέχας καὶ τὰ τοιῶτα προσαγορεύουσα. καὶ μίαν ταύτην προαιρέσσει ἐπεφεύρετο ἐκεῖνους ἐπισκόπεται καὶ τὴν Διονυσιακὴν ἐλευθερίαν καταχεῖν αὐτῶν, ἄρτι μὲν ἀεροβάτουντας διενόιοσα καὶ νεφέλαις ξυνόντας, ἄρτι δὲ ψυλλων πηδῆματα διαμετροῦντας, ὡς δήθεν τὰ ἀέρια λεπτολογομένους. ὁ διάλογος δὲ σεμνοτάτας ἐποιεῖτο τὰς συνουσίας φύσεως τε πέρι καὶ ἀρετῆς φιλοσοφῶν.
\end{quote}

It has to be said that dialogue and comedy were not firmly compatible

\(^{85}\) For a discussion of the figure of Prometheus throughout Lucian’s corpus, see Romm (1990).

\(^{86}\) I am relying on Sidwell’s 2005 translation of the prologue with a few emendations.

\(^{87}\) As I discussed in the previous section, the concept of uniting a serious genre with a comic one is not unique to Lucian, see Plato’s \textit{Symposium} 223d.
friends when they started out. One (Dialogue) stayed at home and kept to himself, or spent time with a few associates in the shaded walks. The other (Comedy) gave herself up to Dionysus and spent time in the theatre, having a ball, raising laughs and making snide remarks about people. She walked in rhythms, sometimes accompanied by the pipe, riding high on anapaestic meters, spending most of her time rubbing the companions of Dialogue by calling them ‘thinksters’ and ‘air heads’ and the like. The only reason she had for living was to deride them and pour down the license of the Dionysia festival over them, sometimes showing them walking on air and consorting with clouds, sometimes measuring the distance a flea can jump, actually discussing in great detail airy nonsense. Dialogue, on the other hand, kept his social affairs strictly above board, philosophizing about nature and virtue. (Lit. Prom. 6)

The description in this passage directly recalls the Clouds and, consequently, places the culpability for the quarrel firmly in the hands of comedy, reminding us of Socrates’ position in the Apology.  

Let’s take up from the beginning the content of the charge that has brought about this slander against me. Meletus believed it and then brought this indictment against me. What is it that they say when they slander me, those slanderers? Now I must read aloud my accuser’s affidavit, as it were. “Socrates does injustice and is a busybody by studying the things above and below the earth, by making the weaker argument the stronger, and teaching others these same things.” It’s something like this. You saw this for yourselves in the comedy of Aristophanes that a certain Socrates was swinging around up there in the basket, claiming to walk on air and spouting all sorts of other nonsense… (19a-b)

Lucian differentiates his innovation from that of Prometheus on the basis that it is derived
from a traditional conflict embodied in the *Clouds* and the *Apology*. The characterization of his craft along these lines thus makes it all the more surprising when, at the prologue’s conclusion, he compares his literary creation to Prometheus’ sacrifice trick: “ἐξαπατῶν ἱσως τοὺς ἀκούοντας καὶ ὀστᾶ παραθείς αὕτοῖς κεκαλυμμένα τῇ πιμελῇ, γέλωτα κωμικῶν ὑπὸ σεμνότητι φιλοσόφῳ.” (Maybe it’s that I’ve deceived my audiences by giving them a feast of bones covered in fat, I mean, comic laughter hidden under philosophy’s solemnity,” *Lit. Prom.* 7) While we might expect comedy here to represent the fat that lures us in only to have the bones of philosophy stick in our teeth, Lucian throws us for a loop and defies our expectations. Just like the ends of the *Heracles* and the *Dionysus*, such a statement not only puts us on our guard regarding the text that presumably would have followed this prologue, it also makes us reconsider everything that has preceded it. With this in mind, I will now return to the beginning of the *Literary Prometheus* and examine how Lucian’s final trick affects our interpretation of this text.

The initial comparison drawn between Lucian and Prometheus, though presumably intended to be a compliment, is taken by Lucian as an accusation of sorts.89 “Ὅτι γὰρ Ἰατρὸν Προμηθέα με εἶναι φής;” (So you’re claiming that I’m a Prometheus, are you? *Lit. Prom.* 1). Like Socrates before him, Lucian blames his unnamed interlocutor’s misunderstanding, just as we saw in the *Dionysus*. Yet, in the case of Socrates, it is impossible to know whether the historical figure in fact blamed Aristophanes for his fate. Plato’s inclusion of Aristophanes among Socrates first accusers consequently has a programmatic feel, not unlike his juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy in the characters

---

89 Branham (1989:40).
of Agathon and Aristophanes in the *Symposium*. For Lucian, the original compliment to Prometheus is an insult, and his rejection of it allows him to highlight the fact that someone paid him the compliment of comparing him to god, and then, by rejecting that complement, to assert that he deserves even higher praise. Lucian thus uses the words of this unnamed interlocutor to have it both ways: he praises himself as truly innovative, while at the same time situating himself in the context of the Greek literary tradition.

In his response to the various charges that a comparison to Prometheus entails, Lucian mimics Socrates at the beginning of the *Apology*, when he simultaneously disparages his own rhetorical abilities and skillfully turns the charge of being a clever speaker back on his opponents. To briefly summarize the opening of the *Apology*, Socrates begins by addressing the accusation that he is a clever and therefore dangerous speaker:

μάλιστα δὲ αὐτῶν ἐν ἐθαύμασα τῶν πολλῶν ὅν ἐξεύσαντο, τούτο ἐν ὡς ἐλεγον ώς χρῆν ὑμᾶς ἐυλαβεῖσθαι μὴ ὑπ’ ἐμοί ἐξαπατηθῆτε ώς δεινὸν ὄντος λέγειν. τὸ γὰρ μὴ αἰσχροθήναι ὑπ’ αὐτίκα ὑπ’ ἐμοὶ ἐξελεγχθήσονται ἔργο, ἐπειδὰν μὴ ὅπωστοι φαίνομαι δεινὸς λέγειν, τοῦτο μοι ἐξοξεύειν αὐτῶν ἀνασχηματιστώτατον εἶναι, εἰ μὴ ἄρα δεινὸν καλοῦσιν οὗτοι λέγειν τὸν τάληθη λέγοντα· εἰ μὲν γὰρ τοῦτο λέγουσιν, ὀμολογοῦν ἂν ἔγωγε οὐ κατὰ τούτους εἶναι ρήτωρ.

I wondered most at one of the many falsehoods they told, when they said that you should beware that you are not deceived by me, since I am a clever speaker. They are not ashamed that I will immediately refute them in deed, as soon as it becomes apparent that I am not a clever speaker at all, this seemed to me to be most shameless of them, unless of course they call a clever speaker the one who speaks the truth. For if this is what they are saying, then I too would agree that I am an orator—but not of their

---

90 For another example of this juxtaposition, see the opening of the *Phaedo* and Socrates’ claim to have written poems from Aesop’s fables and a hymn to Apollo, *(60d).*

91 For a discussion of how to praise oneself without appearing overly self-important, see Plutarch *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*. As Plutarch notes, one acceptable situation is if you are defending your name or refuting a charge, *(540 C).*
Though Socrates initially resists this charge and the negative connotations that the adjective δεηλός conveys, he accepts the term if it refers to the fact that he is speaking the truth, implying of course that his accusers are liars. Socrates then deflects the original charge back onto his accusers and, in doing so, defines his own style of speaking in contradistinction to theirs:

οὗτοι μὲν οὖν, ὥσπερ ἐγὼ λέγω, ἢ τι ἢ οὐδὲν ἄληθὲς εἰρήκασιν, ὡμεῖς δὲ μου ἀκούσασθε πάσαν τὴν ἄληθεαν—οὐ μέντοι μὴ Δία, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναίοι, κεκαλλιπτημένους γε λόγους, ὥσπερ οἱ τοῦτον, ῥήματι τε καὶ ὄνομασιν οὐδὲ κεκοσμημένους, ἀλλ’ ἀκούσασθε εἰκῆ λεγόμενα τοῖς ἐπιτυχοῦσιν ὄνομασιν—πιστεύω γάρ δίκαια εἶναι ἂ λέγω—καὶ μηδεῖς ὑμῶν προσθηκησάτω ἄλλως...

So they, as I say, have said little or nothing true, while for me you will hear the whole truth—but by Zeus, men of Athens, not beautifully spoken speeches like theirs, adorned with choice phrases and words; rather what you hear will be spoken at random in the words that I happen upon—for I trust that the things I say are just—none of you expect otherwise... (Apol. 17b-c)

As Clay has noted, the Apology is a defense of Socrates’ philosophical mission. Cast as Lucian’s literary defense, the Literary Prometheus similarly offers a defense of Lucian’s literary and philosophical mission, namely the innovation of uniting Platonic dialogue and comedy in a traditional light.

Though the connection to the Apology is admittedly subtle, the opening of the Literary Prometheus echoes the rhetorical movement of the Apology’s exordium in three distinct ways. Like Socrates before him, Lucian downplays his style in comparison to his opponents, refuses the label of clever, and ultimately turns such connotations back onto

his opponents. Lucian thus imitates the type of arguments made by Socrates rather than alluding to specific language. As such, Lucian indicates that his approach to the literary tradition goes beyond explicit lexical allusions into the realm of more complex forms of mimesis.

Lucian believes that the comparison to Prometheus was a backhanded compliment. While he initially admits that like Prometheus he is a craftsman, the comparison allows Lucian to downplay his own skill as a writer just as Socrates does in regard to his own rhetorical talents:

εἰ μὲν κατὰ τοῦτο, ὦ ἄριστε, ὡς πηλίνων κάμοι τῶν ἔργων ὄντων, γνωρίζω τὴν εἰκόνα καὶ φημὶ ὅμοιος εἶναι αὐτῷ, οὐδὲ ἀναίιναι πηλοπλάθος ἀκούειν, εἰ καὶ φαυλότερος ἐμοὶ ὁ πηλὸς οἶος ἕκ τριόδου, βόρβορος τὶς παρὰ μικρὸν.

Perhaps, my dear man, you mean that, like him, I also fashion my works from clay. If so, I recognize the point of comparison. I am like him. I don’t deny that I’m a potter, even if the clay I use is inferior, from the crossroads you might say, and next of kin to mud. (Lit. Prom. 1)

As Romm has shown, the image of a sculptor is a favorite of Lucian’s when discussing his own literary craft.93 Within the metaphor of the craftsman drawn here, Lucian’s “clay” must in a sense refer to the literary tradition from which he molds his works. His clay, however, comes from the crossroads, and Lucian here highlights the intermingling of different elements which itself looks ahead to his union of comedy and philosophical dialogue. Lucian thus ironically downplays his work at the same time as he hints at its complexity, suggesting that recognition of its complex nature is essential if one is to avoid falling for his trick.

93 Romm (1990:75-76).
While the label of craftsman is acceptable to Lucian, like Socrates he dismisses the idea that he is clever:

εἰ δὲ υπερπαίνων τούς λόγους ώς δήθεν εὐμηχάνους δντας τὸν σοφώτατον τὸν Τιτάνων ἐπιφημίζεις αὖτοις, ὅρα μή τις εἰρωνείαν φῆ καὶ μυκτῆρα φίον τὸν Ἀττικόν προσεῖναι τῷ ἐπαινῷ. ἦ πόθεν γάρ εὐμηχάνων τοῦμόν; τίς δὲ ἡ περιτή σοφία καὶ προμήθεια ἐν τοῖς γράμμασιν;

On the other hand, if you’re applying the name of the cleverest of the Titans to my works as a way of praising them –way above their merit –as masterpieces of invention, there’s a danger that people will think your good opinion has a subtext rife with irony and the Old Attic nose-in-the-air attitude. Go on, tell me where my inventiveness lies. What exactly is the remarkable cleverness and Promethean quality my writings possess?

(Lit. Prom. 1)

In Socrates’ speech, the adjective δεινός denotes the charge of cleverness and potential danger that some regarded Socrates as possessing. Though Lucian likewise rejects being considered clever, his choice of the adjective σοφός indicates that he has a different type of cleverness in mind. Whereas Socrates’ language recalls the view that rhetoric possesses a certain inherent danger, as illustrated by the debate between the Weaker and Stronger arguments in the Clouds, Lucian’s use of the adjective σοφός alongside εὐμηχάνος suggests a concern with how something is said rather than what is in fact being said. By pointing to this aspect of Prometheus’ character, Lucian rejects notoriety drawn generally from clever speaking. Whereas Socrates faced an Athenian audience unwilling to accept new ideas, Lucian imagines himself facing an erudite audience who refuse to do anything new, literally speaking that is. While Lucian may be exaggerating the unwillingness on his audience’s part to accept novel literary pieces and styles, his juxtaposition of the adjectives σοφός and εὐμηχάνος suggests that his annoyance is not
simply directed at his audience but other sophists. The combination of these two adjectives as well as the reference to Prometheus as the cleverest of the Titans thus calls to mind the standard image of a sophist in this period as the addressees of this prologue and we are perhaps reminded of Lucian’s detractors in the *Heracles* or his description of previous audiences in the *Dionysus*. By Lucian’s time, a sophist was “a public literary performer” more than anything else, concerned in large part with displaying their *paideia*. Such figures were able to recall large sections of works that they had learnt from an early age. Although Lucian does not directly reference *paideia* here, his rejection of the label of *σοφός*, in other words typical sophistic cleverness, is ultimately a rejection of epideictic display, and more importantly of the categories of innovative and traditional.

As he goes on to suggest, it is precisely these types of sophist figures that he imagines as his opponents. Drawing on the myth of creation and Prometheus’ subsequent theft of fire, Lucian deflects the label of Prometheus back onto his opponents, asserting that the fiery nature of their speeches makes them deserving of such a characterization:

Καίτοι πόσω δικαιότερον ὑμεῖς ἄν εἰκάζοισθε τῷ Προμηθεί, ὅποιοι ἐν δίκαιης εὐδοκιμεῖτε ἐξ ἁλθείας ποιούμενοι τούς ἁγώνας. ἣδα γοῦν ὡς ἁλθέος καὶ ἐμπυγχα ὑμιν τὰ ἔργα, καὶ νὴ Δία καὶ τὸ θερμόν αὐτών ἐστι διάπυρον· καὶ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ Προμηθεώς ἂν εἴη, πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἐνι διαλλάττοιτε, ὅτι μὴ ἐκ πηλοῦ πλάττετε ἀλλὰ χρυσὰ ὑμιν τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰ πλάσματα.

94 Other examples of novelties that seem to go against the established order can be found in Dio’s assertion that Homer was wrong about the Trojan War in the *Trojan Oration* and Aelius Aristides’ choice to write prose hymns to the gods.
95 For a discussion of what it meant to be a sophist, see Bowie (1970). For a summary of the types of speeches given and performance venues, see esp. 5-6.
96 Branham, (1989: 222n.19). As Bowie explains, “the term “sophist” appears to be contained within the term *rhetor* and to apply particularly to those teachers of rhetoric (*rhetors*) whose attainment was of such a level as to give public performances.” Bowie (1970:4).
Anyhow, it would be much more reasonable to make the Prometheus comparison with you people who have great reputations in trials of conducting cases in accordance with the dictates of truth. What you create is really living and breathing, and, by Zeus, its heat is intense. Now that is Promethean, except for one thing, of course, that it isn’t from clay that most of your creations are made, but from pure gold. (*Lit. Prom.* 1)

Lucian here further distances himself from his opponents, whom he sarcastically depicts in legal terms (ἐν δίκαις εὐδοκιμαίτε ξὸν ἀληθεία ποιούμενοι τούς ἀγώνας). Since it is unlikely that Lucian here is addressing only the people of his audience associated with the courts, his characterization of his opponents in legal terms raises interesting questions regarding the performative context of this speech. As Bowie notes, the oratory of the law courts had at this time fallen out of fashion and was often looked down upon by the sophists of this period. While this reference to his opponents seems to ascribe to this belief, it also heightens the sense that Lucian sees himself, like Socrates, as in some way on trial for his craft by people who seem to have a different conception of truth (ἀληθείᾳ) than his own. Yet as Lucian remarks rather sarcastically, the label of Prometheus ultimately fails to characterize them accurately since they mold their works from gold.97 Such an image calls to mind that of a speaker with a golden tongue. Just as Socrates deflected the charge back onto his accusers, Lucian takes his opponents’ attempt to compliment him and turns it into a way of insulting them. Though he refers to the truthful quality of their work, the praise is ultimately sarcastic, reinforcing Lucian as the source for truth, albeit a rather slippery one.

By focusing on the opening arguments of this prologue, I have attempted to show that Lucian mimics the types of ironic arguments made by Socrates at the opening of the

97 Romm interprets this as referring to the monetary gain of lawyers, (1990: 82).
Apology and, in so doing, defines his literary craft. Although Lucian’s arguments make the same rhetorical moves as Socrates’, Lucian never directly refers to the Apology, indicating that his approach is not to attempt to rewrite Plato but rather to rework and rewrite them into something new. As he indicates, this is not the case for his opponents.

The connection to Socrates, however, is not as straightforward as it initially appeared. In his initial dismissal of the label of σοφός, Lucian warns his audience that their praise carries with it the potential subtext of Socratic irony: “ὅρα μή τις εἰρωνείαν φη καὶ μυκτήρα ὁ ἄν τὸν Ἀττικὸν προσεῖναι τῷ ἐπαίνῳ,” (there’s a danger that people will think your good opinion has a subtext rife with irony and the Old Attic nose-in-the-air attitude, Lit. Prom. 1). While Lucian’s rejection of the label of σοφός recalls Socrates’ own disavowal of knowledge,98 his use of εἰρωνεία, a word that the LSJ notes directly recalls Socrates, as a descriptive term for his opponents similarly alludes to one of Socrates’ more distinct character traits.99 Such a statement suggests that Lucian’s opponents are not attacking him in a new way, but are, like Lucian, using Socratic irony as their weapon. Lucian further reinforces their reliance on traditional modes of attack by attributing to them a line from Old Comedy. By characterizing his opponents along such similar lines as his own self-portrait, Lucian emphasizes that the difference lies not in their respective source material but rather in their approach to it. In other words, though Lucian may likewise invoke Socrates and Aristophanes, he does not slavishly quote either author, but instead melds them into something new and uniquely his own.

98 See Plato Apol. 21D. For a discussion of Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge, see Vlastos (1991: 31-66).
99 LSJ s.v. εἰρωνεία A. “dissimulation, i.e. ignorance purposely affected to provoke or confound an antagonist, a mode of argument used by Socrates against the Sophist…” For a discussion of the figure of the eirôn in Theophrastus, see Worman (2008: 301-304).
Lucian further reinforces his opponent’s reliance on traditional modes of attack by attributing to them a line from Old Comedy. As Lucian imagines, his opponents had similar intentions to the comic poets when they attacked Cleon:

\[ ὥστε μοι ἐνθυμεῖσθαι ἔπεισι μὴ ᾽ἄρα σύνω με Προμηθέα λέγεις ἐκνα ὡς ὁ κωμικὸς τὸν Κλέωνα· φησίν δὲ, οἴσθα, περὶ αὐτοῦ· Κλέων Προμηθεὺς ἐστι μετὰ τὰ πράγματα. \]

So I suppose I’m wondering whether you might mean by calling me a Prometheus what the comic poet said about Cleon. I think the quotation about him goes:

Cleon’s a Prometheus after the fact. *(Lit. Prom. 2)*

Little is known about this allusion and, although it has been ascribed to Eupolis in the past, recently it has been attributed to Aristophanes’ lost *Farmers*. It would be useful to know the original context of this line, but it is notable that Lucian once again ascribes a direct allusion to his opponents. These two moments thus reinforce the earlier characterization of them as a typical sophist concerned with displays of *paideia*.

As Lucian’s arguments progress, he invokes the rhetorical trope of imagining what someone among his opponents might be thinking: “And yet someone who wanted to console me might say, ‘No, this wasn’t the basis of the comparison with Prometheus at all. What he’s praising is your originality, the fact that you had no model to work to…” *(Lit. Prom. 3)*. Up till now, the unnamed interlocutor who made the mistake of comparing Lucian to Prometheus has been characterized as Lucian’s opponent. Lucian here allows another unnamed figure to come to his original interlocutor’s rescue and attempt to reassure Lucian that the comparison was intended to compliment his innovation. As

---

100 Ades. 461 PCG = Eup. Fr. 456 K. Though the preposition here is μετὰ not ἐπὶ, the line seems to be punning on the Prometheus and Epimetheus distinction (forethought versus afterthought).
Lucian’s previous characterization of these figures has suggested, they fancy themselves literati, well versed in the literary tradition and their compliment of Lucian’s innovation must assume that he is not. Lucian’s response to these figures throughout this prologue has thus been intended to emphasize that he is as well versed in the tradition as these figures and on top of that, he is far cleverer than they are.

While scholars such as Branham and Anderson are right to characterize this text as Lucian’s rejection of being an innovator, it is a rejection not necessarily of all innovation but the dichotomy of innovation or tradition that his interlocutors have established. Lucian illustrates this point with a tale about how a certain Ptolemy attempted to impress an audience with a jet-black camel dressed in purple and gold robes and a black and white man. To Ptolemy’s surprise, his audience scorned and mocked such novelties for their lack of beauty and harmony. As a result, the camel died of neglect and the man was sold into slavery (Lit. Prom. 4). At this point in the prologue, Lucian momentarily drops the vitriolic tone because he worries that his works might suffer a similar fate to Ptolemy’s camel:

Δέδοικα δὲ μὴ καὶ τοῦμὸν κάμηλος ἐν Αἰγυπτίῳ ἦ, οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι τὸν χαλινὸν ἔτι αὐτῆς θαυμάζοσι καὶ τὴν ἁλουργίδα, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ τὸ ἐκ δυοῖν τοῖν καλλίστοις συγκείσθαι, διαλόγου καὶ κωμῳδίας, οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀπόχρη εἰς εὐμορφίαν, εἰ μὴ καὶ ἡ μῖξις ἐναρμόνιος καὶ κατὰ τὸ σύμμετρον γίνοιτο.

I’m afraid my work may be a camel among the Egyptians, so to speak. What people admire is its bit and purple saddle. Even the fact that is made up of two absolutely splendid things, dialogue and comedy, I mean, will be insufficient to create beauty, unless the mixture is harmonious and measured. (Lit. Prom. 5)

As Lucian goes on to explain, even if they are composed of originally beautiful things,
not all generic hybrids will possess beauty, and Lucian cites drunk and murderous hippocentaur as an obvious (τὸ προχειρότατον) illustration of his point. In other words, it is not the material or the subject matter that is important, but how it is executed.

Lucian thus does not reject innovation by its very nature, but only if the label of innovator implies that his works lack the beauty and grace of the more traditional works. For as he admits at the end of this text, he is an innovator:

τὸ γὰρ τῆς κλεπτικῆς—καὶ γὰρ κλεπτικῆς ὁ θεός—ἀπαγε. τούτο μόνον οὐκ ἂν εἶποι ἦνείναι τοῖς ἠμετέροις. ἢ παρὰ τοῦ γὰρ ἂν ἐκλέπτομεν; εἴ μὴ ἂρα τις ἐμὲ διέλαθεν τοιοῦτος ἰπποκάμπους καὶ τραγελάφους καὶ αὐτὸς συνθεθεικός.

As to the charge of theft –also made against the same god –come off it! This at least is something you can’t say my works are guilty of. Who could I have stolen from? Of course, I may be mistaken. Someone else has also possibly put together a set of sea horses and goat-stags like these. (Lit. Prom. 7)

In rejecting this type of innovation, Lucian is characterizing his own approach to traditionalism as anything but the way in which he sees his contemporaries alluding to and following the canon.

If we now return to Lucian’s discussion of Prometheus’ sacrifice trick, we can begin to make sense of the meaning behind this metaphor. Lucian’s reconfiguration of Prometheus’ trick warns us against the types of traditional approaches of his contemporaries and that Lucian achieves this warning through the way in which he subverts or expectations. In the Dionysus we saw how Lucian asks his audience to look beyond the comic surface of his text and we might expect Lucian to be doing much the same here. Yet, as he reveals, it is philosophical dialogue that represents the fat and comedy the bones. As I read this metaphor, there are two possible levels of
interpretation. On the one hand, the philosophical fat is the veneer of philosophy, suggestive of the images of charlatan philosophers drawn by Lucian in such texts as the *Fisherman* who, as we will see, quote philosophers but lack any philosophical substance. Within this reading, the comic bones thus represent the ridicule Lucian inflicts on such people. Read as such, this metaphor characterizes Lucian’s opponents as offering nothing digestible and Lucian as the true source of meat. Yet if we read this metaphor as a programmatic statement about Lucian’s craft, we can see that the aspects drawn from dialogue might lure us in, but it is the comic elements that truly stick in our teeth. While in both readings Lucian appears to emphasize the comic over the philosophic, he leaves us wondering where the meat is.

To get a better understanding of Lucian’s metaphor, let us look briefly at Hesiod’s version of Prometheus’ sacrifice trick. According to Hesiod, Prometheus, who was intending to mislead Zeus, carved up an ox into two different portions: one for Zeus and one for mankind. In one portion Prometheus concealed meat within the ox’s stomach, while in the other he concealed bones with fat. As Hesiod explains, however, Zeus recognized the trick and nonetheless chose the fat-covered bones: “Ζεὺς δ’ ἀφθιτα μήδεα εἰδὼς / γνῶ ρ’ οὐδ’ ἡγνοῖσε δόλον·” (But Zeus, whose designs do not fail, recognized the trick and did not mistake it, *Theogony* 550-1). By making us aware of his trick, Lucian places us in a position analogous to Zeus’ in that we recognize the trick and we

---

102 Lucian’s persona, Parrhesiades, complains the following about his contemporary philosophers: “Καὶ γὰρ αὖ καὶ τὸ δὲ πάντων ἀποκάλεσαν ἔτιν, ὥστε τοὺς μὲν λόγους ὑμῶν πάντα ἀκριβοῦσιν οἱ πολλοὶ αὐτῶν, καθάπερ δὲ ἐπὶ τούτῳ μόνον ἀναγινώσκοιτε αὐτοὺς καὶ μελετῶντες, ὥσ τὰ τάναντα ἐπιτηδεύοιες, οὕτως βοθύσαν.” (It is most extraordinary too, that most of them are thoroughly up on your writings, but live as if they read and studied them simply to practice the reverse, 34).
choose Lucian’s offering anyway. The meat, or rather its absence, presumably in this context refers to other performers whom we might have chosen and from whom we might have gotten simple enjoyment. This is not the case for Lucian who announces in this final metaphor that his work is itself a deception that we must think carefully about. This deception, however, is ultimately a joke, and one that is at our expense, since we have chosen Lucian. If we accept the conventional belief that this text is an introduction to a longer performance piece, then we can see Lucian here boldly asserting to his audience that in choosing to listen to his performance they have not chosen the easy meat and must play careful attention to whatever piece may have followed this prologue.

V. Conclusions

The *Literary Prometheus* thus represents Lucian’s own comic take on Plato’s *Apology*. In comparison to Socrates, who had real accusers and was actually put on trial, Lucian is an entertainer of sorts who may or may not have actually been accused of being a “Prometheus.” As both the author and its orator, Lucian thus casts himself as a conflation of Socrates and Plato but with a comic twist. While Lucian’s debt to Plato in this text may be what lures us in, it is Lucian’s final comic take on Prometheus’ sacrifice trick that sticks in our proverbial teeth. In this introductory speech, Lucian defines his approach to his inherited literary tradition in terms of what he is not, namely a slavish follower. Lucian instead characterizes his own innovative approach to traditionalism not by explicitly spelling it out for his audience, but rather through the very act of doing it. In modeling his own defense speech on Plato’s *Apology*, Lucian manages to leave us
contemplating the role of mimesis in his works as he commences whatever work followed this prologue.

The distaste for the label of innovator that Lucian expresses in this prologue seems initially at odds with the view of it found in the *Heracles*. Yet in both texts Lucian expresses annoyance at those he views as his contemporaries, who are for the most part characterized by their lack of understanding and slavish quoting of such authors as Homer and Euripides. Like in the *Dionysus*, Lucian here commands his audience to look beyond the surface of the text. Though these texts lack the type of questioning that Plato’s Socrates was so famous for, they nonetheless incite the audience to actively question not only what Lucian is telling them but also the world around them. In this way, Lucian’s union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue as expressed in the *Literary Prometheus* extends beyond obvious lexical allusions and generic rules. In his discussion of the *Literary Prometheus*, Romm asserts that the conflict between *mimesis* and innovation remains unresolved at the end of the *Literary Prometheus* and that Lucian “ruefully” accepts his role as an innovator.\(^{103}\) While I do not disagree with Romm that Lucian does accept this role, his acceptance is not because he cannot resolve the conflict but because he has. What makes Lucian innovative is not simply his Celtic representation of Heracles or his hippocentaurs, but the way in which he not only invokes previous authors in his works, but also actively engages with them. It is this approach to the literary tradition that allows Lucian to cast his works as not only novel, but also necessary for highlighting the problems of the world around him.

\(^{103}\) Romm (1990: 85).
In the previous chapter, I argued that Lucian’s prologues imitate the Aristophanic parabasis in three distinct ways: they are speeches given outside the context of the main performance; they react to Lucian’s competitors and critics; and, most importantly for our discussion, they comically engage with the traditionally serious genres of epic, tragedy, and philosophical dialogue. Lucian’s prologues are thus significant for our understanding of his comic dialogues because, like a parabasis, they offer Lucian’s commentary on his comic reinvention of the philosophic dialogue. As we saw in the *Literary Prometheus*, Lucian ironically defends this comic recasting of philosophy by mimicking Plato’s *Apology*. The *Apology* consequently represents a key text for Lucian in that he invokes it both as one of the origins of the conflict between comedy and philosophy that he claims to have resolved and as a model for his defense of that union. In this chapter we will look more closely at the dual role that the *Apology* plays as both the source of and solution to Lucian’s problem of uniting comedy with philosophy, which will raise the following question that has heretofore been left unaddressed by scholars: why does Lucian feel the need to repeatedly defend his union of Old Comedy and Philosophical dialogue?1

---

1 For a collection of comic fragments depicting philosophers, see Olson (2007: 227-56)
In the introduction to this dissertation, we saw how Old Comedy’s status as a potentially problematic genre stems not just from Plato’s comments regarding its incompatibility with philosophy, but also from its lack of the original sanction that it had in the Athens of the fourth and fifth centuries. As Plutarch’s, Dio’s, and Aristides’ discussions suggested, Old Comedy was viewed, at least by some, as a genre now characterized by its crude style of humor and its role in the execution of Socrates. Lucian especially calls our attention to these problems in the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted*, two texts in which he imagines that his persona is on trial for his comic representations of philosophers. In the *Fisherman*, Socrates, Plato, and Diogenes return from the dead to prosecute Lucian's persona, Parrhesiades, for his comic debasement of philosophy, while in the *Twice Prosecuted*, Lucian's alter ego, the Syrian, is sued by Rhetoric and Dialogue for his comic treatment of the respective genres. Both texts thus represent Lucian’s defense of his reliance on Old Comedy for a philosophical purpose and the very act of putting his persona on trial has as its precedent Plato’s *Apology*. While scholars have long pointed to Lucian's references to Old Comedy and the *Apology* within these texts, I will argue that these two texts represent Lucian’s reinvention of the philosophical apology as an apology for Old Comedy. As such, they answer the charge leveled at Old Comedy by Plato’s Socrates and, in doing so, refute the critique of Lucian’s contemporaries by attributing philosophical value to the genre.

---

2 For a brief summary of the similarities between the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* and Old Comedy, see Bowie (2007: 36). For discussion of the connections between the *Fisherman* and Plato’s *Apology*, see Whitmarsh (2001: 59-62). Though Whitmarsh’s discussion does not treat the *Twice Prosecuted*, the similarities between the two texts, namely the fact that both present the author’s persona on trial, allow the connection to be extended to include it.
Though it is impossible to know if they were intended to be read next to one another, the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* nevertheless form a nice pair. As we will see, both texts adopt a narrative frame from Old Comedy that incorporates recognizably Platonic material from various dialogues, including the *Apology*, the *Republic*, and the *Gorgias*, to name just a few. Within this framework, Lucian then replays the debate between Old Comedy and philosophy initially articulated by Plato and later reaffirmed by Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides in such a way that imports a classical tension into the world of contemporary philosophy. In doing this, he retains Old Comedy’s debunking power and the deep value of the Socratic persona as well as certain Platonic tenets in order to reveal the shortcomings of his own intellectual milieu, in particular the degradation of the philosophical schools at the hands of charlatan philosophers. As these texts indicate, Lucian’s responds to these problems by reinventing Old Comedy as a philosophical genre, which militates against contemporary charlatan philosophers by constantly posing harsh questions in the manner once embodied by the figure of Socrates, as well as the Cynic and Skeptic traditions respectively. Read as Lucian’s apologies for Old Comedy, the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* invoke Socrates in order to vindicate comedy against his attacks.

Old Comedy's negative reputation in the Second Sophistic is derived in part from its role in the execution of Socrates. Socrates' condemnation of Old Comedy consequently provides the fodder not only for the criticisms of Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides discussed in the introduction but also for Lucian's defense of that genre in the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted*. As I will argue in this section, the *Fisherman* and
the *Twice Prosecuted* reinvent the trope of the philosophical Apology as an “Apology” of Old Comedy. Lucian, however, reverses the scenario of Plato’s text and makes “Old Philosophy” play the part of the prosecution, in place of Aristophanes and Old Comedy. Though the scenario of a figure on trial for his philosophic approach draws much of its inspiration from Plato’s text, Lucian models the trials of his personae on the structure of the comic *agon*. By recasting the *Apology* through the lens of Old Comedy, Lucian thus returns to one of the sources for the negative view of the genre and in doing so acquits Old Comedy of its reputation as a genre hostile to philosophers by attributing philosophical value to it.

In exploring Lucian’s claim that his comic dialogues possess philosophic value, I will divide my discussion between the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* to examine how each of these texts respond to the negative views of Old Comedy analyzed in the previous section. Turning first to the *Fisherman*, I will argue that at the heart of Parrhesiades’ trial is the question of what function can this long dead genre perform in Lucian’s contemporary society? The answer, as we will see, lies in the Cynic appropriation of *parrhesia*, similar to that found in Dio’s thirty-second discourse, the sole positive view of Old Comedy discussed in the introduction. In contrast to the *Fisherman*’s focus on the appropriateness of Old Comedy, the *Twice Prosecuted* takes on the charge that Old Comedy is hostile to philosophers and appealing only to the uneducated. For as the Syrian argues in his two defense speeches, Old Comedy is the tool by which he has saved the philosophical dialogue and, as he contends, he achieves this precisely through its lowly focus. Such a focus allows him to return philosophy to
the type of hard questioning once seen in the figure of Socrates and the subsequent Skeptic tradition. As the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* reveal, Lucian is dissatisfied by the current state of philosophy, which has been overrun by figures who merely don the guise of a philosopher. By uniting philosophy with Old Comedy, Lucian asserts in these texts that he is seeking to return philosophy to the ideals once embodied by Plato’s Socrates.

**I. The Fisherman**

The *Fisherman* begins with a familiar scene: an angry mob of dead philosophers shouts stone him! Stone him! (βάιιε βάιιε) as they attack the solitary figure of Lucian’s persona, Parrhesiades, standing before them. Among the mob are none other than Socrates, Plato, and Diogenes, to name just a few. This opening scene recalls Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* and the attacks Dikaiopolis suffered at the hands of the Acharnian chorus for his betrayal of Athens. Within the context of Aristophanes’ play, Dikaiopolis successfully escapes unharmed thus minimizing any fears we might have for Parrhesiades’ safety. Unlike the *Acharnians*, however, the impetus of the philosophers’ attack on Parrhesiades is not a political issue, but rather a philosophical one: Lucian debased philosophy in an earlier work, *Philosophies for Sale*, by comically auctioning philosophers off for nickels and dimes in an imagined slave auction. At stake in this text is Lucian’s right to comic free speech or parrhesia, a virtue that he explores in terms of
the comic and Cynic traditions.\(^3\) Lucian's presentation of his “Apology” for his re-appropriation of comic \textit{parrhesia} within the framework of the \textit{Acharnians}, as well as several other plays from Old Comedy, thus explores the role Old Comedy can play in contemporary society. As we will see, the \textit{Fisherman} answers the charge that comic \textit{parrhesia} represents a threat to philosophers by arguing that the Cynic appropriation of the virtue means that no sanction is necessary for Lucian’s \textit{parrhesia}.

Though scholars have long noted Lucian's debt to Old Comedy in the \textit{Fisherman} and the central role that \textit{parrhesia} plays in that text, the full extent of Lucian's imitation of the \textit{Acharnians} and the ramifications that it has for our understanding of his approach to philosophy have yet to be realized.\(^4\) In his brief discussion of this text, Branham places particular emphasis on Lucian's selection of Parrhesiades as his spokesman. As he explains, “in choosing the mask Lucian counters his critics from two traditional angles by implying that he is not really anti-philosophical, since \textit{parrhesia} is a celebrated Cynic value, and that he is authorized to attack fakes anyway as the heir apparent of Old Comedy.”\(^5\) For Branham, Parrhesiades' name and engagement with Diogenes as the philosopher's elected prosecutor illustrates how Old Comic and Cynic influences come together in Lucian's writings to create a literary style that attempts to recreate the style of questioning initiated in the Socratic \textit{elenchus} and continued in the Cynic diatribe.\(^6\) Yet in Parrhesiades' engagement with Diogenes there is a problem that has heretofore been

\(^3\) As an ideal, \textit{parrhesia} or frank speech is not exclusive to the comic and Cynic traditions. Philosophically speaking, it was also revered as an important aspect of personal relationships among the Epicureans and Stoics as opposed to the more public role attributed to it by the Cynics. See Foucault (2001: 108).
\(^6\) Branham (1989: 34).
ignored, namely that Diogenes faults Parrhesiades for parrhesia, one of the central virtues of the Cynic philosophy. This paradoxical representation of Diogenes, however, is best viewed in the context of the other dead philosophers brought to life in this text. As I will suggest, Lucian’s depiction of Plato, Socrates, Diogenes, and the other dead philosophers need not represent his interpretation of the founders of Greek philosophy but rather contemporary opinions about them. In other words, they are the spokesmen of a view of the philosophical tradition as something to be respected and imitated, not unlike the traditionalist views confronted by Lucian in the prologues discussed in chapter one. By pitting his persona against this view, Lucian effectively challenges the contemporary opinions we saw expressed in the previous section about how to approach the literary canon, in particular the comic tradition.

To illustrate this point, my discussion will begin with an analysis of the roles that Plato’s Apology and Old Comedy, in particular the Acharnians, assume in this text. While the presence of the Apology serves to reignite the tension between Old Comedy and philosophy, I will argue that Lucian mimics the structure and intertextuality of the Acharnians’ agon to undermine the dead philosophers’ authority by casting them in the role of the comic chorus. Read in light of Aristophanes’ play, we can begin to see how Diogenes as Parrhesiades’ prosecutor fails to fit the mold of the ideal Cynic philosopher, suggesting that Lucian’s debt to the Cynic tradition in this text is more complex than originally believed. Lucian’s focus in the Fisherman is consequently the problem of philosophic corruption, a fact that is emphasized by the overall comic structure. As I will argue, the Fisherman indicates that Lucian's solution to the philosophic problems of his
day rests not in one single tradition, be it Old Comedy or Cynicism, but an amalgamation of the two. This generic mixture allows Lucian to ascribe philosophic value to Old Comedy, thus establishing a place for Old Comedy in society and refuting the belief that Old Comedy is a dangerous genre, except of course when it comes to philosophical poseurs.

As I mentioned above, Lucian derives the Fisherman’s scenario of a figure on trial for his philosophic approach from Plato’s Apology.\(^7\) Since Lucian's use of the Apology in the Fisherman differs from what we saw in the Literary Prometheus, I will briefly discuss the Fisherman’s relationship to the Apology before turning to its imitation of the Acharnians. In the previous chapter, we saw how Lucian invoked the Apology as a means of debunking the characterization of him as innovative. The Fisherman, in contrast, establishes the Apology and particularly its negative characterization of Aristophanes as what Lucian must work against if he is philosophically to justify his imitation of Old Comedy and as such rehabilitate the genre. In his analysis of the Fisherman, Whitmarsh notes that the philosophers’ concerns that Parrhesiades is a clever speaker mimic Socrates own anxiety about the image of him drawn by his accusers (Fish. 7).\(^8\) For Whitmarsh, this is a sign of the way in which Lucian “ironically advertises his own complicity in the mimetic identity-crisis of his age.”\(^9\) Though Whitmarsh is right that Lucian walks a fine line between highlighting his innovation and following the literary tastes of his day, I would argue here that Lucian attributes the views of the

---

Apology to his critics because the Apology represents an important moment in which comedy's relationship to philosophy becomes problematic. As we saw in our discussion of the reception of Aristophanes in the Second Sophistic, many of the attacks leveled at the poet stemmed from Socrates' blaming Aristophanes for the charges he faces. The presence of arguments akin to those of the Apology in the speeches of the dead philosophers thus characterize the dead philosophers not as the founders of Greek philosophy, but as the source for the traditional view that Old Comedy is inappropriate. As we will see, Lucian turns to Old Comedy, in particular to Aristophanes’ Acharnians, to challenge this view.

In presenting an “Apology” of Old Comedy, the Fisherman calls into question the dead philosophers’ assertions by imitating the ways in which Aristophanes challenges the authority of tragedy in the Acharnians. Since my discussion will focus primarily on two moments within this text, the initial attack of the dead philosophers and Diogenes’ prosecution, let me briefly contextualize them within the plot of this text. As I mentioned above, the Fisherman opens with the dead philosophers attack on Parrhesiades. After an extended agon scene, Parrhesiades persuades them to try him for his crimes in front of Philosophy and her companions, Truth (ἡ Ἀιήζεηά) and Elenchus (ὁ Ἔιεγρνο). The trial is held on the Acropolis, a site that invokes the period of Athens’ history during which Old Comedy was at its height as a genre. As the prosecutor, Diogenes charges that Parrhesiades comically debased philosophy, not unlike Aristophanes’ and Eupolis’ treatment of Socrates, and did so without any kind of official sanction (Fish. 25). In his response to these charges, Parrhesiades describes how he was initially attracted to
philosophy only to be dismayed by the charlatan philosophers of his own times. His mockery of philosophers accordingly was not directed at the dead philosophers but contemporary ones. Parrhesiades' arguments are successful and he is subsequently commissioned to rid Athens of such fake philosophers by fishing for them off of the Acropolis.\textsuperscript{10} By the end of the \textit{Fisherman}, the role of prosecutor, which was once held by the dead philosophers, has been assumed by Parrhesiades, the original defendant, who is now employing comedy to reveal the charlatan philosophers as the true enemies of philosophy.

In the opening scene of the \textit{Fisherman}, we find several allusions to Old Comedy that illustrate Lucian’s attempts to validate his reliance on it. First, as Macleod has already pointed out, the scenario of resurrected dead in a non-epic or Christian context seems to have originated from Eupolis’ \textit{Demoi}, in which Solon, Miltiades, Aristides, and Pericles return from the dead to save Athens.\textsuperscript{11} While the return of the dead philosophers is suggestive of Eupolis’ play, their collective attack on Parrhesiades recalls the first appearance of the Acharnian chorus from Aristophanes’ \textit{Acharnians}. To briefly summarize Aristophanes’ play up to the scene under discussion here: dissatisfied with the state of affairs in Athens, the comic hero Dikiaiopolis seeks out a treaty with the enemy. His treaty angers the Acharnian chorus, provoking them to attack him with coals as they shout: βάλλε, βάλλε, βάλλε, βάλλε (stone him, stone him, stone him, stone him! \textit{Acharn}.

\textsuperscript{10} This is an interesting image since depending on which side of the Acropolis Parrhesiades’ is fishing off of, he is either fishing in the agora, where a lot of philosophical action happened, or into the theater of Dionysus, which evokes Aristophanes’ time period, or into the Odeon of Herodes’ Atticus, a symbol of Lucian’s own times. The text is ambiguous about this, perhaps intentionally so.

\textsuperscript{11} Macleod (1991: 259). The accepted date for the production of the \textit{Demoi} is 412 and the play is seen as a reaction to the events of 413, particularly the Athenian defeat in Sicily, Storey (2003: 24).
In comparison, Lucian’s Socrates incites the other dead philosophers to attack Parrhesiades with the very same βάλλε βάλλε (Fish. 1).\textsuperscript{12} In addition to this, the very fact that it is Socrates who is the mouthpiece for this Aristophanic allusion calls to mind his comic portrayal in the Clouds. Socrates’ opening shouts thus simultaneously evoke the plays of Eupolis and Aristophanes, casting the dead philosophers not merely as philosophers but as a comic chorus comprised of philosophers. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the poets of Old Comedy jockeyed for comic supremacy.\textsuperscript{13} Lucian’s combination of Eupolis’ and Aristophanes’ voices within a single allusion subtly recreates this rivalry for his audience, while at the same time establishing himself as the puppeteer behind the scenes manipulating the original texts to fit a new philosophical purpose.

Though greatly indebted to Old Comedy, the Fisherman is nonetheless focused on what Lucian sees to be the main philosophical problem plaguing his day: people who call themselves philosophers but fail to live up to the very philosophic principles that they espouse. Consequently, in defending his use of Old Comedy Lucian argues for the merits of the genre by shifting the focus away from comedy’s problematic relationship with

\textsuperscript{12} In the Teubner edition, the opening shouts of βάλλε, βάλλε are attributed not merely to Socrates, but rather to the entire group of dead philosophers. On the one hand, this interpretation of the opening scene enhances the connection between the mob of philosophers and that of the Acharnians in Aristophanes’ play. In this scenario, the philosophers call upon one another to attack, including Plato, Chrysippus, Diogenes, Epicurus, Aristippus, and Aristotle. A notable absence from this list, however, is Socrates. While it comes out later in the text that other philosophers, such as Empedocles and Pythagoras, are also present, in my mind Socrates must play a central role in the philosophers’ attack, and I consequently follow Macleod in attributing the lines to Socrates. As the philosophers note, Socrates was mocked by Aristophanes and Eupolis, thus making him the prime candidate to lead the charge against Parrhesiades and for Lucian to connect his work to the earlier philosophic and comic traditions.

\textsuperscript{13} In fact, in the opinion of Sidwell, the “accusation of plagiarism and other evidence linking the comic poets to one another is part of an elaborate series of jokes generated by one underlying characteristic: the tendency of poets to attack each other by making comedy out of each other’s comedy (‘paracomedy’), Sidwell (1993: 365).
philosophy to the problem of charlatan philosophers. Lucian’s answer to this problem, however, is ultimately comic, and the fusion of comedy and philosophical dialogue found in this text is itself announced by the shouts of Socrates, a figure recognizable in both traditions.

The voice of the Acharnian chorus heard in Socrates’ shouts thus establishes an extended comparison between the *Fisherman* and the *Acharnians* that affects how we interpret the characters of the dead philosophers and the arguments they make. In this comparison, the chorus of philosophers assumes the role of the Acharnian chorus and Parrhesiades that of the comic hero, Dikaiopolis in the guise of Telephus. Lucian thus adopts a comic premise to enact the conflict he imagines as existing between his work and contemporary views about the genre of Old Comedy. References to Aristophanes’ play, however, would presumably remind Lucian’s audience that the chorus was no match for Dikaiopolis’ cleverness, and as Lucian will show, the philosophers are no different.

As the scene unfolds, Lucian incorporates his own version of the struggle between comedy and tragedy found in Dikaiopolis’ defense before the Acharnians. Following the attack of the Acharnians, Dikaiopolis seeks help from Euripides, believing that his defense hinges on obtaining the tragic clout associated with the costume of a beggar:

```
Μή μοι φθονήσητ’, ἄνδρες οἱ θεώμενοι,
εἰ πτωχὸς ὄν ἐπειτ’ ἐν Ἀθηναίοις λέγειν
μέλλω περὶ τῆς πόλεως, τρυγῳδίαν ποιῶν.
```

Don’t look down on me, spectators, if I am a beggar and I intend to speak about the affairs of the city among the Athenians, as I’m performing comedy. (*Acharn. 497-99*)

---

As many scholars have already pointed out, these lines parody the speech given by Telephus in Euripides’ lost *Telephus*. In this particular scene, Telephus comes to the Greek camp, dressed as a beggar, in order to procure a cure for the wound inflicted on him by Achilles. To escape the attacks of the chorus, Aristophanes has Dikaiopolis don the costume of Telephus and, consequently, of tragedy. According to Platter, this act establishes a rivalry between tragedy and comedy within the *Acharnians* that allows Aristophanes to question the authority of tragedy while dramatizing the generic struggle. As we discussed above, at the opening of the *Fisherman*, Parrhesiades assumes the role of Dikaiopolis and as such he is already speaking, as it were, behind a mask, albeit the mask of Old Comedy. Like Aristophanes before him, Lucian couches the voice of his comic hero behind that of another, yet for Lucian the voice of authority is not initially that of the serious genre of tragedy but that of Old Comedy and consequently the generic imitation and manipulation that is so characteristic of that genre. In the fight that ensues between Parrhesiades and the dead philosophers, the two sides hurl epic and tragic quotations at one another. Lucian thus re-stages the generic conflict found within the *Acharnians* but expands Aristophanes’ paradigm to include epic.

---

16 Platter (2001: 61) and (2007: 51-6). Hubbard, on the other hand, points to the similarity of comedy and tragedy, as well as that of Euripides and Aristophanes: “the technique of Aristophanes and Euripides are similar in that both bring their heroes down to a level closer to that of the common man in the audience. Both poets also test the frontiers between Tragedy and Comedy, the one making his tragic heroes more comic, the other making his comic heroes more tragic (or paratragic). In so doing, they attempt to make drama a closer reflection of the human condition in its variegated complexity,” (1991: 44).
Unlike the Acharnian chorus, the dead philosophers attack Parrhesiades not only with stones, but also epic and tragic quotations. As Parrhesiades begs for mercy, Socrates quotes Achilles on the verge of slaying Hector:

\[ \text{oýn, óúk ëstí lýousi kai ándrástín òrkía piostá, (there are no trustworthy bonds between lions and men, Fish. 3).} \]

Through this quotation Socrates effectively casts himself in the role of the invincible Achilles and Parrhesiades, who was once the successful Telephus figure, as the doomed Hector. Not willing to let himself be painted into a corner, Parrhesiades rejoins with his own Homeric quotation of sorts:

\[ \text{Kai múýn kath' Ómepow ýmáç kai aútós íketaúsw. aídésasebhe ýár íswos tá ýestí kai óú paróýsesebhe páxwoðíssantí me:} \]
\[ \text{ýogreít' óú kákkón åndrá kai åxía déchí ãpeína,} \]
\[ \text{chalkon te xúswon te, tá dí philéousi soforí pers.} \]

But I can also beg for your mercy through Homer. For perhaps you will respect his words and won't spurn me, if I recite some epic: “take me as your captive, for I am not a bad man and accept a fitting ransom, bronze and gold, which even wise men love.” (Fish. 3)

In Parrhesiades' response we have an amalgamation of partial lines from books 6 and 20 of the Iliad. Unlike Socrates, who quotes a famous and serious line, Parrhesiades responds with a mixture of lines that allows him to manipulate the original epic lines to say something other than what was originally intended. Within Parrhesiades' Homeric

---

17 In addition to evoking the Acharnians, this scene is also reminiscent of the agon of the Frogs between Euripides and Aeschylus. In fact, the Fisherman seems to pick up where the Frogs, which ends where the Fisherman picks up.

18 A.M. Harmon attributes this line to Plato, not Socrates in his 1921 Loeb edition of the text. Since Plato is the conduit for much of what we know of Socrates, in my mind either figure works at this point in the exchange. The decision to attribute these lines to either Plato or Socrates makes sense in light of Socrates' discussion of poetry that Plato presents in Republic III and X, as well as the discussion of rhapsodes in the Ion. If, however, we follow the Teubner, the anonymity of the speaker does not change the overall fact that Parrhesiades and the dead philosophers are using the poetic tradition to attack one another.
quotation, the first line comes from *Iliad* 6.46 (ζώγρει Ἀτρέός υίε, σὺ δ᾽ ἀξία δέξαι ἄποινα·), while the first half of the second line appears two lines later (χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκμητός τε σίδηρος). At this point in the narrative of the *Iliad*, Menelaus is on the verge of killing the Trojan Adrestus, who begs for mercy. Though Menelaus initially appears swayed by Adrestus' appeals for his life, Agamemnon intervenes and the two brothers kill Adrestus. Through this Homeric allusion, Parrhesiades casts himself in the role of the suppliant, whose rhetoric, if not for Agamemnon, would have saved his life.

In the final half of the second line, however, it becomes more difficult to establish a one-to-one correlation between the lines spoken by Parrhesiades and the original Homeric lines. Editors of the *Fisherman* note that this phrase is taken from *Iliad* 20.65 (σμερδαλέ’ εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ·).19 The original Homeric line, however, describes the underworld as containing horrors “which even the gods hate” and Lucian's revision of the line reverses its meaning from what the gods hate to what wise men love. Parrhesiades thus indicates here that wise men do not love what we might expect them to love, namely wisdom, but rather gold. Consequently, Parrhesiades offers Socrates the one thing he knows he will not accept, namely cash.20 As Plato's dialogues tell us, one difference between a philosopher and a sophist was the sophist's acceptance of money.21 Parrhesiades consequently treats Socrates and company here as if they were the same money-grubbing philosophers attacked in *Philosophies for Sale*.

---

20 Even if we do not attribute this line to Socrates or Plato, the problem still remains that Parrhesiades offers a philosopher precisely what they should not be concerned with, namely money. For as Whitmarsh notes in his discussion, one of the ways that Parrhesiades distinguishes the dead philosophers from the charlatans currently plaguing Athens is the latter's acceptance of money. Whitmarsh (2001: 260-61).
21 See Plato, *Protagoras* 311b.
Parrhesiades' modification of the Homeric line ensures that Socrates will reject his offer. As the scene continues, Socrates once again attacks Parrhesiades in the language of Homer:

\[ Ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ἠμεῖς ἀπορήσομεν πρὸς σὲ Ὁμηρικῆς ἀντιλογίας. ἂκουε γοῦν·

\[ 
μὴ δὴ μοι φῦξιν γε, κακηγόρε, βάλλειο θυμῷ
\]

\[ χρυσὸν περὶ λέξας, ἐπεὶ ἕκεο χεῖρας ἐς ἄμας. \]

But we will not be at a loss for a Homeric argument in response to you. Listen to this: “Don't even think about escape, you slanderer, even though you speak of gold, since now you have fallen into my hands. (Fish. 3)

Socrates here quotes almost exactly *Iliad* 10.447-8, a scene in which Diomedes is on the verge of killing the Trojan traitor, Dolon (μὴ δὴ μοι φῦξιν γε Δόλων ἐμβάλλειο θυμῷ·

\[ ἐσθλά περὶ ἀγγείλας, ἐπεὶ ἕκεο χεῖρας ἐς ἄμας]. In his evocation of these Homeric lines, Socrates attempts to further undermine Parrhesiades' position, casting him as a traitor, at the same time as he declares that the epic trope of offering ransom will not work in a philosophical context. It should be noted, however, that in both cases Socrates quotes almost exactly the original Homeric lines, while Parrhesiades takes a more fluid approach to Homer's text, melding various lines and changing their original meaning. It is this fluid approach to the literary tradition that initially got Parrhesiades into trouble with the dead philosophers, who in the context of the *Fisherman* are the embodiment of the philosophical tradition. As such, it stands to reason then that Socrates' use of accurate Homeric quotations illustrates the respect that he and the other dead philosophers feel should be shown to earlier authors and thinkers. In contrast, Parrhesiades' less than rigid approach to the original Homeric lines exemplifies not only the dead philosophers' complaints about his debasement of philosophy but also serves as another example of
how Lucian incorporates the Greek literary tradition into his writings, similar to what we saw in the prologues discussed in chapter one.

The language of Homer, however, ultimately fails Parrhesiades, forcing him to turn, like Dikaiopolis, to Euripides:

\[\text{Οἰμοι τὸν κακὸν. ὁ μὲν Ὄμηρος ἠμῖν ἄπρακτος, ἡ μεγίστη ἐλπίς. ἐπὶ τὸν Ἑὐριπίδην δὴ μοι καταφευγέον· τάχα γὰρ ἂν ἐκείνος σώσει με. μὴ κτεῖνε· τὸν ἰκέτην γὰρ οὐ θέμις κτανεῖν.}\]

Oh, how terrible. Homer, who was my greatest hope, is useless to me. Now I must take refuge with Euripides, perhaps he can save me: “Don't kill me! It is wrong to slay your suppliant.” (Fish. 3)

While the act of seeking help from Euripides further alludes to the Acharnians, the Euripidean quotation, unfortunately, is a fragment from an unknown play and not much can be said about it other than that Plato equally rejects Parrhesiades' tragic pleas.\(^\text{22}\)

Whereas Dikaiopolis' clever adoption of tragic imagery brings him success, Parrhesiades ultimately discards the words of Homer and Euripides in favor of his own. Through these epic and tragic quotations, Lucian incorporates the generic struggle found in the Acharnians between comedy and the so-called “loftier” genre of tragedy. Lucian's inclusion of the epic voice, however, expands Aristophanes' conflict to include the tensions between serious and comedic writing, in a sense the very conflict that we saw enacted in Lucian's prologues and that continues through the rest of the Fisherman.

According to the dead philosopher's objections, Parrhesiades has debased philosophy by treating the once serious genre in a comedic fashion. Whereas Dikaiopolis' success

\(^{22}\) Nauk, TGF 937. When the shift is made from epic to tragedy, Macleod conjectures that Plato takes over Socrates' role, though there is nothing in the text to indicate that this is the case.
comes in his ability to distort tragedy through comedy, Parrhesiades' arises through Lucian's distortion of the very paradigm he is following. Lucian does not merely manipulate the serious genres of epic and tragedy as Aristophanes did with tragedy, but the genre of Old Comedy as well. By expanding on the example of generic interplay established by Aristophanes in the *Acharnians*, Lucian recreates the generic rivalry of Aristophanes’ play but recasts it as between comedy and philosophy. As Lucian’s audience we are reminded of Dikaiopolis’ successful in his encounter with the chorus of *Acharnians*, and it is safe to assume that the same will hold true for Parrhesiades. By casting the dead philosophers within the framework of the *Acharnians*, Lucian subtly subverts their authority as the proponents of the view that Old Comedy is detrimental to the philosophic tradition.

As we have seen so far, like Dikaiopolis, Parrhesiades relies on classical precedents, but nonetheless manages to assert his originality in light of these traditions. In his prosecution of Parrhesaiides, however, Diogenes raises a significant problem with Parrhesiades’ Aristophanic approach that centers on the issue of comic sanction. For as Diogenes explains, Eupolis' and Aristophanes' portrayals of Socrates were outrageous, but acceptable because they took place during the festival of Dionysus:

Καίτοι ἐκεῖνοι μὲν καθ’ ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐτόλμων του ἀείδητα, καὶ ἐν Διονυσίως ἐφειμένον αὐτὸ ἔδρων, καὶ τὸ σκόμμα εἶδος μέρος τι τῆς ἐορτῆς.

They [Aristophanes and Eupolis] brazenly attacked a single individual and they did this in Dionysus' theater, when it was permissible, and their mockery was part of the festival. (*Fish* 25)

Parrhesiades, on the other hand, mocked philosophers without the sanction of the festival. This charge thus confronts the issue at stake in the *Fisherman*: does Old Comedy have a
place in Lucian’s society? Or, rather, is there a place for Lucian’s revitalization of it? To address these questions, we must now turn our attention to the question of comic sanction and the potential issues that Lucian imagines as arising from Parrhesiades' lack of it. It is here that Lucian directly engages with the philosophical influence of Cynicism as embodied by the figure of Diogenes and, in doing so, begins to attribute philosophic value to Old Comedy. As we will see, Lucian uses the Cynic’s claims to parrhesia to answer Diogenes’ charges by asserting that philosophical parrhesia does not in fact require ritual sanction.

In the Acharnians, Aristophanes presents Euripides as a comic figure from whom Dikaiopolis seeks the authority of tragic garb as a means of defending himself against the attacks of the Acharnian chorus. Within the Acharnians, we can consequently see Aristophanes directly engaging with Euripidean tragedy. In the Fisherman, we likewise find an exchange between a comedy and a serious genre, in this case philosophical dialogue. Lucian, however, conflates Euripides and the Acharnian chorus in the figure of Diogenes, who is both the spokesman of the dead philosophers and the figurehead of Cynicism. This change consequently replaces the tension between comedy and tragedy found in the Acharnians with that of comedy and philosophy, in this case specifically the Cynic tradition. Lucian's use of one of the founders of the Cynic philosophy as his prosecutor, however, is striking since Cynicism as a philosophy valued laughter and the questioning of authority, the very charges that Parrhesiades' faces. Though scholars have long noted the influence of Cynicism on Lucian and specifically the Fisherman, there has

been little discussion of this disconnect between Diogenes as the figurehead of the Cynic philosophers and the arguments that Lucian has him espouse. As I will argue, Lucian's presentation of Diogenes betrays his debt to the Cynic tradition not simply through the presence of the Cynic philosopher but through the discrepancies between the figure of Diogenes and the Cynic ideal, which allow Parrhesiades to stake his own claim to the Cynic tradition.\textsuperscript{24} Diogenes, like his companions Plato and Socrates, espouses the view that the philosophical tradition must be respected and followed. This representation of Diogenes casts Parrhesiades as the heir not only to the comic tradition but the Cynic as well.

Before I begin my discussion of Parrhesiades' encounter with Diogenes, let me first briefly summarize the basic features of the philosophical approach embodied by Diogenes so as to better contextualize Lucian's interaction with it. Although first appearing in the fourth or perhaps fifth century BCE, Cynicism experienced a revival during the imperial period and it is this period of Cynicism that I will focus on. Like the Epicureans and the Stoics, the Cynics understood happiness as living according to nature and they sought to achieve this through self-mastery and the rejection of material goods, fame, political power, and misconceptions about the value of things.\textsuperscript{25} As a result of this,

\textsuperscript{24} While it is possible for Parrhesiades' name on its own to evoke the Epicurean or Stoic uses of frank speech, the fact that Lucian pits his persona against Diogenes, one of the founders of Cynicism, suggests a direct engagement with that philosophy rather than the others. For a discussion of the different connotations, political, literary, and philosophical, see Foucault (2001).\textsuperscript{25} Long lists the following seven propositions of the Cynics: “1. Happiness is living in agreement with nature; 2. Happiness is something available to any person willing to engage in sufficient physical and mental training; 3. The essence of happiness is self-mastery, which manifests itself in the ability to live happily under even highly adverse circumstances; 4. Self-mastery is equivalent to, or entails, a virtuous character; 5. The happy person, as so conceived, is the only person who is truly wise, kingly, and free; 6. Things conventionally deemed necessary for happiness, such as wealth, fame, and political power, have no
the Cynics are typically characterized in the Imperial period by their asceticism, often denoted by their possession of a single garment, bag, and staff, as well as their shamelessness. Unlike Stoicism or Epicureanism, however, Cynicism cannot be labeled as a “school,” since to practice it was not to attend classes in a specific place but to imitate its founders, in particular Diogenes. 26 Among the famous anecdotes recorded about Diogenes by the Diogenes Laertius is that he was forced to flee his home town of Sinope after defacing its currency (Life of the Philosophers 6.20). As Branham interprets this tale, “Diogenes’ aim was to demonstrate by his own example the superiority of nature to custom, and he spent his whole life trying to ‘deface’ the false values of the dominant culture,” which included the realms of politics, religion, and philosophy. 27 For a Cynic, one of the ways to convey this rejection of the “dominant culture” was through “disrespectful, aggressively witty, funny, and shocking” speech characterized by its parrhesia and laughter. 28 In the Fisherman, however, Lucian conveys conflicting views about the Cynics. On the one hand, Lucian describes the fake philosophers plaguing Athens as dressed in the traditional Cynic garb of a cloak and carrying a staff, while, on the other, the very name of Lucian’s persona seems in part to be the embodiment of the Cynic appropriation of parrhesia. 29

Despite this apparent contradiction, we nonetheless would expect to find the core values of Cynicism illustrated in the figure of Diogenes. Yet the charges Diogenes levels

---

28 Trapp (2007: 190-1). The collection of chreia preserved in Diogenes Laertius’ life of Diogenes bears witness to this.
at Parrhesiades clash with the Cynic ideal of questioning the accepted norms of society through disrespectful and shocking language. For according to Diogenes, one of the main issues that Parrhesiades must confront is that he incited the general public to laugh at Philosophy and her followers:

He has persuaded the masses to laugh at us and despise us as worthless. What's more, he has now made both you, Philosophy, and ourselves to be hated by the populace, calling your activities nonsense and rubbish and giving a satirical version of the finest and most serious of things you taught us, so that he is applauded and praised by his audience. For this what the general public like: they delight in people who deride and insult, and especially when the most respected things are ridiculed, just as, of course they enjoyed having Aristophanes and Eupolis put Socrates here on the stage and compose outrageous comedies about him. (*Fish*. 25)

The verb used by Diogenes to characterize this laughter, καταγελαν, typically denotes the mocking or derisive laughter that Plutarch attributed to Old Comedy in his *Comparison* and saw as so dangerous to society. We consequently find in Diogenes' arguments against Parrhesiades' comic approach many of the sentiments leveled against Old Comedy in Plutarch's *Comparison*. This laughter, however, also represents a trait of Cynic philosophers, and perhaps even more surprisingly, the laughter that Diogenes charges Parrhesiades with is in fact commonly associated with Diogenes himself. In addition to this, Diogenes attacks Parrhesiades, whose name suggests that he is the
embodiment of a Cynic ideal, for behaving like a Cynic, and there consequently exists a further disconnect within Lucian's Diogenes between the Cynic image that he would have evoked for Lucian's audience and the arguments that Lucian presents him as espousing. This discrepancy indicates the figure of Diogenes not to be representative of a Cynic standpoint but rather as Lucian's depiction of contemporary interpretations of these philosophers as the pinnacles of philosophic achievement.

Parrhesiades, however, does not convince the dead philosophers about the merits of his comic dialogues by invoking Plato, but rather by turning to the Cynic tradition that Diogenes seems to have lost sight of. By pitting his persona against Diogenes, Lucian establishes the Cynic tradition as the key to refuting Diogenes' anti-comedy arguments. As Branham has already noted, Parrhesiades' name evokes the parrhesia of Old Comedy and that of Cynicism. Cynic freedom, however, is characterized in large part by its “its provocative acts of free speech, meant to subvert existing authorities.” As we saw in the introduction, Dio similarly connected Cynic parrhesia to the parrhesia of Old Comedy in his speech to the Alexandrians. If we read Parrhesiades as evocative of both traditions of parrhesia, and I think we should, then the idea that a Cynic must subvert existing authorities presents the interesting problem that as a Cynic Parrhesiades must reject authority and tradition. In other words, he must reject his teacher to honor him. To outdo Diogenes, therefore, is exactly what Parrhesiades should be doing as a good Cynic philosopher. Diogenes' rigid approach to the philosophical tradition consequently shows

---

him to be unaware that he and the other dead philosophers have become the “tradition” that the Cynic Parrhesiades “defaces.”

Lucian challenges the philosopher’s authority with a rival claim of his own that is hard-wired into his narrator's name. As his name suggests, Parrhesiades is a follower of parrhesia, the meaning of which changed as the politics of Athens changed. Beginning as a political virtue found in the public assembly of fifth century Athens, parrhesia was the exercise of free speech by free men for the public good. When the Athenian democracy fell, parrhesia did not cease to exist, but reemerged in philosophy, particularly Cynic philosophy. For philosophers, parrhesia was the enjoyment of moral freedom used for the improvement, not of the city, but of one's philosophical companions. By arguing that he directs his laughter at the charlatan philosophers currently plaguing Athens, Parrhesiades, though drawing on the influence Cynicism, returns parrhesia to its original job of benefiting the city. Through the Fisherman’s focus on parrhesia, a virtue that bridges the divide between Old Comedy and Philosophy, Lucian merges the parrhesia of comedy with that of the Cynics and in doing so, argues for its place in society.

The character of Parrhesiades therefore encapsulates the range of parrhesia's associations. Glenn Holland attributes Lucian's interest in parrhesia to a need to justify his comedy and consequently aligns Lucian's concerns with those of the dead philosophers.32 Though Lucian's comic license represents the central issue of the Fisherman, Lucian's evocation of parrhesia indicates that he does not need this license in

the strict sense that Diogenes requires—for the philosophical appropriation of *parrhesia* meant that the ritual sanction was no longer necessary. Instead, it serves to connect the *Fisherman*'s philosophical arguments and debt to Old Comedy. In other words, Lucian calls upon the double meaning of *parrhesia* to simultaneously assert his similarity to Aristophanes and the other writers of Old Comedy and to position his work within the philosophic tradition. Lucian's approach to comedy in the *Fisherman* thus combines the license of Old Comedy with the philosophical freedom enjoyed by philosophers, and thus answers the objections of the likes of Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides, that Old Comedy has no place in contemporary society.

Lucian's claim to *parrhesia* situates his comic dialogues within the comedic and philosophic traditions and in doing so establishes their focus to be the socio-cultural problems of his day, specifically the problem of charlatan philosophers. In the context of the *Fisherman*, this societal role is enacted in the final scene of the text, in which the dead philosophers commission Parrhesiades to prosecute the fake philosophers on the Acropolis in front of Virtue, Philosophy, and Justice (*Fish. 40*). To entice the philosophers of Athens—both real and counterfeit—to come to the Acropolis, Parrhesiades offers a reward of two minas, a sesame cake, and, for anyone with a long beard, dried figs (*Fish. 41*). Parrhesiades' summons, however, draw so many fake philosophers that Philosophy herself complains that she cannot distinguish between the two:

μεστὴ δὲ ἡ ἀκρόπολις ἐν βραχεὶ κλαγητῇ δόν προκαθιζόντων καὶ πανταχοῦ πῆρα κολακεία, πώγων ἀναισχυντία, βακτηρία λιγνεία, συλλογισμός φιλαργυρία· οἱ ὀλίγοι δὲ, ὅπου δίνει τῷ πρώτῳ τῇ κήρυγμα ἐκεῖνο ἀνήσχεν, ἀφανεῖς καὶ ἄσημοι, ἀναμιχθέντες τῷ πλήθει τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ λελήθασιν ἐν τῇ ὁμοίωτητι τῶν ἄλλων σχημάτων.
The acropolis has filled with them 'as noisily they perch' and everywhere are pouches and flattery, beards and shamelessness, staffs and gluttony, syllogisms and avarice, but the few who came up in answer to that first summons, cannot be seen or distinguished, but have been swallowed up by the hordes of others and can't be made out where all appearances are so similar.

Philosophy here indicates that the problem is not just that Athens is overrun by charlatan philosophers, but that on the surface they are indistinguishable from the few true ones.

Parrhesiades in turn indicates that in fact the fake philosophers are often more convincing than the true ones (πιθανότεροι γάρ οἱ γόητες οὕτῳ πολλάκις τῶν ἄληθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντων, 42).

The problem highlighted here by Philosophy and Parrhesiades is further reinforced by a fight, which breaks outs between the respective philosophic schools over the rewards offered by Parrhesiades. Disgusted with the state of philosophy in Athens, Philosophy, Truth, and the personification of Elenchus commission Parrhesiades to rid Athens of these charlatan philosophers. Such an act indicates that Lucian sees his comedic philosophy as adopting the Socratic persona for himself. While the presence of Elenchus recalls the Socrates of Plato's dialogues, the fact that Fisherman up to this point has drawn much of its inspiration from Aristophanic comedy suggests that Lucian's approach to Socrates and his elenchus is ultimately comic. Lucian's image of Socrates is thus not simply Plato’s, but the complex literary image that we find in Old Comedy and Plato's dialogues as well as the later philosophic traditions, such as that of the Cynics.

In Parrhesiades' solution to Athens' problems of charlatan philosopher, Lucian highlights how his work represents the enactment of a variety of traditions. Once commissioned by Philosophy and Truth, Parrhesiades hatches a scheme that involves
using gold and figs as bait to literally fish for philosophers off the side of the Acropolis (Fish. 47). In the Fisherman Lucian tries his persona for his reliance on Old Comedy as a means of revealing the problems he sees with his contemporary philosophers. While the end of the Fisherman indicates that Lucian's comic reinvention of the Socratic method is the tool needed to expose fake philosophers, Philosophy eventually puts an end to Parrhesiades' fishing scene, and he is not allowed to fully purge Athens. The embodiment of Elenchus is thus left to ask where they should go next: Ποὶ δὲ καὶ πρῶτον ἀπίέναι δεήσει; μῶν εἰς τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν ἢ εἰς τὴν Ἀθήναν ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ Λύκείου ποιησῶμεθα τὴν ἀρχήν; (Where must we go first? The Academy or the Porch? Or are we start at the Lyceum? Fish. 52) In light of Parrhesiades' exposure of Athens' philosophers as charlatans, Elenchus asks which of the schools is the right school to follow, or, in other words, which should be the home for philosophy and the Socratic tradition? Parrhesiades' answer is that it does not make a difference, they are ultimately all the same: Οὐδὲν διώσει τοῦτο. πλὴν οἴδα γε ἐγὼ ὡς ὁποι ποτ’ ἄν ἀπέλθομεν, ὀλίγων μὲν τῶν στεφάνων, πολλῶν δὲ τῶν καυτηρίων δεησόμεθα. (It won't make any difference. However, I do know that wherever we go, we'll need few wreaths but lots of branding-irons, Fish. 52). As the final lines of the Fisherman, Parrhesiades' response indicates that Lucian views each of the philosophical schools as corrupt, emphasizing that his comic approach to philosophy, which represents a return to the harsh societal questioning once seen in traditions of Old Comedy, Platonic dialogue, and the Cynic tradition, as the solution to this problem.
At the opening of the *Fisherman* we saw how Parrhesiades faced the attacks of the dead philosophers because of his comic portrayal of them. In his arguments regarding the dangers of Old Comedy espoused by the philosophers, Lucian enacts the tension between the two genres initiated by Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Plato's *Apology*. Lucian's comic trial of Parrhesiades represents Lucian's attempt to revive Old Comedy from the attacks of Plato and his followers by likening the type of socio-cultural questioning found in it to Cynicism and the Socratic *elenchus*. This Old Comic approach to philosophy allows Lucian to reveal how figures, such as Diogenes, have lost their original connotations, in this case the derisive and comic questioning of authority, to become nothing more than figure heads for the literary and philosophical tradition embodied by the ideal of *paideia*. In contrast to this, the *Fisherman*’s complex engagement not only with traditions of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue, but also with that of the Cynics casts Lucian as the figure who does not merely cite the cultural cache of Socrates, but attempts to embody him in all his different manifestations. As we will see in the next section, Lucian takes this a step further in the *Twice Prosecuted*, casting his comic dialogues as representative of a new philosophic approach worthy of emulation in its own right.

**II. The Twice Prosecuted**

In the previous section we saw how Lucian uses Parrhesiades’ apology to establish a philosophical precedent for his literary project by linking comic *parrhesia* to its Cynic counterpart. Though the connections drawn between comic and Cynic free speech
challenge the views expressed by Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides that Old Comedy has no
place in contemporary society, the *Fisherman* does not directly address Old Comedy’s
reputation as a genre hostile to philosophers. As we discussed in the introduction, Old
Comedy’s experience was ambivalent and complex in the Second Sophistic. Although it
represented Attic style, it also had the agonistic stigma attributed to it by Plato’s *Apology.*
The *Twice Prosecuted* confronts this opinion by turning to what Lucian sees as the crux
of the problem, namely the attacks leveled by Plato’s Socrates at Aristophanes’ comic
representation of him in the *Clouds.* In this section, I will show that Lucian addressed
this problem by assigning to Old Comedy philosophical value. As I will argue, the
apology of the *Twice Prosecuted* answers the charge that Old Comedy is unsuitable for
an educated person by using it to expose the flaws inherent in the contemporary
approaches to philosophy and thus establishing Lucian’s comic dialogues as the proper
vehicle for conducting philosophy.

According to Plato’s representation of him, Socrates possessed the potential to
make Athens a better and more just city, an ideal that serves as the starting point for
Lucian’s *Twice Prosecuted.* To briefly summarize the intricate plot, the text opens with
a problem: Zeus has allowed a backlog of lawsuits involving the major philosophical
schools to develop. In an attempt to resolve this problem, Zeus commissions a
subcommittee headed up by Justice to empanel juries on the Areopagus for the following
cases: Intoxication versus the Academy over the kidnapping of Polemo, the Stoa versus

---

33 In the *Apology,* for example, Socrates points to the fact that he spoke out against the illegality of trying as
a group the ten generals who failed to pick up the survivors after the battle of Arginusae (32ff).
Pleasure for the seduction of Dionysius, Luxury versus Virtue over Aristippus, Banking versus Diogenes for Defection, and Painting versus Pyhrro for desertion. Through these trials, Lucian presents his audience with a caricature of the philosophical approaches embodied by each school and in doing so questions the value of each method in terms of living a philosophical life. These cases, however, are augmented by two more recent lawsuits brought against Lucian’s persona, the Syrian, by the personifications of Rhetoric and Dialogue on the most serious charges of all: maltreatment (κάκωσις) and hubris respectively (TP 14). While Rhetoric accuses the Syrian of abandoning her, Dialogue asserts that the Syrian has degraded him by uniting him with comedy.

As scholars have noted about the first of the Syrian’s two trials, the scenario of a personified literary genre suing its author on the grounds of abandonment is reminiscent of Cratinus’ Wine Flask, which similarly imagines that the comic poet is brought to court by his “wife” Comedy on the grounds that he left her for μέθη (drunkenness). In Lucian’s version of this scenario, Comedy’s role is assumed by the two figures of Rhetoric and philosophical Dialogue. This adaptation revisits the tension between the sophist and philosopher that we find in many of Plato’s dialogues, which we will see as well in chapter four. As I will argue, Lucian draws on the scenario of Cratinus’ play to reveal the corruption of rhetoric in his own time and thus establishes comedy as an important philosophic tool. In attributing to comedy a philosophic role, Lucian contends

that the genre’s base humor and lowly focus are necessary if he is to save the philosophical Dialogue from becoming overly obscure and esoteric. By adopting the persona of the Syrian, Lucian thus presents himself as a comic Socratic figure, greatly indebted to the Cynic and Skeptic traditions, through whom justice will be returned to Athens.

Although the *Twice Prosecuted* presents Lucian directly addressing his literary style, the text has received little scholarly attention. While Branham labels the work as Lucian’s “most ambitious attempt at using the idiosyncratic form of the dialogue he developed,” his discussion focuses solely on the ways in which this text establishes Lucian’s “literary pedigree” through allusions to Homer, Old Comedy, and even Demosthenes. More recently, Braun has argued for the importance of contextualizing Lucian’s discussion of his craft within the larger framework of the work as a whole. Building on the work of Branham and Braun, my discussion will explore how the *Twice Prosecuted* first revives the tension that Lucian imagines arose out of Plato’s condemnation of Aristophanes’ *Clouds* in the *Apology* and then uses that tension to establish comedy as an important philosophic tool. I will begin by examining the ways in which the initial exchange between Zeus and Justice sets the stage for the Syrian’s “apology” by imagining that Aristophanes’ *Clouds* has had such a lasting effect on Athens that it has become a city ruled by injustice. Lucian achieves this by drawing first on the debate between the Stronger and Weaker arguments in the *Clouds* and then on the

definition of justice found in Plato’s *Republic*. The effect of this juxtaposition of comic and philosophic elements serves to reignite the tension between comedy and philosophy that Lucian’s persona, the Syrian, will proclaim to have resolved at the conclusion of the text. Furthermore, this image of Athens allows Lucian to cast the trials in this text as referendums on the various philosophical approaches. In each trial, Lucian depicts a caricature of a philosophical school and thus calls into question its merits. By placing the two trials of his persona at the culmination of the text, Lucian asserts that his comic dialogues represent a novel philosophic approach, worthy of following in its own right.

**Athens as the Unjust City**

Lucian’s characterizes Athens as an unjust city through Zeus’ decision to send Justice and Hermes to empanel juries on the Areopagus. Before I begin my analysis of this representation of Athens, let me first briefly contextualize the basic scenario of the *Twice Prosecuted*. The precedent for the divine establishment of courts at the opening of the text is Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, which was produced in 458 BCE and reflects the tensions surrounding the legal role of the courts on the Areopagus. The connection between Aeschylus’ play and the affairs of the contemporary Athens has led some to see a similar connection in the *Twice Prosecuted*. Delz, for example, has suggested that Lucian’s courts indicate that the tradition of empanelling juries continued into the Roman period, an assumption that has been called into question by Braun, who contends that the

---

proconsul held all legal authority.\textsuperscript{38} In fact, as Boegehold has pointed out, we have very little evidence for the law courts in Athens after 322 CE.\textsuperscript{39} Though it is certainly conceivable that Lucian intends the empanelling of juries in the \textit{Twice Prosecuted} to evoke an image of the Athens of his own day, I would like to suggest that Lucian recasts this once tragic scenario as a comic one.

The connection to Old Comedy first appears in the language surrounding the establishment of the court. As Zeus instructs Hermes to lead Justice to Athens, he refers to the courts on the Areopagus not as a δικαστήριον but instead as a lawsuit market (ἀγοπὰν δικῶν, \textit{TP} 4). This is an unusual phrase and, as Sidwell has noted, one that recalls the \textit{Knights}’ portrayal of the law courts as a “law suit bazaar,” (ἐν τῷ δείγματι τῶν δικῶν, 979).\textsuperscript{40} As Sidwell conjectures, Aristophanes’ “law suit bazaar” may itself be an allusion to an unknown contemporary comedy, --a hypothesis that leads Sidwell to contend that Lucian is potentially modeling his own ἀγοπὰν δικῶν not necessarily on the \textit{Knights}, but instead on an unknown comedy by either Eupolis or Cratinus.\textsuperscript{41} While this interpretation is plausible, I would like to suggest here that Lucian’s ἀγορὰν δικῶν need not refer to one specific play but rather to the general trope in Old Comedy of mocking the law courts.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Boegehold (1995: 41-2).
\textsuperscript{41} Sidwell (2005: 354).
\textsuperscript{42} Braun also makes a connection to Old Comedy but along slightly different lines. As he argues, the figure of Zeus is intended to be a comic character and that his opening speech mimics the opening complaints figures such as Dikaiopolis (65-70).
Jokes about the litigiousness of the Athenians are common in Aristophanes’ plays.\(^43\) To cite just a few examples, the joke represents the basic scenario of the *Wasps*, which depicts Bdelycleon’s struggles to curb his father’s passion for serving on juries.\(^44\) Similarly in the *Clouds*, the law courts and their juries are such a feature of Athenian life that they have become synonymous with Athens for Strepsiades, who fails to recognize Athens on a map without them:

{Ma.} αὕτη δέ σοι γῆς περίοδος πάσης. ὥρᾶς; αἰδέ μὲν Ἀθῆναι.
{Στ.} τί σοι λέγεις; οὐ πείθομαι, ἐπεὶ δικαστάς οὐχ ὤρῳ καθημένους.

Student: And this, you see, is a map of the whole world. Look, here's Athens.
Strepsiades: How do you make that out? I’m not persuaded since I don’t see the jury sitting on their benches (*Clouds*, 206-208)

For Aristophanes, these jokes highlight political and societal issues specific to the Athens in which these plays were produced. In contrast, Lucian reworks this trope to address the philosophical corruption that has plagued Athens since the execution of Socrates. His adoption of this joke for a philosophical purpose thus looks ahead to the ensuing trials, and in particular, the Syrian’s comic apology.

Whereas the *Fisherman* presents Parrhesiades’ apology in the model of the *Acharnians*, the opening of the *Twice Prosecuted* sets the stage for the Syrian’s apology by drawing much of its inspiration from the *Clouds*. In turning to the *Clouds*, Lucian revives for his audience the very source of the problem that confronts his comic approach.

\(^{43}\) As Dover points out, “the joke against the Athenian’s insistence on trying cases, both domestic and imperial by large juries is a standby of Aristophanes” Dover (1968: 123).
\(^{44}\) See also the *Peace* 501 and the *Birds* 41 and 409
to philosophy, namely the comic Socrates. This debt appears primarily in the figure of Justice and her interactions with Zeus. Though Zeus believes that he has found an easy solution to his problem, Justice initially refuses to return to Athens because she fears that her counterpart, Injustice, will mock her: Αὖζηο εἰο ηὴλ γ῅λ, ἵλ' ἐμειαπλνκέλε πξὸο αὐηῶλ δραπετεύω πάλιν ἐκ τοῦ βίου τὴν Ἀδηθίαν ἐπηγειῶζαλ νὐ θέξνπζα; (You want me to go back to earth again? All that will happen is that I'll have to run away from human life once more when I can't stand the mocking laughter of Injustice, TP 5). As this line indicates, Justice’s refusal to return to Athens stems from her belief that Athens is ruled by Injustice, a scenario suggestive of the debate between the Stronger and Weaker speeches taken from the Clouds (889-1111). In the context of the Clouds, the Stronger argument boasts that he will defeat the Weaker argument by presenting a just argument, (τὰ δίκαια λέγων, 900). In response to this, however, the Weaker argument counters that he denies the existence of Justice: ἀλλ’ ἀνατρέψω ταῦτ’ ἀντιλέγων· / οὐδὲ γὰρ εἶναι πάνω φημὶ Δίκην, (But I will turn this around and refute this. I say that there is no such thing as Justice, 901-2). The Stronger argument rejects this assertion and an investigation into justice quickly disintegrates into insults. As we can see, Lucian capitalizes on the Weaker argument’s line of reasoning about the non-existence Justice by suggesting at the opening of the Twice Prosecuted that the defeat of the Stronger argument has led to Justice’s decamping from Athens. In referencing this moment in the Clouds, Lucian casts Athens as a corrupt city and, more importantly for our discussion, revives for his audience what he imagines to be one of the sources for Old Comedy’s problematic status, namely Aristophanes’ comic portrayal of Socrates as a sophist.
Lucian’s characterization of the Athens of the *Twice Prosecuted* as existing in the wake of the *Clouds* capitalizes on the view so prominent in Dio and Aristides that comedy can have a negative effect on society, which we saw expressed particularly by Aristides in his call to ban all forms of it. To further dramatize this line of argument for his audience, Lucian invokes the supposed role that Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates played in the philosopher’s execution. As he attempts to alleviate Justice’s fears, Zeus contends that Justice should return to Athens because philosophers and especially Socrates have taken up her cause (*TP* 5). Zeus’ arguments, however, fail when Justice points to Socrates’ fate:

Πάνυ γοῦν ὁ φής αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνον ἑγνήσαν οἱ περὶ ἔμοι λόγοι, ὡς παραδόθεις τοῖς ἐνδέκα καὶ εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον ἐμπεσὼν ἔπινεν ἄθλιος τοῦ κονείου, μηδὲ τὸν ἀλεκτρύνα τῷ Ἀσκληπίων ἀποδεδοκώς. παρά τοσοῦτον ὑπερέσθηοι οἱ κατήγοροι τὰν αὐτῆς Ἀδικίας θινζνθνῦληεο.

Well that fellow you mentioned got a fantastic reward for the lectures about me. He was handed over to the Eleven, put in prison and drank the cup of hemlock. The poor man, he hadn't even offered the cockerel he owed to Asclepius. That's the advantage his accusers had. They produced philosophy with Injustice as its focus. (*Twice Prosecuted* 5)

Justice here strikingly describes Socrates’ accusers as philosophizing (φιλοσοφοῦντες) about injustice. This suggests that their actions brought about not only the death of Socrates but also the perversion of philosophy. As the opening exchange between Justice and Zeus indicates, Justice has removed herself from Athens because Injustice mocked her, thus recalling Aristophanes’ *Clouds*. Justice’s assertion here that Injustice is to blame for Socrates’ execution lays the blame once again with Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates and in doing so recalls the *Apology*. Whereas the *Fisherman* focused on the
issue of sanctioning comic *parrhesia*, Justice’s initial fears indicate that the *Twice Prosecuted* will not attempt to rehabilitate a particular aspect of Old Comedy but the genre as a whole by acquitting it of the charge of being hostile to philosophers initiated by Plato.

The initial encounter between Justice and Zeus thus reignites the tension between the *Clouds* and the *Apology* that represents the source of the charges brought against the Syrian by Rhetoric and Dialogue. As a result, Athens is an unjust city because Justice refuses to go there. This then raises the question that will drive the ensuing philosophical trials: in this situation, what is the best way to lead a philosophical life? Lucian first signals this question to us through Zeus who fails to understand Justice’s fear because he lacks an understanding of what it means to be a philosopher, as is evident from his attempts to persuade Justice to return to Athens. As Zeus tries to convince Justice to return to Athens, he goes so far as to argue that Anytus and Meletus were in fact not to blame for bringing Socrates to trial since at that time philosophical discourses were unknown to the crowd (Ξένα ἐτὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἦν τότε, καὶ ὀλίγοι ἦσαν οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες, ὡστε εἰκότως εἰς τὸν Ἀνυτὸν καὶ Μέλητον ἔρρεπεν τὰ δικαστήρια, *TP* 6). Zeus then contrasts the Athens of Anytus and Meletus to contemporary Athens, which is full of philosophers instantly recognizable by their beards and cloaks:

> πολλοὶ γοῦν τὰς τέχνας ἄφεντες ἃς εἶχον τέως, ἐπὶ τὴν πῆραν ἄξαντες καὶ τὸ τριβώνιον, καὶ τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὸν ἠλίου εἰς τὸ Ἀἰθιοπικὸν ἑπιχράντες αὐτοσχέδιοι φιλόσοφοι ἐκ σκυτοτόμων ἢ τεκτόνων περινοστόςις σὲ καὶ τὴν σὴν ἄρετὴν ἐπαινοῦντες, ὡστε κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν, θάττον ἂν τις ἐν

---

45 This is ultimately a Platonic point that has Socrates’ account of Diotima’s speech at its heart. According to Socrates, no god can lack and since a lover lacks, a god cannot therefore be a lover of wisdom (202c-d).
πλοίῳ πεσόν διαμάρτοις θύλοι ἐν ἐνθα ἐν ἄπιδη ὁ ὀθεακόο, ἀπορήσει
φιλοσόφου

Why, lots of them have abandoned the skills they had before, made a dash
for the begging-bowl; and the little cloak, got themselves an Ethiopian tan
and hey presto are now philosophers instead of cobbler and carpenters, and
go around singing the praises of you and your virtue. Consequently, in the
words of the proverb, it would be easier for a man to fall in a boat without
hitting a plank than for your eye to miss a philosopher wherever it look
(TP 6).

As is often the case, Lucian’s comments about philosophers are not sect specific. Sidwell
notes about this passage that Zeus’ description of the garb worn by these philosophers
recalls the standard image of a Cynic philosopher, while their fixation on virtue is
suggestive of the Stoic way of life.46 I would add to this that Zeus’ reference to cobblers
and carpenters comically recalls Socrates who appealed to these professions in his
discussions of first- and second-order sciences and more specifically his definition of
Justice in Plato’s Republic. In the Republic, Socrates defines justice as each citizen doing
the job that he is naturally suited to do (ἔνα ἑκαστὸν ἐν δῶι ἐπιτηδεύειν τῶν περὶ τῆν
πόλιν, εἰς ὁ ὁτόν ἡ φύσις ἐπιτηδειοτάτη περικυῖα εἶ, Republic 433a).47 Lucian’s
Athens, which is characterized by people abandoning their original occupations in favor
of the philosophical life, cannot be a “just” city according to Socrates’ definition, a point
that reinforces Justices’ reluctance to return to it.

Besides presenting us with further evidence that Lucian’s Athens is an unjust city,
Zeus’ description of the cobbler and carpenters who have become philosophers also

47 For a discussion of the different Platonic, Cynic, and Stoic undertones of this part of the TP, see Braun
(1994: 88-94). Anderson (1976B) labels this portion of the TP as “a superfluous discussion of philosophy,”
(163).
recalls how Socrates defines justice in the *Republic* by first invoking the figures from everyday life, in particular that of the cobbler and the carpenter:

> Ἰδὲ δὴ ἐὰν σοὶ δὴ περ ἐμοὶ συνδικῆ. τέκτων σκυτοτόμου ἐπιχειρῶν ἐργα ἐργάζεσθαι ἢ σκυτοτόμος τέκτονος, ἢ τὰ ὄργανα μεταλαμβάνοντες τάλληλων ἢ τιμᾶς, ἢ καὶ ὁ ὀμός ἐπιχειρῶν ἀμφότερα πράττειν, πάντα τᾶλα μεταλαμπόμενα, ἄρα σοὶ ἃν τι δοκεῖ μέγα βλάψαι πόλιν;

Consider, then, and see whether you agree with me about this. If a carpenter attempts to do the work of a cobbler, or a cobbler that of a carpenter, or they exchange their tools or honors with one another, or if the same person tries to do both jobs, and all other such exchanges are made, do you think that does any great harm to the city? (434A)

As Socrates leads Glaucon through this argument, they agree that meddling and exchanging what one is supposed to do is an injustice to the city (434c). Zeus’ argument that now practically everyone in Athens is a philosopher thus invokes the language used by Socrates to define justice, but ironically does not describe an Athens that would correspond to Socrates’ ideal. In other words, Zeus’ “just” city, which appears to be overrun by philosophers, is ruled by Injustice because its citizens are not performing their allotted tasks but have abandoned them in favor of being philosophers.48

Zeus’ language recalls Plato’s *Republic* but within the overall framework of Old Comedy that Lucian has established. As this reference to the *Republic* indicates, however, Lucian’s focus on the Athenian law courts is not intended to highlight Athens’ political and social corruption, as in Aristophanes’ plays, but its philosophical corruption. By sending Justice down to Athens, Lucian indicates that his work is in a sense recasting Athens as a city that fits Socrates’ definition of justice. Zeus’ reference to the *Republic*

48 This characterization of Athens as an unjust city also speaks to the historical change from Plato’s day, when “philosopher” was not a widely recognized career, to Lucian’s when it was.
furthermore designates the question of how one should live a philosophical life as the central question of the *Twice Prosecuted*, a question that is reiterated in the philosophical trials, all of which involve personifications of crafts, lifestyles, and intellectual pursuits, (τέχναις ἢ βίοις ἢ ἐπιστήμαις, *TP* 13). At this point, I would like to turn my attention to the trial portion of the text and the representations of the different philosophical schools that it presents. Within the context established by the opening discussion between Zeus and Justice, I will suggest that these cases serve as referendums about whether the philosophical approaches involved possess any merit.

**Philosophies on Trial**

While Lucian presents five trials leading up to the Syrian’s, only two are presented in any detail: the Academy versus Intoxication and the Stoa versus Pleasure. I will consequently focus first on these trials, before turning to the two trials of the Syrian. In these two early trials Lucian presents us with comic caricatures of each philosophical school that allows him to discard them systematically as useless philosophical approaches in favor of his comic dialogues as a better approach to philosophy. In making this argument, Lucian responds to the critiques espoused by Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides that Old Comedy is lowly, base, and hostile to philosophers by reinventing the genre as a means of living according to the philosophical ideal of constant questioning and seeking out knowledge established by Plato’s Socrates.

The first trial heard by the court involves the Platonic/ Academic tradition and is concerned with the quarrel between Intoxication and the Academy over the philosophical
conversion of Polemo. This case represents Lucian's direct engagement with the Academic skeptics, the self-proclaimed followers of Plato. As the trial is about to begin, however, it is revealed that Intoxication is too drunk to speak her own case and has no lawyer to speak for her. The Academy, however, steps in and announces that he is willing to speak both sides of the case (TP 15). In his characterization of the Academy, Lucian draws on the skeptics' claim to be able to present both sides of any argument. Both Academy’s speeches, however, address the profligacy of Polemo and how the influence of the Academy helped him. Lucian thus undermines this supposed feature of ancient skepticism by having the Academy fail to present two sides of the same argument. Both speeches end up making the same point, namely that Polemo was a dissolute drunk who was saved by philosophy. The Academy, consequently, comes across as a dishonest and rhetorical sect.

The Academy’s two speeches fail to present both sides of the argument equally but instead bolster the Academy’s own image as the successor of Socrates and Plato, a fact that is indicated by the characterization of Polemo. In the first speech, Polemo is described in the following way:

ὁς μεθ’ ἡμέραν ἐκώμαξεν δία τῆς ἀγορᾶς μέσης, ψαλτρίαν ἔχον καὶ καταδομένος ἐσθέθεν εἰς ἐσπέραν, μεθύον ἀεὶ καὶ κραπαλῶν καὶ τὴν κεφαλήν τοῖς στεφάνοις δηνθυμένος. καὶ ταῦτα ὁτὶ ἄληθη, μάρτυρες Ἀθηναίοι ἔπαντες, οἱ μὴ δὲ πώποτε νήφοντα Πολέμωνα εἶδον. ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ κακοδαίμον ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀκαδημείας θύρας ἐκώμασεν, ὡσπερ ἐπὶ πάντας εἰώθει, ἀνδραποδισμένη αὐτὸν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν χειρῶν τῆς Μέθης ἀρπάσασα μετὰ βία καὶ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἀγαγοῦσα ὑδροποτεῖν τε κατηνάγκασεν καὶ

49 According to Diogenes Laertius, Polemo lived a dissolute life as a young man but was converted to philosophy by Xenocrates, who was then head of the Academy, (DL IV.16-20).
He [Polemo] used to party during the day in the middle of the Agora, with a female lyre player and a singer until dusk. He was always drunk, hung over and wearing a garland on his head. And these things are the truth, all the Athenians can bear witness to it, who never saw Polemo not drinking. And when that poor guy partied all the way up to the doors of the Academy just as he was accustomed to do to everyone else, I kidnapped him and I snatched him from Intoxications' hands by force. I then compelled him to drink water and I taught him to be sober. I stripped him of his crowns and, when he ought to be lying down, I taught him my pet phrases that are riddling, troubling and full of deep thoughts. (Twice Prosecuted 16)\(^51\)

This initial image of Polemo presented by the Academy casts Polemo as a Dionysiac reveler, calling to mind the image of Alcibiades presented at the end of Plato's Symposium, who similarly bursts into Agathon's house at the end of the Symposium with a band of revelers.\(^52\) The Academy further reinforces this image in its own speech, which highlights the licentiousness of Polemo's earlier life in comparison to his philosophical conversion. Alcibiades, however, is famously Socrates' failed student, who chooses the life of politics over philosophy (Symposium 215e-216c). Though the speech is ostensibly on behalf of Intoxication, the Academy characterizes Polemo as an Alcibiades figure who ultimately chooses the route of philosophy. This image of Polemo thus undercuts any arguments that Academy makes on Intoxication's behalf, a fact that Lucian uses to undermine our opinion of the Academy.

\(^{51}\) This depiction of Polemo as a figure who abandoned Intoxication for the Academy also invokes the scenario of Cratinus' Pytine and thus looks ahead to Lucian's use of it in his own trails

\(^{52}\) See Braun (1994: 138-140).
If the Academy fails to practice the suspension of judgment as we would expect of an Academic skeptic and ultimately does not present both sides of the argument, we find in the second case a similar caricature of the Stoic and Epicurean schools. To briefly summarize the circumstances surrounding this case, though the quarrel is ostensibly between the Stoa and Pleasure, Epicurus speaks on Pleasure's behalf. The philosophic conversion presented in this trial is that of Dionysius, a figure about whom little is known. Diogenes Laertius records that as a young man he studied under Heraclides and Zeno, but eventually abandoned the teachings of Zeno and became a follower of the Cyreniac school. This sect argued for the immediate gratification of the pleasures at hand rather the more abstract ideal of Epicurus, which regarded pleasure as the telos of virtue. According to Lucian's version of this tale, Dionysius remained a Stoic until an illness led him to convert to the Cyreniac school. Although Aristippus was ostensibly the founder of the Cyreniac school, the choice of Epicurus as Dionysius' advocate allows Lucian to explore the tensions between the Stoics and Epicureans at the same time as he jokes about the similarities between the two schools.

In the figures of the Stoa and Epicurus, Lucian once again presents us with stereotypical representations of the two schools. While the Stoa is depicted as manly and obsessed with virtue and hardship, citing such Stoic models as Heracles and Theseus, Epicurus expounds on the futility of the Stoic ideal of virtue in comparison to the importance he places on pleasure (TP 20-1). In his personifications of these two

---

approaches, Lucian does not present his audience with a novel interpretation of them or their quarrel, but offers caricatures of the two schools, which highlight the futility of their arguments rather than the benefits or pitfalls of either approach. Despite the fact that Epicurus wins the day, the Stoa refuses to accept the judgment of the jury and instead insists on appealing to Zeus, (TP 22-3). If his representation of the Academy illustrates the corruption of that branch of philosophy, this second case suggests that the quarreling between the Stoics and Epicureans will never be resolved.

Lucian's presentation of the quarrel between the Stoics and Epicureans casts such philosophical debates as futile and ridiculous, a characterization that is reinforced by the ensuing three cases, none of which are actually heard by the court. The third case, between Virtue and Luxury, who are fighting over Aristippus, is deemed so similar to the case of the Stoa and Pleasure that Justice decides that it will have the same outcome as the preceding case. Aristippus was the founder of the Cyrenaic school and Justice's decision to lump this case in with the Stoa's trial of Pleasure effectively renders the Cyreniac school as nothing more than a variation of Epicureanism. Similarly, the fourth case between Diogenes and Banking is not heard because Diogenes chases her off with his staff. Though this humorous moment presents us with only a glimpse of the Cynics, Diogenes' philosophy comes across as equated with violence. Lucian continues his mockery of these philosophical schools in the case between Pyrrho and Painting when Hermes informs Justice that Pyrrho has failed to show up to court because he will not accept the fact that there is such a thing as true judgment. While the Academy failed to live up to the ideal that it set for itself, Pyrrho here represents the ideal skeptic, yet his
refusal to accept the judgment of the court indicates that his approach to philosophy is ultimately a pointless one.

**The Syrian’s Philosophic Reinvention of Old Comedy**

Now that we have seen how Lucian mocks the philosophical schools that grew out of the Socratic tradition by drawing on stereotypical images of them, we can now turn our attention to Lucian’s presentation of his philosophical reinvention of Old Comedy as the solution to the philosophical corruption depicted in the previous trials. Unlike the other trials, which present philosophic schools quarreling over a recent convert, Rhetoric and Dialogue are not fighting over the Syrian’s allegiance. Rather, they are suing him for the way that he has treated them. The scenario of both Rhetoric and Dialogue attacking the Syrian thus recreates the tension found in many of Plato’s dialogues between various sophists and Socrates. As I will argue, Lucian recasts this Platonic tension through a comedic lens, specifically through Cratinus’ *Pytine*, and in doing so follows in the footsteps of Plato’s Socrates in revealing the inherent flaws of Rhetoric. Lucian’s version of Rhetoric, however, does not evoke the image of a Gorgias or a Hippias but, rather, a figure that parodies the sophists of Lucian’s own day. Likewise, Dialogue's speech characterizes the genre as focused not on justice and truth, which consumed Socrates’ discussions but rather on metaphysical questions such as the cycle of the universe (τῆς τῶν ὄλων περιόδου, *TP* 33), which, according to the Syrian, have rendered Dialogue unappealing and obscure. Lucian thus defends his use comedy by establishing it not only
as a method of exposing charlatan philosophers as we saw in the Fisherman but also as
the saving grace of philosophy that will return it to its former glories.

According to Justice, the Syrian's two trials are added to the docket of cases
because they likewise involve a τέχνη and an ἐπιστήμη. Since Rhetoric’s status as a
tέχνη is clear, it is initially ambiguous how we should classify Dialogue: as another τέχνη
or as an ἐπιστήμη? In the other cases, the ἐπιστήμαι represented are philosophical
schools. Though Dialogue does not fall into that category, it nonetheless represents a tool
by which knowledge is sought, specifically that of Plato's Socrates. Lucian here thus
seems to be elevating what had been a τέχνη for Plato to the status of an ἐπιστήμη. In
the first of these cases, Rhetoric argues that the Syrian has abandoned her, his wife, in
favor of Dialogue. This scenario, as Bowie has suggested, draws its inspiration from
Cratinus’ Wine Flask, a fragmentary play that “boldly portrayed” Cratinus as the hero and
imagined that the poet’s wife, Comedy, was suing him for divorce because of his
propensity to drink. As scholars have suggested, the Wine Flask represents Cratinus’
response to Aristophanes’ characterization of him in the parabasis of the Knights as a
drunkard. Lucian thus adopts this scenario, replacing Comedy with Rhetoric and
Drunkenness with philosophical Dialogue. This change in the cast of characters pits
Rhetoric against Dialogue and consequently recalls the tension between rhetoric and
philosophy found in such dialogues as the Protagoras, the Republic, the Phaedrus, and
the Gorgias. In the Gorgias, for example, the tension between rhetoric and philosophy

54 Bowie (2007: 36). For discussions of the comedic rivalry between Cratinus and Aristophanes, see Heath
(1990), Rosen (2000), and Biles (2002). Braun (1994) analyzes the connections to Demosthenes.
55 See Aristophanes’ Knights (526-536).
stems from Socrates’ attempts to define Gorgias’ “craft,” namely rhetoric: βούλομαι γὰρ πυθέσθαι παρ’ αὐτὸν τίς ὡς δύναμις τῆς τέχνης τοῦ ἀνδρός, καὶ τι ἐστιν ὁ ἐπαγγέλλεται τε καὶ διδάσκει. (For I want to learn from him what is the power of his craft, and what is it that he makes claims about and teaches, 447c). As Socrates’ discussion with the sophist reveals, Gorgias’ assertion that a speaker possesses knowledge on a wide variety of topics that can be imparted to students is flawed. This leads Gorgias to retreat from the discussion and his side of the argument is taken up by his two students, Callicles and Polus. Both students are hostile to Socrates’ point of view and the tension between rhetoric and philosophy pervades the entire dialogue.

Lucian uses comedy to invoke this tension in the complex images that contemporary sophists, such as Dio and Favorinus, fashioned for themselves as sophistic and philosophical figures. As in Cratinus’ play, Rhetoric charges that the Syrian abandoned their marriage, despite the fact that she endowed the Syrian with the paideia necessary for becoming a famous sophist:

Ἐγὼ γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τούτοις κομιδή μειράκιον ὄντα, βάρβαρον ἐτι τὴν φωνὴν καὶ μονονοεύς κάνοντον ἐνδικάκιτα εἰς τὸν Ἀσσυρίον τρόπον, περὶ τὴν Ἰωνίαν εὐρύσει παλαζόμενον ἐτι καὶ ὅ τι χρήσατο ἐαυτῷ ὁ ὕκ εἰδότα παραλαβοῦσα ἐπαίδευσα.

It was I, men of the jury, who came upon this man, still wandering around Ionia not knowing what to do with himself, took him up and trained him. He was pretty young, still spoke a barbarian language and was a hair’s breadth from going native and wearing an Assyrian kaftan. (TP 27)

56 For a discussion of these figures, see Swain (1996) and Whitmarsh (2001).
Rhetoric here emphasizes the Syrian’s non-Hellenic identity and how her paideia brought him into the mainstream Greek society, suggesting the τέχνη of rhetoric has the power to overcome the Syrian’s outsider status.

In his defense against Rhetoric’s charges, however, the Syrian attacks the way of life embodied by Rhetoric. While he admits that he did benefit from her instruction, her inability to remain faithful led him to turn to Dialogue:

Ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅριν ταύτην οὐκέτι σωφρονοῦσαν οὐδὲ μένουσαν ἐπὶ τοῦ κοσμίου σχήματος οἶνον οὐδὲ μένουσαν ἐπὶ τοῦ κοσμίου σχήματος οἶνον ποτε ἐσχηματισμένην αὐτὴν ὁ Παιανεύς ἐκείνος ἤγαγε το, κοσμουμένην δὲ καὶ τὰς τρίχας εὐθείωσαν εἰς τὸ ἐταιρικὸν καὶ φυκίον ἐντριβομένην καὶ τώφθαλμῳ ὑπογραφομένην, ὑπόπτευον εὐθὺς καὶ παρεφύλαττον ὅποι τὸν ὀρθάλμον φέρει. καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἐδ’ ἀθ’ ἐκάστην δὲ τὴν νύκτα ὁ μὲν στενωπὸς ἤμοι ἐνεπιμπλατο μεθυόντων ἔραστον κομιαζόντων ἐπ’ αὐτήν καὶ κοπόντων τὴν θύραν

There came a time when I saw that she was not behaving sensibly any longer, nor retaining the seemly dress which she wore when the famous demesman of Paeania took her as his bride. Instead, she was wearing jewelry, had coiffeured hair, had rubbed rouge all over her cheeks and had a black line drawn under each of her eyes. I was immediately suspicious and I watched to see where she turned her gaze. I can pass over everything else. I’ll just tell you this. Every single night our side-street was packed with drunken lovers reveling up to her door and knocking on it... (TP 30)

According to the Syrian's description of rhetoric, she is no longer the honorable art once practiced by Demosthenes, the “famous demesman of Paeania,” but instead is a slut. The distinction drawn here by the Syrian between the rhetoric of Demosthenes’ day and that of his own indicates that Rhetoric’s immorality represents a critique of contemporary sophists. By characterizing Rhetoric in the role of the comically unfaithful wife, the Syrian successfully escapes the charges of abandonment. Whereas Plato employed Socrates' dialectical skills to attack rhetoric, Lucian uses comedy both to reignite the
tension between rhetoric and philosophy and to highlight the problems of contemporary rhetoric. In other words, comedy achieves for Lucian what the *elenchus* did for Socrates.

Lucian does not address the seminal role of comedy in his approach to philosophy, however, until Dialogue’s prosecution of the Syrian on the charge of *hubris*. Whereas Lucian borrowed the scenario of Cratinus’ *Wine Flask* to recall the tension between rhetoric and philosophy in texts such as the *Gorgias*, the language of Dialogue’s prosecution simultaneously evokes the language of the *Clouds* and the *Phaedrus* to describe the Syrian’s treatment of him:

'Α δὲ ἠδίθεκαη καὶ περιβρισσαὶ πρὸς τοῦτο, ταῦτα ἔστιν, ὅτι με σεμνόν τέως ὄντα καὶ θεὸν τε πέρι καὶ φύσεως καὶ τῆς τόν ἄλων περίδου σκοπούμενον, ύψηλον ἄνω που τόν νεφόν ἄεροβατοῦντα, ἐνθα ὁ μέγας ἐν ὠυρανῷ Ζεὺς πτηνόν άρμα ἐλαύνων φέρεται, κατασπάσας αὐτός ἡδὴ κατὰ τήν ἁγία πετόμενον καὶ αναβάινοντα ὑπὲρ τὰ νότα τοῦ ὠυρανοῦ καὶ τὰ πτερά συντρίψας ἰσοδίαιτον τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐποίησεν

Now, I'm going to tell you how this man has wronged and mistreated me. I used to be majestic. I inquired into subjects such as, ‘the gods,’ ‘nature,’ ‘the universal periodic cycle.’ I 'trod on air,' high above the clouds, where 'great Zeus driving his winged chariot is born along. I was actually flying through the vault of heaven and climbing 'the sky’s back,' when this fellow dragged me down, broke my wings and made me life the same life as ordinary people.

According to Dialogue, he was initially interested in cosmological questions about the gods and the universe. In describing this metaphysical focus, however, Dialogue’s description of himself as walking on air (ἄεροβατοῦντα) where Zeus drives his chariot (ἐνθα ὁ μέγας ἐν ὠυρανῷ Ζεὺς πτηνόν άρμα ἐλαύνων φέρεται) ironically draws first on the language used by Socrates to describe himself in the *Clouds* (ἄεροβατό καὶ περιφρονῶ τὸν ἥλιον, 225) and then on the metaphor of the chariot found in the
Dialogue’s language subtly hints at Lucian’s literary project, the very thing with which he is charging the Syrian. Furthermore, the charge that he degraded Dialogue reminds us of Plutarch’s characterization of Old Comedy as inappropriate for the *pepaideumenos* to study. Dialogue conveys this view specifically through his reference to the chariot analogy taken from the *Phaedrus*. For Plato’s Socrates, the image of chariot serves as a metaphor of the soul, which is pulled by two horses: a good one that stays on course, and a bad one that represents our appetitive desires, which prevent the soul from ever obtaining knowledge. In his description of his former self, Dialogue thus equates the Syrian with the bad horse and in doing so, makes the bold insinuation that if not for the Syrian, he would have achieved knowledge. Lucian, however, subverts this assertion by his use of comic language to describe Dialogue’s former self. By linking language from the *Clouds* with that of the *Phaedrus* within Dialogue’s speech, Lucian once again reminds us of the tension between comedy and philosophy that has provoked Dialogue’s prosecution of the Syrian and ultimately the *Twice Prosecuted*.

The Syrian’s use of comedy is thus at the heart of Dialogue’s prosecution. For as Dialogue contends, what ultimately broke his wings and distracted him from his metaphysical questioning was a variety of comic genres that the Syrian forced upon him:

καὶ τὸ μὲν τραγικὸν ἔκεινο καὶ σωφρονικὸν προσωπεῖον ἄφειλε μου, κομικὸν δὲ καὶ σατυρικὸν ἄλλο ἐπέθηκε μοι καὶ μικρὸν δεῖν γελοίον. εἰτά μοι εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ φέρον συγκαθείρξεν τὸ σκώμμα καὶ τὸν ἰαμβόν καὶ κυνικὸν καὶ τὸν Εὐπολίν καὶ τὸν Αριστοφάνην, δείνοις ἀνδρας ἐπικερτομήσαι τὰ σεμνὰ καὶ χλευάσαι τὰ ὀρθῶς ἔχοντα. τελευταίον δὲ καὶ

---

57 The line, ἀεροβατῶ καὶ περιφρονῶ τὸν ἕλλον, is also spoken by Strepsiades as he burns down the Thinkery at the end of the play, (1503).
58 The switch from Intoxication in Cratinus’ play to philosophical dialogues contains another connection to the *Phaedrus*: at 244-245 Socrates discusses the value of mania, of which drunkenness is one form, (245a).
59 For an in-depth analysis of function of this analogy in the dialogue, see Griswold (1986: 138-157).
He took off my sensible tragic mask and put on another, comic, satyr-like and almost ridiculous. Then he shut me up in the same room with joking, iambus, cynicism, Eupolis and Aristophanes—men terribly clever at criticizing serious things and pouring scorn on what is right and proper. Finally, he even dug up one of the ancient dogs, Menippus...Is this not contemptuous treatment? I’ve lost my natural character. I’m a comic, I’m a clown who has to act bizarre roles for him. The most absurd thing of all is that I’ve been stirred into a paradoxical mixture. I’m not prose and I’m not poetry. The audience looks on me as some sort of Centaur, a strange and compound monster. (TP 33)

Dialogue here uses words, such as τραγικόν and σωφρονικόν, to stress his seriousness as a genre and to emphasize the degradation he experienced at the Syrian’s hands because he was forced to consort with a variety of comic influences, ranging from Old Comedy to Cynicism and Menippean satire. Though Dialogue here places particular emphasis on both Old Comedy and Menippean satire, the Syrian’s response leaves us in little doubt that Old Comedy represents the most important influence on his approach to the genre of the philosophic dialogue: ἐπὶ πάσι δὲ τὴν κωμῳδίαν αὐτῷ παρέξευξα (But the most important thing I did was to yoke him up with Comedy, TP 34). Whereas Lucian makes Old Comedy philosophically valuable in the case between the Syrian and Rhetoric by using it to expose the flaws of rhetoric as a craft, here Lucian indicates that Old Comedy represents his rejuvenation of the philosophic dialogue. This idea of rejuvenation is
itself a comic idea and Lucian here asserts that he has given philosophy a comic
makeover.\textsuperscript{60}

Though Dialogue appears content with its metaphysical pursuits, the Syrian
argues that it is precisely this line of questioning that has rendered the genre unappealing
and obscure. According to the Syrian's description of Dialogue's former self, most
people considered him σκυθρωπόν (sullen looking), ὑπὸ τῶν συνεχῶν ἐρωτήσεων
cατεσκληκτά (withered with continuous question and answer sessions), and ultimately
unpleasant. As the Syrian contends, what makes the genre unappealing is specifically the
type of questions that it asks:

\begin{quote}
Αλλ᾽ ἐγὼ οἶδ᾽ ὅπερ μάλιστα λυπεῖ αὐτόν, ὃτι μὴ τὰ γλίσχρα ἔκεῖνα καὶ
λεπτὰ κάθημι πρὸς αὐτὸν σμικρολογούμενος, εἰ ἄθανατος ἡ ψυχή, καὶ
πόσας κοτύλας ὁ θεός ὅποτε τὸν κόσμον εἰργάσατο τῆς ἀμιγοῦς καὶ κατὰ
tαυτὰ ἐχούσης ὑσίας ἐνέχεοι εἰς τὸν κρατήρα ἐν ὃ τὰ πάντα ἐκεράννυτο,
καὶ εἰ ἡ Ῥητορικὴ πολιτικῆς μορίου εἰδολον, κολακεῖας τὸ τέταρτον.
χαίρει γὰρ οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅπως τὰ τοιαῦτα λεπτολογῶν καθάπερ οἱ τὴν ψώραν
ἡδεως κνώμενοι, καὶ τὸ φρόντισμα ἡδού αὐτῷ δοκεῖ καὶ μέγα φρονεὶ ἢν
λέγηται ὡς οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρός ἐστι συνιδεῖν ἄ περι τῶν ἱδεῶν ὀξιδορκεῖ

Actually, I know what it is that's really upsetting him. It's the fact that I
don't sit down and engage in all that nit picking logic chopping with him.
'Is the soul immortal?' 'How many ladles of the unmixed essence of real
being did the god pour into the mixing-bowl in which everything was
combined when he constructed the universe?' 'Is Rhetoric only a phantom
of a portion of politics, or is it a quarter art of flattery?' He's incredibly
attached to this type of logical minutiae. He's like a man scratching an
itch. When it's put to him that not everyone can see the truth about the
Platonic Ideas as sharply as he can, he finds the thought most pleasant and
gives himself airs on that account. \textit{(TP 34)}

In his voicing of Dialogue’s primary interests, the Syrian draws here on questions pulled
from several of Plato’s dialogues: “is the soul immortal,” represents the central question

\textsuperscript{60} See the end of Aristophanes’ \textit{Wasps} and Cratinus’ \textit{Wine Flask}.\textsuperscript{60}
of the *Phaedo*, while “how many ladles of unmixed essence of real being did the god
pour into the mixing-bowl?” looks to the *Timaeus* and the question concerning
Rhetoric’s relationship to politics and flattery is drawn from the *Gorgias*. These are
thus not the logic chopping questions that the Syrian paints them to be, but are
representative of Plato’s works. The Syrian’s point, however, is not that there is
something inherently wrong with these questions as they are posed in Plato’s dialogues,
but rather that Dialogue as a genre has not moved posed any new ones that might be
more relevant to Lucian’s society. He is, as it were, scratching the same itch. This itch,
according to the Syrian, is too focused on the “Platonic Ideas,” doctrines not found in
Plato’s own writings. As we have seen so far, Lucian’s portrayal of contemporary
philosophers throughout this text, as well as that of the *Fisherman*, has highlighted how
they are fakes, who merely adopt a philosopher’s outward appearance. The Syrian’s
point here is ultimately that those who pose these questions do so in order to appear to be
philosophers. In other words, these questions, which were originally posed by Plato,
have become part of a philosopher’s garb. As the Syrian’s defense suggests, Lucian
regards his comic dialogues as a new philosophic approach. This approach represents a
return to the type of questioning embodied by the Socratic *elenchus*, which allows
Lucian to shift the focus away from the problems posed in Plato’s dialogues to those he
sees around him, in particular charlatan philosophers. As the previous philosophical

---

61 As Sidwell notes, these themes appear in the *Phaedo*, *Timaeus* (35a, 41d), and *Gorgias* (463b, d, 465c)
62 The idea of “Platonic Ideas” appears in such dialogues as the *Republic* (book 7) and the *Phaedrus* but is
not ever fully developed by Plato in the dialogues. Dillon hypothesizes that they may have been part of the
trials suggest, Lucian rejects the contemporary philosophical schools because of their corruption and ridiculousness. Instead he both adopts an approach that combines elements of Cynicism and Skepticism to reject dogmatism and advocates harsh scrutiny in a search for answers. This effectively revitalizes the view espoused by Plato's Socrates in *Phaedrus*’ chariot analogy that humans are never able to achieve knowledge.

In this characterization of Dialogue, the Syrian paints a similar portrait of the genre as found in the *Literary Prometheus*, albeit in more depth. As we saw in the first chapter, Lucian presents his union of comedy and the philosophical dialogue as a return to the type of questioning embodied in the figure of Plato's Socrates. In Dialogue's characterization of himself, we saw how Lucian employs the language of Plato's *Phaedrus* to symbolize Dialogue's lofty interests and claim to knowledge. At the conclusion of this speech, the Syrian returns to this assertion only to conclude that these interests are what led him astray:

> Ταῦτα δηλαδή καὶ παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἅπαστεὶ καὶ τὰ πτερὰ ἐκεῖνα ζητεῖ καὶ ἄνω βλέπει τὰ πρὸ τῶν ποδῶν σοὶ ὃ ὀρῶν. ἔπει τῶν γε ἄλλων ἐνεκα οὐκ ἂν οἶμαι μέμψαιτό μοι, ὡς θοιμάτων τοῦτο τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν περιστάσας αὐτοῦ βαρβαρικόν τι μετενέδυσα, καὶ ταῦτα βάρβαρος αὐτὸς εἶναι δοκῶν· ἥδίκουν γὰρ ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰς αὐτὸν παρανομῶν καὶ τὴν πάτριον ἐσθήτα λωποδυτῶν

I suppose that it's this that he's looking for from me. He wants those wings of his back. He's always looking up. He can't see what's at his feet. I can't think that he would have any other grounds for blaming me. He can't say, for example, that I've torn off his Greek cloak and put him into barbarian costume, even though people think I am a barbarian. That would certainly have been a crime, to steal his native dress. (*TP* 34)

In his response to Dialogue's evocation of Socrates' chariot analogy, the Syrian flips it on its head and suggests that Dialogue has lost track of the problems in front of him, an
image that recalls the Thales falling into the well from Plato’s *Theaetetus* (*Theaetetus* 174a).

Up to this point, the problem of the Syrian’s non-Greek status has been left unaddressed by Lucian’s persona. As a figure that purports to have saved philosophy, the Syrian occupies the precarious position of an outsider, a fact that he acknowledges here at the conclusion of his speech. Lucian here emphasizes his non-Greek origins and in doing so, perhaps looks to his philosophic predecessor, Socrates. Though a figure who rarely leaves the city walls of Athens, Socrates declares himself to be a foreigner (ξένος) at the opening of the *Apology*, since he has never come before a law court, a fact that essentially makes him a barbarian when it comes to the Athenian legal system:

> νῦν ἐγὼ πρῶτον ἐπὶ δικαστήριον ἀναβέβηκα, ἔτι γεγονός ἐβδομήκοντα· ἀτεχνῶς οὖν ξένος ἔχω τῆς ἐνθάδε λέξεως. ὦσπερ οὖν ἂν, εἰ τῷ ὄντι ξένος ἐτύγχανον ὄν, συνεγιγνόσκετε δήπου ἄν μοι εἰ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ φωνῇ τε καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ ἔλεγον ἐν οἴσπερ ἐπεθράμμην

Now is the first time I have come before the law court, at the age of seventy; hence I am simply a foreigner to the manner of speech here. So just as, if I really did happen to be a foreigner, you would surely sympathize with me if I spoke in the dialect and way in which I was raised… (*Apology* 17d-18a)

Socrates’ self-proclaimed “foreignness” shows him to be unfamiliar with the rhetoric of the law courts. If Lucian’s emphasis on his own foreignness is in fact inspired by Socrates’ statements in the *Apology*, then Socrates’ disclaimer here provides us with a model for Lucian’s abandonment of Rhetoric in the first trial.⁶³ Though Socrates’ explicit reference to his “foreignness” (ξένος) is ultimately a metaphorical foreignness, I will conclude this discussion by suggesting that Lucian highlights his origins in this text

---

⁶³ We find a similar image of a foreign sage who is unfamiliar with Athenian customs in the *Anacharsis*. 
not simply because he feels a need to defend his claim to the Greek literary canon, but also because it allows him to connect his own comedic apology with Plato’s portrayal of Socrates’ more clearly. In defending his new approach to philosophy, Lucian thus casts himself as the comic Socrates.

Though Lucian postpones his comedic apology until the end of the *Twice Prosecuted*, he nonetheless sets it within a framework of Old Comedy not unlike that of Parrhesiades in the *Fisherman*. Just as Aristophanes used comedy to highlight the political and social corruption of Athens, Lucian’s comedy points to the philosophical corruption of his contemporaries who hold up Athens as the birthplace of Plato and Socrates but fail to live up to the philosophical principles that those figures established. To highlight this philosophical corruption, Lucian draws on the comedic trope of mocking the Athenian court system and presents us with his own philosophical trials. Unlike the trial of Socrates, the philosophical schools on trial in the *Twice Prosecuted* are caricatures intended to emphasize the problems of each philosophical approach. In contrast to these schools, Lucian presents us with his persona, the Syrian, who uses comedy as a tool for exposing the flaws of rhetoric as a practice and in doing so reinvigorate philosophy by returning its focus to Socrates’ social and moral concerns. By presenting the two trials of his persona alongside personifications of the Academy, the Stoa, as well as Diogenes and Pyhro, Lucian indicates that his comic dialogues are within the tradition that sprung out the figure of Socrates, while at the same time the remedy for the degradation of that tradition that he sees around him.
III. Conclusions

In both the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted*, Lucian offers an Apology for Old Comedy that answers the charges leveled at the genre both by his contemporaries and ultimately by Plato's Socrates. As we saw in our discussion of Aristophanes’ reception in the writings of Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides in the introduction, Old Comedy had the reputation of being a vulgar genre that was hostile to philosophers. The popularity of Old Comedy among such writers was thus deeply connected to its status as a problematic genre. Lucian responds to these views in his apologies for the genre by turning to its original role as a socially corrective force and refocusing it towards the philosophy and philosophers of his own time. In the *Fisherman*, Parrhesiades proves this fact to the figureheads of the philosophical tradition by using it as a means of exposing charlatan philosophers. The *Fisherman* thus attributes to Old Comedy specific philosophical value at the same time as it uses Old Comedy to expose the flaws inherent in the approach that only values tradition as embodied in the figure of Diogenes. The *Twice Prosecuted* takes a slightly different approach to the comedic apology, focusing instead on how it effects Lucian's treatment of preconceived genres. As the Syrian's defense illustrates, comedy allows him to expose the problems inherent in the practice of rhetoric and in doing so save the philosophical dialogue. In his comic dialogues, Lucian reinvents Old Comedy with specific philosophic purpose that involves the type of social questioning once seen in the figure of Socrates and the subsequent Cynic and Skeptic traditions. As the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* reveal, however, Lucian believes that this message is no longer part of the contemporary schools, consumed as they are with petty bickering.
Old Comedy’s new philosophic purpose thus answers the critiques of the genre initiated by Plato and reaffirmed by Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides.

From the accounts of the comic dialogue found in the prologues and these apologetic texts, we have seen Lucian’s basic formulation for his new generic hybrid as the forced union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue that results in a philosophical reinvention of the low-register genre or, in other words, Old Comedy put to philosophical use. Although the descriptions of the comic dialogue discussed in this and the previous chapter might suggest a rigid view of the genre, for example comic allusions found in a dialogue context, in the following two chapters I will argue that Lucian’s comic dialogues represent a quite fluid genre. This fluidity appears both in terms of Lucian’s debt to the comic tradition, which I will explore in the next chapter, and his imitation of Platonic dialogue, the focus of the final chapter. Lucian’s accounts of his union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue thus ask us to take notice of the comic and Platonic resonances within his texts. These features, as I will argue, allow for the possibility of new ways of regarding Lucian’s relationship to his philosophical predecessors and supposed contemporaries, such as Menippus and Nigrinus, by revealing Lucian to be crafting himself as a philosophical writer in his own right.
Chapter 3
Examples of the Comic Dialogue in Motion: The Menippus, Icaromenippus, Parasite, and Hermotimus

In the previous chapter, I have argued that Lucian’s defense against charges of distorting the Greek philosophical tradition responds to a wide-spread trend during the Second Sophistic of attacking Old Comedy in imitation of Socrates in Plato’s Apology. Whereas Plutarch, Dio, and Aristides rehearse Socrates’ assertion that Aristophanes’ Clouds played a role in the charges brought against him, in the Fisherman and Twice Prosecuted Lucian champions comedy’s cause by reinventing Socrates’ philosophical apology as an apology for comedy. In offering a defense for comedy that is simultaneously modeled on Old Comedy and Plato’s Apology, Lucian attributes philosophical value to the genre by arguing that it is a necessary tool for correcting the philosophical corruption plaguing the intellectual climate of his day. Moreover, these texts reveal Lucian to be modeling his comedic-philosophical style on both the comic and Platonic manifestations of Socrates, as well as his subsequent reinterpretation by the Hellenistic tradition.

Since the texts discussed in the previous chapters have presented us with a definition of Lucian’s comic dialogue as a genre, this chapter will begin to explore how Lucian enacts this literary and philosophical program by staging (and thereby attempting to resolve) the sectarian debates of the philosophical schools in four key texts: the
Menippus, Icaromenippus, Parasite, and Hermotimus. Closely intertwined with this problem is that of philosophical education, an issue that Lucian roots in the Clouds and, as I will suggest in this chapter, Plato’s discussions of the sophists. Much as he harmonizes Aristophanic comedy and Plato’s Apology in articulating his literary defense, here again Lucian fuses the Aristophanic and Platonic depictions of sophistry. In considering Lucian’s criticisms of the philosophers of his day, I will argue that each of these texts highlights a different significant aspect of Lucian’s project: the Menippus and Icaromenippus illustrate Lucian’s literary and philosophical style in contradistinction to the seriocomic figure of the Cynic Menippus, a potential foil for Lucian’s own project; the Parasite in turn offers Lucian’s philosophical reinvention of comedy as a possible solution to conflict between the Stoics and Epicureans; and the Hermotimus aligns Lucian’s project with that of Plato at the same time as it reaffirms his position within both the philosophical and comic traditions.¹ My reading of these texts will therefore stand in contrast to previous interpretations of Lucian, which have largely sought to define Lucian in terms of previously established philosophical traditions, for example Cynicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism.² Although Lucian signals his debt to these traditions, I will argue that these texts reveal Lucian not simply to be adopting comedy for serious purposes, but to be establishing his union of comedy and philosophy as a philosophical approach in its own right. In doing this, Lucian situates himself as the heir to both Aristophanes and Plato.

¹ For this label of Menippus, see Branham (1989: 14-17 and 20-25) and Relihan (1993: 9)
² For discussion of Lucian in connection to the Cynics, see Branham (1989). For an Epicurean connection, see Clay (1992), and for Lucian as a skeptic, see Nesselrath (1992). For a survey of Lucian’s presentation of the different schools, see Dolcetti (1998).
I. Philosopher as Comic Character: Menippus

At the opening of both the *Menippus* and *Icaromenippus*, Menippus recounts to a bemused and incredulous companion how his dissatisfaction with philosophers’ understandings of the gods and the universe drove him to seek answers in the underworld and heavens respectively. These fantastical voyages are inspired by the *Odyssey* and, more importantly for our discussion, Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and *Peace*.\(^3\) Such comic resonances are striking when we consider the fact that, as we saw in the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted*, Menippus is cited among the sources used by Lucian to degrade philosophy.\(^4\) In light of Menippus’ inclusion within the charges brought against Lucian’s personae, this section will therefore pose the following questions: how does Lucian define his relationship to Menippus in these dialogues? And does Menippus represent an instantiation of the comic-Socratic approach as defined by Lucian in the *Fisherman* and *Twice Prosecuted*?\(^5\)

To answer these questions, we will begin by examining the union of comedy and philosophy that Lucian presents at the opening of these two dialogues. In the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* we saw how Lucian reinvented the philosophical apology by presenting it within a framework borrowed from Old Comedy. In this section, I will...

---

\(^3\) For this connection to Aristophanes, see Branham (1989: 14-15) and Relihan (1993: 32 and 113).

\(^4\) In the *Fisherman*, Diogenes notes that Menippus alone is not included among Parrhesiades’ prosecutors (ὁς μόνος οὖν πάραστην οὐδὲ κατηγορεῖ μεθ’ ἡμῶν, 26), while in the *Twice Prosecuted*, Dialogue lists Menippus as among the genres used by the Syrian to corrupt him, (πελευταίον δὲ καὶ Μένιππόν τινα τῶν παλαιῶν κυνῶν, 33).

\(^5\) Besides the *Menippus* and *Icaromenippus*, Menippus appears as a reoccurring character in the *Dialogues of the Dead*. For a discussion of his role in that text, see Relihan (1987). In addition to these texts, other texts to varying degrees have been labeled as “Menippean,” for example the *Downward Descent*, the *Tragic Zeus*, and the *Charon*.
suggest that the openings of the *Menippus* and *Icaromenippus* reveal the opposite structure: Menippus’ comically inspired voyages cast him as a figure from Old Comedy within the larger context of a dialogue designed to explore the merits of his philosophical approach. My discussion of these texts will therefore be structured in the following way: I will begin by briefly contextualizing Lucian’s Menippus in terms of Menippus the historical figure, before turning to consider how Lucian uses comic references to cast Menippus as a comic figure and undermine his philosophical approach. Lucian, as I will argue, uses comedy within these dialogues to distance himself from his protagonist, a point further reinforced by the presence of topographical references in the *Icaromenippus*, which firmly situate the dramatic date of the dialogue within the Hellenistic period. Whereas Lucian invokes comedy in the *Fisherman* and *Twice Prosecuted* to define his relationship to the philosophical tradition, in these texts he uses the dialogue form to interrogate Menippus’ comedic approach to philosophy and his own relationship to it.

**The Shadowy Figure of Menippus**

The *Menippus* and *Icaromenippus* engage as much with the figure of Menippus as they do the questions that he poses within them. As the focus of these dialogues, Menippus, like Diogenes in the *Fisherman*, represents Lucian’s comic recreation of a historical figure and, to better understand how Lucian characterizes him, it will be useful to first consider briefly Menippus independent of Lucian’s writings. This is admittedly a difficult task because so little is known about this third-century figure, and despite modern
curiosity, the surviving ancient sources do not appear to be particularly concerned or familiar with him. The main source for Menippus’ life is Diogenes Laertius’ brief biography, which records that Menippus was born a slave but eventually acquired great wealth and Corinthian citizenship, only to lose all of his money and hang himself (6.99-101). According to Diogenes, Menippus was a Cynic (κυνικός), whose writings contained nothing serious (φέρει μὲν οὖν σπουδαῖον οὐδέν) but were full of laughter (6.99). In addition to a bit of biographical information, he provides a list of writings attributed to Menippus, none of which survive. Included within this list are, among other things, a Νέκυων or voyage to the underworld, and treatises against natural philosophers, mathematicians, and grammarians (Πρὸς τοὺς φυσικοὺς καὶ μαθηματικοὺς καὶ γραμματικοὺς, 101). As Relihan has noted, Diogenes’ portrayal of Menippus calls into question his value as a philosopher and reveals a general hostility towards him. Yet Diogenes’ biography nonetheless remains interesting for our discussion since it highlights the fact that Menippus was known for his biting laughter and attacks on philosophers, not unlike the image Lucian presents of himself.

As Diogenes’ biography reveals, however, it is difficult to separate the man from his method and it is therefore impossible to consider Menippus without taking into

---

6 Relihan (1993:40).
7 Besides the Νέκυων and treatises against the natural philosopher, Diogenes Laertius also lists the following works: Wills (Διαθήκαι), a collection of letters imagined to be from the god’s presence (‘Επιστολαί κεκομισμέναι ἀπὸ τῶν θεῶν ποιοῦσαν), a text on the family of Epicurus (Γονῶς Ἐπικούρου), and a text on the observance of the twentieth day by the philosophers of his own school, (τὸς θησαυροῦμενος ύπ’ αὐτῶν ἐκκοόδος, 101). In addition to these works, Diogenes Laertius also refers to a “Sale of Diogenes,” in his life of Diogenes, see VI.29. Relihan cites the absence of this text from the life of Menippus as evidence of the untrustworthiness and hostility of Diogenes’ biography. While Relihan’s distrust of this account of Menippus is certainly valid, Diogenes’ conclusion of the list of works with καὶ ἄλλα (and others) indicates that he does not intend this list to be exhaustive, (VI.101). See Relihan (1993) for a discussion of the problems inherent in Diogenes’ account of Menippus, (43-44).
account the genre that he is believed to have inspired: Menippean Satire. This generic label, however, is not one that we find in antiquity but a modern invention. Since none of Menippus’ own writings survive, scholars have attempted to define the genre based on texts that they believe to be later examples of it, including the surviving fragments of Varro’s Menippeans, Seneca’s Apocolocyntosis, and the texts under discussion here. From these writings, Relihan has concluded that Menippean satire possesses four core features: a mixture of prose and poetry that are the author’s own composition (as opposed to quotations drawn from other poets), a fantastical narrative, the burlesque of serious language and literature, and jokes at the expense of learning. Besides these central elements, Relihan also notes that Menippean satire is typically a first person narration that is indebted to the Odyssey for its theme of travel, Old Comedy for its fantasy, and Plato’s use of myth, in particular that of Er from the Republic for its theme of death as the great equalizer.

From this brief discussion of the figure of Menippus outside of Lucian’s writings and the modern reconstruction of his eponymous genre, I have attempted to show the problems inherent in trying to define precisely Lucian’s debt to Menippus. Since Lucian remains one of the main sources for this figure about whom so little is known, it is difficult to determine to what extent Lucian is drawing on Menippus’ reputation in antiquity and how much his works are in fact contributing to our presumptions about that
reputation. Combined with this is the fact that many of the sources that Relihan regards as contributing to Menippean satire, specifically Homer, Plato, and Old Comedy, can be found elsewhere in Lucian’s corpus, apart from Menippus.\(^\text{12}\) This begs the perhaps unanswerable question of how we determine when these represent Lucian’s debt to Menippus and when they are references simply to the original sources themselves?

Lucian himself likewise explores his relationship to Menippus by presenting Menippus as a figure who, on the surface, appears to embody a comedic-philosophical approach. The apparent similarities between Lucian and Menippus have led some scholars to interpret Menippus as a mouthpiece for Lucian or as a Lucianic mask akin to the Syrian or Parrhesiades.\(^\text{13}\) Branham, for example, equates Menippus with the authorial persona of Lycinus, to whom we will turn at the end of this chapter, contending that he represents the very embodiment of Lucian’s seriocomic project and an important connection between Lucian, the Cynic tradition, and ultimately Plato’s Socrates.\(^\text{14}\) In contrast to Branham, Relihan has suggested that Menippus’ presence as a character within a dialogue means that we should not read him as a mask for Lucian, but rather as a representative of an “abstraction of Cynicism.”\(^\text{15}\) While Relihan’s interpretation of Menippus as a character allows for a more nuanced reading than Branham’s, he still treats Lucian’s “Menippean” dialogues as evidence for a larger tradition. As a result of this type of reading, the various literary resonances found in these texts have been

\(^{12}\) An example of this is the *True Histories*, in which we find Lucian drawing on all three of these sources in their own right.

\(^{13}\) Perhaps the best example of this is Helms’ *Lucian und Menipp* (1906), in which he argues that Lucian essentially plagiarized Menippus. Helms’ arguments have now summarily discounted. For a rebuttal of Helm, see McCarthy (1934).


\(^{15}\) Relihan (1993:104).
regarded as indicative of Menippean influence rather than as interesting in their own right.

This is particularly the case in terms of the debt of Menippus’ tales to the *Frogs* and *Peace*. Although Lucian’s reliance on these plays has long been noted, scholars have tended to include Lucian’s imitation of Aristophanes under the larger umbrella of Menippean satire. Branham, for example, highlights the differences between the Aristophanic original and Lucian’s adaptations as evidence of Lucian’s debt to Menippus.\(^\text{16}\) For Branham, the main distinguishing feature lies in the end result of Aristophanes’ and Lucian’s Menippean fantasies: whereas Aristophanes’ plays typically involve a “triumphant inversion of reality” that results in “order restored,” Menippus’ journeys offer no such resolution at their conclusion.\(^\text{17}\) This emphasis on the different results of Lucian’s and Aristophanes’ fantasies, however, excludes Lucian’s application of these comic scenarios, whose very selection may be filtered through the historical figure of Menippus, to shape his representation of the Cynic. In contrast to Branham’s discussion, I will focus on how Lucian’s simultaneous use of scenarios borrowed from Old Comedy and the dialogue format controls at the outset of these texts our view of Menippus as a character and foil for Lucian’s own project. In the previous chapter, we saw how Lucian’s characterization of Diogenes and the other dead philosophers of the *Fisherman* as members of a comic chorus undermined the types of tradition-centered approaches that they represent. Similarly, the resonances between Menippus’ tales and

\(^{16}\) Branham (1989: 17).

\(^{17}\) Branham (1989:16-17).
Aristophanes’ plays cast Menippus as a comic character, thus forcing us to question his value as a model for Lucian.

Lucian presents Menippus as a figure so frustrated with the internal and external wrangling of the philosophical school that he appeals to fantasy. Though Menippus travels in different directions in the Menippus and the Icomenippus, both texts begin in the same way: Menippus has just returned from his trip and encounters an unnamed friend, who questions him about that journey. The tales related by Menippus are indebted to Aristophanes’ Frogs and Peace respectively and, as I will suggest, effectively cast Menippus in the role of the comic figures, Dionysus and Trygaeus. In his portrayal of Menippus, however, Lucian does not simply depict the voyage as it occurred, but instead has Menippus recount his trips after the fact to his interlocutor. The dialogue format thus draws our focus to Menippus as the narrator of these tales as much as to the tales themselves. In the context of this dialogue, the interlocutor as Menippus’ audience plays a role analogous to our own and his reactions, which are generally characterized by skepticism and annoyance, can influence our own. Through this presentation of comic references in the context of a dialogue, I will contend that Lucian distances himself from the comedic-philosophical paradigm offered by Menippus and more specifically the solution that he offers to the frustration provoked by the philosophical schools: comic escapism.
The Menippus

In the *Menippus*, we find a Menippus concerned with a problem familiar from the second and third books of Plato’s *Republic*; the poets’ portrayal of *gods* committing what would be considered unlawful acts in human society.¹⁸ For Menippus, this discrepancy between the poets’ tales and real life has left him confused as to what type of life is best. Whereas Socrates’ response in the *Republic* was to censor the poets, Menippus determines that philosophy, with the various answers that it offers, fails to deal satisfactorily with this problem. As a result, he turns to a Chaldean, who promises to take him to the underworld where he can consult Tiresias. Once in the underworld, Menippus witnesses how death is the great equalizer and eventually stumbles upon Tiresias, who informs Menippus that the simple life is best and ironically commands him to stop speculating about the heavens (μετεωρολογεῖν), ends (τέλη), and beginnings (ἀρχῆς, 21). While this tale draws as much of inspiration from Odysseus’ own *katabasis* as Plato’s “Myth of Er,” I will focus on how the opening of this dialogue recalls Aristophanes’ comic recasting of this epic trope in the *Frogs*.¹⁹ As I will suggest, the resonances between Menippus’ mock heroic journey and that portrayed in the *Frogs* effectively undermine Menippus as a serious figure and force us to reevaluate Lucian’s relationship to him.

In its humorous recasting of the epic *katabasis*, Menippus’ tale recalls Aristophanes’ comic take on this trope in the *Frogs*. Besides the similarities between Menippus’ journey and that of Dionysus, Lucian signals his debt to the Aristophanic play

---

¹⁸ See Plato, *Republic* 376e-408c.
¹⁹ On Platonic myth, in particular the “Myth of Er,” as a subtext for “Menippian” satire, see Relihan (1993: 33).
in his initial presentation of Menippus. As the dialogue commences, the Cynic appears dressed in Odysseus’ felt hat, Heracles’ lion skin, and carrying Orpheus’ lyre. Menippus here has assumed the garb of three figures united by their visit and return from the underworld yet is himself a philosophical figure known for his laughter. In addition to invoking these heroes, Menippus’ heroic garb also recalls the opening of the *Frogs* and specifically Dionysus’ Herculean costume. To briefly summarize the opening of Aristophanes’ play, Dionysus and Xanthias are on their way to Heracles’ house where they hope to discover an easy way to get into the underworld. By casting Dionysus as the one who must go down to the underworld to bring back Euripides, Aristophanes plays with Dionysus’ reputation as someone who cheated death and was twice-born.20

Although much of the humor of this opening scene is found in Dionysus’ gastrointestinal problems, Aristophanes draws on Dionysus’ effeminacy by presenting him as a mock-heroic figure, wearing the accoutrements of Heracles over his yellow dress (κροκωτός, 46). The incongruity of this image is highlighted by Heracles’ reaction to seeing the womanly Dionysus dressed in his lion skin:

\[ \text{Ἀλλά' οὐχ οἶός τ' εὖ' ἀποσοβήσαι τὸν γέλων όρόν λεοντὴν ἐπὶ κροκωτὸ κειμένην. Τίς ὁ νοῦς; Τί κόθορνος καὶ ῥόπαλον ξυνηλθέτην; } \]

Sorry, friend, I couldn’t help it. A lion-skin over a yellow negligee! What’s going on? Why the high-heel boots? Why the club? (*Frogs* 45-7)

---

20 See Hesiod, *Theogony* 940ff., Homeric *Hymn* 1 and 26, Euripides *Bacchae* 1ff, 90 ff, 245 ff, 285 ff, and 520 ff, Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.26-9, and Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 4.2.3. Moreover, depending on when the *Bacchae* was preformed, Aristophanes’ choice of Dionysus may also reflect the central role that Dionysus assumes in that play.
As Dover describes the comic figure of Dionysus, he is “boastful but cowardly, incompetent, fat and out of condition, sensual, but highly susceptible to the charm of the stage.” Heracles’ laughter thus invites our own as we imagine an actor playing a ridiculous and effeminate Dionysus pretending to be the hyper-masculine Heracles.

Aristophanes casts Dionysus as a buffoon, and it is into this mold that Lucian inserts Menippus. At the opening of the dialogue, the interlocutor questions Menippus’ appearance: τί οὖν αὐτῷ βούλεται τὸ ἀλλόκοτον τοῦ σχήματος, πῖλος καὶ λύρα καὶ λεοντῆ; (What is the meaning of his strange costume, a felt hat, lyre, and lion skin? 1) Although Menippus does not immediately respond to this question, he later reveals that his Chaldean guide dressed him in this way with the hope that he would be mistaken for the previous visitors to the underworld, namely Odysseus, Heracles, and Orpheus:

And then he put on a magician’s gown very like the Median dress, and quickly dressed me in these things: the felt cap, lion skin, and a lyre besides, and he urged me, if anyone asked me my name, not to say Menippus, but Heracles or Odysseus or Orpheus…Since these guys lived before us and had gone down to Hades, he [Menippus’ guide] believed that if he made me look like them, I might easily slip by the guard of

---

21 As Dover (1997) notes, the image of Dionysus in disguise is not unique to Aristophanes’ play. In the Dionysalxaxandros of Cratinus, Dionysus disguises himself as Paris so as to trick Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite and get hold of Helen. In the Taxiarchs of Eupolis, Dionysus was apparently taught by Phormion to be a soldier and sailor, (23).

Aeacus and go unhindered, for thanks to my costume they would speed me along on my journey. (*Men.* 8)

Like Aristophanes’ Dionysus, Menippus dons mock heroic garb believing that it will make it easier for him to get into the underworld. For Branham, the humor of Menippus’ costume lies in the very fact that he is wearing such clothing.\(^{23}\) Yet, it is my contention that the humor derives not only from the incongruity of finding Menippus wearing the trappings of Odysseus, Heracles, and Orpheus, but also from the fact that Lucian has taken his comic model of the *Frogs* to the extreme, dressing Menippus up not as one hero but four, if we include his imitation of Dionysus.

Besides Menippus’ mock heroic garb, Lucian connects his character to Dionysus through his initial passion for speaking in the language of tragedy. In the context of Aristophanes’ play, part of the ridiculousness of Dionysus’ character can be found in the fact that, though he proclaims to be Euripides’ greatest fan, his attempts at quoting the poet fall short. As he describes to Heracles how the living tragic poets fail to meet the standard set by Euripides, he slips into tragic language. To cite just one example, Dionysus asserts that no contemporary poet would offer anything akin to the following phrase:

Ωδὶ γόνιμον, ὅστις φθέγξεται
τοιούτον οἱ παρακεκινδυνεμένοιν,
«αἰθέρα Διὸς δωμάτιον,» ἢ «χρόνον πόδα,»
ἡ «φρένα μὲν οὐκ ἔθελουσαν ὁμόσαι καθ’ ἱερὸν,
γλώτταυν δ’ ἐπιορκήσασαν ἰδία τῇς φρενός.»

\(^{23}\) Branham (1989: 19).
One who can produce something truly original, like “The airy hall of Zeus”, or “the tread of time,” or “heart that would not swear by all that's holy” and “tongue that swears, without consent of mind.” (98-102)

While Dionysus attempts to quote Euripides here, his language in fact reveals his inability to accurately remember Euripides’ lines. His errors appear in his use of the word δομάτιον, which according to Dover occurs nowhere in extant Tragedy, and in his mis-paraphrasing of a famous line from the Hippolytus, (ἡ γλῶσσα ὀμώμοχα, ἥ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμωτος, Hippolytus 612). In contrast, χρόνου πόδα may be a direct quotation of Bacchae 888 and was originally spoken by the chorus directly following the scene in which Dionysus tricks Pentheus into dressing like a woman. If we accept Dover’s presumption that Aristophanes was familiar with the Bacchae, then we can see Aristophanes using the context of this quotation to reflect on his own portrayal of Dionysus. In this case, the joke may work on several levels: for those who recognize the allusion, Dionysus appears to be either misremembering the words of his favorite poet or succeeding at playing with them, while for those who do not, he once again uses language that appears tragic but is not an accurate quotation.

As a figure who will purportedly return tragedy to its former glories by going on a heroic quest, Dionysus is comically undermined by his inability to recall the very poet that he holds in such esteem. In Lucian’s Menippus, we likewise find in Menippus a figure crazy for the poets, especially Euripides. Unlike Dionysus who misremembers...
Euripides’ words, Menippus accurately quotes him and the humor of Lucian’s scene arises from Menippus’ initial refusal, much to his interlocutor’s annoyance, to speak in anything but the language of tragedy. In fact, Menippus’ first lines, which open the text, are drawn from Euripides’ *Hercules*: Ὦ ραῖξ κέιαζξνλ πξόππιά ζ’, ἑζηίαο ἐκῆο, / ἡο άζκελόο ζ’ ἐζεῖδον ἐς φάος μολόν. (Greetings my house and hearth, how glad I am to see you now that I have returned to the light, 1). Unlike Dionysus, who at times misquotes Euripides, these lines are in fact a direct quotation of lines spoken by Heracles upon returning from the underworld (523-4). Combined with Menippus’ costume, they further reinforce the heroic and specifically Herculean image that he has adopted for himself, revealing that he has not only adopted Heracles’ lion skin but his language as well.

Menippus’ preference for tragedy continues throughout the opening scene of this dialogue to the point that he initially refuses to speak in anything but tragic language. For example, as his companion attempts to question him about his journey and strange appearance, Menippus responds once again with several lines from Euripides, this time from the *Hecuba*: Ἡκω νεκρών κευθμόνα και σκότου πύλας / λιπών, ἵν Ἄιδης χωρίς ὁκισται θεόν. (I have come from the dead’s lair and I have left behind the gates of darkness where Hades dwells apart from the gods, 2). Whereas in the initial quotation we found Menippus speaking in language that corresponded to his costume, these lines were originally spoken by the treacherously murdered Polydorus at the opening of the play. Menippus has gone from adopting the language of Heracles to that of Priam’s son and,

27 For a discussion of the presence of poetic quotations in Menippean satire, see Relihan (1993: 17-21).
although there exists a clever logic in a recent visitor to Hades speaking these lines, his shift from heroic language to that of a ghost contributes to the humor of this opening scene.

As Menippus initially appears in this dialogue, he is a figure who has comically adopted heroic attire and tragic language in a manner akin to Dionysus in the *Frogs*. Lucian guides our response to this image of Menippus through his interlocutor’s reactions and within the mock-tragic tone of the opening, the interlocutor assumes a role similar to that of a chorus. After tolerating several tragic quotations, the interlocutor asks Menippus to stop pretending that he is in play: παῦσαί, μακάριε, τραγωδῶν καὶ λέγε οὕτωσι πως ἀπλῶς καταβὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ἰαμβείων, τίς ἦ στολή; τί σοι τής κάτω πορείας ἐδέσθησαν; (Stop, my good man, acting like a tragic figure and come off your blank-verse, tell me in plain language like mine what your costume is, and why you had to go down below, 1). His use of the participle τραγωδῶν signals the mock theatricality of Menippus’ initial appearance, while the annoyance he expresses suggests that it is incompatible with the dialogue he hopes to have with Menippus. Moreover, his repetition of the preposition κατά in the participle καταβάς and κάτω creates a pun on the tale Menippus is about to tell, thus mocking Menippus and calling into question his value as a philosophical figure.

Unlike Aristophanes’ Dionysus, who stands outside of tragedy by reading it and judging it, Menippus here appears to believe that he is in some way tragic or part of a tragedy. This image is reinforced when he refuses to heed his companion but continues to speak as if he were a Euripidean character, an act which sparks his companion to
exclaim: Οὗτος, ἄλλ' ἐπαραπαίεις· οὐ γὰρ ἂν οὕτως ἐμμέτρως ἐρραψώδεις πρὸς ἄνδρας φίλους. (Man, you are surely crazy or you would not recite in meter to your friends, 1). In this response to Menippus, the interlocutor likens the Cynic to a rhapsode (ἐρραψώδεις), a characterization which serves to cast Menippus not as a poet but rather as someone who merely recites poetry. By likening Menippus’ tragic set-up for his tale to a poetic recitation that is not of his own creation, the interlocutor here undermines Menippus’ claim to knowledge, painting him instead as a mere performer. This characterization ironically reflects the central question that has driven Menippus’ journey: how do we interpret the poets? Here at the opening of the dialogue, Menippus appears as a comic rhapsode-like figure, a characterization which casts a shadow over the tale he is about to relate.

As we have seen thus far, the opening of the Menippus mimics Aristophanes’ Frogs not just in Menippus’ voyage to the underworld but his adoption of heroic and tragic language. In addition to noticing the comic resonances within this text, it is also important to note how Lucian diverges from his comic model. One obvious difference lies in the purposes behind the respective voyages. In casting Menippus in the role of Dionysus, Lucian mimics Dionysus’ original dislike of contemporary tragedy with Menippus’ dissatisfaction with philosophers and Dionysus’ desire to return Euripides to the living with Menippus’ quest to find Tiresias. This shift from a literary focus to a more philosophical one belies one aspect of Lucian’s melding of comedy and philosophy within this text.
Ultimately, however, Lucian’s union of comedy and philosophy emerges from Menippus’ appearance as a rhapsodic figure within the larger context of a dialogue, and this represents Lucian’s main divergence from the Aristophanic model of Menippus’ Νέθπηα. In Aristophanes’ play, we begin just as Dionysus embarks on his quest and we witness the sequence of events as they happen, culminating in the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides. Compared with the Frogs, the Menippus takes the opposite approach: opening not at the beginning of Menippus’ travels, but at the end. Moreover, we do not witness the events as they happen but rather learn of them as Menippus relates them to his interlocutor. In diverging from the Aristophanic model, Lucian draws our focus first to the figure of Menippus and then to his tale. The result of this is that the dialogue explores not the problem that sparked Menippus’ journey, namely a dissatisfaction with philosophers, but rather Menippus as a philosophical model for Lucian. Although the dialogue drops off as soon as Menippus commences his tale, its function at the opening of the text is to cast Menippus as a comic figure in the mold of Aristophanes’ Dionysus, thus undermining both the seriousness with which he relates his journey and his philosophical approach. We therefore find in Menippus’ tale the derisive laughter noted by Relihan, yet his role as a comic figure means that while Menippus is laughing at philosophers and the dead, we are laughing at him.

Our interpretation of Menippus’ tale is therefore very much affected by how, as we have seen in our discussion of the opening dialogue, Menippus comes to be characterized through his attire, his language, and the reactions he inspires in his companion as a comic buffoon. In other words, dialogue is the tool by which Lucian
casts Menippus as a comic character, a characterization which calls into question his value as a philosophical figure. In the context of his tale, Menippus describes to the interlocutor his entrance into the underworld and the figures he saw undergoing judgment there. Although he witnesses the shades of both historical and mythical figures, throughout most of his journey he seems to have forgotten the questions that inspired it: how do we interpret the poets and what is the best way to live life? It is not, however, until the end of Menippus’ tale and his encounter with Tiresias that he returns to his original purpose. Upon encountering Tiresias, his confusion regarding the poets is left by the wayside as he attempts to discover what is the best life (21). Though Tiresias initially tries to evade Menippus’ question, he eventually reveals the best life to be that of a common people (ἰδήσης), and he commands Menippus to stop concerning himself with philosophical questions (21). As the conclusion of this dialogue, Tiresias’ answer is not a novel one, but is reminiscent of Odysseus’ choice of a simple life in the “Myth of Er.”  

Menippus has rejected philosophy, but ironically has been given an answer familiar from it. Moreover, Tiresias’ command to Menippus to stop concerning himself with philosophical questions further reinforces Lucian’s characterization of Menippus at the start of the text as a comical figure whose attempts at seriousness prove ridiculous.

In our discussion thus far we have seen how Lucian uses the dialogue of the Menippus to render Menippus in the mold of Dionysus from the Frogs, a characterization that calls into question the merits of his tale. We find Lucian achieving a similar effect in the Icaromenippus, this time through the adoption of the Peace as his model as well as

---

28 See Plato, Republic 620c-d.
language that recalls Socrates’ Thinkery in the *Clouds*. Unlike the *Menippus*, however, Menippus’ interlocutor in this dialogue plays a more prevalent role by consistently calling into question the tale that Menippus is relating to him. In examining the *Icaromenippus*, I will begin by considering the relationship between Lucian’s text and its Aristophanic model, the *Peace*. As I will argue, the differences between Lucian’s text and its comic predecessor reveal how Menippus’ journey fails to achieve its purpose of philosophical enlightenment. Lucian continually emphasizes this point through the interlocutor’s consistent questioning of Menippus’ tale. Like the *Menippus*, this Menippus once again appears as a comic figure, only this time, he fails in his purpose. This is an important distinction since it is in this text that we will see more clearly how Lucian uses the end result of Menippus’ journey to distinguish himself from his Cynic predecessor.

**The Icaromenippus**

In the *Icaromenippus*, we once again find a dialogue between Menippus and an unnamed interlocutor, in which the former narrates how his dissatisfaction with competing philosophical views about the universe inspired a recent journey to the heavens. As Menippus relates to his incredulous friend, he achieved this feat by fastening to his arms the wings of an eagle and a vulture and then jumping off the Acropolis. Once airborne, he flew first to the Moon, where he encountered not only a charred version of Empedocles, but also spoke with the Moon herself about the slander that philosophers spread about her. Menippus promises to carry the Moon’s complaints to Zeus on Mt.
Olympus, where he is received as a guest and allowed to witness Zeus’ answering of prayers and the assembly of the gods convened to discuss the Moon’s complaints. According to Menippus, the assembly results in a promise from Zeus that he will smite all the philosophers in the following spring, and the dialogue concludes with Menippus declaring that he is going to gleefully proclaim this fact at the Painted Stoa (ἐν τῇ Ποικίλῃ, 34).

In his analysis of the plot structure found within this dialogue, Relihan has suggested that Menippus’ decision to seek the solution to his problems in the heavens represents Lucian’s “reworking” of Menippus’ traditional journey to the underworld that is itself indebted to Aristophanes’ Peace and Birds. While the connection to the Birds stems largely from Menippus’ use of birds’ wings to bring about his journey, in the Peace Aristophanes presents Trygaeus’ journey on the back of a dung beetle to Olympus to return the goddess Peace to the world and thus bring about the end of the Peloponnesian War. If we read the Icaromenippus in tandem with the Peace, as I believe that Lucian intends us, then we once again find Menippus assuming a comic role, this time that of Trygaeus. Just as in the Menippus, Lucian replaces Trygaeus’ original quest to end the war with Menippus’ more philosophical concerns regarding a desire to learn the true nature of the universe. Menippus therefore plays the role of Trygaeus, who seeks not to resolve a martial conflict, but a philosophical one.

Whereas in the Menippus we saw that Menippus’ adoption of a heroic costume for his journey to the underworld leads to an association with Dionysus from the Frogs,

---

in the *Icaromenippus* Lucian characterizes Menippus chiefly through his interlocutors’ reaction to him. At the opening of this text, Menippus appears lost in thought as he attempts to calculate the exact distance he has just traveled. In response to this image, Menippus’ interlocutor employs language, which evokes images of Socrates’ *Thinkery* and Socrates’ account of Thales in the *Theaetetus*:

> τί ταῦτα πρὸς Χαρίτων, ὦ Μένιππε, ἀστρονομεῖς καὶ ἡσυχὴ πως ἀναμετρεῖς; πάλαι γὰρ ἐπακροδία σου παρακολουθῶν ἡλίους καὶ σελήνας, ἓτι δὲ τὰ φορτικὰ ταῦτα σταθμοὺς τίνας καὶ παρασάγγας ὑποξενί ζοντος.

Why, by the Graces, Menippus are you studying astronomy and in some way silently measuring again? For a long time, I have been following you and listening to you talk strangely about the suns, moons, and even those tiresome topics, namely stages and leagues. (*Icar. I*)

Used in conjunction with one another, ἀστρονομεῖς and ἀναμετρεῖς allude to a passage found in the *Clouds* in which Strepsiades asks one of Socrates’ students why another student has his backside in the air. In response to Strepsiades’ question, the student provides the following response: αὐτῶς καθ’ αὐτὸν ἀστρονομεῖν διδάσκεται. (It is being taught to do astronomy on its own, *Clouds* 194). Amazed by this answer, Strepsiades continues to question the student about the various instruments in the school, one of which is used to measure land (γῆν ἀναμετρεῖσθαι, 203).30 As we saw in the *Menippus*, Lucian uses the dialogue in order to characterize Menippus. The interlocutor’s question found here at the opening of the *Icaromenippus* consequently invokes language reminiscent of the *Clouds* and compares Menippus’ actions to those of Socrates’ students.

---

Although Lucian borrows the general scenario of Menippus’ journey from the *Peace*, Lucian turns to the *Clouds* to undermine Menippus’ philosophical role.

In addition to the *Clouds*, Lucian’s use of ἄστρονομοῦντα in reference to Menippus similarly echoes the anecdote about Thales falling into a well told by Socrates in Plato’s *Theaetetus*. This tale is found within the larger context of a discussion about how philosophers typically disdain the affairs of the city and focus instead on questions that concern things below and above the earth: ἄτιμάσασα πανταχῇ πέτεται κατὰ Πίνδαρον “τὰς τε γὰς ύπένερθε” καὶ τὰ ἐπίπεδα γεωμετροῦσα, “οὐρανὸθ’ ὑπὲρ” ἄστρονομοῦσα, (“he [the philosopher] deems these things unworthy and he flies every which way in the words of Pindar “below the earth,” measuring its surface, and “above heaven,” doing astronomy,” *Theaetetus* 173c). 31 Socrates’ description of a philosopher is further reinforced by his account of how Thales was so busy studying the stars (ἄστρονομοῦντα) that he fell into a well, provoking the laughter of a Thracian girl, who demanded to know why he was so curious about the stars when he could not even see what was in front of him on the ground, (λέγεται ὡς τὰ μὲν ἐν οὐρανῷ προθυμοῖτο εἰδέναι, τὰ δ’ ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ πόδας λανθάνοι αὐτόν, 174a). As Socrates concludes his tale, he notes that the same joke applies to all philosophers, (ταῦταν δὲ ἄρκει σκῶμα ἐπὶ πάντας ὡσι ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διάγουσι, 174a-b). In the context of Lucian’s text, the interlocutor’s question casts Menippus in the double role of one of Socrates’ students in the *Clouds* and of Thales. Like the Thracian slave girl, the interlocutor mocks Menippus for his obsession with the heavens.

31 These are also among the charges that Socrates states were brought against him in the *Apology* 18b-c.
Within this opening scene, Menippus appears as a ridiculous natural philosopher, contemplating the stars and unaware of his companion, who has been watching him. In the dialogue that ensues, the interlocutor maintains a skeptical attitude toward Menippus’ journey, indicating that we as Lucian’s readers should approach Menippus with the same grain of salt. When, for example, Menippus acknowledges that his trip is in fact beyond belief, (τὸ πέρα πίστεως εὐτυχεῖν), his companion offers the following response:

καὶ πώς ἂν ἔγογε, ὦ θεσπέσις καὶ Ὡλύμπιε Μένιππε, γεννητὸς αὐτὸς καὶ ἐ πίγεαις ὃν ἀπεστείν δυναίμην ὑπερνεφέλῳ ἀνδρὶ καὶ ἵνα καθ’ Ὄμηρον ἐπὶ ὃ τῶν Ὀὐρανίων ἔν; ἄλλ.’ ἐκεῖνα μοι φράσον, εἰ δοκεῖ, τίνα τρόπον ἦρθ’ ἦς ἄνω καὶ ὀπόθεν ἐπορίσω κλίμακα τηλικαύτην τὸ μέγεθος; τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀμφί τὴν ὄψιν οὐ πάνω ἑοικας ἐκεῖνο τῷ Φρυγὶ, ὡς ἡμᾶς εἰκάζειν καὶ σὲ οἰνοχοήσοντά που ἀνάρπαστον γεγονέναι πρὸς τοῦ ἀετοῦ.

How can I, divine and Olympian Menippus, myself a mortal and an inhabitant of earth not believe a man who is above the clouds and, to use the words of Homer, one of the celestial gods. But tell me please how you were carried aloft and where you got such a long ladder, for as far as looks are concerned, you look too little like that Phrygian boy for me to think that like him, you were snatched up by an eagle and became a cupbearer. (Icaro. 2).

As this passage indicates, the interlocutor’s reaction to Menippus is to make fun of him by adopting mock-Homeric seriousness and by highlighting the fact that Menippus is no Ganymede. In his analysis of Lucian’s representation of Menippus, Relihan points to the fact that, contrary to the connections drawn by Branham, Lucian does not portray Menippus as a Socratic eiron. Relihan’s evaluation of Menippus’ character in this text is significant because it begins to articulate the nature of his comic character, namely the seriousness with which he regards his trip, a point highlighted by the interlocutor’s incredulous and mocking response. According to Aristotle, a Socratic eiron is a figure

---

who claims not to possess qualities, which are generally highly esteemed, in the manner of Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge (*NE* 1127 b25). In contrast to this figure, the *alazon* claims to know more than he in fact does. In Lucian’s text, Menippus seeks to resolve his frustration with the philosophical discussions of the universe by going to see for himself, yet the fantastical nature of his journey combined with the interlocutor’s sarcastic remarks renders his tale unbelievable. The fact that Menippus will claim to have acquired knowledge in such a way consequently indicates his character is more in line with the model of the *alazon*. Although Menippus will seek to cast himself as knowledgeable about such lofty topics, it is in fact the interlocutor with his incredulity about Menippus’ knowledge, who comes closer to a Socratic figure. Lucian thus presents in this dialogue an inversion of what we find in Plato’s dialogues. Whereas Plato presents Socrates as often taking down his interlocutor’s claims to knowledge, for example Ion and Callicles, through irony, Lucian uses the irony of the interlocutor to undermine Menippus’ assertion that he has obtained knowledge about the universe.

As we have seen so far, Lucian’s opening dialogue, in particular the interlocutor’s responses, comically questions the seriousness with which Menippus treats his fantastical journey. We find in fact several layers of comedy embedded in the opening sections of this dialogue. Beginning with Menippus’ tale, the act of resolving a problem by flying to the heavens recalls the essential scenario of Aristophanes’ *Peace*. As in the *Menippus,*

---

33 See also Theophrastus *Characters* I and XXIII. For a discussion of these character types, see Gooch (1987: 95).


35 This connection has long been made by scholars and is reinforced, as Camerotto has shown, by multiple verbal allusions found within Menippus’ tale. See Camerotto (2009:107).
Menippus’ tale places him in the role of Trygaeus and consequently casts him as a character from Old Comedy. As the interlocutor’s comments reveal, however, Menippus plays the part not only of Trygaeus, but also a ridiculous natural philosopher akin to one of Socrates’ students in the *Clouds* and to Thales in the *Theaetetus*. Lucian uses these references to cast Menippus as a character from comedy and, in doing so, effectively undermines Menippus as a philosophical figure.

In considering the connections between this text and Aristophanes’ plays, however, scholars such as Branham and Camerotto, draw a distinction between Lucian and his model: Aristophanes’ plays focus on “topical complaints arising from actual events,” such as the Peloponnesian War, while Menippus inhabits a “timeless ‘classical Athens,’” and struggles with “universal” issues. Lucian thus exchanges the “political” war of the *Peace* for the philosophical “wars” about cosmology and, in doing so, replaces the presumably fictional Trygaeus with the shadowy, historical figure of Menippus.

Menippus is generally dated to the third century BCE, a philosophical period characterized by the developments of the major schools, including the Stoics and Epicureans. In exchanging Trygaeus’ dissatisfaction with an actual war for Menippus’ with philosophy, Lucian creates a scenario in which the comedy surrounding Menippus is intended to address the issues of Menippus’ own day. As I will argue, Lucian signals this fact to us by including topographical references that have heretofore been ignored in discussions of this text. While Branham is not wrong to note that the complaints that we find Menippus voicing in this text appear elsewhere in Lucian’s corpus, it is not that

---

Menippus inhabits a “universal Athens,” but rather that Lucian has established him, the problems of his day, and his approach to answering them as a foil for Lucian’s own project. This is a significant distinction because it allows us to see Lucian’s ultimate rejection of the model offered by Menippus and offers his own dialogues as a more constructive approach.

As he relates his journey from the Acropolis to the moon, Menippus describes how the high altitude of the moon made it initially difficult to recognize earth, and, were it not for the Colossus of Rhodes and the Lighthouse of Pharos, he would not have recognized earth at all (εἰ γε μὴ τὸν Ροδίων κολοσσὸν ἔθεασάμην καὶ τὸν ἑπὶ τῇ Φάρῳ πύργον, εὖ ἰσθι, παντελῶς ἄν με ἡ γῆ διέλαθε, Icaro. 12). Menippus’ point here is that these two wonders of the world were so large that he could see them even from heaven. This topographical reference, however, is problematic for readings that regard the action of this text as taking place within Lucian’s own time, given the fact that, as Camerotto notes, the Colossus, which was constructed ca. 283 BCE, only stood for 56 years. In an attempt to explain this apparent discrepancy, Camerotto concludes that this reference must be a holdover from a Menippean original. While this explanation is certainly plausible, it is also possible that, within the context of this dialogue, Menippus’ reference to these wonders orients this dialogue in the third century BCE, and not in Branham’s “timeless Athens.” Although Lucian does not admittedly provide us with a clear

---

38 The Lighthouse was also constructed in the third century and it is believed to have been destroyed by earthquakes in the twelfth century, see Camerotto (2009:120).
dramatic date for this dialogue, he nonetheless establishes Menippus’ journey as occurring within the Hellenistic period.

Lucian continues to reinforce the Hellenistic setting of this dialogue in Menippus’ description of what he saw from the Moon. Although the high altitude initially proves problematic for Menippus, Empedocles suddenly appears and explains to Menippus that he can use his eagle wing to see the events on earth more clearly. As Menippus describes to his companion, the eagle’s wing allowed him to witness the following things:

κατακώψας γοῦν ἐς τὴν γῆν ἑώρων σαφῶς τὰς πόλεις, τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, τὰ γιγνόμενα, καὶ ού τὰ ἐν υπαίθρῳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπόσα οὐκοί ἔπραττον οἰόμενοι λανθάνειν, Πτολεμαῖον μὲν συνόντα τῇ ἀδελφῇ, Λυσιμάχῳ δὲ τὸν υἱὸν ἐπιβουλεύοντα, τὸν Σελεύκου δὲ Ἀντίγονον Στρατονίκη διανεύοντα λάθρα τῇ μητριᾷ, τὸν δὲ Θεσπαλὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ὑπὸ τῆς γυναικὸς ἀναφούμενον καὶ Ἀντίγονον μοιχεύοντα τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς γυναίκας καὶ Ἀττάλῳ τὸν υἱὸν ἐγχέοντα τὸ φάρμακον, ἐπέρρωθι δ’ αὖ Ἀρσάκην φοινύοντα τὸ γύναιον καὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον Ἀρβάκην ἐλκοντα τὸ ξίφος ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀρσάκην, Σπατῖνος δὲ ὁ Μήδος ἐκ τοῦ συμποσίου πρὸς τὸν ὀρφυροῦντον εὕλκετο ἐξὸ τοῦ ποδὸς σκύρφυρσῃ τὴν ὀφρὺν κατηλομένους, ὄμοια δὲ τούτοις ἐν τῇ Λιβύῃ καὶ παρὰ Σκύθας καὶ Θρᾳξὶ γινόμενα ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἢν ὀράν, μοιχεύοντας, φοινύοντας, ἐπιβουλεύοντας, ἀρπάζοντας, ἐπιορκοῦντας, δεδίοτας, ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκειοτάτων προδιδομένους.

And so bending down to the earth I saw clearly the cities, the men, the things that were happening and not only those done publicly, but those done at home when they thought they would escape notice. I saw Ptolemy the greater having sex with his sister, Lysimachus’ son plotting, Seleucus’ son Antigonus committing adultery with the wife of his son, the son of Attalus pouring out the poison for him.40 In another quarter I saw Arsaces killing the woman, the eunuch Arbaces drawing his sword on Arsaces, and Spatinus the Mede in the hand of the guards, after having had his head

40 Lucian here presents references to various events occurring within the Hellenistic period, some more datable than others. Although the reference to Ptolemy the great clearly points to Ptolemy II, who married his sister Arsinoë perhaps in 285 BCE, it is less clear who Lysimachus’ son is supposed to be given the fact that Lysimachus (353-281) allowed himself to be swayed by his second wife, Arsinoë, into imprisoning and having his son, Agathocles, murdered. See Lund (1992: 186-7). As Anderson has shown, the reference to Arsaces represents Lucian’s own version of the death of Sardanapalus. For a discussion of Lucian’s potential sources and the changes he makes to this tale, see Anderson (1976D: 59).
broken with a golden cup. Similar things were to be seen going on in Libya and among the Thracians and Scythians in the palaces of kings—men committing adultery, murdering, conspiring, plundering, forswearing, fearing and falling victims to the treason of their closest kin. (15)

The events described here by Menippus are not synchronous, yet they involve various figures drawn from the Hellenistic period and serve to reinforce the fact that this dialogue takes place at a time roughly contemporaneous with Menippus’ life. If this dialogue is set within the Hellenistic period, we must also reconsider Branham’s “universal” issues of this text, namely Menippus’ frustration with the quarrels between philosophers and their inability to answer his questions regarding the universe. While we find Lucian expressing similar frustration in other dialogues, the Hellenistic setting of this dialogue points to the fact that these quarrels are long-standing. As a figure concerned with the contradictory views espoused by philosophers, Menippus represents an important foil for Lucian and his literary project. Yet in setting Menippus within the Hellenistic period, Lucian creates a distance between himself and the protagonist of this dialogue that allows him to compare Menippus’ approach to resolving his philosophical frustrations with that of his own.

Though Menippus’ journey was initially inspired by a desire to learn about the universe, this question is preempted by the problems of the Stoic, Epicurean, and Cynic schools. As Menippus contemplates what he sees below him, the Moon suddenly begs him to carry the following message to Zeus: philosophers are spreading lies about her. Menippus’ focus therefore shifts from discovering the true nature of the universe to
reporting to Zeus the very frustration that sparked his journey.\footnote{In his discussion of this moment in the text, Relihan notes that Menippus has become “dissociated” from the original goal (1993:111).} Once on Olympus, Menippus relates this message to Zeus, who calls an assembly of the gods to discuss the Moon’s complaints the following day. Here it is decided that, while philosophers must be eradicated, the gods will wait until the end of the festival season, a delay that perhaps recalls the postponement of Socrates’ execution \textit{(Phaedo 58a-c)}:

\begin{quote}
“Εσται ταύτα ὡς βουλεύεται, ἔφη, “καὶ πάντες ἐπιτρέψονται αὐτῇ διαλεκτή κή. πλὴν τὸ γε νῦν εἶναι οὐ ἰθέμις κολασθήναι τινα: ἵναμην γάρ ἐστιν, ὡς ἰστε, μηνὸν τούτων τεταρτῶν, καὶ ἥδη τὴν ἐκεχειρίαν περιηγειλάμην. ἔς νέωσα οὖν ἄρχομένου ἥρος κακὸς κακῶς ἀπολούνται τῷ σμερθαλέῳ κεραυνῷ.”
\end{quote}

It shall be as you wish; they shall be annihilated and their dialectic with them, except that right now it is not right to punish anyone, for it is the festival-season, as you know, during the next four months, and I have already sent about to announce a truce. Next year, therefore, at the opening of the spring the wretches shall die a wretched death by the horrible thunderbolt.\textit{” (Icaro.33)}

Following this proclamation, Menippus relates how he was stripped of his wings and returned to earth. His tale and consequently the dialogue conclude with Menippus’ gleeful proclamation to his friend that he is going to the Cerameicus to relate this happy news to the Peripatetic philosophers at the Painted Stoa \textit{(ἄπειμι τοίνυν καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ Ποικίλῃ περιπατοῦσι τοῖς φιλοσόφοις αὐτὰ ταύτα εὐηγγελιούμενος, Icaro. 34).}

\textit{It is important to remember, however, that this text is a dialogue in which, as we have seen, Menippus appears as comic character. Lucian reminds us of this point here at the end of dialogue by attributing to Menippus a basic lack of understanding regarding the different philosophical schools. Within this final proclamation, the participle}
περιπατοῦσι recalls the philosophers of the Peripatetic school, who, as Menippus tells us, are walking around the Painted Stoa, a place commonly associated with the Stoics. Moreover, the Painted Stoa was located in the agora, not the Cerameicus, which was the location of Plato’s Academy. Menippus here appears to have conflated several schools, and this final line has the effect of once again undermining how we interpret the tale of this philosophical figure and its outcome.

Though it is delayed, the end result of Menippus’ journey is the ensuing destruction of philosophers, a result that suggests a certain nihilistic quality of Menippus’ approach to philosophy. As a philosophic figure known for his use of laughter, Menippus represents an important precedent for Lucian’s own project, and Lucian acknowledges this fact in the similarities between Menippus’ dissatisfaction with philosophy and his own. Yet the destructive outcome of Menippus’ journey stands in contrast to the ways in which Lucian regards the effects of his own union of comedy and philosophy in the

Literary Prometheus, Fisherman, and Twice Prosecuted. Although in the Fisherman Lucian attempts to weed the fake philosophers from the true ones by fishing for philosophers off the side of the Acropolis, he characterizes his use of comedy for philosophic purposes as a largely revitalizing force. In the Literary Prometheus and Twice Prosecuted, philosophical dialogue is painted as an obscure genre that is overly focused on lofty forms, notably similar to questions that sparked Menippus’ journey. Similarly, in the Fisherman, Diogenes and the other dead philosophers are painted as out of touch with the realities of philosophical corruption in Lucian’s time. For Lucian, Comedy represents the tool by which he will restore philosophy, yet in this dialogue we
find Menippus happy at the very thought of its destruction. While there are certain core similarities between Lucian and his Cynic foil, the end results prove quite different and we can see Lucian here distancing himself from Menippus.

In this section, we have seen how Lucian questions Menippus’ philosophical merits by presenting us with the reverse of what we saw in the Fisherman: philosophers are not presented in a comic scenario, but rather a figure known for his laughter is cast as figure from Old Comedy and explored in the context of a dialogue. As I have argued, although Lucian establishes Menippus as an important precedent for his own project, he ultimately distances himself from him through his use of Old Comic references in a dialogue format. In the next section we will see Lucian take a different approach to his union of comedy and philosophy in the Parasite. Whereas in the texts discussed up to this point Lucian has presented either historical philosophers, such as Plato, Diogenes, and Menippus, or philosophical personifications, for example that of the Academy or Dialogue, in a scenario indebted to Old Comedy, in the Parasite he depicts the typically comic figure of the parasite within the framework of a dialogue, characterized by highly Stoic language. As I will argue, Lucian uses this representation of a comic figure within a dialogue to directly address one of the conflicts that sparked Menippus’ journeys, namely that of the Stoics and Epicureans and more broadly the very notion of ongoing disagreements between philosophical schools. Through his recasting of a comic character within a philosophical scenario, Lucian reveals both the ridiculousness of these debates and how they represent one of the main sources for the philosophical corruption
of his day. As opposed to Menippus’ destructive tendencies, Lucian offers up his own approach as a welcome alternative to these conflicts.

II. A Comic Character as Philosopher: the Parasite

The *Menippus* and *Icaromenippus*, as I have argued, are dialogues that cast the Cynic Menippus as a comic character within the larger framework of a dialogue. This is a different format from that of the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted*, which presented philosophers within a framework borrowed from Old Comedy. Though Lucian’s “Menippean” dialogues invert the model of the *Fisherman* and *Twice Prosecuted*, their comic and philosophic elements explore the merits of Menippus’ approach in a similar fashion to Lucian’s treatment of Diogenes and the personification of the various schools in the previous chapter. In this section, I will examine the *Parasite* as a third variation on the genre of the “comic dialogue,” in which we find Lucian pulling a character from comedy and inserting him into a philosophical scenario. To briefly summarize this text, the parasite Simon seeks to convince Lucian’s persona, Tychiades, that the act of being a parasite is a ηέρλε, which surpasses all others, including rhetoric and philosophy.

Whereas the previously discussed dialogues took up a specific philosophical figure, school, or tenet, such as *parrhesia*, this dialogue focuses not on a philosophical figure but the comic one of a parasite. In presenting this comic character, however, Lucian subverts our expectations by attributing to him not the language of comedy but that of a Stoic philosopher. As Nesselrath has shown, Simon’s attempts to define the parasitic τέχνη draws on a particularly Stoic style of argumentation only to assert that its value as a τέχνη
derives from the pleasure it affords its practitioner, a decidedly un-Stoic ideal.\footnote{For a discussion of the philosophical resonances found in Lucian’s discussion of τεχνη, see Nesselrath (1985:123-156).} Lucian’s attribution of such conflicting arguments to a comic character allows him, as I will show, to address not a single philosophical figure but the conflict between the Stoic and Epicurean schools. Although ostensibly about the parasitic art, this dialogue uses the combination of comic and philosophic elements to interrogate the value of these philosophical disagreements. Lucian’s answer, as I will suggest, is that they are ultimately futile, and in mocking them, Lucian once again offers himself and his comic dialogues up as an alternative.

Lucian achieves this, however, not simply through the comic figure of Simon but through his persona, Tychiades. In the \textit{Fisherman} and the \textit{Twice Prosecuted}, we saw how the figures of Parrhesiades and the Syrian reflect the larger concerns found within these texts regarding Lucian’s claim to free speech and outsider status respectively.\footnote{As Said has suggested, a common feature of Lucian’s writing is the complex and playful ways he inserts either the authorial “I” into his texts or figures, such as Parrhesiades and the Syrian, intended to invoke an authorial image. For a discussion of all of Lucian’s various personae, see Said (1993).} Though he also appears in the \textit{Lover of Lies}, a dialogue in which Tychiades questions the veracity of ghost stories, Tychiades differs from Parrhesiades and the Syrian in that he is not the central character in the \textit{Parasite} but Simon’s interlocutor. This reversal of our expectations, as I will argue, suggests that Lucian is emphasizing the importance of the dialogue itself, rather than one particular character. To illustrate this point, I will begin my discussion with the figure of Simon the parasite: first as a stock character from comedy and then as a Lucianic character whose presence in this dialogue undermines the
seriousness of the rivalry between the Stoics and Epicureans. I will then conclude my discussion with the figure of Tychiades. Just as Parrhesiades’ name emphasizes parrhesia in the Fisherman, Tychiades’ highlights τύχη in this dialogue, a focus that has led Nesselrath to contend that Tychiades is more suited for the Lover of Lies than the Parasite. While Tychiades’ name and its emphasis on chance may initially appear disconnected from the subject matter of the dialogue, I will argue that it recalls the different philosophical interpretations of τύχη, thus reflecting the philosophic conflict found in Simon’s language. Unlike in the Fisherman and the Twice Prosecuted, the Parasite does not offer a definition of Lucian’s comedic-philosophical approach, but enacts it. In this enactment of it, Lucian challenges the established philosophical schools at the same time as he offers himself as a welcome alternative.

The Character of the Parasite

In the context of the Parasite, Lucian’s debt to comedy appears not in the dialogue’s scenario or language, but in its central figure of Simon the parasite. The parasite is a stock character from Middle and New Comedy that, as Nesselrath has argued, has its origins in the figure of the flatter (θόιαμ) of Old Comedy.44 Nesselrath’s arguments for the connection between the κόλαξ and the parasite rest heavily on a passage found in Athenaeus’ Deipnosophistés, in which one of the participants in Athenaeus’ dinner party, Plutarchus, reports that the ancient poets initially referred to the parasite as κόλαξ

---

44 For a complete account of the comic character of the κόλαξ, as well as its development into the parasite, see Nesselrath (1985:88-111). According to Athenaeus’ character Plutarchus, the parasite was not originally a comic character, but a temple attendant (Deipn. 6.26).
To support this point, Plutarchus points to the fact that Eupolis wrote a play entitled *Flatterers*, which he takes as proof that the parasite was not an uncommon figure in the plays of Old Comedy. From the little that survives of Eupolis’ play, it seems to have centered on the character of Callias and his newly inherited wealth. In addition to Eupolis’ play, we also possess several Aristophanic fragments in which the character of the κόλαξ is featured. While one depicts a parasite picking dandruff off his host’s cloak and grey hairs from his beard, others show the κόλαξ removing fuzz from his patron’s cloak and committing perjury for him.

From these fragments, it becomes clear that, as the precedent for the parasite, the κόλαξ is characterized by his willingness to debase himself by performing demeaning and even unlawful tasks for a reward. It is ultimately this readiness to demean himself that led to the development of the character of the parasite. In her discussion of how this character type developed, Damon notes that the term parasite does not appear in Old Comedy, but arose in Middle Comedy from a joke concerning the κόλαξ’s desire to always be near food, hence παράσιτος. It is believed that this joke eventually led to the development of two different character types: the κόλαξ, who typically appears as an obsequious follower, and the parasite, who was driven largely by a desire for food.

---

45 Although few details are known about this play, the third hypothesis to Aristophanes’ *Peace* records that Eupolis’ κόλαξ won first prize at the City Dionysia in 421 BCE, where it defeated the *Peace*. (ἐνίκησε δὲ τὸ δράματι ὁ ποιητὴς ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Ἀλκαίου ἐν ἀστεί. πρῶτος Εὔπολις Κόλαξ.) For a discussion of this, see Storey (2003: 179-183).
46 Kassel and Austin fr. 416 and 659. See also *Knights* 869-911. For a discussion of this, see Nesselrath (1985: 92-99) and Damon (1998: 30).
47 See Damon (1998: 12) and Nesselrath (1985: 99). The prevalence of the parasite in Middle Comedy, however, is difficult to discern given the fact that our evidence is based largely on the discussion of the parasite found in Athenaeus, where poets such as Alexis and Plato Comicus are quoted, (6.234-48).
According to Nesselrath, the distinction between these two character types continued in New and Roman comedy.\textsuperscript{49} From this brief summary of the development of this character type, we can begin to see how Simon the parasite is a distinctly comic character type that Lucian has transplanted into the context of a philosophical dialogue.

**Lucian’s Parasite: Simon the Stoic?**

As a figure rooted in the comic tradition, Lucian’s parasite is striking given the philosophical language he adopts throughout the dialogue. At the opening of the dialogue, Tychiades mocks Simon with the following question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \text{τί ποτε ἄρα, ὦ Σίμων, οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι ἀνθρώποι καὶ ἐλεύθεροι καὶ δοῦλοι τέ χνην ἔκαστός τινα ἐπιστάνται δι’ ἣς αὐτοῖς τέ εἰσιν καὶ ἄλλω χρήσιμοι, σοῦ δὲ, ὦς ἔοικεν, ἔργον οὐδὲν ἔχεις δι’ ὦ σοι ἄν τι ἢ αὐτὸς ἑπόναιο ἢ ἄλλος μεταδοίης?}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why is it, Simon, that other men, both freedmen and slaves, each know some craft through which they are useful to themselves and others, but you, as it seems, have no work through which you yourself in some way profit or you give something to another person? (Parasite 1)

Though Simon initially admits that he lacks the knowledge of a traditional τέχνη, such as medicine, rhetoric, or philosophy, he eventually concedes that he does in fact posses a τέχνη, namely that of being a parasite. The language of Tychiades’ opening question and Simon’s response signals that this dialogue is engaged in the traditional distinction between τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη that we find in Plato, Aristotle, and the surviving fragments of Stoic writers.\textsuperscript{50} While Nesselrath has highlighted the full range of philosophical

\textsuperscript{49} Nesselrath (1985: 99-111).

\textsuperscript{50} Though Plato’s Socrates often invokes various τέχναι in support of an argument, it is hard to distinguish a definition of these terms which holds true across the Platonic corpus. At times, the two terms can appear
influences on this dialogue, Robinson has argued that Simon’s act of defining the lifestyle of a parasite as a τέχνη reveals a debt to Plato’s Gorgias and its attempts to define rhetoric as a τέχνη.\(^5\) In contrast to these approaches, I will focus on Simon’s specifically Stoic language and examine how Lucian uses the inherent incongruity found between this language and the comic character voicing it to undermine not just Stoicism but its conflict with Epicureanism as well.

The Stoic nature of Simon’s language appears in his definition of the parasitic art, his use of Homeric exempla as supporting evidence, and the ways in which he reinterprets that evidence. Beginning with a general discussion, Simon offers the following broad definition of what constitutes a τέχνη: τέχνη ἐστὶν, ὡς ἐγὼ διάμηνημονεὺω σοφοῦ τινὸς ἁκούσας, σύστημα ἐκ καταλήψεων συγγεγυμνασμένων πρὸς τι τέλος εὐχρηστον τῷ βίῳ (An art is, as I remember distinctly hearing from some wise man, a system of perceptions exercised together towards some useful end in life, 4).

As scholars have noted, Simon’s words here are striking similar to a definition of τέχνη attributed to Zeno by Sextus Empiricus’ (Πᾶσα τοῖνον τέχνη σύστημα ἐστιν ἐκ καταλήψεων συγγεγυμνασμένων καὶ ἐπὶ τέλος εὐχρηστον τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ to be interchangeable. In the Charmides, for example, Socrates argues that medicine is the doctor’s τέχνη and consequently represents the ἐπιστήμη or knowledge of health, (165c). Aristotle, on the other hand, in book six of the Nichomachean Ethics divides the rational soul into two parts: the calculating half (τὸ λογιστικόν) and the scientific half (τὸ ἐπιστημονικόν, 1139a5-15). He then further divides the scientific half into five separate parts: τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, and νοῦς, (NE 1139b15). These subcategories indicate that at least for Aristotle there was an important distinction between the practical knowledge of a τέχνη and the more theoretical knowledge of ἐπιστήμη. While we find discussions of these two terms in the works of Plato and Aristotle, it is not until the development of Stoicism that we find a theory expressed about the relationship of these two terms. For a full discussion of the development of these terms, see Long (1974: 124-131), Schofield (1980: 283-308), and Nesselrath (1985:144-156). \(^5\) Robinson (1979: 27).
Although it is difficult to discern the exact relationship between Lucian’s text and the Adversus Mathematicos in which this definition is found, the similarities between these two definitions nonetheless suggest that Lucian here may be referencing a standard definition that either was or came to be associated with Zeno.

One particularly Stoic quality of Simon’s definition appears in his assertion that a τέχνη results from perceptions (ἐκ καταλήψεων). A significant word within the Stoic philosophy, *kataleipsis* is integral to how the Stoics regarded the acquisition of knowledge. As Schofield notes, Zeno stands in “marked contrast” to the rejection of the senses by the Skeptics and Epicureans in his theory of *phantasia kataleiptikē* or ‘apprehensive presentation,’ which contended that “an impression is caused by a real external object and accurately represents it.”

For example, among the surviving fragments attributed to Zeno, we find knowledge defined as something that is grasped or apprehended: εἶναι τὴν ἐπιστήμην κατάληψιν ἀσφαλῆ καὶ ἀμετάπτωτον ύπὸ λόγου, (knowledge is a secure and unchanging apprehension by reason, SVF 68). According to Sextus Empiricus, for the Stoics, knowledge (φρόνεσις) provides the τέχνη for life: οἱ δὲ Στοικοὶ καὶ ἀντικρύς φασι τὴν φρόνησιν, ἐπιστήμην οὖσαν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν καὶ οὐδετέρων, τέχνην ὑπάρχειν περὶ τὸν βίον, (And the Stoics openly say that practical wisdom, being the knowledge of good, evil, and neither, that provides an initial craft for

---

53 Schofield (1980: 284). See also Diogenes Laertius, VII 45-6, 49.
54 Diogenes Laertius records a similar definition: ἐπιστήμην εἶναι τὴν ἀσφαλῆ καὶ βεβαίαν καὶ ἀμετάθετον ύπὸ λόγου κατάληψιν, VII.47. For a discussion of the Stoic’s theory of knowledge, see Long (1974:123-131).
life, *Adversus Mathematicos* 11.170). If we return to Simon’s definition of τέχνη (τέχνη ἐστίν, ὡς ἡγῇ διαμνημονεύων σοφοῦ τινος ἀκούσας, σύστημα ἐκ καταλήψεων συγγεγμνασιμένων πρὸς τι τέλος εὐχρηστον τῷ βίῳ), we can begin to see the Stoic, yet comic, guise that Simon fashions for himself. As he defines τέχνη, Simon cites as his source a certain wise man (σοφοῦ τινος), suggesting that, while this is a standard definition, he cannot remember its actual source. Instead, he is repeating something he heard, perhaps while hoping for food, and does not actually understand it. This is evidenced by how he will come to interpret the adjective εὐχρηστον. Whereas the passage from Sextus Empiricus contends that every τέχνη arises from kataleipsis, Simon’s definition speaks of τέχνη as a whole, the use of which, as we will see, comes in its ability to receive handouts. He is not a real philosopher, but instead a comic figure adopting a mock philosophical guise.

As the dialogue progresses, Simon assumes the Socratic role of leading Tychiades, his interlocutor, through the argument that the parasitic τέχνη is valuable and worth practicing. After first defining it as a τέχνη, Simon goes on to show that, since a parasite must be able to distinguish between those who will feed him and those who will not, the parasitic art is valuable for its ability to distinguish between men who are fakes and good men, (διακρίνειν τούς τε κιβδήλους τῶν ἄνθρώπων καὶ τοὺς ἀγαθούς, 4). In Simon’s opinion, this ability to discern between good men and charlatans makes the parasitic art better than that of divination and as such reflects one of Lucian’s foremost concerns, namely the importance of being able to distinguish between true philosophers

and fakes. As a figure who claims to be able to detect charlatans, Simon is representative of Lucian’s project and similarly straddles the divide between comedy and philosophy. He is a stock figure from comedy, yet is well-versed in the language of philosophy. On the most basic level, the incongruity of Simon’s character type and language is intended to be funny. Yet, on another, it reflects Lucian’s own project, since like Lucian’s account of his work, Simon’s powers of discernment stem from comedy. As the only parasite presented in this text, Simon necessarily represents the embodiment of the parasitic art and, as a figure that unites comedy and philosophy, he reinforces the arguments made in the *Fisherman* and the *Twice Prosecuted* that Lucian’s blend of comedy and philosophy will effectively reveal true philosophers from the fakes. The arguments made in this text for the value of the parasitic τέχνη, while clearly ironic, reinforce Lucian’s claim to the value of his comic approach to philosophy.

The comic incongruities found in this text, however, are not limited to Simon’s status as a stock character from comedy and his Stoic language, but also include the types of arguments that he uses that language to make. As we have seen, Simon’s initial arguments are concerned with defining ἡ παρασιτική according to an apparently established definition of a τέχνη. While Tychiades agrees with Simon’s arguments, he nonetheless asks Simon to define ἡ παρασιτική according to the previously accepted definition of a τέχνη: ὀρθῶς σὺ γε λέγων. δοκεῖ γὰρ δὴ μοι οὕτως ἄν μάλιστα ὀρίζω: παρασιτική ἐστιν τέχνη ποτέων καὶ βρωτέων καὶ τῶν διὰ ταῦτα λεκτέων καὶ πρακτέων, τέλος δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ ἥδυ. (Right. It seems to me that the definition might best be expressed thus: Parasitic is that art which is concerned with food and drink and what must be said
and done to obtain them, and its τέλος is pleasure, 9). In this reiteration of the definition, Simon once again employs decidedly Stoic language, but now attributes to this art the τέλος or purpose of pleasure (τὸ ἡξού). As an end result, pleasure is not usually associated with the Stoic school but rather the Epicureans. Tychiades draws our attention to this fact by offering the following response: ὑπέρεινε μοι δοκεῖς ὁρίσασθαι τὴν σεαυτοῦ τέχνην· ἀλλ’ ἔκεινο σκόπει, μὴ πρὸς ἐνίους τῶν φιλοσόφων μάχη σοι περὶ τοῦ τέλος ὧν. (My very noble friend, you seem to me to define your art, but consider this, namely that in the eyes of some philosophers there might be fight about your τέλος, 9). Tychiades’ use of τέλος here functions on two levels: in its most immediate sense, it refers to the τέλος of pleasure just stated by Simon, while at the same time it points more abstractly to the disagreement among philosophers concerning the τέλος of life, namely philosophy.

In an attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction between Simon’s language and arguments, Nesselrath has suggested that Simon’s reference to pleasure is not intended to invoke the Epicureans, but rather looks ahead to the reference to εὐδαίμονία in the subsequent lines, (Καὶ μὴν ἀπόχρη γε ἐξέρ ςται τὸ αὐτὸ τέλος εὐδαίμονίας καὶ παρασιτικῆς, Par. 9-10). Although Simon does later contend that the τέλος of the parasitic art is εὐδαίμονία, we should not discount Tychiades’ earlier statement regarding the philosophical battle (μάχη) that Simon’s words might incite. Rather than attempt to explain away these apparent contradictions, I would like to suggest here that they are in fact the point. Lucian has created in Simon the parasite a comic character whose attempts

at defining his own philosophical approach in fact embody the conflict between the Epicureans and the Stoics. In the *Twice Prosecuted*, we saw how Lucian enacted this conflict in the case involving the Stoa and Pleasure, who is represented by Epicurus. Despite the fact that Pleasure and Epicurus win unanimously, the Stoa proclaims that he will appeal to Zeus and this lack of resolution implies that Lucian regarded the conflict between the two schools as unending and ultimately unproductive. In the context of the *Parasite*, this conflict appears in the very language of Simon, who adopts Stoic and Epicurean tropes to argue for the superiority of what is essentially the art of being a comic character. Lucian here mocks this conflict by subjugating it to comedy, an act which effectively offers comedy, specifically his own philosophical appropriation of it, as its solution.

Although Tychiades points to the fact that Simon’s Stoic language seemingly jars with the role of pleasure in the parasitic art, Simon does not concede this apparent contradiction, but turns instead to Homer for further proof. Since Simon has thus far adopted a Stoic guise for himself, it will be useful first to discuss briefly the admittedly complex question of how the Stoics approached Homer so as to contextualize Simon’s reliance on him. Our understanding of Stoic interpretations of Homer stems largely from Cornutus’ etymological readings of Greek mythology and a story concerning Zeno preserved by Diogenes Laertius.\(^5\) At the opening of his life of Zeno, Diogenes Laertius records that the philosopher consulted an oracle about what he should do to obtain the best life. The oracle responded that he should be in contact with the dead, (εἰ

---

\(^5\) For a discussion of this, see Long (2001: 58-85).
ζπγρξσηίδνηην (ὅθεν ξυνέντα τά τῶν ἀρχαίων ἀναγινώσκειν, 7.2). Citing Hecaton of Rhodes, a Stoic philosopher, and Apollonius of Tyre as his sources, Diogenes uses this anecdote to characterize Zeno as a philosopher who does not reject the merits of the poets, as his Epicurean and Cynic counterparts did.\(^{59}\) Besides this tale, Diogenes Laertius also records among the works attributed to Zeno five books of Homeric questions (Προβλημάτα Ὄμηρικῶν πέντε) and a work on reading poetry (Περὶ ποιητικῆς ἄκροσεως).

From this list of works, it has generally been assumed that, unlike their Epicurean and Cynic counterparts, the Stoics read in particular Homer and Hesiod as allegories in support for their own philosophical doctrines.\(^{60}\) In his explanation of the Stoic approach to the poets, Long has suggested that “the Stoics did not regard the times in which they were living as specifically privileged in their share of divine \textit{logos}. Their allegorical interpretations of the poets were based on the assumption that Homer and Euripides, Hesiod and Sophocles were also living in a world governed by the principles operative in Zeno’s day, and were seeking to express insights which the Stoics themselves had systematically grasped.”\(^{61}\) Zeno, for example, is reported to have interpreted Hesiod’s chaos as water and thus used Hesiod as proof of the role that the Stoics attribute to “primal moisture” in the creation of the universes, (καὶ Ζήνων δὲ τὸ παρ’ Ἡσιόδῳ χάος ὑδωρ εἶναι φήσιν, οὗ συνιζάνοντος ἑλεν γίνεσθαι, ἣς πηγνυμένης ἢ γῆ στερεμιοῦται.

---

\(^{59}\) According to Long, the Epicureans and Cynics were hostile to the poets because of their status within the \textit{paideia} of the period. See Long (1980: 164-5).

\(^{60}\) Long (1980:165).

\(^{61}\) Long (1980: 165). See also Tate (1929), Pepin (1958: 105), and Lamberton (1986:11-16). Boys-Stones notes that this trend can be traced to the Pre-Socratic’s, but argues that Stoic allegory went beyond justifying their place at the center of Greek culture, but played an apologetic role as well. See Boys-Stones (2001: 32).
tritén δὲ Ἐρωτα γεγονέναι καθ’ Ἡσίοδον, ἵνα τὸ πῦρ παραστήσῃ· πυρωδέστερον γὰρ πάθος Ἐρωτ. SVF 104). 62 Though Zeno is here attested as using Hesiod to illustrate his argument, Long has recently called into question the prevalent view that the Stoics read Homer allegorically, contending that either we do not possess enough evidence or that their readings were more akin to etymologies such as those found in Cornutus. 63 Whether all Stoics read Homer as allegory, however, does not in the end detract from the point that the tradition surrounding Zeno records that he sought precedents for his own theories within the works of the poets, in particular Homer. 64 This point will become useful when we consider how Simon invokes Homer and specifically the figure of Odysseus as evidence of the superiority of the parasitic art.

Despite Tychiades’ concern regarding the apparent contradiction in Simon’s language and arguments, Simon is not dissuaded, but turns to the Odyssey to illustrate his point:

ο γὰρ σοφὸς Ὀμήρος τὸν τοῦ παρασίτου βίον θαυμάζων ὡς ἄρα μακάριος καὶ ζηλωτὸς εἰς μόνος, οὕτω φησίν·
οὐ γὰρ ἔγγοι τὰ χρήματα οὗδεστερον εἶναι,
ἦ ὡς ἀν εὐφροσύνη μὲν ἔχῃ κάτα δῆμον ἁπάντα,
δαιμονίας δ’ ἀνά δώματ’ ἄκοψων ἄοιδοῦ
ἡμενοι ἔξεις, παρά δὲ πλῆθωσι τράπεζαι
σίτου καὶ κρείτων, μέθυ δ’ ἐκ κρητήρος ἀφύσσων
οἰνοχόδος φορέσι καὶ ἐγχείη δεπάσσαι.

62 For further discussion of this, see Long (1980: 164).
63 See Long (2001: 58-85). In this essay, Long argues against what he sees as the established view of how the Stoics read Homer. For examples of these views, see De Lacy (1948), Pfeiffer (1968), as well as Long’s own 1980 essay. Boys-Stones similarly argues that the issue is more complex than has been previously recognized. See Boys-Stones (2001: 31-43).
64 By Lucian’s day, allegorical readings of Homer were a common practice and not limited to the Stoics. For a discussion of this, see Lamberton (1986). For a discussion of Homer in the Second Sophistic, see Zeitlin (2001).
καὶ ὡς οὔχ ἰκανὸς ταῦτα θαυμάζων μᾶλλον τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην ποιεῖ φανεροτέραν εὐ λέγον·
τοῦτο τί μοι κάλλιστον ἕνι φρεσίν εἰδεται εἶναι,
οὔχ ἐτερόν τι, εξ ἧν φησίν, ἢ τὸ παρασιτεῖν εὐδαίμον νομίζων.

For the wise Homer admired the life of a parasite on the grounds that he alone is blessed and enviable, and he says the following: “Nothing we do is sweeter than this— a cheerful gathering of all the people sitting side by side throughout the halls, feasting and listening to a singer of tales, the tables filled with food and drink, the server drawing wine from the bowl and bringing it around to fill our cups.” And if this were not enough to express his admiration he makes his own opinion more evident: “For me, this is the finest thing in the world.” From what he says, he counts nothing else happy but to be a parasite. \(\text{Parasite 10}\)

Taken from the opening of book nine of the \textit{Odyssey}, these lines were originally spoken by Odysseus as he responds to Demodocus’ description of the Trojan horse. Homer, however, is a frequent source for Lucian, and on the surface there is nothing inherently unusual about this passage, except perhaps its length.\textsuperscript{65} Like his initial definition of a \textit{τέχνη}, which he claims to have heard from a wise man, Simon here characterizes Homer as \textit{σοφός}, indicating that he has assumed a role analogous to that of the anonymous philosopher cited by Simon in his initial definition of \textit{τέχνη}.\textsuperscript{66} In his reading of Homer as a wise man, Simon has replaced their original context with a new pseudo-philosophical one. He is, as it were, providing Tychiades with a kind of allegorical reading of Homer, albeit one according to the parasitic \textit{τέχνη}.

In his “parasitic” reinterpretation of the opening of book nine, Simon fixates on Odysseus’ claim that the banquet represents \textit{τὸ τέλος χαριέστερον} and uses this assertion

\textsuperscript{65} See Nesselrath (1985:299-301).
\textsuperscript{66} As Boys-Stones (2001) notes, the Stoics in fact did not label poets as philosophers, a point which highlights the fact that Simon is merely assuming the guise of a philosopher (34).
to argue that Odysseus is himself a proto-parasite, thus proving the superiority of the parasitic art. To make this point, however, Simon first demonstrates how Odysseus could be read as Stoic or Epicurean and how neither of these interpretations is in line with Odysseus’ assertion in book nine. Beginning with Odysseus as a potential Stoic paradigm, Simon points to the hardships suffered by Odysseus:

καίτοι γε εἶπερ ἐβούλετο Ὅδυσσεως τὸ κατὰ τοὺς Στοικοὺς ἐπαινεῖν τέλος, ἐδύνατο ταύτι λέγειν ὅτε τὸν Φιλοκτήτην ἀνήγαγεν ἐκ τῆς Λήμνου, ὅτε τὸ Ἰλιον ἐξεπόρθησεν, ὅτε τοὺς Ἑλλήνας φεύγοντας κατέσχεν, ὅτε εἰς Τροίαν εἰσῆλθεν ἐαυτὸν μαστιγώσας καὶ κακὰ καὶ Στοικὰ ῥάκη ἔνδος· ἀλλὰ τότε οὐκ ἐπε τοῦτο τέλος χαριέστερον.

After all, if Odysseus had wished to commend the Stoic end, he could have said so when he brought Philoctetes back from Lemnos, when he sacked Troy, when he checked the Greeks in their flight, when he entered Troy after flogging himself and putting on wretched Stoic rags; but on these occasions he did not call that a more delightful end! (Parasite 10)

For Simon, war and misfortune are indicative of the Stoic τέλος and the fact that Odysseus did not consider it to be pleasant proves his point that the parasitic art and the pleasure that results from it makes it superior to all other ways of life. In contrast to this passage, Simon presents Odysseus as a potential Epicurean figure by drawing on moments in his mythology in which pleasure is emphasized.

ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἐν τῷ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων βίῳ γενόμενος αὖθις παρὰ τῇ Καλυψο, ὅτε αὐτὸν ὑπῆρχεν ἐν ἄργῳ τε βιοτεύειν καὶ τρυφᾶν καὶ βινεῖν τὴν Ἀτλαντος θυγατέρα καὶ κυνείν πάσας τὰς λείας κινήσεις, οὐδὲ τότε εἶπε τοῦτο τὸ τέλος χαριέστερον, ἀλλὰ τὸν τῶν παρασίτων βίον. ἐκαλούντο δὲ δαιτυμόνες οἱ παράσιτοι τότε.

Moreover, after he had entered in the Epicurean life once more in Calypso’s isle, when he had it in his power to live in idleness and luxury, to dally with the daughter of Atlas, and to enjoy every pleasurable

---

67 The original Homeric line is as follows: ὥ γὰρ ἐγὼ γέ τι φημι τέλος χαριέστερον εἶναι (For I say that there is no more pleasing end, IX.5).
emotion, even then he did not call that end more delightful, but the life of a parasite, who at that time was called a banqueter. (Parasite 10)

From these reinterpretations of the figure of Odysseus, Simon demonstrates how the two schools can appropriate the same figure as evidence of their philosophical approach. These passages thus serve as paradigms for Simon’s own “parasitic” interpretation of Odysseus’ comment found at the opening of book nine of the Odyssey that the banquet brings the most delightful end (τὸ τέλος χαριστέρατον).

In appropriating Stoic and Epicurean language to define the parasitic τέχνη as a philosophic approach, Simon uses Odysseus to take particular aim at the Epicureans, arguing that Epicurus plagiarized the idea that the τέλος of a philosophical life is εὐδαιμονία from the parasitic τέχνη, (11). To prove this point, Simon offers the following clarification of the parasitic τέλος:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ηδὺ πρῶτον μὲν τὸ τῆς σαρκὸς ἀόχλημα, ἔπειτα τὸ μή θ' ορύβου καὶ ταραχῆς τὴν ψυχὴν ἐμπεπλῆθαι. τούτων τοῖν εἷν νόμον μὲν παράσιτος ἐκατέρων τυγχάνει, οὗ δὲ Ἐπίκουρος οὐδὲ θατέρου· γὰρ ζητών περί σχήματος γῆς καὶ κόσμου ἀπειρίας καὶ μεγέθους ἡλίου καὶ ἀποστημάτων καὶ πρώτων στοιχείων καὶ περί θεῶν, εἴτε εἰσίν εἴτε οὐκ εἰσίν, καὶ περί αὐτοῦ τοῦ τέλους οὐδὲ πολεμῶν καὶ διαφερόμενος πρὸς τινας οὐ μόνον ἐν ἀνθρωπίναις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν κοσμικάς ἐστίν ὀχλήσειν. οὗ δὲ παράσιτος πάντα καλῶς ἔχειν οἰόμενος καὶ πεπιστηκός μή ἄλλος τούτα ἔχειν ἀμείνον ἢ ἔχει, μετὰ πολλῆς ἀδείας καὶ γαλήνης, οὐδενὸς αὐτῷ τοιούτου παρενοχλοῦντος, ἐσθείει καὶ κοιμᾶται ὑπίπτων ἀφεικός τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ὡσπερ Ὄδυσσειδες τῆς Σχέριας ἀποπλέων οἰκάδε.

I for my part consider that pleasure is first of all the freedom of the flesh from discomfort, and secondly, not having the spirit full of turbulence and commotion. Now then, each of these things is attained by the parasite, but neither by Epicurus. For with his inquires about the shape of the earth, the infinitude of the universe, the magnitude of the sun, distances in space, primal elements, and whether the gods exist or not, and with his continual strife and bickering with certain persons about the end itself, he is involved not only in the troubles of man but in those of the universe. The
parasite, however, thinking that everything is all right and thoroughly convinced it would not be any better if it were other than as it is, eats and sleeps in great peace and comfort, with nothing of that sort annoying him, flat on his back, with his arms and legs flung out, like Odysseus sailing home to Scheria. \textit{(Parasite} 11) \\

As Nesselrath notes about this passage, Simon draws heavily on the language of Epicureanism, specifically his definition of pleasure, to refute Epicurus by suggesting that it is not through Epicurus that one can achieve pleasure but rather through the parasitic art.\textsuperscript{68} In making this claim, Lucian has Simon situate himself on a level with Epicurus, only to reject Epicurus’ concern for cosmological questions in favor of a life devoted to eating and sleeping in comfort. In our discussion of the development of the parasite as a comic figure, we saw how he came to be characterized by a drive for food and the finer things in life. Though Simon supplants Epicurus with himself, his philosophical approach is nothing more than the typical image of a parasite. Simon’s use of Stoic language to contest Epicurus mocks these types of debates at the same time as it suggests that, if a comic parasite can appropriate philosophical language, there is something inherently wrong with this type of philosophy.

Through the figure of Simon, Lucian challenges the status quo of philosophy by no longer restricting Simon’s attacks to solely the Stoics and Epicureans, but broadening them to include the practice as whole. As the dialogue continues, Simon asserts that in fact the parasitic τέχνη surpasses all others, including philosophy.\textsuperscript{69} Among Simon’s criticisms of philosophy is the fact that the different schools do not all maintain the same

\textsuperscript{68} Nesselrath (1985:311).

\textsuperscript{69} According to Nesselrath, Simon’s critique of rhetoric may be rooted in Philodemus’ \textit{On Rhetoric} and as such reignites the tension between rhetoric and philosophy that we find in Plato and the subsequent philosophic traditions, (1985:143-156).
opinion about the value of rhetoric, which has the effect of calling into question the very existence of the subject (29-30). The parasitic τέχνη, however, holds true for both Greeks and Barbarians and it is without sects:

οὐδὲ εἰσιν ὡς ἔσκεν ἐν παρασίτωις τινες οἶνον Στωϊκοὶ ἢ Ἑπικούρειοι δόγμα ἀτα ἔχοντες διάφορα, ἀλλὰ πάσῃ πρὸς ἄπαντας ὁμολογία τῖς ἔστιν καὶ συμφωνία τῶν ἔργων καὶ τοῦ τέλους. ὡστε ἐμοιγε δοκεῖ ἡ παρασιτική κινδυνεύειν κατὰ γε τοῦτο καὶ σοφία εἶναι.

Nor are there, it seems, among parasites any sects like the Stoics or the Epicureans, holding different doctrines; no, there is concord among them all and agreement in their works and in their end. So to my thinking Parasitic may well be, in this respect at least, actually wisdom. (Parasite 30)

Through Simon, Lucian here faults the divisions among philosophy in a manner similar to what we saw in the Twice Prosecuted. In that text, Lucian used the comic agon and Cratinus’ Wine Flask to highlight the absurdity of such quarrels. Likewise in the Parasite he uses the comic character of Simon to point to what he sees as the problems that arise out of the disagreements between the philosophical schools. By presenting Simon as a comic alternative to this problem, Lucian once again demonstrates how he uses comedy to call for a new approach to an ongoing problem. Though the parasitic τέχνη is clearly absurd, this exercise of defining it in relationship to the established schools focuses our attention on how these schools fail to provide answers.

As we have seen thus far, the dialogue presented in this text is largely one-sided with the comic figure of Simon presenting arguments about the parasitic τέχνη and Tychiades, for the most part, assenting to each of them. By shaping the dialogue in this way, Lucian draws our attention to Simon and his arguments, while Tychiades plays a supporting role. As I mentioned above, Nesselrath interprets Tychiades and the emphasis
his name places on τὸχη as out of place in the Parasite and generally better suited for the ghost stories found in the Lover of Lies, the only other dialogue in which he appears.70

Nesselrath’s problem with Tychiades’ presence in this text derives largely from his complacency to Simon’s arguments. In response to Nesselrath’s concerns, I would like to suggest here that Tychiades’ role as interlocutor is in fact significant because, like Menippus’ anonymous companions, he is in a role analogous to our own and shapes our reactions to Simon’s arguments. It is ultimately through his character that we witness how Lucian undermines arguments about the superiority of a particular philosophical approach. I will therefore conclude my analysis of the Parasite with a brief discussion of Tychiades, his role within the dialogue, and finally the significance of his name.

Tychiades

Although Tychiades begins the dialogue by mocking Simon for his lack of a τέχνη, once Simon agrees to engage in the dialogue, Tychiades’ role is limited to one of two functions: raising questions that help direct the dialogue and providing statements of assent. In terms of the first category of responses, these are generally questions of clarification or ones designed to push Simon’s point further. For example, upon Simon’s critique of the lack of agreement among the respective philosophies, Tychiades asks the following question: πάνυ μοι δοκείς ἵκανός ταῦτα εἱρηκέναι. ὡς δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα χείρων ἐστίν ἢ φιλοσοφίας τῆς σῆς τέχνης, πῶς ἀποδεικνύεις; (You seem to me have spoken these things very well. But how do you prove that philosophy is inferior to your art in

other ways, 31). As for the second category of responses, Tychiades’ statements of assent can vary from simple one-line responses, such as νῇ Δία, κἀμοι δοκεῖ, (by Zeus, it seems to me, 13), to longer statements intended to encourage Simon in the course of his argument. For example, Simon contends that parasites are preferable in war to philosophers because philosophers are inexperienced in war and are cowards, (38-9). This assertion provokes Tychiades to laugh: ὡς οὖ μέτρων ἄγιδα καταγγέλλεις τῶν ἀνδρῶν· καὶ ἔσχη πάλαι γελῶ κατ’ ἐμαυτόν ἐννοῶν ποῖς ἂν εἶ ἁμβαλλόμενος παρασίτῳ φιλόσοφος. (You mock the contest of manhood excessively. I myself for a long time have laughed to myself thinking how a philosopher would compare to a parasite, 39). Tychiades’ response to Simon here is to laugh at him and the verb καταγγέλλεις recalls how Lucian characterizes his own style of humor in the Fisherman and Twice Prosecuted. This response to Simon, however, is also suggestive of our own reaction to this moment and the dialogue as a whole. Like Tychiades, we laugh at the image drawn by Simon, but on a broader level we also laugh at the very exercise that Simon is engaged in.

Perhaps Tychiades’ most telling response, however, is his final one. Upon concluding his account of the parasitic art, Tychiades questions whether the name παρασίτικη is in fact the right label for it (60). In response to Tychiades’ question, Simon proceeds to explain that it is the appropriate name because it involves eating food with (παρά) others. This explanation provokes Tychiades to offer one final assessment of Simon’s argument:

όμολογεῖν ἀνάγκη, καὶ σοὶ λοιπὸν ὄσπερ οἱ παῖδες ἄφιξομαι καὶ ἐδῶς καὶ μετ’ ἄριστον μαθησόμενος τὴν τέχνην. σὺ δὲ με αὕτην δίκαιος
I cannot but agree. Hereafter I shall go to you like a schoolboy both in the morning and after luncheon to learn your art. You, for your part, ought to teach me ungrudgingly, for I shall be your first pupil. They say that mothers love their first children more. (61)

In his discussion of Lucian’s conclusion to this dialogue, Nesselrath finds Tychiades’ eagerness to follow Simon problematic because of an earlier comment made by Simon that the parasitic art is acquired not by teaching but divine inspiration (19). Yet, as Reardon has pointed out, this contradiction exists only if we accept Tychiades’ response to be serious in tone rather than the more standard Lucianic tongue in cheek. Tychiades’ joke here at the end of the dialogue is that Simon has argued so convincingly that he has acquired a follower or rather his own parasite. He is no longer the dependent, but has become the teacher so to speak of Tychiades, who will now be his rival for free handouts.

As we have seen so far, Lucian uses Simon’s status as a figure drawn from comedy, his use of Stoic language to make Epicurean sounding arguments, and Tychiades’ responses to these arguments to mock the conflict between the Stoics and Epicureans. Lucian’s focus in this text is further highlighted when we consider his choice of the name “Tychiades” for his presumed authorial persona. In selecting Tychiades for this dialogue, Lucian draws our attention to chance or fortune. Although the dialogue is not itself ultimately about chance, if we read Lucian’s choice of persona in

---

72 Reardon (1987:160)
light of the way he reenacts the quarrel between Stoics and Epicureans, we can see how Tychiades similarly plays into this theme by drawing our attention to another contested philosophical belief, namely the role of chance in the world. The tension in Tychiades’ name rests on the fact that, while the Epicureans allowed for the existence of chance in the world by positing that atoms swerve unpredictably, the Stoics attempted to explain away chance by contending that “for everything that happens there are conditions such that, given them, nothing else could happen.” In other words, chance is nothing but an “undiscovered cause.”

By his very presence in a dialogue intermingled with Stoic language and Epicurean arguments, Tychiades further ignites the tension between these two contesting philosophical viewpoints. Although his name suggests a belief in chance and thus a rejection of the Stoic need to have an explanation for everything, the mockery for Epicurus and his followers means that we should not also read Tychiades as an adherent of that school. Instead, like the dialogue he inhabits, his presence highlights the ridiculousness and futility of these sorts of philosophical arguments. As Tychiades’ joke at the end of the dialogue indicates, Lucian uses Tychiades, his interactions with the comic Simon, and the overall dialogue format to question the types of conflicts that arise out of philosophical dogmatism.

The *Parasite* specifically confronts the tension between the Stoic and Epicurean schools through the figures of Simon and Tychiades and in doing so, signals its ridiculousness. In using a comic character to mock the Stoics and Epicureans, Lucian calls into question these dogmatic approaches. Whereas the *Menippus* and

---

73 See Long (1974: 38) and (1974: 164) respectively.
Icaromenippus present the Hellenistic figure of Menippus as an Aristophanic hero, the Parasite reveals the fluidity of the comic dialogue form by the very fact that the comic aspect of this text is derived from a later, Hellenistic-style of comedy. In the next section, we will examine how Lucian uses the language of philosophy, specifically that of Plato, to challenge the problem of dogmatism in the Hermotimus. Presented as a dialogue between a student of the Stoics, Hermotimus, and the Lucianic persona, Lycinus, this dialogue questions which philosophical school will in fact lead you to knowledge? And how can you tell? Like the Menippus, Icaromenippus, and Parasite, the Hermotimus considers issues surrounding philosophers’ claims to knowledge, yet its length, frequency of Platonic allusions, and overt lack of comic references have led scholars to characterize it as Lucian’s most Platonic dialogue and consequently an anomaly within his corpus. I will challenge this characterization by exploring how Lucian combines Platonic references with allusions to his own work to cast the philosophical schools of his day in the mold of Plato’s sophists and argue against dogmatic approaches to philosophy. The Hermotimus, as I will suggest, does in fact represent an instantiation of Lucian’s comic dialogues, only Lucian has replaced Old Comedy with his own works. In doing this, he aligns his own work to that of Plato, a point further illustrated by how the figure of Lycinus mimics the ambiguity found in Plato’s dialogues between Plato and Socrates. As the Hermotimus reveals, Lucian regards his work as more than the seriocomic tone attributed to him, instead it represents his attempt to define his work as a philosophical approach in its own right. By likening his own work to Plato’s, Lucian, as I will contend,

---

defines his approach as a return to the Socratic method before it was taken up by the respective schools. To achieve this, however, Lucian turns not to philosophy, which has in his mind become corrupted, but to comedy, including Old, New, and even his own writings.

III. Lucian Playing the Part of Philosopher: the Hermotimus

In the previous sections, we saw how Lucian tackles the sectarian debates among philosophers largely by drawing scenarios and characters from comedy. Whereas Lucian undermines the Cynic Menippus by borrowing scenarios from Old Comedy, in the Parasite he specifically confronts the conflict between Stoics and Epicureans through the figure of Simon the parasite. As a comic character turned pseudo-philosopher, Simon highlights the absurdity of the very arguments he espouses and, consequently, embodies Lucian’s literary project. Lucian’s comedic-philosophical approach, as we have seen in the previous sections, employs comedy to highlight the problems inherent in conflicting philosophical viewpoints. From our analysis of Lucian’s comic dialogues in the previous chapters, however, it is clear that Lucian envisions his project not simply as comedy put to philosophical use but rather as the union of the comic and philosophical traditions. Though the Menippus, Icaromenippus, and Parasite exhibit different aspects of Lucian’s literary style, they present only part of the picture and to understand more fully how Lucian enacts his comedic-philosophical approach, I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of the Hermotimus, Lucian’s longest and most Platonic of dialogues.75

Although the dialogue has been viewed as an anomaly in Lucian’s corpus due to its length, purportedly serious tone, and apparent lack of comic elements, in this section I will show that the text refers not only to the dialogues of Plato but Lucian’s as well and, consequently, ascribes to the definition of the comic dialogue seen in the previous chapters. The *Hermotimus* thus presents a different image of Lucian’s comedic-philosophical approach than the previously discussed dialogues because in it we find Lucian’s own work assuming the role of comedy, a shift that, as I will argue, reveals Lucian’s attempts to equate his own project with that of Plato.

Before turning to my analysis of this text, it will be useful to summarize briefly its argument. The dialogue presents a discussion between the Lucianic mask, Lycinus, and the Stoic Hermotimus, in which the former seeks to reveal how the latter’s teacher has taken him for the proverbial ride. Lycinus achieves this first by demonstrating to Hermotimus that his teacher is not the virtuous figure that Hermotimus believes him to be (9-12) and then by focusing on the larger question of whether it is possible to determine which school to follow without studying under each of them (25-70). In considering the latter problem, Lycinus contends that a single school, such as Stoicism, cannot be trusted to provide an unbiased view of their rivals (33-4). He further calls into question the value of Hermotimus’ philosophical education by asserting that words alone are not enough to make someone a better person, but they must be reflected in a person’s actions (80-3). As the discussion draws to a close, Hermotimus declares that he will abandon his philosophical studies and that henceforth he will adopt Lycinus’ critical stance regarding philosophers (86).
The *Hermotimus* thus confronts scholastic disagreements and, more broadly, the education offered by the philosophical schools of Lucian’s time. In considering the *Hermotimus*’ attacks on the philosophical schools, scholars have long noted Lucian’s debt to Plato’s dialogues, while Nesselrath has pointed to similarities in arguments between this text and the writings of Sextus Empiricus as evidence that Lucian was a Skeptic. Though Nesselrath has demonstrated Lucian’s engagement with the current trends in Skepticism, Lucian’s use of Platonic references in this text have not been fully explored. My discussion will therefore show how Lucian’s use of the *Theaetetus* and *Gorgias* mounts a double attack on Hermotimus’ philosophical education first by painting him as the embodiment of Dialogue from the *Twice Prosecuted* and then by likening him and his teacher to the sophists of Plato’s dialogues. As I will argue, Lucian first invokes the *Theaetetus* to characterize Hermotimus as a figure that suffers from the same problem as Dialogue in the *Twice Prosecuted*: his focus on lofty topics has left him out of touch with reality and created in him an elitist attitude. This initial portrait of Hermotimus questions the value of Hermotimus’ philosophical education by likening Lycinus’ attempts to rescue Hermotimus to Lucian’s rehabilitation of philosophical dialogue, indicating that, in many ways, Lycinus’ discussion with Hermotimus is a metaphor for Lucian’s own project. Lucian further undermines Hermotimus’ education by appealing to the *Gorgias*, through which Lucian casts Hermotimus and his teacher in to the role of Callicles and Gorgias respectively. As a framework for reading the

---

76 For a complete survey of the scholarship on this dialogue’s debt to Plato, see Nesselrath (1992: 3451-4). For the similarities between this dialogue and the writings of Sextus Empiricus, see Nesselrath (1992: 3474-3479).
Hermotimus, I will contend that the Theaetetus and Gorgias reveal Lucian’s concern regarding the value of a philosophical education as an attempt to align his own project with that of Plato.

Unlike the Menippus, Icaromenippus, and Parasite, the Hermotimus engages more directly with Plato and, as a result, it has generally been excluded from discussions of Lucian’s relationship to the comic tradition. Although Möllendorf has recently uncovered several Aristophanic allusions within this text, the Hermotimus is devoid of the type of comically inspired scenarios and characters that we have seen thus far. This absence of Aristophanic features, however, does not mean that the Hermotimus is without comic elements or that it does not fit Lucian’s definition of his literary style in the Literary Prometheus, Fisherman, and Twice Prosecuted. As I will suggest, Lucian inserts several allusions to his own works, which assume the comic role in this dialogue. Read in juxtaposition to the Platonic references, these allusions reveal that the Hermotimus does in fact fit the model of the comic dialogue discussed in the previous chapters, particularly in their self-referential nature, which recalls Lucian’s imitation of the Aristophanic parabasis discussed in the first chapter. Moreover, their presence, as I will argue, indicates that Lucian regards his own work as playing an analogous role to that of Old Comedy and that his comedic-philosophical approach in the Hermotimus is to unite his own work with Plato’s.

In aligning his work to Plato, Hermotimus becomes representative of the contemporary philosophical approach, while Lycinus embodies Lucian’s literary and

---

philosophical project. To illustrate this point, I will begin by examining how Lucian undermines Hermotimus’ philosophical education first with the *Theaetetus* and then with the *Gorgias*, before exploring how this Platonic framework establishes Lycinus in the Socratic role. As I will argue, Lucian reinforces this characterization through references to his own work, which play with the relationship between Plato and his protagonist, Socrates.\(^7\) In citing his work alongside that of Plato, Lucian equates his own work to that of Plato and indicates that it is in the figure of Lycinus that we find the clearest instantiation of the comic Socrates.

**Enacting the Problems with Philosophy: the Character of Hermotimus**

Hermotimus, as Lucian presents him, has spent most of his time pursuing a philosophical education, but has learned nothing. When Lycinus first encounters him, he is lost in thought trying to recall his teacher’s lesson from the previous day. This opening evokes several familiar images from Plato’s dialogues: the fact that Lycinus meets Hermotimus as he attempts to remember what his teacher has said calls to mind the opening of the *Phaedrus* (227b-d), while Hermotimus’ appearance of being lost in thought conjures the image of Socrates on his way to Agathon’s house in the *Symposium* (460e). Though Plato never reveals what Socrates was thinking about, the main difference between these moments is that Phaedrus, who possesses a written copy of his Lysias’ speech, is faking it. As an image that recalls both Platonic moments, Lycinus’ initial description of Hermotimus thus appears to question whether he will find in Hermotimus a Socratic or

---

Phaedrus-like figure. The answer is ultimately that he is more similar to Phaedrus, since, like Phaedrus, Hermotimus’ judgment has been clouded by his passion for his teacher. Lucian emphasizes this fact through Lycinus’ initial reactions to Hermotimus, which simultaneously recall Socrates’ discussion of the difference between orators and philosophers in the *Theaetetus* and Lucian’s description of Dialogue in the *Twice Prosecuted*. As a double reference, Lycinus’ description of Hermotimus establishes him as the embodiment of the challenge faced by Lucian in comically reinventing the philosophical dialogue at the same time as it highlights his attempts to equate his own project with that of Plato.

In his initial reaction to meeting Hermotimus, Lycinus focuses on the physical toll that studying philosophy for over twenty years has taken on Hermotimus:

> εἰ γάρ τι μέμνημαι, σχεδὸν εἶκοσιν ἔτη ταῦτα ἐστὶν ἄφ’, οὐ σε οὐδὲν ἄλλο ποιοῦντα ἑώρακα, ἢ παρὰ τοὺς διδασκάλους φοιτῶντα καὶ ως το πολὺ ἐς βιβλίων ἐπικεκυφῶτα καὶ ὑπομνήματα τῶν συνουσίων ἀπογραφέμον, ὥρθρων ἀεὶ ὑπὸ φροντίδον καὶ τὸ σῶμα κατεσκληκότα. δοκεῖς δὲ μοὶ ἄλλ’ οὐδὲ ὃν ποτὲ ἀνεῖναι σεαυτόν, οὕτως ὄλος ἐὰν ἐν τῷ πράγματι.

For if I remember, it’s been nearly twenty-years that I have seen you do nothing but visiting your teachers. You’re usually bent over a book and writing notes on the lectures, your body is always pale and withered from studying. And I suppose even your dreams give you no rest, you are so wrapped up in it. (*Herm.2*)

According to Lycinus, Hermotimus is so devoted to his studies that his body has wasted away (τὸ σῶμα κατεσκληκότα). If we recall our discussion of the *Twice Prosecuted*, the Syrian describes in his defense against Dialogue’s charges of *hubris* how Dialogue used to be a genre considered by most people as obscure and in a state of decline due to constant questioning (ὑπὸ τῶν συνεχῶν ἐρωτήσεων κατεσκληκότα, *TP* 34). As in the
case of Dialogue, philosophy has had a harmful effect on Hermotimus and Lycinus’ language here indicates that Hermotimus embodies the Syrian’s problems with Dialogue.

In pitting his persona against a figure representative of the problems he has with contemporary philosophy, Lucian presents a dialogue that enacts the comedic-philosophical approach we saw him defend and define in the *Twice Prosecuted* and, in doing so, engages directly with Plato. This is initially evident in Lycinus’ continued description of Hermotimus. Despite the physical toll that his education is taking on his body, Hermotimus, as Lycinus contends, is so dedicated to his studies that he must engage with them even in his dreams. This image of Hermotimus as thinking about philosophy even in his dreams is reminiscent, as Möllendorf has noted, of Socrates’ account in the *Theaetetus* of the difference between men of the law courts (οἱ ἐν δικαστηρίοις) and men engaged in philosophy (οἱ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, 172c). While the former category of men are bogged down with concerns regarding the speeches they must deliver, laws, and dinner parties, to name just a few, the philosopher is not equipped for political life because these concerns never enter his mind, not even in a dream, (οὐδὲ ὄναρ πράττειν προσίσταται αὐτοῖς, 173d). The connection drawn here by Möllendorf between Lycinus’ comment and that of Socrates allows us to read Hermotimus as an archetypal student of philosophy. While both passages point to the potential dreams of a philosopher, Lycinus’ description of Hermotimus in fact represents the opposite of what we find in the *Theaetetus*. For Socrates, it is the men of the law court who are constantly thinking about things that do not even cross the mind of the

---

philosopher, even when he is dreaming. At first glance, then, Hermotimus appears as the opposite of the image of a philosopher painted by Socrates.

It is important, however, also to consider the context of the *Theaetetus’* discussion. Although Socrates paints the men of the law court as corrupt to the point that their souls are small and warped (σμικροὶ δὲ καὶ οὐκ ὅρθοὶ τὰς ψυχὰς, 173a), the philosopher appears so concerned with such topics as geometry and astronomy that he is unaware of the problems in front of him, just as Thales was when he fell into a well -- an anecdote that directly follows the description of these two types of men (173e-b). Hermotimus therefore straddles Socrates’ two categories of men by the very fact that he is busy even in his dreams and that his philosophical interests have made him, like Dialogue and Thales, out of touch with the problems in front of him. In thus characterizing Hermotimus, Lucian presents an embodiment of the problems attributed to Dialogue in the *Twice Dialogue* and, in doing so, indicates that this text will enact how he envisions his work as rescuing philosophy from teachers such as Hermotimus’.

**Attacking Philosophers with Philosophy: Hermotimus and his Teacher as Callicles and Gorgias**

Broadly speaking, the *Hermotimus* questions whether philosophers teach wisdom, which recasts a problem familiar from Plato’s *Meno, Protagoras,* and *Gorgias:* can abstract ideals, such as justice and virtue, be taught? As this dialogue asserts, philosophers have assumed the potentially dangerous role once held by the sophists in Plato’s dialogues through their claims to possess wisdom and be able to teach it. In his discussion of the
Platonic resonances in this dialogue, Nesselrath notes that Lucian’s debt to Plato appears in the general language of the dialogue and in direct allusions to the *Ion*, *Euthydemus*, *Phaedo*, and *Gorgias*.\(^80\) While Nesselrath has demonstrated the general influence of Plato on this dialogue, I will focus specifically on how specific references to the *Gorgias* characterize Hermotimus’ teacher in a similar light to Plato’s sophists by demonstrating the dangerous effects that he has on his student. These references, as I will contend, allow Lucian to establish Hermotimus and his teacher at the opening of the dialogue in the roles of Callicles and Gorgias respectively. Though Socrates contends that Callicles’ knowledge, good will, and frankness make him the ideal interlocutor (487a), Callicles resists Socrates’ arguments to the point of hostility. Lucian invokes the *Gorgias* to demonstrate that Hermotimus is initially a Callicles-like figure. By characterizing Hermotimus in this way, Lucian presents a dialogue that has the potential to recreate the tension of the *Gorgias* only this time with philosophers. As we will see, however, Lucian simultaneously refers to his own work to convince Hermotimus of the problems of a philosophical approach such as that of his teacher. In other words, Lycinus succeeds where Socrates fails and, in achieving this, Lucian likens his own project to that of Plato.

References to Plato’s *Gorgias* equate Lycinus’ uneasiness about Hermotimus’ teacher and, more broadly, philosophers in general to that of Socrates regarding rhetoric and the sophists. Generally speaking, Plato presents rhetoric and its purveyors, namely the sophists, as a skill (τέχνη) that is concerned with speeches that persuade people about matters of justice and injustice based not on knowledge of these topics but belief without

\(^{80}\) See Nesselrath (1992: 3472-4). In addition to Nesselrath, Croiset (1882) argues for a connection to the *Ion* and *Gorgias* (330), while Bompaire (1958) adds the *Euthydemus* into the mix (305).
knowledge.\textsuperscript{81} In the \textit{Gorgias}, for example, Socrates drives the sophist to define the τέχνη of rhetoric as the ability to persuade assemblies and juries about what is just and unjust (453e-457c). Though Gorgias initially asserts that the teacher of oratory must not be blamed for the injustice of his students, he later contradicts himself when he claims to have knowledge of justice and be able to teach it (458e-461a). As a result of this, Gorgias abandons the discussion, which is taken up by his students, Polus and Callicles, who argue respectively that rhetoric allows someone to do whatever they want and that living in this way is the best. While rhetoric initially appeared as a potentially beneficial craft, Polus and Callicles’ resistance to Socrates reveals its sinister side. As Plato’s characterization of Gorgias’ students implies, the problem with Gorgias lies in large part with the types of students that he produces.

In our discussion of Lucian’s reference to the \textit{Theaetetus}, we saw how Hermotimus fails to live up to Socrates’ description of political and philosophical men. His inability to fit the mold of either of these two types of men indicates that philosophy, for Lucian, has become guilty of the faults once leveled at rhetoric by Plato’s Socrates. Lucian signals this to his audience by interspersing in the dialogue language that is reminiscent of Plato’s \textit{Gorgias}. Lucian echoes the \textit{Gorgias} largely in the reactions of his dialogue’s participants have to one another. Within these moments, Lycinus plays the part of Socrates and Hermotimus that of Callicles. To review Socrates’ interactions with Callicles, in Callicles Socrates finds an interlocutor who is consistently unwilling to abandon the Thrasymachean position that “might makes right,” which Callicles

\textsuperscript{81} See the discussions of this found in the \textit{Gorgias} and \textit{Phaedrus} especially.
associates with rhetorical abilities. For Callicles, rhetoric is preferable to philosophy because it can be used to acquire the practical skills necessary for public life (484c). The dialogue, consequently, becomes quite contentious and concludes with Socrates abandoning the discussion in frustration and instead presenting a speech concerning the rewards and punishments of the soul in the afterlife (Gorg. 523ff.). By replacing Callicles’ devotion to rhetoric with Hermotimus’ to philosophy, Lucian indicates in this dialogue that the problems he finds with the way philosophy is practiced in his day are analogous to those cited by Socrates regarding rhetoric.

Lucian’s use of “Gorgian” language in the Hermotimus—to borrow a term from the Symposium (198c)—has a double effect: it points to the potential of this dialogue to become combative and suggests that the philosophical teachings of Hermotimus’ teacher may have produced a problematic student similar to Callicles. Lucian hints at the possibility of the dialogue losing its amicable tone early in the discussion, when Lycinus questions Hermotimus about his choice of Stoicism over other schools. In response to Lycinus’ question, Hermotimus asserts that he was drawn to Stoicism because it was the most popular school.82 When Lycinus asks if he came to this conclusion by taking a head count, Hermotimus replies that his belief was based on an estimate, leading Lycinus to respond that Hermotimus is not in a position to instruct him: ὡς οὖν ἐθέλεις διδάξαι με ἀλλ’ ἔξαπατᾶς, ὃς περὶ τὸν τοιούτων εἰκασμὸ φής καὶ πλήθει κρίναι ἀποκρυπτόμενος λέγειν πρὸς με τάληθές. (So you don’t want to teach me but are cheating me, when you tell me you decide such a matter by guesswork and weight of numbers. You’re hiding

---

the truth from me, *Herm.* 16). In his discussion of the Platonic resonances of this
dialogue, Nesselrath notes that Lycinus’ charge of deception against Hermotimus
(ἐξαπατᾷς) echoes the charge that Socrates directs at Callicles (ἐξαπατῶν, 499c).

Lycinus’ assertion that Hermotimus is attempting to cheat him thus creates the potential
scenario here in the opening sections of the dialogue that Hermotimus will play the role
of the resistant interlocutor represented by Callicles. Lucian, however, has updated the
*Gorgias*’ scenario for a second century audience by replacing the tension between
rhetoric and philosophy with the problem of sectarian debates. By recasting Plato’s
original context in this way, Lucian has put forth his unified comedic-philosophical
approach as an alternative to the corrupted philosophical schools.

This possibility for hostility recurs at several points throughout the dialogue. For
e example, while Lycinus elicits the concession from Hermotimus that in order to know
which school to choose one must study each of them, it becomes apparent that a careful
study of each approach would exceed the limits of a human life span. Without this
careful study, as Lycinus contends, people are left in the dark, taking up whatever they
first stumble upon and completely unable to recognize the truth (*Herm.* 49). As this
image suggests, the philosophical schools with their varying viewpoints cause ignorance
and, although Hermotimus does not deny Lycinus’ point, he expresses annoyance that
Lycinus has questioned the value of a philosophical education: ὦ Λυκίνε, οὐκ ὁδὸν ὅπως εὖλογα μὲν δοκεῖς μοι λέγειν, ἀτὰρ—εἰρῆσεται γὰρ τὰληθὲς—οὐ
μετρίως ἀνίας με διεξῶν αὐτὰ καὶ ἀκριβολογούμενος οὐδὲν δέον. (I feel, Lycinus, that
what you say is reasonable, but—and I shall be honest—you annoy me a great deal by
this detailed examination and your unnecessary precision. *Herm.* 50). For Möllendorf, Hermotimus’ exasperation with Lycinus mimics that expressed by Callicles in response to Socrates’ assertion that Callicles should not imitate those who seek out power (*Gorg.* 511d-513c): Οὐκ ὁδ’ ὄντινα μοι τρόπον δοκεῖς εὖ λέγειν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πέπονθα δὲ τὸ τὸν πολλῶν πάθος· οὐ πάντα σοι πείθομαι, (I don’t know, Socrates—in a way you seem to be right, but the thing that happens to most people has happened to me: I’m not really persuaded by you. 513c). In his recasting of Callicles’ exasperation with the Socratic method, Lucian ironically presents the philosophical student as annoyed with Lycinus’ philosophical approach as it is enacted in his questioning of the schools.

Like Callicles, who is a failed student, Hermotimus is also revealed to be a failure as a philosopher because of his exasperation with Lycinus’ questions and overall inability to answer them. Although he accepts that the proper way to choose a philosophical approach is to study them all, Hermotimus asserts that Lycinus has concocted this argument out of jealousy of his success (*Herm.* 63). Despite the fact that Lycinus asserts that, if this is the case, Hermotimus should ignore him, Hermotimus retorts that Lycinus is so forceful that he does not let him make any choice at all, ( Ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔχεις σὺ βίαιος ὑπ’ αἱρεῖσθαι τι, ἢν μὴ πειραθῶ ἁπάντων. *Herm.* 63). We find Callicles leveling a similar charge at Socrates in section 505d: Ὡς βίαιος εἶ, ὦ Σώκρατες. ἐὰν δὲ ἐμοὶ πείθη, ἐάσεις χαίρειν τοῦτον τὸν λόγον, ἢ καὶ ἄλλῳ τῷ διαλέξῃ. (How forceful you are, Socrates, but if you’ll obey me, you’ll drop this discussion or carry it through with

---

As we have seen thus far, Lucian at times attributes to Hermotimus language that is reminiscent of Plato’s portrayal of Callicles. Like Callicles, Hermotimus appears unwilling to give up his lifestyle, despite the fact that Lycinus has revealed to him that his love of Stoicism is in fact based on ignorance and arbitrary. Lucian’s use of the *Gorgias* opens up the possibility for the *Hermotimus* to end in a similarly hostile way.

Whereas Socrates calls into question Callicles’ love of the rhetorical lifestyle and the power he believes comes with it, Lycinus undermines Hermotimus’ passion for philosophy and its image as an elitist pursuit, suggesting that philosophy has taken on the potentially problematic role once afforded to rhetoric by Plato. Although Hermotimus is initially resistant to this point, he eventually concedes it as he bemoans to Lycinus the fact that he has wasted his life:

> ὥ-turn his knees, ὦ Ἰτισί-νεν, ἄνθρακάς μοι τὸν θησαυρὸν ἀποφήνας, καὶ ὡς ἐνοίκεν ἀπολεῖται μοι τὰ τοσαῦτα ἔτη καὶ ὁ κάματος ὁ πολύς. (Look at what you’ve done to me, Lycinus. You have shown my treasure to be nothing more than ashes and I seem to have wasted so many years and so much toil, 71).

In response to Hermotimus’ despondency, Lycinus suggests that he is not alone in failing to find the knowledge he thought he would find in philosophy:

> ἂλλ’, ὦ Ἐρμότιμε, πολὺ ἔλαττον ἀνιάση, ἣν ἐννοήσης ὅτι οὐ μόνος ἐξω μένεις τῶν ἐλπισθέντων ἁγαθῶν, ἄλλα πάντες ὡς ἐπος εἰπεῖν περὶ ὧν σκιᾶς μάχονται οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες. (But, Hermotimus, you will be much less hurt if you remember that you are not the only one excluded from these desired blessings, but all who engage in philosophy, so to speak, are fighting over the shadow of an ass, 71).

Lycinus’ account of philosophers here is significant since it suggests that they

---

do not know what they think they know and, what is more, they fight over something that
is not worth fighting for.

This image of philosophers fighting over the shadow of an ass simultaneously
evokes Aristophanes’ *Wasps* and Plato’s *Phaedrus.*85 In the *Wasps*, this image appears in
the context of Philocleon’s attempts to escape the house arrest of his son by hiding
himself, like Odysseus, under the belly of an ass, (170ff). This trick fails and Philocleon
proclaims that he will sue and, when asked what the suit will be about, (περί τοῦ μαχεῖ
νόν δῆτα), he responds that it will be περί ὄνου σκίας (191). The joke here is
presumably that Philocleon has been given away by his shadow, which, in the context of
Lucian’s dialogue, points once again to the fact that philosophers are fighting over what
is not really real. They have, as it were, seen only a shadow of the wisdom they claim to
possess. Moreover, as a backdrop to Lycinus’ characterization of philosophy,
Philocleon’s statement likens Lycinus’ philosophical quarrels to the type of petty legal
cases depicted by Aristophanes in the *Wasps* that Philocleon is so eager to take part in.

While the *Hermotimus* does not draw on Aristophanes as much as other
dialogues, in this moment we find Lucian evoking an image found in both Aristophanic
comedy and Platonic Dialogue. Besides appearing in the *Wasps*, Socrates also refers to
the shadow of an ass during his discussion of the art of rhetoric at the end of the
*Phaedrus.*86 As Socrates and Phaedrus attempt to determine whether a speaker must have
knowledge of what is just or he must simply know enough to make something seem just

86 It is difficult to say whether Plato here alludes to the *Wasps*. This is not a common phrase, appearing
initially in Aristophanes, then the *Phaedrus*, as well as Galen and Pausanias in addition to Lucian.
to his audience, Socrates offers the following analogy: a speaker, who does not know what a horse is, addresses an audience that is likewise ignorant of horses and attempts to convince them that they should fight on horseback, based only on the knowledge that his audience believes a horse to be a tame animal with the longest ears. The speaker, as Socrates supposes, would deceive his audience by praising a donkey and suggesting that it is of great military value (260a-b). For Socrates, this scenario is analogous to a speaker who lacks knowledge of what is good and what is bad:

Segue qui oím o ῥητορικός ἄγνοον ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν, λαβὼν πόλιν ὡσαύτως ἔχοντα σπείραν πείθῃ, μὴ περὶ ἄνου σκεῦς ὡς ῥποῦ τὸν ἔπαινον ποιούμενοις, ἀλλὰ περὶ κακοῦ ὡς ἀγαθοῦ, δόξας δὲ πλήθους μεμελετηκώς πείσῃ κακὰ πράττειν ἀν̷ ἄγαθον, ποιόν τιν’ ἀν’ oat oiei metai tausta tihn ῥητορικήν καρπὸν ὅν ἔσπειρε θερίζειν;

So suppose an orator who doesn’t know about good and bad gains power in a city which is in the same state of ignorance and tries to persuade it, not by eulogizing some miserable donkey as if it were a horse, but by making bad seem good. Suppose he’s carefully studied the opinions of the masses and succeeds in persuading them to act badly instead as well, what kind of crop do you think rhetoric would later harvest from the seeds it set about sowing? (Phaedrus 260c)

According to Socrates here, a lack of knowledge about good and bad on the part of both speaker and audience can result in persuasion being used for evil purposes. Socrates’ use of this image thus reveals to Phaedrus the dangers of rhetoric if the speaker does not in fact have knowledge about what he is talking about, and we can see Lycinus invoking it for a similar purpose in terms of philosophers. For Lycinus, philosophers who do not possess the wisdom that they claim to have can lead their eager students, such as Hermotimus, down a wrong and potentially dangerous path. Whereas for Socrates the dangers of rhetoric expressed in this passage are public, Lycinus’ fears concerning
philosophy are directed at the individual in the form of Hermotimus. Like Socrates’
imagined speaker, the philosophers of this text do not know what they claim to teach and
through this false knowledge lead students, such as Hermotimus, into devoting their
money and time to them. This transfer of Socrates’ original concerns to philosophy
indicates that within Lucian’s dialogues philosophers have assumed the role once held by
sophists. Similar to the sophists found in Plato’s dialogues, they are dangerous, they
mislead their students by promising to teach them wisdom and they create students such
as Hermotimus, who has wasted over twenty-years of his life with little to show for his
efforts.

As a whole, this image also recalls Socrates’ metaphor of the cave, whose bound
inhabitants are only able to see shadows on a wall (οἴει ὃν τι ἑωρακέναι ἄλλο πλην τᾶς
σκιᾶς τᾶς ὑπὸ τοῦ πυρὸς εἰς τὸ καπαντικρὺ αὐτῶν τοῦ σπηλαίου προσπιτούσας;
Republic 515a). In Socrates’ metaphor, however, only the philosopher is able to see the
true Form and Lucian has reversed Socrates’ image to suggest that philosophers are in
fact still stuck in the cave, whereas he sees the truth. While in the previous section we
saw how Lucian used the quarrels of philosophers to explore his relationship to
Menippus, here Lycinus invokes the lack of agreement among philosophers to reveal to
Hermotimus that his teacher does not actually possess the wisdom he claims to teach and,
moreover, he is not in fact searching for it.

87 Besides the Aristophanic and Platonic resonances, this image is also attributed to Demosthenes in the
Lexicon on the Ten Attic Orators by Harpocratus, (Περὶ τῆς ἐν Δελφοῖς σκιᾶς: Δημοσθένης
Φιλιππικοῖς. Διδυμός φησι τὴν περὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ σκιᾶς παροιμίαν παραπεποιθῆται περὶ τοῦ ῥήτορος ζ
λέγοντος περὶ τῆς ἐν Δελφοῖς σκιᾶς, λέγεσθαι δ’ αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς περὶ τῶν μηδενὸς ἄξιων μαχομένων, 246).
As we have seen so far, Lucian inserts language that is reminiscent of Socrates’ discussions of rhetoric at several points throughout this dialogue that attributes to philosophy the role once held by rhetoric in Plato’s dialogues. Though it is difficult to generalize about the portrait of rhetoric found in Plato’s dialogues, many of the discussions of it come back to the same point: whether the speaker must have knowledge of such topics as Justice and Virtue. From Plato’s ambiguous views regarding the role of rhetoric, we find Lucian establishing a paradigm for his approach to the philosophical practices of his day. While some, such as Jones, have regarded the *Hermotimus* as evidence of Lucian’s rejection of philosophy and others, for example Nesselrath, have pointed to it as proof that Lucian was a Skeptic, these Platonic references bear witness to the fact that he does not reject all philosophy and knowledge but rather the current atmosphere of the philosophical schools. As he explains to the downtrodden Hermotimus, his arguments against the Stoics are not based on any particular hatred for them and could be applied to all the schools, (μὴ με νομίσῃς κατὰ τῆς Στοᾶς παρεσκευασμένον ἢ ἔχθραν τινὰ ἐξαίρετον πρὸς Στοϊκοὺς ἐπανηρημένον εἰρηκέναι, ἄλλ. ἀ κοινὸς ἐπὶ πάντας ὁ λόγος, 85). This implies that Lucian views his work as separate from these philosophical schools. Moreover, Lucian’s failure to fit the mold of a Cynic, Skeptic, or Epicurean derives from this rejection and while he bears certain affinities to Cynicism and Skepticism, this is because he sees his own novel approach, namely the comic dialogue, as functioning within that tradition. As illustration of this point, I will now examine how Lucian incorporates allusions to his own works alongside the

previously discussed Platonic ones. These self-allusions, as I will suggest, cast Lycinus as Lucian’s Socratic persona and reveal Lucian’s attempts to equate his comic dialogues with the dialogues of Plato.

**Lycinus as Socrates**

In the exchanges between Hermotimus and Lycinus, Hermotimus at times assumes a Callicles-like role, which casts Lycinus as the Socratic figure. As Branham has noted, the persona of Lycinus is the most pervasive of those adopted by Lucian, appearing in *On Images*, the *Dance*, the *Lexiphanes*, the *Ship*, the *Eunuch*, and the *Symposium*.\(^ {89} \) Although these dialogues differ greatly in subject matter, many of them are connected by the fact that the focus of the dialogue, as in the *Hermotimus*, is the interlocutor.\(^ {90} \) In addition to the *Hermotimus*, several of these texts represent clear imitations of Plato’s dialogues. As Branham asserts, “no work entitled the *Symposium* could help recalling Plato’s masterpiece to a second-century audience.”\(^ {91} \) Moreover, the *Ship* opens with Lycinus and his companions walking to the Pireaus, an opening that directly recalls that of the *Republic*. In Plato’s dialogues, it is often difficult to separate Plato’s voice from that of Socrates and in the case of these dialogues it is no different. Lucian has created a persona, whose name is only slightly different from his own, a

---

\(^ {89} \) See Branham (1989: 105-6), as well as Saïd (1993:254).


\(^ {91} \) Branham (1989: 108).
difference that suggests that Lucian intends to maintain some distance, if even only a small amount, between himself and the character Lycinus.\textsuperscript{92}

In his discussion of Lucian’s imitation of the Plato-Socrates relationship, Branham asserts that Lycinus is not the “embodiment of a rival idea or serious moralist” that we find in Plato’s Socrates, but instead is “viciously censorious.”\textsuperscript{93} As we have seen thus far, Socrates is an important model for Lucian but not just in the form portrayed by Plato. The comic image of him is important as well. In contrast to Branham’s interpretation of Lycinus, I will suggest that Lycinus’ failure to correspond to the Platonic Socrates stems from the fact that he draws as well on the comic Socrates and thus represents the embodiment of Lucian’s literary project. Within the context of the \textit{Hermotimus}, Lucian signals this fact through the inclusion of references to the \textit{Philopseudes}, his own \textit{Symposium}, and the \textit{Fisherman}. These references, as I will argue, further the ambiguity between Lucian and his persona and suggest that it is in the figure of Lycinus that we find Lucian’s comic Socrates. Found alongside Platonic allusions, they assume a role similar to that of Old and New Comedy in the \textit{Parasite} and “Menippean” dialogues.

In the \textit{Fisherman} and “Menippean” dialogues we saw that Lucian’s use of Old Comedy cast the figures of Diogenes and Menippus as Old Comic characters respectively. Lucian likewise questions the value of Hermotimus’ teacher and the philosophical approach through two references to the \textit{Philopseudes} and \textit{Symposium}

\textsuperscript{92} For an in-depth discussion of the various ways in which Lucian inserts himself into a text, see Saïd (1993).
\textsuperscript{93} Branham (1989: 107).
respectively. Though Hermotimus initially attempts to escape Lycinus’ questioning by claiming that he must get to school, Lycinus reveals that class has been canceled due to a raucous drinking party the previous night:

ἐλέγετο δὲ παρ’ Εὐκράτει τῷ πάνῳ δειπνήσας χθές γενέθλια θυγατρός ἐστιόντι πολλά τε συμφιλοσοφήσαι ἐν τῷ συμποσίῳ καὶ πρὸς Εὐθύδημον τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Περιπάτου παροξυνόντας τι καὶ ἄμφισβητήσαι αὐτῷ ὧν ἐκεῖνοι εἰώθασιν ἀντιλέγειν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς Στοὰς.

They said that he [Hermotimus’ teacher] had dinner yesterday at the house of the great Eucrates, who was throwing a party for his daughter’s birthday. He talked a lot of philosophy during the party and grew cross with Euthydemus the Peripatetic, disputing their usual arguments against the Stoics. (11)

As the setting of this dinner party, the house of Eucrates recalls the Philopseudes, a dialogue between Tychiades and his companion, Philocles, in which the former relates a discussion concerning the supernatural that took place at the house of Eucrates (Philopseudes 5). Tychiades’ purpose in relating the ghost stories told by Eucrates and his guests is to highlight for Philocles the propensity of people to lie. As the only other text in which a character by the name of Eucrates figures, it is possible to read the context of the Philopseudes behind Lycinus’ dinner party, thus undermining the respect Hermotimus expresses for his teacher.

Upon hearing that his teacher attended a party with other philosophers, Hermotimus asks Lycinus to tell him the outcome of his teacher’s argument with Euthydemus. Instead of relating their discussion, however, Lycinus recounts how the party disintegrated into violence:

94 Mollendorf contends that Lucian here is using this name for two purposes: 1) the name, which is derived from the adjective eukratos or well-mixed, recalls the sympotic context and 2) it is intended to invoke the bridegroom in Lucian’s Symposium Eukritos, (2000: 154-55).
At first, it seems, they were level, but in the end victory was on the side of you Stoics, and the old man was well in front. At any rate they say that Euthydemus didn’t get away unscathed: he was badly wounded in the head. You see he was pretentious and argumentative and wouldn’t be convinced and didn’t show himself ready to take criticism, so your excellent teacher hit him with a cup as big as Nestor’s which he had in his was lying quite near him), and so he won. (12)

The image drawn here of a violent symposium recalls Lucian’s own Symposium, which depicts how a wedding feast involving philosophers from each of the schools erupts in a violent fight. Unlike Plato’s Symposium, which, until Alcibiades’ entrance, is dry and civilized, Lucian’s text portrays philosophers drinking and quarreling over who gets the biggest piece of meat, in other words, philosophers at their worst. Although all the philosophers are generally portrayed as combative, one of the main aggressors is the Stoic Zenothemis, who, at the end of the dialogue hurls a bowl at his host, only to miss and hit the bridegroom (Symp. 44). Like Zenothemis, Hermotimus’ teacher is portrayed as aggressive to the point of violence, similarly striking the head of Euthydemus with a cup. The world of Lucian’s Symposium and, for that matter, the one related by Lycinus, consequently appears more akin to the raucous Alcibiades than the discussion that preceded his entrance. Read as the backdrop for Lycinus’ tale, Lucian’s Symposium

effectively paints a negative picture of Hermotimus’ teacher and further calls into question the value of his teachings.

Besides using these Lucianic references to reveal the true nature of Hermotimus’ teacher, Lucian has Lycinus turn again to his own work as he attempts to show the inherent difficulties of trying to determine which philosophical school to follow:

Come now, suppose that I, just as I am, still ignorant about which of them all has the truth, should choose your way, putting my trust in you, a friend, but one who knows only the way of the Stoics and has travelled by this road along; then suppose one of the gods brought Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, and the rest back to life, and they stood round me and put questions to me, or even, by Zeus, brought me into court and sued me each and every one of them for maltreatment, saying: “My good Lycinus what was the matter with you? Who persuaded you to give Chrysippus and Zeno preference over us, who are older by far than they? They were born only yesterday, or the day before, and you have given us no chance to speak, and you have put nothing of what we say to the test.” (30)

This scenario of dead philosophers returning to life to attack Lycinus for his philosophical approach directly recalls the *Fisherman.* Whereas in the *Fisherman* Parrhesiades found himself in legal troubles due to his comic portrayal of philosophers, here it is Hermotimus’ choice of Stoicism and overall ignorance regarding other, older philosophical approaches that has potentially angered the philosophical tradition.

---

Lycinus thus adopts the scenario of the *Fisherman* to charge that Hermotimus’ philosophical education is at odds with the philosophical tradition. Unable to defend himself against this charge, Hermotimus begs Lycinus to abandon this imagined scenario:

ὦ Λυκίνε, πρὸς τῆς Ἑστίας, Πλάτωνα μὲν καὶ Αριστοτέλην καὶ Ἐπίκουρον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀτρεμεῖν ἐάσωμεν· οὐ γὰρ κατ’ ἐμὲ ἀνταγονίζεται αὐτοῖς, νῦ δὲ, ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ, ἐφ’ ἡμῶν αὐτὸν ἐξετάσωμεν, τι τοιοῦτον ἐστὶ τὸ φιλοσοφίας πράγμα οἷον ἐγὼ φημι αὐτὸ ἐἶναι.

In Hestia’s name, Lycinus, let us leave Plato and Aristotle and Epicurus and the others undisturbed, for I am no match for them. Let us, you and me, enquire into it by ourselves, whether the pursuit of philosophy is as I say it is. (35)

In the context of the *Fisherman*, Parrhesiades escaped the charges of the dead philosophers by turning to Old Comedy and proving its philosophical value.

Hermotimus, on the other hand, faces charges of ignorance, which he is unable to escape without Lycinus’ help. This reference to the *Fisherman* thus once again presents us with an instance of Lucian’s union of comedy and philosophy, but shifts its focus from defining Lucian’s approach to enacting it. By raising philosophers from the dead here, Lucian draws a comparison between his persona, Parrhesiades, who successfully warded off their attacks through a reliance on Old Comedy, and Hermotimus, whose inability to answer their charges reveals the extent to which his philosophical education has failed him.

Whereas in the *Fisherman* the dead philosophers charged Parrhesiades with comically degrading philosophy, Lycinus here invokes their voices to reveal to Hermotimus his ignorance. This change in the philosophers’ charge recasts a scenario, which initially served as a platform for Lucian to defend and define his comic approach.
to philosophy as an important philosophical tool by which Lycinus can reveal to Hermotimus the error of his ways. The character of Lycinus, whose name is only slightly different from Lucian’s represents, as Saïd has noted, a thin authorial mask. As an image evocative of the *Fisherman*, Lycinus’ raising of dead philosophers, a situation that evokes the *Fisherman*, combined with his account of the previous night’s symposium furthers this connection and suggests that this persona represents Lucian’s enactment of his union of comedy and philosophy. Lycinus invokes Lucian’s own dialogues to convey to Hermotimus why his choice of teachers is problematic.

In considering Hermotimus’ portrayal of conflicting philosophical viewpoints, I have attempted to demonstrate first how Lucian uses Platonic echoes to cast Hermotimus as a potentially hostile interlocutor such as Callicles and Lycinus in the Socratic role. As a Socratic figure, Lycinus does not simply represent Lucian’s imitation of Plato’s protagonist, but rather, as several references to other Lucianic works reveal, he embodies Lucian’s own project. The *Hermotimus* thus differs from what we saw in the two “Menippean” dialogues and the *Parasite* in its overall lack of features borrowed from Greek comedy. Though this lack of comic features has led scholars to characterize this dialogue as an anomaly within Lucian’s corpus, it is my contention that the references to the *Philopseudes, Symposium*, and *Fisherman* represent the comic aspects of this dialogue. Despite the fact that they are not as pervasive as what we have previously seen, Lycinus nonetheless uses them to undermine Hermotimus’ preconceived notions regarding philosophy. In the previous chapters, we saw how Lucian presented himself as

---

the successor to Old Comedy by adopting its language and scenarios in his engagement with the philosophical tradition. The *Hermotimus*, in comparison, invokes Lucian’s own works in place of Aristophanic references, thus proclaiming Lucian’s position as a member of the comic tradition. As this text reveals, Lucian views his texts as assuming the role once played by Aristophanes and the other poets of Old Comedy. Moreover, in citing his own works, Lucian draws a further connection between himself and his persona and suggests that he is playing the role of both Plato and Socrates. This conflation of author and character draws our focus to him and reinforces the view seen in the previous chapters that he regards his union of comedy and philosophy as a kind of philosophical approach.

**IV. Conclusions**

By examining three different instantiations of the same problem, namely philosophers in conflict, I have attempted to show how Lucian both defines his comedic-philosophic approach as separate from the established approaches and offers it as a solution to the philosophical corruption he sees plaguing his own time. This rejection of a philosophical label is evidenced by Lucian’s treatment of Menippus, a potential foil for his own project, in the *Menippus* and *Icaromenippus*. As we saw in our discussion of these dialogues, Lucian casts the Cynic as a comic character within the larger framework of a dialogue designed to explore the merits of his philosophical approach. From this interaction of comic and philosophical elements, Lucian paints a picture of Menippus as failing to answer the questions he poses and ultimately unsatisfactory model for his own
approach. In contrast to Menippus’ failures as a philosopher, the *Parasite* casts the comic parasite in the role of a pseudo-philosopher, who, as I argued, embodies the conflict between the Stoics and Epicureans and consequently an instantiation of Lucian’s comedic-philosophic approach. Through Simon, Lucian characterizes such conflicts as ridiculous and in doing so, offers his own work up as the solution to this problem. We find this point repeated in the *Hermotimus*, only this time in terms borrowed from the *Theaetetus* and *Gorgias*. References to these dialogues have the effect of casting Hermotimus first as the embodiment of the out of touch and elitist approach we saw presented in the figure of Dialogue from the *Twice Prosecuted* and then as the failed student, Callicles. These Platonic resonances cast the philosophers of Lucian’s day in the mold of Plato’s sophists and consequently align Lucian’s project with Plato’s.

Intertwined with these references, however, are also allusions to Lucian’s own work that allow Lucian to position his own literary and philosophical project not just in terms of Plato, but the comedic tradition as well. By citing his own works in this text, Lucian announces that they have assumed the role of Old Comedy for the second century.

Combined with the discussions of his hybrid genre discussed in the previous two chapters, these three texts bear witness to the fact that Lucian’s comic dialogues are more than the “seriocomic” tone that has been attributed to him by Branham. As I have argued, it is a fluid genre that is not restricted to a single form and represents Lucian’s attempt to define a philosophical project for himself both in terms of the literary tradition and the trends of his day. In the next chapter, we will examine how this comedic-philosophical approach is enacted in Lucian’s *Nigrinus*, a text that is only partially a
dialogue. Generally read as one of Lucian’s few positive portraits of a philosopher, I will argue that recognition of the comedic and philosophical elements at play in this text reveals Lucian’s portrait to be critical of the philosopher. The *Nigrinus* will thus be significant for our discussion in that it will reveal the approach embodied in Lucian’s comic dialogues not to be restricted to works written in the dialogue format.
In the previous chapter, we studied how Lucian tackles the problem of conflicting schools through three different instantiations of the comic dialogue form: a philosopher cast in the role of a comic figure in the Menippus and Icaromenippus, a comic character depicted as a philosopher in the Parasite, and Lucian himself adopting the role of philosopher in the Hermotimus. These dialogues are significant for our discussion because they reveal the fluidity with which Lucian approaches the comic elements of his literary style.

Whereas in the first half of this dissertation our focus was mainly on Lucian’s imitation of different aspects of Old Comedy (specifically Aristophanic comedy), these texts illustrate how Lucian’s comic dialogues draw on Hellenistic forms of comedy and, in the case of the Hermotimus, Lucian’s own works to achieve a similar effect. By invoking his own dialogues in the place of his comic precedents, Lucian declares that his comic dialogues are the heir to the comic tradition. In this chapter we will shift gears to examine a single text, the Nigrinus, a work that is not typically included among Lucian’s comic dialogues but nonetheless contains both Aristophanic and Platonic language. Read in light of Lucian’s theoretical accounts of his literary style, I will argue that the Nigrinus demonstrates that Lucian’s union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue is not restricted
to a specific generic form but describes his overall philosophical approach as a return to Socratic questioning in its purest form.

Framed as a letter from Lucian to the Roman philosopher Nigrinus, the *Nigrinus* presents a dialogue between an unnamed speaker, a student of Nigrinus, and his companion. The Student relates a long speech of Nigrinus contrasting the philosophical life of Athens to the depravity of life in Rome.\(^1\) According to the Student, Nigrinus represents the ideal Platonic philosopher who has opened his eyes to the ills of Roman society.\(^2\) Yet, as Hall notes, “if Lucian did not tell us that Nigrinus was a Platonist, we would never have guessed,”\(^3\) since Nigrinus’ speech has more in common with Roman satire and Greek diatribe than anything found in Plato’s dialogues.\(^4\) This then begs the question of how we should view the philosopher Nigrinus. Despite this incongruity between Nigrinus’ Platonic label and speech, most scholars have interpreted him and, consequently, the text as a whole as a serious honorific portrait of the philosopher. Clay, for example, goes so far as to assert that “conceivably, Eunapius of Sardis had the

---

\(^1\) The participants in the dialogue are unnamed. I will refer to the main speaker as the Student and the other speaker as his friend.

\(^2\) In the past, scholars have attempted to identify Nigrinus as a real philosopher, yet there has been no definitive connection between Nigrinus and a known contemporary philosopher. See in particular Baldwin (1973) and Tarrant (1985). For my discussion of the text, Nigrinus need not be a real person, but rather represents a character type, similar to other portrayals of fake philosophers found elsewhere in Lucian’s works.

\(^3\) Hall (1981: 157).

\(^4\) Clay (1992:3423). While Hall does not specifically point to the similarities between Nigrinus’ speech and Roman satire, she does not that the points made in the speech were “moral commonplaces” (Hall 1981: 157).
‘Nigrinus’ in mind when he refers to Lucian’s ‘Demonax’ as one of the satirist’s few serious writings.”

Though Clay and others would like to include the Nigrinus in Eunapius’ statement, Lucian’s accounts of his literary style, which we discussed in the first half of this dissertation, should put us on our guard against reading the Nigrinus as an overtly serious work. For example, as we saw in the Literary Prometheus, Lucian attributes the significance of his literary achievement not simply to the fact that he brought comedy and dialogue together, but rather that he created a harmonious union from the two genres. This point is hit home at the end of the prologue when Lucian likens his generic creation to Prometheus’ sacrifice trick of bones covered in fat (Lit. Prom. 7). As this comparison reveals, one feature of Lucian’s comic dialogue is that what appears to be a clear, philosophical purpose on the surface is in actuality concealing comic laughter. Such an analogy is perhaps the reverse of what we might expect. Lucian’s equation of philosophy with Prometheus’ fat would seem to imply that Lucian regards philosophy as a popular pursuit, much to philosophy’s detriment. No longer able to provoke hard questions in people, philosophy becomes the seductive cover for comic laughter, a powerful protreptic tool. If we apply this analogy to the Nigrinus, by paying attention only to the fatty, philosophical parts we assume the role of the gods. As this metaphor reveals, reading Nigrinus as a serious philosopher ultimately misses the underlying comic aspects of Lucian’s texts that are critical to understanding his portrait of this philosopher.

---

5 Clay (1992: 3420). It could be suggested, however, that Eunapius was correct in his exclusion of the Nigrinus from his statement regarding the Demonax and that the Nigrinus is not in fact a serious portrait of a philosopher, an argument that I will make in the rest of the chapter.
Like the *Literary Prometheus*, the *Nigrinus* presents us with a philosophical surface that conceals several references to Old Comedy, which reveal Lucian’s attempts to return philosophy to its Socratic form. As I will suggest, Lucian’s careful use of Platonic and Aristophanic references unveil more comic aspects of this text and allow it to be viewed not as an enigma but in line with Lucian’s other attacks on charlatan philosophers that we explored in the previous chapters. To illustrate this point, I will begin my discussion by examining the philosophical overtones of the text found in Lucian’s use of Platonic, Aristophanic, and Thucydidean references in his opening letter to Nigrinus, which, as I will show, begin to reveal Lucian’s true feelings regarding Nigrinus. I will then turn to look specifically at the figure of the Student, whom Clay has labeled a rhetorician, and will focus my discussion on one particular Homeric allusion found in the mouths of both the Student and Nigrinus that illustrates the close affinity between teacher and Student, suggesting that we cannot evaluate the success of Nigrinus as a philosopher without taking into account the failures of his Student. Lucian emphasizes this point, as I will argue, through a double allusion to the Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Aristophanes’ *Clouds* found in the word κεηέσξνο (high in the air, haughty), a word that highlights the close union of Comedy and Philosophy in this text and furthers Lucian’s satire of Nigrinus as a philosopher. Such an allusion allows us to begin to view the *Nigrinus* as one of Lucian’s comic dialogues. My discussion will then conclude with an analysis of the overall structure of the *Nigrinus*, how it mimics Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and ultimately how it invites us to read the text as another example of Lucian’s attacks on

---

charlatan philosophers, a typical theme among Lucian’s comic dialogues. As the Nigrinus confirms, Lucian’s characterization of his literary style as the union of Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue speaks as much to his use of elements drawn from both genres as a means of advocating the rejection of contemporary philosophy as it does to the actual format of the text.

Scholarship on the Nigrinus has focused for the most part on Nigrinus’ speech, its views of Rome, and the philosophy he espouses in it, while the framing letter, the embedded dialogue, and the Aristophanic and Platonic resonances that they contain have tended to be overlooked. Clay’s and Whitmarsh’s discussions of the Nigrinus are the exception to this trend. While previous scholarship has for the most part assumed that the Student represents Lucian, Clay argues against such an association and suggests in fact that allusions to Homer and tragedy found throughout the dialogue betray the Student as a lover of rhetoric. ⁷ For Clay, the Student does not represent a serious philosophical convert but rather a sophist figure at whom we are meant to laugh. ⁸ Yet Clay’s interpretation of the Student begs the question, if the Student is a ridiculous figure, how then are we to view his teacher?

In contrast to Clay’s discussion of the figure of the Student, Whitmarsh turns his attention to the overall structure of the work and how it alludes to Plato’s Symposium. Although scholars have long noted Lucian’s incorporation of references to Plato’s Menexenus, Protagoras, Symposium, and Phaedrus, it was not until Whitmarsh that the

---

⁷ See Baldwin (1973) and Camerotto (1998) for arguments for this connection. For an overall summary of all scholarship on the Nigrinus pre-1981, see Hall (1981).
outer frames of the text began to be more fully understood. For Whitmarsh, the Nigrinus’ complex narrative structure—a dialogue that recounts a speech and is framed by a letter, mirrors that of the Symposium. In the Symposium, Plato separates us from Socrates’ voice by introducing the text with a dialogue between Apollodorus and an unnamed companion, which recounts a previous retelling of the speeches on love given at Agathon’s house in 416 BCE. As Whitmarsh argues, the narrative structure of both texts effectively removes us from the voice of the philosopher at the same time as it emphasizes our distance from him. According to Whitmarsh, the allusions found in the Nigrinus, Platonic and otherwise, play a critical role in the text’s interpretation, and as I will argue, they also convey more comic undertones that call into question the traditional view of the text and its protagonist.

The complex structure of the Nigrinus, however, presents a number of interpretative challenges, two of which I will discuss here. First, as I have already mentioned, although the Student labels Nigrinus as a Platonic philosopher, there is nothing particularly Platonic about his philosophy (Nigr. 2). For, as scholars have

---

9 For the most complete catalogue of Platonic allusions within the Nigrinus, see Neef (1940). See Whitmarsh (2001:265-8) for a discussion of specific allusions to the Symposium. Anderson notes that the opening of the embedded dialogue contains the highest concentration of Platonic allusions, but cites these allusions as evidence of Lucian nodding: “Lucian tends to be a little disorganized when he is delivering a piece for a single occasion. In this case the frame (1-12) suggests that he is trying to combine as much material as possible as though for a single opportunity to impress; Platonic reminiscences are more thickly concentrated here than anywhere else in the work; while the whole ensemble, with its apparently serious central speech is an attempt to reproduce something of the Menexenus” (Anderson 1978:372). While Anderson here seems to dismiss the presence of Platonic allusions as if they were mere window dressing, it is my contention that they are an important aspect of the work and are central to our understanding of the text.


11 Jennifer Hall (1981) has already provided a thorough analysis of Nigrinus’ speech and for that reason I will not treat the speech on its own, but rather will refer to it as it becomes necessary in the course of my discussion.
already pointed out, his views of the respective cities are nothing more than cliché characterizations typically found in Roman satire and Greek diatribe.\textsuperscript{12} Athens is praised for the philosophically pure lifestyle it promotes, while Rome comes under attack for its decadent way of life (\textit{Nigr.} 12-37). As Clay suggests:

\begin{quote}
The real subject of Lucian’s \textit{Nigrinus} is not “The Philosophy of Nigrinus” (as advertised in the mss.) His philosophy is the stale, flat, and unprofitable fare of Roman satire and Greek diatribe. It amounts to a praise of poverty (and Athens 13-16) and the vices of the great city of Rome (17-34).\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

If the text is in fact a serious portrait of a philosopher intended to praise him, why do we find nothing new or interesting in his speech? Second, scholars have read the relationship between the Student and Nigrinus as a veiled biography of Lucian’s own experiences with Nigrinus as his teacher—a perspective, as I will contend, that has led to a misunderstanding of the relationship between teacher and Student.\textsuperscript{14} Although it might be tempting to read the \textit{Nigrinus} as at least partially autobiographical, it is important to keep in mind that the “Lucian” of this letter is as much an authorial persona as Parrhesiades of the \textit{Fisherman} or the Syrian of the \textit{Twice Prosecuted}.\textsuperscript{15} His authorial voice is stylized like Lucian’s other personae and cannot, therefore, be assumed to be the

\textsuperscript{12} See Hall (1981:157).
\textsuperscript{13} Clay (1992:3423).
\textsuperscript{14} See Baldwin (1973), Hall (1981), Jones (1986), and Camerotto (1998) as more recent examples of this interpretation. For a summary of earlier interpretations of the text, see Hall (1981: 158).
\textsuperscript{15} I follow Clay here in calling into question earlier autobiographical readings of the text. Clay (1992: 3422) in his arguments against reading the Student as Lucian himself states: “If we can identify the Convert with Lucian himself, we have gained a detail in Lucian’s biography. And so it is sometimes stated that, at some time in his errant career, Lucian returned to Rome to consult an eye doctor. And since the Convert of the \textit{Nigrinus} is often identified with Lucian with no separation anxieties, the trip to the ophthalmologist has seemed good history. But both assumptions rest on the foundation of prior assumptions. The first is that when Lucian creates a character in his dialogues (call him Lykinos) or a narrator in his lives he is speaking of and for himself. The second assumption is that the autobiographical details revealed by such an identification can safely be extracted from their literary contexts for the purposes of biography.”
author’s own. In his letter, Lucian professes, among other things, his desire to convey his 
opinion of Nigrinus to Nigrinus himself, (ἐπεὶ δὲ μόνην σοι δηλώσαι τὴν ἐμὴν γνώμην 
ἐθέλω, Nigr. præfatio). This prefatory letter, however, does not explicitly express 
Lucian’s opinion, and it is necessary to derive it from the dialogue that follows and even 
Nigrinus’ speech. The Nigrinus thus invites us not just to read the work linearly, but to 
reread and compare the dialogue’s description of Nigrinus and his speech with Lucian’s 
own comments to Nigrinus himself. In the next section, I will argue that Lucian’s 
references to Plato, Old Comedy, and even Thucydides in his letter to Nigrinus serve as a 
subtext that highlights Lucian’s criticisms of the philosopher.

I. Lucian’s Letter to Nigrinus: Platonic ἔρως and the Void Left by Nigrinus’ 
Philosophy

The opening of the Nigrinus is a letter from Lucian to Nigrinus that seems, at least on the 
surface, to convey Lucian’s devotion to the philosopher.17 As some have noted, however, 
the praise is quite effusive, a fact that has led most scholars to discount the letter as 
lacking in any real substance.18 While on the surface Lucian’s letter appears to laud the 
philosopher, it does so through language that recalls Plato, Old Comedy, and Thucydides. 
In this section I would show that these resonances, in particular those to Old Comedy and

---

16 The letter that I will refer to in this section is the epistolary portion of the text not the text as a whole, 
which is presumably included within Lucian’s letter to Nigrinus.
17 Schroeder takes a slightly different approach to Lucian’s portrayal of Nigrinus than other scholars. As 
she interprets this letter, and for that matter the text as a whole, Nigrinus represents a Lucianic figure and 
she cites certain similarities between Nigrinus and what Lucian has to say in other works, in particular the 
prologues. Lucian’s self-deprecation found in this letter is consequently a way of laughing at himself as 
well as Nigrinus. I do not find Schroeder’s arguments, however, to be entirely convincing, since they focus 
almost solely on the character of Nigrinus at the expense of the rest of the text. Schroeder (2000:436-7).
Plato, serve as generic markers that inform how we should read the rest of the text and indicate a union of comedy and philosophy that is in line with Lucian’s definition of his “comic dialogues” in the *Literary Prometheus*. By examining both the original context of the references and how Lucian uses them, I will argue that they infuse Lucian’s letter with a level of irony that casts Nigrinus not as an example of a true philosopher but rather as a charlatan, who has failed to provide Lucian with the philosophical truths he was searching for.

From the very opening of the letter, Lucian invokes a variety of images from Classical Athens that color our understanding of Nigrinus and the author’s views of him.

Greetings from Lucian to Nigrinus. As the saying goes, ‘An owl to Athens,’ the point being that it would be ridiculous for anyone to bring owls there, since they have lots of them. If I wanted to put on display my verbal dexterity and then I wrote it down in a book and sent it to Nigrinus, I would truly be the butt of that owl-bringing joke. However, since all I want to do is to reveal my current opinion of you and that I have not been moved by your *logoi* in any cursory fashion, I suppose I might also reasonably escape the terms of the Thucydidean dictum, ‘ignorance leads to brazenness, but proper consideration renders people timid.’ For it is obvious that ignorance on its own is not the only cause of my brazenness, but also my passion for *logoi*. Fare well. (Nigr. praef.)
In these opening lines, Lucian unites philosophical and comic language and therefore the two genres.\textsuperscript{19} As he addresses Nigrinus, Lucian noticeably abandons the standard greeting of χαίρειν in favor of the philosophical, even Platonic, greeting εὖ πράττειν.\textsuperscript{20} This greeting announces a philosophical tone from the very opening of the letter and, consequently, the whole text, implying that, at least on the surface, the \textit{Nigrinus} will be philosophical in nature.

In the sentence that follows, however, Lucian states that his letter would be the equivalent of sending “an owl to Athens.” Lucian’s choice to label the saying as a παρομία and then to offer an explanation of it is striking.\textsuperscript{21} Labeled as a cliché, it is uncommon in the contexts of literary writings, appearing initially in the \textit{Birds} with the \textit{Nigrinus} and Diogenes Laertius’ biography of Plato representing the two other occurrences of the saying in Classical Greek from the fifth century B.C.E through the third century C.E.\textsuperscript{22} While it is certainly probable that this was a common saying outside

\textsuperscript{19} While in Lucian’s time philosophical prose is clearly a genre (one has only to look at Plutarch’s \textit{Moralia}), the genre question becomes trickier for Plato. For a discussion of Plato’s creation of the philosophical dialogue, see Nightingale (1995). While it is possible to point to comic elements within Plato’s dialogues, the most notable being Aristophanes’ speech in the \textit{Symposium}, Lucian’s union differs from Plato’s in that Lucian boasts that his union is harmonious, meaning equal parts comedy and philosophy.

\textsuperscript{20} Trapp notes that philosophers tended to use εὖ πράττειν in place of χαίρειν to demonstrate “their superior moral seriousness” and this phrase appears as a greeting in all of the Platonic \textit{Epistles}, (Trapp 2003: 35). See the opening of \textit{Epistle} 3 for a discussion of why this phrase is preferable to χαίρειν. Within Lucian’s own corpus, εὖ πράττειν is the greeting offered to Cronius at the opening of the \textit{Peregrinus}. It should be noted that the \textit{Nigrinus} and the \textit{Peregrinus}, though usually not grouped together, are both texts that presents self-proclaimed philosophers. For Lucian’s own discussion of the use of εὖ πράττειν as a greeting, as opposed to χαίρειν or ὑγηαίλειν, see the \textit{A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting}, specifically section 5.

\textsuperscript{21} Among the Paroemiographical writers, little information is provided other than the basic meaning of the saying. Pausanius Atticus explains: “<γλαῦκ’ Ἀθήναζε>· ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων μάτην τὰ πλεοναζόμενα ὡς σπάνια τινα ἐμπεπρονεμένον, ὡς τὸ ‘πούξον ἐς Κύπβρον ἤγαγες’ ἢ ἴθθεν εἰς Ἐλλησσόντον.’”

\textsuperscript{22} Diogenes Laertius’ use of the saying is similar to that of Lucian’s. As he explains, if he were to go into all the details of Plato’s dialogues: “γλαῦκα γὰρ εἰς Αθήνας, φοσίν, εἰδέσκ εἰς τὰ κατ’ ἀδῆς δυχὴς τῆς” (as they say, it would be taking owls to Athens, were I to give you of all people the full particulars, 3.47) This saying, however, seems to have become popular among Byzantine writers. Procopius uses it twice in his

256
of literature, the *Birds* contains the first extant usage of it, and Lucian’s employment of it here potentially evokes Aristophanes’ earlier use of this saying.

In the context of the *Birds*, this saying appears as the Hoopoe summons the birds to assemble. Upon hearing that the Hoopoe has called an owl to the assembly, Euelpides proclaims: “Τί φησί; Τίς γλαυκ’ Αθήνας’ ἔγαγεν;” (What are you saying? Did someone bring an owl to Athens? *Birds* 301). In its original context, this saying functions metatheatrically: the scene itself is taking place outside of Athens as the play is being performed there. In Lucian’s case, the saying takes on a rather ironic tone since as we later learn his letter is not going to Athens but rather to Rome. This saying and Lucian’s subsequent explanation of it implies that Lucian need not send Nigrinus an account of his own (Lucian’s) skill— for that would merely make him “the butt of that owl-bearing joke.”

While the verb ἐπιδείκνυμι can mean simply to display or show, taken in conjunction with the phrase, δύναμιν λόγων, it conjures up the image of an epideictic performance typical of the Second Sophistic. Although the greeting εὖ πράττειν suggests a serious, philosophical tone to his letter and consequently the rest of the text,

---

23 The participle, ἐκπνξεπόκελνο, carries with it certain economic connotations that suggest in my mind a distaste on Lucian’s part for the commoditization of knowledge.

24 LSJ s.v. ἐπιδείκνυμι, I.2. The phrase “δύναμιν λόγων” in fact appears elsewhere in Lucian’s corpus in reference to rhetorical displays. In the *Dream*, for example, Paideia promises the young Lucian that if he ever has to make a speech on behalf of his friend, his audience will be amazed at his “τῆς δυνάμεως τῶν λόγων,” (*The Dream* 12). The phrase also appears at *On Images* 3.7 where Lucian scoffs that he will be able to describe the portrait through his “ιόγσλ δύλακηλ.” In *How to Write History* 19.1, Lucian uses the phrase in reference to an unnamed historian who was well known for his “λόγων δυνάμια,” and again at 57.2 in reference to how rivers, mountains, and fortifications should not be described. In other words, one’s “δύναμιν λόγων” has no place in history writing. In the *Scythian* 10.16, Lucian says that upon his seeking out a list of potential patrons, he is told that the city has two eminent citizens who possess outstanding merit, are from good families, are equal to the Ten Attic Orators in culture and “λόγων δυνάμει.”
this potential reference to the *Birds* characterizes Nigrinus not in the language of a philosopher but in that of a contemporary sophist. The comic laughter that lies beneath this philosophical surface begins to reveal Nigrinus’ true colors.

In its recalling of the *Birds*, the phrase “an owl to Athens” in fact carries with it a variety of connotations that further convey Lucian’s opinion of Nigrinus as a philosopher. Typically associated with Athena and wisdom, the owl had close associations with the city of Athens.25 As a symbol of wisdom, the owl thus seems on the surface to continue the philosophical tone of εὖ πξάηηεηλ. The scholiast to Aristophanes, however, points out in his discussion of the original line from the *Birds* that the owl was more than a symbol of the goddess Athena, it was also synonymous with the Athenian mint.26 While its placement after the philosophical greeting εὖ πξάηηεηλ would seem to suggest that the owl symbolizes philosophical wisdom, it also subtly implies that Nigrinus receives money for his teachings.27 In the context of the Platonic greeting, the owl as a monetary symbol characterizes Nigrinus more as a sophist figure than as a philosopher and suggests a subversion of Nigrinus’ role as such.

As a symbol of both wisdom and money, the owl invokes the tension between the sophists and Socrates found in Plato’s dialogues.28 In his description of Nigrinus, the

25 Sidwell explains that this phrase is the Greek equivalent of the English phrase, “coals to Newcastle.” Sidwell (2005: 20 n2).
26 The scholiast provides the following comment: “διότι εἰςι πολλαὶ γλαύκες εἰς τὰς Αθήνας· οὐ μόνον γὰρ ζώα, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς τὰ ναοῦσματα ἐντευκομένα,” (because there are many owls in Athens, not only living ones, but also ones stamped on their coins.) See ΣΑr. Aves 301.
27 Read as a monetary symbol, this might also suggest that the Student has paid Nigrinus for his teachings, though the Student never mentions this in his account to his friend.
28 In comparison to Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge, broadly speaking, the sophists claim to know what they do not know and to be able to teach it for a fee. See esp. Protagoras 310d.
Student labels his teacher as τὸν Πλατωνικόν φιλόσοφον, (Nigr. 2). The image of the owl, with its dual connotations, introduces Nigrinus as a rather ambiguous figure, inciting us to question the Platonic label the Student later attributes to him and, for that matter, the very character of the Student. As Clay argues, the Student is a satirical figure whose conversion to philosophy is questionable.29 Lucian’s use of the owl thus problematizes the view that Nigrinus is a philosopher.

As the opening lines of the letter make clear, Lucian lays the groundwork for how we should regard Nigrinus in the rest of the text. For as Lucian indicates, his letter represents his opinion of Nigrinus, and it is therefore possible to read the tone of this letter as indicative of the work as a whole. As Lucian goes on to say, the purpose of his letter to Nigrinus is to express his opinion of him, that is, what he currently thinks of him, and most importantly for our discussion, how Nigrinus’ words have affected him.30 While scholars have tended to interpret this statement as Lucian’s effusive praise of Nigrinus, Lucian’s description of the effect that Nigrinus’ words had over him as not παρέργας (cursory) is striking. The fact that he chooses to negate παρέργας rather than to employ a positive alternative emphasizes the significance of παρέργας in this statement and, ultimately, to our understanding of Lucian’s characterization of Nigrinus. If we consider how Lucian expresses his opinion of Nigrinus as a whole, namely through a speech of Nigrinus related by the Student in dialogue format, παρέργας becomes a term not just descriptive of Nigrinus’ effect on Lucian but also of how Lucian approaches

30 The placement of μόνην here, directly preceding σοι and separated from τὴν ἐμὴν γνώμην, indicates on Lucian’s part a desire to tell Nigrinus exactly what he thinks of him. Since σοι is enclitic, emphasis is placed on μόνην.
Nigrinus. Lucian's portrait of Nigrinus is not straightforward but rather has hidden him behind several narrative layers and, as Whitmarsh has already pointed out, put distance between his audience and the eponymous philosopher. Lucian thus does not directly state his opinion of Nigrinus in the letter but instead uses the subsequent characterization of Nigrinus and his Student to convey his true opinion.

As we have already seen, the opening of Lucian's letter to Nigrinus draws on the language and scenarios of Plato and Aristophanes, and to these authors we can add Thucydides as well. For Lucian, these references become a tool both to further define his relationship with Nigrinus and to question Nigrinus’ role as a philosopher. At the conclusion of his letter, Lucian imagines that his treatment of Nigrinus might leave him open to the criticism that Pericles once leveled at non-Athenians in his famed Funeral Oration:

\[
\text{ἀποφεύγομεν’ ἂν εἰκότως καὶ τὸ τοῦ Θουκυδίδου λέγοντος ὅτι ἡ ἀμαθία μὲν θράσος, ὁκνηροὺς δὲ τὸ λελογισμένον ἀπεργάζεται·}
\]

I suppose I might also reasonably escape the terms of the Thucydidean dictum, ‘ignorance leads to brazenness, but proper consideration renders people timid.’ (Nigr. praef.)

In the original Thucydidean context of these lines, Pericles characterizes the Athenians as able to use reflection to their advantage, while non-Athenians are hampered by it: δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀμαθία μὲν θράσος, λογισμὸς δὲ ὁκνὸν φέρει, (For others, ignorance makes men bold, but consideration hesitant, Histories 20.4.3). In Lucian’s appropriation of the line, however, he has deleted Thucydides’ τοῖς ἄλλοις and effectively placed himself in the outsider position of a non-Athenian in Thucydides’ context, thus distancing himself from
Nigrinus who up to this point in the letter has been synonymous with Athens.\footnote{Lucian’s interest in the position of an outsider is in part connected to his non-Greek identity and the outsider perspective that it provides. This perspective allows for much of the subversion that takes place throughout his corpus. Good examples of this can be seen in this two Menippus works (the Icaromenippus and the Menippus) and the Charon, to name just a select few.}

Lucian, however, uses Thucydides’ voice to highlight not only the difference between himself and Nigrinus but also the audacity of his endeavor. Boldness, which was originally in Pericles’ speech a negative quality associated with non-Athenians, becomes at the end of Lucian’s letter the result of his ignorance, passion, and ultimately the driving force behind the Nigrinus, (ἀδήλον γὰρ ὡς οὐχ ἢ ἄμαθία μοι μόνη τῆς τοιαύτης τόλμης, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ πρὸς τοὺς λόγους ἐρως αἴτιοι.) Lucian here proudly applies the negative non-Athenian traits to himself, but he notably exchanges the θρᾶσος of the original Thucydidean line for τόλμα as an expression of his audacity. Within the Thucydidean context established by the earlier allusion, τόλμα generally signifies a negative, destructive trait, often associated with Athens.\footnote{According to Thucydides, the political unrest in Athens caused ordinary words to change their meaning, and “τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἄλογος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίζθη,” (reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal supporter.) An obvious exception to this is Thucydides’ description of Brasidas’ death at Amphipolis. In his description of the fighting at Amphipolis, Brasidas falls on a group of Athenian soldiers who are described by Thucydides as being amazed at Brasidas’ boldness: “καὶ προσβαλὼν τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις παροδημένοις τε ἄμα τῇ σφετέρᾳ ἀταξίᾳ καὶ τῆν τόλμαν ἀμύντων ἐκπεπληγμένος,” (He fell upon the Athenians at the same time frightened by their disorder and struck by his audacity.) Hist. 5.10.6. Compare, however, Thucydides’ use of the term as he describes the Athenian fleet’s departure for Sicily: “καὶ ὁ στόλος οὐχ ἤσσον τόλμης τε θάμβω καὶ ὀψεως λαμπρότητι περιβότος ἐγένετο ἡ στρατιάς πρὸς ὄρχη ἐπῆσαν ὑπερβολή,” (Indeed the expedition became not less famous for its wonderful boldness and for the splendor of its appearance, than for its overwhelming strength as compared with the peoples against whom it was directed.) Hist. 6.31.6.} In the congress of the Spartans, for example, τόλμα is indicative of Athens’ superior attitude to the rest of the Greek world: αὖθες δὲ οἱ μὲν καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν τολμήσαι καὶ παρὰ γνώμην κινδύνεσκαί, (And again they are bold beyond their power and they are daring beyond their judgment, Hist. 1.70.3). Lucian’s incorporation of Thucydides’ voice, however, is ultimately a
method of characterizing his approach to the philosopher Nigrinus. His use of
Thucydidean language to describe the boldness of his endeavor conveys a concern on
Lucian’s part, albeit potentially a rhetorical trope, that his characterization of Nigrinus
runs the risk of being overly bold, a fear that seems out of place if we read the letter, and
for that matter the rest of the text, as effusive praise of the philosopher. Such hesitation,
whether it be genuine or not, would thus seem to suggest that the Nigrinus will not
present us with favorable portrait of the philosopher but something more along the lines
of a critique.

We must keep in mind, however, that Lucian’s allusion to Thucydides appears
within the philosophical tone established by Lucian’s initial greeting to Nigrinus, and the
language employed here at the end of the letter should be viewed in light of such a
greeting. In addition to calling to mind the Athenians’ negative audacity, in a
philosophical context τόλμα also carries with it specific Platonic connotations that speak
not just to Lucian’s treatment of Nigrinus but to Lucian’s own relationship to philosophy.
Within Plato’s dialogues, τόλμα or “tolma-language” often denotes Plato’s boldness in
founding a new philosophical movement and challenging traditional teachings.33 Found
within the context of a philosophical letter and directly following a Thucydidean allusion,
Lucian’s τόλμα represents a double allusion and a certain amount of playfulness on
Lucian’s part. On the one hand, Lucian’s use of τόλμα suggests that he might be like
Thucydides’ characterization of the Athenians, being overly bold in his treatment of
Nigrinus, while on the other hand it implies that Lucian, like Plato before him, is

33 Torchia (1993:12-13).
preparing to confront Nigrinus’ teachings through his comic dialogue genre.

Lucian challenges contemporary philosophers such as Nigrinus because, as he indicates at the end of his letter, Nigrinus has failed to inspire wisdom in him. At the end of his letter, Lucian draws a connection between τόλμα, ἀμαθία, and ἔρως that stems from his allusion to Pericles’ funeral oration at the same time as it evokes the Socrates’ discussions love found in the Symposium and the Phaedrus.34 Lucian’s reference to these discussions of love found within these dialogues brings their respective definitions of philosophy to bear on Nigrinus’ role as a philosopher. Although Whitmarsh has already argued for the structural connections between the Symposium and the Nigrinus, the presence of ἀμαθία, ἔρως, and their connection to the Symposium has largely gone unnoticed by scholars. In the context of the Symposium, ἀμαθία and ἔρως are closely related to the definition of philosophy found in Socrates’ version of Diotima’s speech. According to Diotima, Love was the son of Poros (resource) and Penia (poverty) and consequently possesses the characteristics of both parents (Symp. 203c-203d). He is neither rich nor poor and exists between wisdom and ignorance (σοφίας τε αὕτη καὶ ἀμαθίας ἐν μέσῳ ἐστὶν, Symp. 202e). As the argument of Diotima’s speech makes clear, a lover of wisdom, in other words a philosopher, holds the same position as Love, stuck between ignorance and wisdom, ultimately never able to obtain his goal. Socrates asks Diotima: Τίνες οὖν, ἡφην ἔγγνω, ὦ Διοτίμα, οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες, εἰ μήτε οἱ σοφοὶ μήτε οἱ ἀμαθεῖς; (In that case Diotima, who are the people who love wisdom, if they are neither

34 The concepts of ἀμαθία and ἔρως are important ones within the context of Pericles’ speech (i.e. we should all be lovers of Athens), yet the ultimate philosophical tenor of Lucian’s letter to Nigrinus would seem to suggest that his final lines to Nigrinus should be viewed within a philosophical context.
To which Diotima responds that lovers of wisdom hold the same position as that of ἔρως: Δῆλον δὴ, ἔφη, τούτο γε ἡδη καὶ παιδί, ὅτι οἱ μετὰ τοῦτον ἀμφοτέρων, ὅν ἂν εἴη καὶ ὁ Ἐρως, (That’s obvious, she said. A child could tell you. Those who love wisdom fall in between those two extremes, Symp. 204b). To love wisdom then is to lack it (Symp. 204b-204c). Lucian’s connection between ἁμαθία and ἔρως thus recalls the Symposium and Diotima’s portrayal of ἔρως. Read in this way, ἔρως, which was previously believed by scholars to denote Lucian’s admiration for Nigrinus, suggests that Lucian has not found in Nigrinus what he is searching for.

In a Platonic context, however, ἔρως cannot recall the Symposium without also bringing to mind Plato’s other great dialogue on love, the Phaedrus. Just as in the Symposium, ἔρως in the Phaedrus also denotes a lack. As Lucian concludes his letter, he states that his passion for logoi is the reason behind the Nigrinus. This passion for logoi (ὁ πξὸο ηνὺο ιόγνπο ἔξσο) in particular evokes the Phaedrus and the passion that Phaedrus initially feels for Lysias’ speech. In his discussion of ἔρως in the Phaedrus, Geier cites the close relationship between ἔρως and ἔρωτα (“ask”), the final word of Lysias’ reported speech: ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ικανά μοι νομίζω τὰ εἰρημένα· εἰ δ’ ἔτι <τι> σὺ ποθεῖς, ἥγούμενος παραλείφθαι, ἔρωτα. (I think what has been said is sufficient as far as I’m concerned, but if you still yearn for something because you supposed it has been left out, ask, Phdr. 234c). As Geier argues, the love that Phaedrus believes he feels for Lysias and his speech is ultimately misguided. Lysias’ speech provokes no questions in Phaedrus’ mind and consequently no ἔρως. It is only after Socrates attempts to define love in his first speech, only to break it off in the middle, leaving Phaedrus hanging, that
ἔρως begins to be inspired in Phaedrus. This ἔρως grows in Phaedrus and replaces the original passion he felt for logoi as speeches with a passion for logoi as philosophical discussions. Like Phaedrus, Lucian here professes a passion for logoi and scholars generally have interpreted logoi as denoting Nigrinus’ speech. Seen as such, Nigrinus’ speech is as much a failure as Lysias’. As the preceding portions of the letter indicate, these logoi have not inspired questions or a desire on Lucian’s part to learn from Nigrinus and, as we will see in the ensuing dialogue, the Student, who is not unlike Hermotimus, believes Nigrinus to have instilled knowledge in him. Lucian’s letter to Nigrinus thus indicates from the very outset of the work that Nigrinus does not fit the paradigm of a Platonic philosopher. He potentially receives money for his teaching and provides answers, not questions.

Lucian, however, does not clarify τούς λόγους with a possessive adjective and we need not assume that they refer to Nigrinus’ speech. The Platonic language of the final lines of the letter signals that Lucian’s passion for logoi is a passion for philosophical logoi, in particular those of Plato. His love of them, however, signifies an absence of them and consequently denotes his dissatisfaction with those offered by Nigrinus. Lucian’s use of Platonic language to express Nigrinus’ failure as a philosopher suggests that Lucian looks to Plato as his guide. It is Lucian’s text, not Nigrinus, which inspires us to question how to lead a philosophical life. Lucian thus sets himself up to fill the role that Nigrinus has failed to, namely a philosophical teacher. Like the Platonic Socrates,

36 Since there has been very little actual discussion of this letter, I am basing this assertion on how scholars have translated the final lines of the letter and it is almost without exception that the possessive adjective “your” is supplied.
Lucian does not provide us with answers but rather with questions (albeit often through laughter) about distinguishing between true and charlatan philosophers.

As Lucian suggests in the *Literary Prometheus*, his philosophical fat hides the comic bones of his writings. In the case of the *Nigrinus*, the philosophical language found at the conclusion of the letter establishes a philosophical tone that functions at the surface of the text. This continues even after the conclusion of the letter as Lucian presents us with a dialogue between the Student and his Friend. In the following section, I will examine the dialogue portion of the text, in particular a Homeric allusion found both in mouth of the Student and later in Nigrinus’ speech. This allusion is used by Clay to prove that the Student is a lover of rhetoric not philosophy, a characterization that I will argue should be extended to Nigrinus himself.

II. Nigrinus as the Song of the Sirens

In the previous section, we saw how references to Plato, Aristophanes, and Thucydides undercut Nigrinus’ role as a philosopher worthy of emulation. Although Nigrinus’ status as a serious philosopher has hardly been questioned by modern scholars, his Student has not been viewed with the same admiration. In his discussion of the *Nigrinus*, Clay argues that Nigrinus is not in fact the subject of Lucian’s piece, but rather Nigrinus’ Student:

> What is striking about the *Nigrinus* is not in fact the philosophy of Nigrinus; it is the enthusiasm of the Convert (the Student). His conversion is the object of Lucian’s interest and the object of Lucian’s satire, and it is a fascinating document of a skeptic’s view of the quasi-religious nature of philosophical conversion.  

---

37 Clay writes, “The real subject of Lucian’s *Nigrinus* is not “The Philosophy of Nigrinus” (as advertised in the mss.) His philosophy is the stale, flat, and unprofitable fare of Roman satire and Greek diatribe. It
While Clay’s arguments are well taken, the fact that a majority of the text is devoted to the Student’s recounting of Nigrinus’ speech suggests that the focus is less on the character of the Student than on his experience with Nigrinus. In his description of his encounter with Nigrinus, the Student persistently turns to Homeric allusions and the language of the stage to convey his experience fully. For Clay, this aspect of the Student’s account, as well as his choice to relate Nigrinus’ words as a speech, characterizes him as a rhetorician instead of a philosopher.\(^{38}\) Taking this a step further, Lucian characterizes the Student not merely as a rhetorician but as a sophist who, like so many other sophists of the Second Sophistic, is greatly concerned with exhibiting his *paideia* to his companion.\(^{39}\) In this section, I will focus on one particular allusion to Homer’s Sirens that characterizes not only the Student as lover of rhetoric but Nigrinus as well. I will argue that Lucian recasts the typically Homeric Sirens in a Platonic light, thus indicating that his satire is not just restricted to the figure of the Student but extends to include Nigrinus as well. Like the Sirens, the seductiveness of Nigrinus has the power to lead a potential philosopher off course.

amounts to a praise of poverty (and Athens 13-16) and the vices of the great city of Rome (17-34)...What is striking about the *Nigrinus* is not in fact the philosophy of Nigrinus; it is the enthusiasm of the Convert (the Student). His conversion is the object of Lucian’s interest and the object of Lucian’s satire, and it is a fascinating document of a skeptic’s view of the quasi-religious nature of philosophical conversion,” (Clay 1992: 3423).

\(^{38}\) Clay initially points to a similarity between the Student and the figure of the Apollodorus from the *Symposium*. Both are passionate followers of the philosophers who inspired their philosophical conversion. Apollodorus, however, repeats both the speeches and dialogue that occurred at Agathon’s symposium, while the Student chooses to present Nigrinus’ words as if it were a speech (Clay assumes that some dialogue must have occurred between the Student and Nigrinus). (Clay 1992: 3423-3425). This in my mind would characterize the Student very much as a sophist of the second sophistic greatly concerned with exhibiting his *paideia* to his companion.

\(^{39}\) Such rhetorical elements would not make Nigrinus or his Student unique among those purporting to be philosophers in Lucian’s time. One has only to look at figures such as Dio and Favorinus to see evidence of this.
According to the Student, Nigrinus’ *logoi* are the philosophical equivalent of the Sirens, the nightingale, and the Lotus Eaters:\(^{40}\)

\[\text{὇ δὲ ἀπ’} \text{ ἀρχῆς} \text{ ἀρξάμενος, ὁ ἐταίρε, περὶ τούτων λέγειν καὶ τὴν ἔαυτον γνώμην διηγείσθαι: τοσαύτην τινά μου λόγων ἀμβροσίαν κατεσκέδασεν, ὥστε καὶ τὰς Σαηήνας ἐκείνας, εἰ τινὲς ἄρα ἐγένοντο, καὶ τὰς ἀπὶ δόνας καὶ τὸν Ὀμήρου λωτὸν ἀρχαῖον ἀποδείξαι.\]

He began right away to talk about these things, my friend, and to tell me his views. In doing so he sprinkled over me such an amount of ambrosial language that he rendered obsolete the famous Sirens (if they really existed), the nightingales and the Homeric lotus. *(Nigr.3-4)*

As Clay has already suggested, the Student’s style of language here characterizes his “conversion” to philosophy as dubious: “The Convert (Student) is drunk with the nectar of Nigrinus’ words; they are the song of the Sirens. This is the stuff of rhetoric, not philosophy.”\(^{41}\) While Clay’s characterization of Nigrinus’ words is apt, it fails to take into account the meaning behind each of these images and how they influence our interpretation of Nigrinus. To begin with, the Student’s assertion that the power of Nigrinus’ *logoi* surpasses that of the Sirens and the Lotus Eaters does not ultimately convey what the Student intends it to convey, namely how great a philosopher Nigrinus

---

\(^{40}\) While Lucian clearly alludes to the Sirens and Lotus Eaters of Homer’s *Odyssey* (12.165-200 and 9.82-104), the allusion to the nightingale is less clear. At *Odyssey* 19.518 as Penelope tells the disguised Odysseus about her sorrows she compares herself to the nightingale: “ὡς ὁ’ ὁ Πανδαρέου κοῦρ, χλωρής ἀριδῶν, ἐκ θεοῦ ἐκίνησθαι ἀρχή νέοιον ἵστατον, / δεινόντας ἐν πετάλοις καθεξομένην πυκνοῦσθαι, / ἢ τε βαμμα τροπόταμα χέλε πολυπρυκτά φωνήν, / παιδ’ ὅλοφυρομένη ᾿Ιτύλον φίλων, ὅν ποτε χαλκὸν / κτείνε τι’ ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζῆθου ἀνακόψως.” (Just as the daughter of Pandareus, the pale nightingale, sings sweetly in the greening of spring, perched in the leaves, and trills out her song of lament for her son, her beloved Itylos, whom she killed unwittingly, Itylos, the son of Zethus her lord).

\(^{41}\) Clay (1992: 3424). For arguments in favor of the Student’s philosophical conversion, see Cancik (1998). Cancik argues that the *Nigrinus* represents the longest and oldest text from antiquity to provide us with an account of a philosophical conversion (31). He goes on to state that at the opening of the *Nigrinus*, “Lucian fundamentally expounds the theme of his narrative frame. He aims at the psychology of the sudden change, analyses the altered state of the inner man, and reflects upon the question how this experience and the situation that brought it about can be faithfully transmitted.” (32) I do not find his arguments, however, to be convincing, especially when viewed next to Clay’s.
is. Instead, these images characterize Nigrinus as a monstrous figure who possesses the power to lead one astray, dull one’s senses, or, in the case of the Sirens, perhaps even bring about one’s destruction through knowledge.\footnote{For Odysseus’ encounter with the Lotus Eater’s, see Odyssey 9.84-105 and for his encounter with the Sirens, see Odyssey 12.165-200.}

Grouped with the Sirens and the Lotus Eaters, the image of the nightingale is striking. While the Sirens and the Lotus Eaters refer to specific stories, the nightingale generally evokes the image of a singer. In the \textit{Works and Days}, for example, Hesiod tells a fable about how a hawk seized a nightingale in his talons. When the nightingale cried out, the hawk responded: δαηκνλίε, ηί ιέιεθαο; ἔρεη λύ ζε πνιιὸλ ἀξεύον·/ τῇ δ’ εἴς ἴ ζ’ σ’ ἄν ἐγὼ περ ἀγω καὶ ἀοιδὸν ἐνοῦσαν· (Goodness, why are you screaming? You are in the power of one much superior, and you will go whichever way I take you, singer though you are, \textit{Works and Days 207-708}). As this passage suggests, the nightingale is a singer, a characterization that would seem to extend to include Nigrinus himself. Admittedly, Nigrinus is not labeled as a bard but a philosopher, and the image of the nightingale must convey Lucian’s opinion regarding Nigrinus’ philosophy in general rather than refer to his method of conducting philosophy. The fame of the nightingale as a singer does not speak to the content of the nightingale’s song but the beauty on the surface. It is this beauty that Lucian in part attacks and it is possible in the context of this allusion to read Lucian as the hawk. Though Nigrinus may be a beautiful singer, he is powerless to defend himself against Lucian’s attacks. Like the image of the Sirens and the Lotus Eaters, Nigrinus’ words appear seductive on the surface yet prove to be empty and
detrimental to the Student. Although the Student wants to relate to his friend his admiration for Nigrinus’ *logoi*, the metaphors actually convey reservations on Lucian’s part regarding Nigrinus and, in the case of the Sirens and Lotus Eater imagery, present a characterization of Nigrinus as potentially dangerous.

In order to appreciate the impact of the Homeric imagery on our understanding of the *Nigrinus*, however, we first must examine more fully the relationship between the seductive teacher and the entranced Student. As the previous passage illustrated, the Student’s love for Nigrinus is ultimately not the ἔξσο expressed by Lucian in his letter, namely the lack that according to Diotima is a prerequisite of philosophy; for the Student already possesses Nigrinus’ *logoi*. Though he claims to be like a lover whose beloved is absent, Nigrinus has not inspired him to continue his quest for knowledge: ὥζπεξ νἱ ἐξαζηαὶ ηῶλ παηδηθῶλ νὐ παξόλησλ, (I’m a lot like lovers when the object of affection is away, *Nigr. 7*). Despite his claim to be a lover of philosophy, it is clear from the language of the following passage that in the Student’s mind Nigrinus has become synonymous with philosophy:

οὔτω δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς φιλοσοφίας οὐ παρούσης τοὺς λόγους οὗς τότε ἦκουσα συναγείρων καὶ πρὸς ἔμαυτόν ἄναπτύττων οὐ μικράν ἔχω παραμυθίαν, καὶ ὅλως καθάπερ ἐν πελάγει καὶ νυκτὶ πολλῇ φερόμενος, ἐς πυρσόν τινα τούτον ἁποβλέπω, πάσι μὲν παρεῖναι τοῖς ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ πραττόμενος τὸν ἄνδρα ἐκείνον οἴκομενος, ἀεὶ δὲ ὅσπερ ἄκουοιν αὐτοῦ τὰ αὐτὰ πρός με λέγοντος:

This is what I do with respect to philosophy. Though she isn’t here, I gather up the words I heard at the time and gain great comfort from as it were unrolling for myself the book which contains them. I’m like a sailor riding the sea at night: Nigrinus is like a beacon that I look to for guidance. I imagine that the great man is there in everything I do and that I’m continually hearing him repeating to me the same message. (*Nigr. 7*)
The image of the Student as a sailor and Nigrinus as a beacon reminds us again of the Student’s characterization of Nigrinus as a Siren, highlighting the fact that as a beacon, Nigrinus may lead us astray. Although the Student would like to view him as a great Platonic philosopher, his description of Nigrinus puts him more in line with the sophists of Plato’s dialogues. As dialogues such as the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* indicate, one of the main differences between Socrates and the sophists is that the sophists provide answers (however inadequate), while Socrates guides through *elenchus*. Nigrinus, as a beacon, however, does not offer this type of guidance to the Student because he has not inspired the Student to look further. As the Student explains, Nigrinus opened his eyes to the error his ways by making him forget about his eye disease and provoking him to see things more clearly with his soul (ὡς ἐς δή, τὸ καὶνότατον, τὸ ὁφθαλμοῦ μὲν καὶ τῆς περὶ αὐτῶν ἀσθενείας ἐπελανθανόμην, τὴν δὲ ὤψη εὖ ὄξυδερκέστερος κατὰ μικρὸν ἔγγυομην. *Nigr.4*). The Student has not been incited to think further but rather repeats Nigrinus’ speech over and over to himself. Nigrinus’ style of guidance is one that provides answers and these answers, according to Lucian, are akin either to the songs of a nightingale in that they have no power in the real world or even worse to the Sirens and Lotus Eaters.

The Student’s constant need to repeat Nigrinus’ words also calls to mind the passion Phaedrus’ expresses for Lysias in the *Phaedrus*:

---

44 The *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* are good examples of the main differences between Socrates and the sophists, namely Socrates asks questions and the sophists provide answers. In both dialogues we witness the sophists’ unwillingness to engage with Socrates’ questions. In the *Protagoras*, a deal must be struck between the Socrates and Protagoras before Protagoras will submit to Socrates’ questions (335-339), while in the *Gorgias*, Gorgias simply hands over the discussion to his two pupils, Polus and Callicles (461b). For a discussion of Socratic *elenchus*, see Vlastos (1991) and Blondell (2002).
Ὦ Φαῖδρε, εἰ ἐγὼ Φαῖδρον ἁγνῷ, καὶ ἐμαυτοὶ ἐπιλέξησαι. ἀλλὰ γὰρ 
οὐδέτερα ἐστι τοῦτον· ἐν οἷν δέ οἱ Λυσίων λόγον ἀκοῦον ἐκεῖνος οὐ 
μόνον ἂπαξ ἕκουσεν, ἀλλὰ πολλὰκα τοπαλαμβάνων ἐκέλευν οἱ λέγειν, 
ὅ δὲ ἐπείθετο προθύμως. τῷ δὲ οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἦν ἱκανά, ἀλλὰ τελευτῶν 
παραλαβῶν τὸ βιβλίον ἃ μάλιστα ἐπεθύμη ἐπεσκόπη, καὶ τοῦτο ὅρον ἔξ 
ἐωθίνου καθήμενος

I tell you Phaedrus, if I don’t know Phaedrus, I’m a stranger to myself too. 
But neither of these is the case. I’m sure that once he had heard Lysias’ 
speech he didn’t hear it just once. No, he nagged him to read it again and 
again—and I’m sure that Lysias was very happy to comply. And I doubt 
that even this was enough for Phaedrus. Eventually he borrowed the scroll 
himself and pored over those parts of the speech he particularly wanted to 
look at this, and continued with this, sitting in his place from daybreak 
 onwards. (Phaedrus 228a-b)

Though there is a lack of verbal parallels between these two passages, they describe 
similar circumstances. As Geier points out, Phaedrus’ ἔρως cannot be philosophical ἔρως 
because it has caused Phaedrus to overlook the absurdity of Lysias’ arguments. The 
Student has likewise fallen into the same trap. His love for Nigrinus has caused him to 
repeat Nigrinus’ logoi over and over again and, as I will show, misappropriate Nigrinus’ 
language in such a way that shows a failure on Nigrinus’ part to have properly instructed 
him.

The comparison between Phaedrus and the Student establishes the Phaedrus as 
one of the models for the Nigrinus. In this paradigm, Nigrinus begins to look like a 
Lysias figure. Although one could argue that Lysias is not a good comparison with 
Nigrinus because he is a rhetorician not a philosopher, Lucian has nonetheless suggested 
in his prefatory letter that Nigrinus may receive money for his teachings and has failed to 
inspire in him philosophical ἔρως. In his discussion of the Nigrinus, Clay uses Homeric

---

and tragic language as a kind of litmus test for distinguishing a rhetorician from a philosopher. For Clay, the Student is clearly a “lover of Rhetoric” because of his constant use of Homeric and tragic language.\(^46\) Yet the Student is not alone in his use of Homeric language but seems to have borrowed this trait from his teacher. For example, as Nigrinus describes his return to Rome, he tells how he stopped outside the gates of Rome to recite a line of Homer:

\[
\text{ὅηε ηὸ πξῶην λῆπε δεῦξν ἀθίμεσο, ἐθεῖλα δὴ ἄηνύ, ἔκεινα δὴ τά τοῦ Ἁμήρου λέγον, τύπτ’ αὐτ’, ὣ δύστηνε, λιπών φάος ἠελίοιο}
\]

When I first returned from Greece, I stopped when I got near Rome and asked myself why I was coming here. I had the famous Homeric line on my lips:

Why then, you wretch, leaving the sun’s bright light… (Nigr. 17)\(^47\)

Nigrinus is here guilty of the same sort of theatricality used by Clay to brand the Student as a rhetorician.\(^48\) If Clay is right to label the Student as such, and I think he is, then that label must extend to Nigrinus when he employs the same image in his speech. Lucian thus undermines Nigrinus as a philosopher by placing in his mouth the same style of language that appeared so absurd in the Student’s description of his conversion to philosophy.

Nigrinus’ own reliance on Homeric language makes it now possible to see the Student’s language in the dialogue as merely an imitation of Nigrinus. For example, like his Student, Nigrinus also employs the image of the Sirens. As he describes what it


\(^{47}\) Sidwell notes that this is a rather formulaic line. See Sidwell (2005) *Nigrinus* n.18.

means to live and conduct philosophy in Rome, he argues that the temptations of life in Rome must be approached just as Odysseus confronted the Sirens:

άλλὰ ἀπεξεύθεν τὸν Ὀδυσσέα μιμησάμενον παραπλεῖν αὐτὰ μὴ δεδεμένον τῷ χείρε—δειλὸν γὰρ—μηδὲ τὰ ὅτα κηρῶ φραζάμενον, ἀλλ’ ἀκούοντα καὶ λευμένον καὶ ἄληθῶς ὑπερήφανον.

You really do have to follow Odysseus’ example and sail past them. However, it would be cowardly to have your hands tied and your ears stuffed with wax. You must hear the Siren-song free and truly rise above its level. (Nigr.19-20)

Nigrinus’ appropriation of the Siren episode, however, is counterintuitive. As he argues here, a philosopher must be like Odysseus, except that he should not follow the example Odysseus set. In other words, a philosopher should listen to the Sirens’ song but under no restrictions, since it is only through being completely free that one can overcome their temptation. I have focused here specifically on the image of the Sirens because it demonstrates a disconnect between the Student and his teacher. The Student has clearly borrowed the Siren image from Nigrinus’ own speech, but his use of this image reveals a misunderstanding on his part. For as the Student’s comparison of Nigrinus to the Sirens indicates, the Sirens represent not something that is dangerous but rather something good that should be sought out.

The Sirens do not signify Rome for the Student but rather Nigrinus’ *logoi*, *logoi*, which, according to Nigrinus, must be heard and ultimately overcome. Although Nigrinus has deceived the Student, Lucian’s recreation of his speech as well as the Student’s reaction to it allows us to hear Nigrinus’ words and ultimately to overcome them. If we read Nigrinus’ dictum regarding the Sirens behind the Student’s use of the image, Lucian’s opinion of Nigrinus becomes even clearer. In the context of the letter,
Lucian used the saying “an owl to Athens” and referred to Platonic ἔρως to highlight the fact that Nigrinus is not a philosopher in the Platonic sense; and the presence of the Siren imagery functions much in the same way here. Nigrinus’ logoi have incited ἔρως in the Student, but it is not the right kind of ἔρως. The Student seeks to emulate his teacher but is ultimately unsuccessful. He appropriates Nigrinus’ language, as in the Siren metaphor, only to misuse it. Though the Student’s Siren metaphor does not ultimately convey his admiration for Nigrinus as he intends it to, it does suggest once again that Nigrinus does not fit the role of Platonic philosopher.

The opening letter of the Nigrinus, however, indicates that the text is not simply a dramatization of the effects of Nigrinus but rather is a text that depicts the effects of Nigrinus to Nigrinus, who is the assumed primary audience. As the Student inadvertently makes clear, Nigrinus’ logoi are the equivalent of the song of the Sirens that must be experienced to be overcome. Lucian’s choice to recount Nigrinus’ logoi and their effect on the Student ultimately conveys to Nigrinus that he must follow his own advice. To become a good philosopher, he must listen to his own words through the lens of his Student and witness their effect. Lucian critiques Nigrinus here not only for the philosophy he espouses but also for failing to instruct his pupil in any meaningful way.

As I have argued in this section, Lucian’s characterization of the Student calls into question Nigrinus’ role as a teacher of philosophy. Such a view of Nigrinus is furthered

---

49 I do not want to imply here that I believe that Nigrinus was a real person and Lucian in fact sent the Nigrinus to him. While scholars such as Tarrant (1985) and Baldwin (1973) have made cases for Nigrinus being a pseudonym for various figures (in particular that of Alcinous), any such arguments are purely hypothetical and can never be proven definitively. When I talk about Lucian sending a letter to Nigrinus, I am referring to the dramatic context of the text in which the authorial persona sent a letter to the character of Nigrinus.
by Lucian’s use of the word μετέωρος, which simultaneously evokes two other failed educative relationships: that of Anaxagoras and Pericles as described in the Phaedrus as well as that of Strepsiades and Socrates as depicted in the Clouds. This double allusion effectively unites the comic and philosophical elements found in the Nigrinus so as to subvert Nigrinus. In the following section, I will use the paradigm established by Lucian in the Literary Prometheus to discuss Lucian’s use of the adjective μετέωρος first in terms of the Phaedrus and then as an allusion to the Clouds.

III. A Walk in the Clouds: the Nigrinus as Comic Dialogue

As we saw in the previous section, Homeric language in both the dialogue portion of the text and in Nigrinus’ speech reveals certain sophistic qualities in the characters of the Nigrinus and his Student that subvert the figure of the Student and call into question Nigrinus’ claims to be a philosopher. Despite the absurdity of the Student, the question still remains whether the Nigrinus fits the paradigm of the comic dialogue established in the first half of this dissertation, in particular that presented in the Literary Prometheus. I will argue in this section that the Nigrinus, though not typically grouped among Lucian’s comic dialogues, fits the requirements in two key respects: it contains a philosophical surface that hides elements borrowed from Old Comedy and it unites the two elements in a harmonious mixture to such an extent that both are necessary to understanding Lucian’s portrayal of Nigrinus and his Student.

It is not hard to see the philosophical “fat” of the Nigrinus: it presents a portrait of a philosopher and his own account of his brand of philosophy. Moreover, as Whitmarsh
argues, the *Nigrinus*’ complex narrative structure mirrors that of the *Symposium* and the way in which Plato separates us from Socrates’ voice by couching it first behind Apollodorus’ and then Aristodemus’ voice. The narrative structure of the *Symposium* not only emphasizes our distance from Socrates, but the fact that people outside of Athens long after his death still desired to hear about the great philosopher.\(^{50}\) While Whitmarsh makes the important point that the *Nigrinus* functions much in the same way, there remains one crucial difference between the two texts. Unlike the opening of the *Symposium*, the *Nigrinus* commences with a letter from the authorial persona, Lucian, to the protagonist of the text, Nigrinus. The dialogue that follows must then be viewed in the context of the letter. Whitmarsh’s suggestion that the *Nigrinus*, like the *Symposium*, emphasizes our distance from the philosopher is therefore problematic because it fails to take into account that Nigrinus is the presumed recipient of the dialogue. Lucian thus creates a scenario that places us in the same position as Nigrinus in that like him we are the recipients of his words.\(^{51}\) It is this difference between the two texts that suggests a further layer of complexity to the text. While the standard interpretations of the text as a letter depicting Lucian’s devotion to Nigrinus is certainly possible, the question remains that if the *Nigrinus* is in fact intended to praise Nigrinus, why is the Student so ridiculous? Since Nigrinus produced such a Student, it is also possible to read the text as a corrective tool to illustrate how not to conduct philosophy.

Although the *Symposium* is a model for the complex narrative structure found in

\(^{50}\) Whitmarsh (2001: 276).
\(^{51}\) Another key difference being that Nigrinus has not been put to death as Socrates was.
the Nigrinus, it is by no means the only Platonic text referenced in the Nigrinus.\footnote{It should be noted that it is perhaps significant that the Nigrinus alludes to the Symposium specifically in it structure, in other words the very surface of the text.} In fact, as Anderson has noted, there is a high concentration of Platonic allusions found at the opening of the dialogue.\footnote{For a summary of the main Platonic allusions found in the Nigrinus, see Anderson (1978). It should be noted that Anderson does not see these allusions as successfully integrated into the text. For a complete list of the Platonic allusions, see Tackaberry (1930) and Householder (1941).} To cite just a few examples, the Student’s statement that he went to visit Nigrinus early in the morning alludes to the opening of the Protagoras, while the inset speech of Nigrinus mimics Aspasia’s speech in the Menexenus.\footnote{Anderson (1978: 369).} In addition, as I have already suggested, the very the scenario of the Nigrinus, namely that of the Student relating a speech of his teacher to a friend, has distinct similarities to that of the Phaedrus. If we keep this similarity in mind when we consider the rest of the text, including the external letter, it is possible to read Lucian as a Plato figure who has created a dialogue in which he plays no role and Nigrinus, the author of the speech found within the dialogue, as the Lysias figure. Lucian thus seems to have borrowed the scenario of the Phaedrus and reworked it to his advantage, imagining what it might be like if Lysias/ Nigrinus witnessed the effect of the teacher over their pupil.\footnote{It is, in fact, not surprising that Lucian incorporates the Phaedrus into the Nigrinus since as Trapp asserts that “few works were more firmly entrenched in the ‘cultural syllabus’ of Hellenic paideia by the second century AD than Plato’s Phaedrus.” For Trapp, the Phaedrus’ subject matter and “stylistic brilliance” makes it inconceivable that a pepaideumenos could have avoided studying the dialogue. Besides a broad situational similarity between the two texts, there are more specific references, primarily derived from the opening chapters devoted to Lysias’ speech, Phaedrus’ excitement, and Socrates’ ultimate skepticism as to its merits. Trapp (1990:141).}

As Anderson notes, the Student’s assertion that he can give only a rough account of his encounter with Nigrinus is a “concession” to Phaedrus 228d.\footnote{Anderson (1978: 368).} The Student firmly asserts: κὰκεῖνα δὲ, ὅτι οὐχ ἔξης οὐδὲ ὡς ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγε, ῥῆσίν τινα περὶ πάντων ἔρῳ.
πάνυ γὰρ τοῦθ’ ἢμῖν ἀδύνατον· οὖδ’ αὖ ἐκεῖνοι περίθεις τοὺς λόγους (I’m not going to speak in an ordered way, as he did. That would be impossible for me. I’m not going to put words in his mouth, Nigr. 11). In the corresponding passage from the Phaedrus, Socrates’ urging of Phaedrus to deliver Lysias’ speech prompts Phaedrus to reply:

Οὐτωσὶ τοῖνοι ποιήσω, τῷ ὄντι γάρ, ὁ Σώκρατες, παντὸς μᾶλλον τὰ γε ἥματα ὧν ἐξέμαθον· τὴν μέντοι διάνοιαν σχεδὸν ἀπάντησον, οἷς ἔρη διαφέρειν τὰ τοῦ ἐρώτως ἢ τὰ τοῦ μή, ἐν κεφαλαίοις ἐκαστόν ἐφεξῆς δίεμι, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ πρῶτου.

So that’s what I’ll do. Nothing could be truer, Socrates — I did not learn it word for word; but I shall run through the purport of just about everything in which he said the situation of the lover was different from that of the non-lover, giving a summary of each in turn, beginning from the first. (Phaedrus 228d)

The Student, like Phaedrus, feigns to be able to accurately recollect the words of his teacher. In Phaedrus’ case, Socrates soon discovers that he is concealing a written copy of Lysias’ speech, while for the Student, his ability to be able to recall Nigrinus’ words from memory proves his fear to be nothing more than posturing on his part.

As Whitmarsh points out, however, a clearer allusion can be found in the Student’s characterization of the effect Nigrinus’ words have over him.57 In his description of his encounter with Nigrinus, the Student compares his experience to that of an Indian who has just tasted wine for the first time:

δοκῶ γὰρ μοι δοκεῖν τι πεπονθέναι πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν, οἷόνπερ καὶ οἱ Ἰνδοὶ πρὸς τὸν οἴνον λέγονται παθεῖν, ὅτε πρῶτον ἔπιον αὐτοῦ· θερμότεροι γὰρ ὄντες φύσει πιόντες ἱσχυρὸν οὐτό ποτὸν αὐτίκα μᾶλα ἐξέβακενθῆσαν καὶ διπλασίος ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀκράτου ἐξεμάνησαν.

I think the same thing has happened to me in respect of philosophy as they say did to the Indians in relation to their first experience of drinking wine.

They are a naturally excitable race themselves and when they drank such a strong concoction they immediately went crazy, and in double measure too because of the unmixed wine. (Nigr. 5)

The Student’s description of his passion for Nigrinus mirrors Socrates’ reaction to hearing Lysias’ speech:

Δαηκνλίσο κὲλ νữu, ὦ ἑηαῖξε, ὥζηε κὲ ἐθπιαγ῅λαη. θαὶ ηνῦην ἐγὼ ἔπαζνλ
dηὰ ζέ, ὦ Φαῖδξε, πξὸο ζὲ ἀπνβιέπσλ, ὅηη ἐκνὶ ἐδόθεηο γάλπζζαη ὑπὸ ηνῦ
ιόγνπ κεηαμὺ ἀλαγηγλ

Yes, it’s out of this world, my friend. I was amazed. And you were the reason I felt this way, Phaedrus, because I was looking at you while you were reading and it seemed to me that the speech made you glow with pleasure. Assuming that your understanding of these matters is better than mine, I follow your lead, and so I came to share the ecstasy of your enthusiasm. (Phaedrus 234d)

Socrates’ overall reaction to Lysias’ speech is one of reticence regarding Lysias’ argument and the enthusiasm, which he professes to share with Phaedrus (συνεβάκχευσα), is thus highly ironic. As an allusion to this passage, the Student’s use of the image of excessively drunken Indians (ἐξεβακχεύθησαν) as a metaphor for his own experience recalls the irony of Socrates’ reaction to hearing Lysias’ speech, and Lucian here employs this Platonic reference to further subvert the figure of the Student. He is not the philosophical convert he believes himself to be but instead is like Phaedrus, so crazy about his teacher that he does not stop to question what Nigrinus has told him.

While there appears to be a wealth of Platonic resonances in the Nigrinus, those to Old Comedy are notably scarcer, perhaps because they are hidden under the “philosophical” fat on the surface of the text. As Lucian states in the Literary Prometheus, as well as in several other texts, it is not enough to merely mix philosophical
dialogue and Old Comedy, one must do so harmoniously. With this in mind, it would seem that texts in which we cannot easily separate the two would better represent what Lucian is describing in the *Literary Prometheus*. As we saw in the opening letter, Lucian’s use of the phrase “an owl to Athens” is reminiscent of a scene from the *Birds*, but is easily overlooked because it appears in the midst of Platonic language. In addition to this, I will argue that Lucian’s use of the adjective μετέωρος at several points in the text simultaneously recalls Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, illustrating Lucian’s ability to meld the two genres into a unified whole.

At the very outset of the dialogue, the Student’s friend accuses him of being arrogant and having his head in the clouds:

> Οὐς σεμνὸς ἡμῖν σφόδρα καὶ μετέωρος ἐπανελήλυθας. οὐ τοίνυν προσβλέπειν ἡμᾶς ἔτι ἄξιος σῶθ’ ὀμιλίαις μεταδίδως οὐτε κοινωνεῖς τῶν ὀμοίων λόγων, ἀλλ’ ἀφνω μεταβέβλησαι καὶ ὅλως ύπεροπτικῷ τιν ἐοικας.

You seem so haughty and like you have your head in the clouds since you’ve come back. Really you don’t deign to notice us any more, you don’t associate with us any more, you don’t join in our conversations, but you’ve changed all of a sudden and, in short, you have a disdainful air. *(Nigr. 1)*

In this initial description of the Student, the word μετέωρος evokes the unfavorable image of a philosopher as someone who walks around with his head stuck in the clouds uninterested in human affairs, which we have already seen in the Syrian's description of Dialogue in the *Twice Prosecuted* and the interlocutor’s characterization of Menippus in the *Icaromenippus*. In terms of the appearance μετέωρος in the *Nigrinus*, Lucian’s use

---

58 The *LSJ* lists as possible meanings for “μετέωρος:” raised from the ground, in mid-air, astronomical phenomena, inflated, in suspense, haughty, and puffed up. The *LSJ* cites chapter five of the *Nigrinus* as an example of “μετέωρος” denoting haughtiness or pride. While this meaning is definitely connected to the Student’s change in attitude, we cannot discount the other connotations of this word. There are certainly
of this adjective looks simultaneously to the *Phaedrus* and the *Clouds*, in the former to Socrates’ description of the educative relationship between Pericles and Anaxagoras and in the latter to the relationship between Socrates and Strepsiades. Read as a double allusion to the *Phaedrus* and the *Clouds*, μετέωρος characterizes Nigrinus, not as the Platonic philosopher he and his Student believe him to be but as the kind of charlatan philosopher attacked by Lucian in many of his other works.

The Student’s labeling of Nigrinus as a Platonic philosopher invites us to first consider the adjective μετέωρος in a Platonic light. While μετέωρος appears in a variety of contexts in Plato’s dialogues, including the *Theaetetus* and the *Republic*, Plato’s use of μετέωρος in the *Phaedrus* to describe the relationship between Pericles and Anaxagoras provides an interesting precedent for the relationship between Nigrinus and his Student. According to Socrates’ definition of rhetoric presented in the *Phaedrus*, rhetoric is the skill of persuasion over the soul:

\[ \text{Ἄρ’ οὖν οὐ τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἡ ὁμορρίκη ἢ ἑννῃ τέχνη ψυχαναγία τις διὰ λόγουν, οὐ μόνον ἐν δικαστηρίων καὶ ὅσιοι ἄλλοι δημόσιος σύλλογοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἰδίοις} \]

Wouldn’t rhetoric, in general, be a kind of skillful leading of the soul by means of words, not only in public gatherings such as law courts, but also in private meetings. (*Phdr.*, 261a)

As Socrates argues, a skilled speaker’s education must go beyond reading rhetorical handbooks to include the study of philosophy. In the midst of this discussion, Socrates other ways of expressing pride and it is significant that Lucian chooses such a word as μετέωρος to be one of the first descriptive terms employed by the Students.

59 The *Theaetetus* and the *Republic* represent other precedents as well. See *Theaetetus* 175d and *Republic* 488e and 489c. Unlike in the *Theaetetus* and the *Republic*, however, μετέωρος speaks to a particular teacher-Student relationship that is particularly important to understanding what is at stake in the *Nigrinus*. 282
praises Pericles as the best orator, attributing his skill as a speaker to his teacher Anaxagoras:

Πᾶσαι ὅσαι μεγάλαι τῶν τεχνῶν προσδέονται ἀδολεσχίας καὶ μετεωρολογίας φύσεως πέρι· τὸ γὰρ ψηλόνουν τοῦτο καὶ πάντῃ τελεσιουργὸν ἔοικεν ἐντεῦθεν ποθὲν εἰσιέγαι. ὃ καὶ Περικλῆς πρὸς τὸ εὐφυῆς εἶναι ἐκτήσατο· προσπεσὼν γὰρ οὖμαι τοιούτῳ ὄντι Ἀναξαγόρας, μετεωρολογίας ἐμπληθεῖς καὶ ἐπὶ φύσιν νοῦ τε καὶ διανοίας ἀφικόμενος, ὃν δὴ πέρι τὸν πολῖν λόγον ἐποιεῖτο Ἀναξαγόρας, ἐντεῦθεν εὐλυκυσεν ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν λόγων τέχνην τὸ πρόσφορο αὐτῇ.

Every area of expertise of any importance requires one to be a windbag natural scientist with one’s head in the clouds, since that seems to be where loftiness of perspective and all-round effectiveness come from. And Pericles did supplement his natural ability like this. As a result of falling in with Anaxagoras, who was just that sort of person, I think, he became infected with this lofty perspective, reached an understanding of the nature of mind and mindlessness (which Anaxagoras famously used to discuss a lot), and applied to his rhetorical expertise whatever he gained from this source that was appropriate. (Phdr., 270a)

According to Socrates’ definition of rhetoric that preceded this passage, Pericles made the correct choice to study under a philosopher and not a sophist. Socrates’ claim that all skills require ἀδολεσχίας (garrulity) and μετεωρολογίας (haughtiness), however, betrays Socrates’ praise of Pericles as sarcastic. Though Pericles chose a philosopher for a teacher, Socrates’ assertion that Anaxagoras instilled in Pericles the lofty perspective denoted by μετεωρολογία, rather than knowledge, highlights the ultimate failure of Anaxagoras as a teacher.

As Brisson points out, Socrates’ characterization of Pericles and Anaxagoras in this passage is at odds with their portrayals elsewhere in the dialogues. To cite just two examples of the criticism leveled at Pericles: in the Menexenus, Plato attributes Pericles’

---

famed funeral oration to his lover Aspasia, while in the *Protagoras*, Socrates charges that
Pericles and speakers like him deliver speeches lacking in substance. Once questioned,
they will go on as if they were bronze bowls ringing indefinitely until the sound has
dampened (ὅσπερ τῇ χαλκίᾳ πληγέντα μακρὸν ἤχει καὶ ἀποτείνει ἓαν μὴ ἐπιλάβηται τις,
*Protagoras* 329a). Socrates likewise undermines the value of Anaxagoras’ philosophy.

As Socrates states in the *Phaedo*, his quest to discover the intelligent principle that
organizes the cosmos led him to Anaxagoras and his theory that Mind is the cause of
everything. Although he was initially taken in by this theory, Socrates states that the
natural scientist ultimately failed him:

& άπο δὴ θαυμαστής ἐλπίδος, ὦ ἑηαῖξε, ἠορόκελ θεξόκελνο, ἐπεηδὴ πξντὼλ
καὶ ἀναγγέλσκων ὁρός ἄνδρα τῷ μὲν νῷ οὐδὲν χρώμενον οὐδὲ τινὰς
ἀιτίας ἐπαιτίωμεν εἰς τὸ οὐδὲν χρώμενον οὐδὲ τινὰς ἀιτίας
ἐπαιτίωμεν εἰς τὸ διακοσμεῖτά τὰ πράγματα, ἀέρας δὲ καὶ αἰθέρας καὶ
ὕδατα αἰτίωμεν καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ καὶ ἄτοπα.

This wonderful hope was dashed, as I went on reading and saw that the
man made no use of Mind, nor gave it any responsibility for the
management of things, but mentioned as causes air and ether and water
and many other strange things. (*Phd.* 98b)

In other words, Socrates’ quest for a metaphysical answer to his question found in
Anaxagoras nothing but arguments based on natural phenomena.

Seen in light of the characterization of Pericles and Anaxagoras elsewhere in the
dialogues, the knowledge that Pericles received from Anaxagoras appears rather suspect.

According to Socrates, Pericles excelled as an orator in part because of Anaxagoras’
theories on the nature of mind and mindlessness, precisely the theories investigated and

---

61 In the *Meno*, Socrates charges Pericles with not having passed his knowledge onto his sons (94a-b), and
in the *Gorgias*, Socrates charges Pericles with not having made Athens a better city by his rule (503c-d).
Finally, in the *Symposium*, Pericles is named as Alcibiades other teacher (*Symp.* 221c-d) and consequently
a foil for Socrates. See Brisson (1992) for a fuller summary of these examples.
ultimately rejected by Socrates in the *Phaedo*. Socrates’ dismissal of Anaxagoras’ theories because they failed to answer his questions suggests that what Pericles learned from Anaxagoras was equally useless. Moreover, his description of Anaxagoras’ teachings as resulting in *μετέωρολογίας* further emphasizes the failure of Anaxagoras as a teacher. In other words, Pericles may be a better speaker than Lysias because he followed a philosopher, but he still fails to live up to Socrates’ views of what an orator should be.

As a key point of contact between the *Nigrinus* and the *Phaedrus*, the adjective *μετέωρος* not only characterizes Nigrinus’ Student as arrogant, but also describes the Student and Nigrinus’ approach to philosophy. Despite his friend’s censure of his arrogant attitude, the Student is proud to be *μετέωρος*:

> προϊν δὲ ἐς τόδε περιήχθην, ὅπερ ἀρτίως ἠμῖν ἐπεκάλεισ· γαῦρός τε γάρ ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου καὶ μετέωρός εἰμι καὶ ὅλως μικρὸν οὐκέτι οὐδὲν ἐπινοῶ.

I eventually progressed to the point you accused me a few moments ago of being at. I’m arrogant and have my head in the clouds as a result of what Nigrinus said, and I scarcely notice little things any more. (*Nigr. 5*)

For the Student, the lofty position denoted by *μετέωρος* signifies his intellectual superiority over his companion. As the Student’s enthusiasm for Nigrinus makes clear, Nigrinus represents the source of the Student’s newfound perspective, and it is therefore not surprising that *μετέωρος* is a facet of Nigrinus’ philosophy. For Nigrinus, life in Rome is one of solitude and philosophical reflection:

> προτιθέμενος αὐτῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ Πλάτωνι καὶ Ἀληθεία προσλαλῶ, καὶ καθίσας ἐμαυτὸν ὃσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ μυριάνδρῳ σφόδρα που μετέωρος ἐπισκοπῶ τὰ γιγνόμενα, τοῦτο μὲν πολλῆν ψυχαγωγίαν καὶ γέλωτα παρέχειν δυνάμενα, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ πείραν ἀνδρὸς ὡς ἀληθῶς βεβαιὸν
I pass the time in conversation with philosophy, Plato, and the truth, and by seating myself really high up, as it were, in a packed theatre to watch what goes on. This can give me a great deal of entertainment and amusement, but it also has the capacity to test a man’s resolve. (Nigr. 18)

Scholars have typically interpreted this portion of Nigrinus’ speech and specifically his use of μετέωρος as denoting the katascopia used by Cynics and followers of Menippus to highlight the problems of the world around them. Like his Student, Nigrinus sees himself as above everyone else, but for Nigrinus Plato inspired his μετέωρος perspective, while for the Student, Nigrinus is the sole cause. By using Nigrinus’ term to describe himself, the Student shows a desire to emulate his teacher. In his emulation of his teacher, however, the philosophical posturing denoted by μετέωρος is what ultimately lies at the heart of his arrogance.

As a backdrop to the Student’s newfound lofty perspective, the Phaedrus begins to deepen our understanding of the teacher-Student relationship in the Nigrinus. Though both texts present similar educative relationships, namely a non-philosopher learning from a philosopher, they focus on different aspects of that relationship. As Socrates explains, Pericles studied under Anaxagoras to become a better orator and the emphasis here is on why Pericles associated with Anaxagoras rather than the actual teachings he received from him. This is not the case in Lucian’s text. Lucian’s choice to open the dialogue with the friend’s complaints about the Student’s arrogance indicates that Lucian’s focus is not on why the Student has visited Nigrinus but rather on the results of

---

62 It is important to note here that, though scholars have assumed that Nigrinus is actually sitting at the top of the theater, what Nigrinus in fact says is more ambiguous. The fact that he states that conversing with Plato, Philosophy, and the Truth is like (ὁσπέρ) sitting at the top of the theater leaves open the possibility that this is merely an analogy and that Nigrinus is as much guilty of intellectual posturing as his Student.
Nigrinus’ teachings.

As an allusion to the *Clouds*, however, μετέωρος addresses the question of the effects of Nigrinus’ teachings at the same time as it adds a more comic tone to the relationship of Nigrinus and the Student. While Pericles and Anaxagoras represent one foil for the relationship between Nigrinus and the Student, Strepsiades and Socrates represent another. In the context of the *Clouds*, μετέωρος is primarily associated with the figure of Socrates. As Socrates first descends onto the stage, for example, he explains to the inquisitive Strepsiades that in order to understand celestial matters, one must first suspend the intellect:

\[
\text{où γάρ ἄν ποτε}
\]
\[
\text{ἐξηρον ὅρθος τὰ μετέωρα πράγματα}
\]
\[
\text{εἰ μὴ κρεμᾶσα τὸ νόημα καὶ τὴν φροντίδα,}
\]
\[
\text{λεπτὴν καταμείζας εἰς τὸν ὅμοιον ἀέρα}
\]

Why, for accurate investigation of meteorological phenomena it is indispensoble to get one’s thoughts into a state of *suspension* and mix its minute particles into the air, which they so closely resemble. *(Clouds, 227-229)*

Interpretations of Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates tend to view him as an amalgamation of a Pre-Socratic philosopher interested primarily in natural questions and a sophist.\(^{63}\) For Socrates, μετέωρος thus represents an important facet of the arguments he espouses and Aristophanes, in fact, places the word almost exclusively in Socrates’ mouth, with a notable exception being Strepsiades’ wrangling with his creditors at the

---

\(^{63}\) For a discussion of the figure of Socrates, see the introduction to Dover’s commentary on the *Clouds* (1989: xxxii-lvi).
end of the play. As I will suggest, this particular scene serves as a precedent for the Student’s misappropriation of Nigrinus’ teachings. In the context of the Clouds, Socrates has two students, one of whom, Strepsiades, he brands a failure, and expels from his school, and another, Pheidippides, who emerges as a successful pupil, albeit a dangerous one. Since μετέωρος appears primarily in exchanges between Socrates and Strepsiades, my focus will therefore be on the educative relationship between Socrates and Strepsiades.

Strepsiades goes to Socrates to learn the type of crafty argumentation that will allow him to evade his debts. Though the arguments of Socrates and the Clouds continually amaze Strepsiades, Socrates expresses frustration at Strepsiades’ inability to learn:

μὰ τὴν Ἀναπνοῆν, μὰ τὸ Χάος, μὰ τὸν Ἀέρα, οὐκ εἶδον οὕτως ἐνδρ’ ἀγροικον οὐδαμοῦ ὁὐδ’ ἀπορον οὐδ’ σκαῖνον οὐδ’ ἐπιλήσμονα, ὀστίς σκαλαθυμ mát’ ἅττα μικρὰ μανθάνων ταῦτ’ ἐπιλέξησται πρὶν μαθεῖν.

In the name of Respiration and Chaos and Air and all that’s holy, I’ve never met such a clueless stupid forgetful bumpkin in all my life! The most trifling little think I teach him, he forgets before he’s even learnt it! (Cl. 626-629)

This frustration comes to a head when Strepsiades, after successfully answering several questions about how to evade creditors, offers suicide as a potential solution, to which

---

64 Besides Socrates’ entrance, Socrates incorporates μετέωρος into his arguments at lines 264, 266, 333, and 490. He also uses the verbal form, μετεωρίσθηκε, at line 404. In addition to Socrates’ use of μετέωρος, μετέωρος appears in the mouth of the chorus at line 360 in the compound form, μετεωροφυστῶν.

65 When asked by Socrates why he has come to the Thinkery, Strepsiades responds: “βουλόμενος μαθεῖν λέγειν: ὑπὸ γὰρ τῶν χρήστων τε δυσκολωτάτων ἀγομα, φέρομαι, τὰ χρήματ’ ἐνεχυράζουμαι,” (I want to be made an orator. Interest bills and heartless creditors are laying me waste with fire, the sword, and distress warrants, Cl. 240).
Socrates responds: ὦκ εἰς κόρακας ἄποφθερεῖ, / ἐπιλησμότατον καὶ σκαϊῶτατον γερόντιο (Oh, to hell with you, you old amnesiac fool! Cl. 789-90) and expels him from the Thinkery.

Despite this, Strepsiades retains some of what his teacher has taught him. At the end of the play, after Pheidippides has returned from the Thinkery, Strepsiades is confronted by his creditors and seeks to escape his debts by employing the type of logic he learned from Socrates. In the course of being accosted by his creditors, Strepsiades turns specifically to meteorological arguments: πῶς οὖν ἀπολαβεῖν τάργυριον δίκαιος εἶ, / εἰ μηδὲν οἷσθα τῶν μετεώρων πραγμάτων; (Then how can you claim the right to have your money, if you have no knowledge of meteorological arguments?” (Clouds, 1283-4).

In the exchange that follows, one of the creditors attempts to explain to Strepsiades how he owes interest on the debt, only to be confused with questions concerning the amount of water in the sea:

{Chr.} σὺ δὲ νὴ τὸν Ἐρμῆν προσκεκλήσεσθαι γ’ ἐμοί, 
εἰ μὴ ποδόσεις τάργυριον.
{Στ.} κάτειπέ νυν·
πότερα νομίζεις καίνον αἰεὶ τὸν Δία
ὑείν ὕδωρ ἐκάστωτ’, ἢ τὸν ἠλιον
ἐλκεῖν κάτωθεν ταῦτα τοῦ ὅδωρ πάλιν;
{Χρ.} οὐκ οἶδ’ ἐγὼν’ ὀπότερον, οὐδὲ μοι μέλει.
{Στ.} πῶς οὖν ἀπολαβεῖν τάργυριον δίκαιος εἶ,
εἰ μηδὲν οἷσθα τῶν μετεώρων πραγμάτων;

Second Creditor: I’m fairly sure that you’re going to get a summons from me, if you don’t pay up.
Strepsiades: Tell me now: do you think that when Zeus rains, it’s new rain every time, or do you think the sun sucks up water from the ground so that he can use it again?
Second Creditor: I don’t know and I don’t care.
Strepsiades: Then how can you claim the right to have your money back, if you have no knowledge of meteorology? (Clouds, 1275-1282)
Although Strepsiades is unable to learn from Socrates the type of sophistic argumentation he is seeking, he nonetheless mimics his teacher’s meteorological arguments. These arguments, however, ultimately fail Strepsiades, forcing him to resort to violence. As this passage illustrates, especially when read in light of Socrates’ entrance and the ensuing arguments he makes, Strepsiades has not learnt from Socrates the art of dodging debts but has managed to mimic Socratic style of argumentation. Yet as he learns in his encounter with his creditors, this style of argumentation has no value in the real world and he is forced to resort to violence.

The teacher-student relationship between Socrates and Strepsiades represents an important parallel for that of Nigrinus and his Student. Like Strepsiades, the Student seeks to emulate his teacher. As I have argued, we can find precedents for the type of language employed by the Student in Nigrinus’ speech, in particular the role that μετέωρος plays in defining their approaches to philosophy. For Nigrinus, μετέωρος represents physical elevation and consequently separation as well as a certain degree of intellectual posturing. As he sits at the top of the theater, he sees himself as conversing with philosophy and truth, a fact that causes him to disdain the behavior of those below him. When filtered through the Student, however, μετέωρος no longer retains any physical connotations but has become mere intellectual posturing and arrogance in relation to his friend. Like the transfer of ideas from Socrates to Strepsiades in the Clouds, Nigrinus’ arguments appear ridiculous in his own mouth but their bastardization by the Student further highlights their lack of substance. As an allusion to the Clouds, the focus of μετέωρος is less on Nigrinus’ role as a philosopher, than on the effects of their
transference on the Student. Like Strepsiades, the Student mimics his teacher to no avail, for as Clay has already pointed out, he is not the philosophical convert he believes himself to be, but instead an absurd figure that incites our laughter.66

As his friend’s complaints make clear, Nigrinus’ effect on the Student is not necessarily good and a discussion of them consumes the rest of the dialogue. For the Student, as I have already mentioned, Nigrinus and his words have become the guiding principle of his life: καθάπερ ἐν πελάγει καὶ νυκτὶ πολλῇ φερόμενος, ἐς πυρσόν τινα τοῦτον ἀποβλέπω (I’m like a sailor riding the sea at night: Nigrinus is like a beacon that I look to for guidance. Nigr. 7) Such a claim whets his companion’s appetite, as well as our own, to hear Nigrinus’ words. Much to his companion’s exasperation, the Student stalls as he worries that he will not do his teacher and himself justice. As he sees himself, he is an actor performing Nigrinus’ speech for his friend:

Δέδοικα μή σοι μεταξύ δόξω γελοίως αὐτὰ μμεῖσθαι, τὰ μὲν ἄτάκτως συνείρων, ἑνίοτε δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ὑπ’ ἀσθενείας τὸν νοῦν διαφθείρων, κάτω προαχθῆς ἥρεμα καὶ αὐτοῦ καταγίνων τὸ δράματος.

I’m afraid that while I’m talking I might do a passable imitation of people like these, and make a fool of myself. I might put some things in the wrong order, and sometimes spoil the ideas themselves through my own feebleness. If I do, you might gradually become inclined to despise the play itself.

Lucian employs the Student’s fervor for Nigrinus and lack of confidence to heighten our anticipation for what philosophical truths Nigrinus’ speech will hold. Nigrinus’ speech, however, contains nothing more than common characterizations of Athens and Rome. Lucian thus sets Nigrinus and his philosophy on a pedestal only to knock it off.

66 In a sense, Lucian incites us our own μετέωρος perspective regarding Nigrinus and his Student.
The double allusion found in μετέωρος presents us with two foils for the character of Nigrinus: Anaxagoras in the Phaedrus and Socrates in the Clouds. Nigrinus’ philosophy, like that of Anaxagoras, lacks substance. As I have argued, Lucian characterizes Nigrinus as a failed philosopher much like Socrates’ characterization of Anaxagoras, yet there is something rather peculiar about Nigrinus that differentiates him from Anaxagoras. For, while Anaxagoras associated with such public figures as Pericles, Nigrinus is described as a recluse. In his account of his visit to Nigrinus, the Student notes that he found Nigrinus alone in his study, surrounded by busts of dead philosophers (Nigr. 2). This image of Nigrinus is supported by Nigrinus himself at the opening of the speech, where he admits to shutting himself off from society and conversing only with “philosophy, Plato, and the truth” (Nigr. 18). Nigrinus, in fact, goes so far as to call his way of life “womanish:" τὸ λοιπὸν οἶκουρεῖν εἰλόμην καὶ βίον τινὰ τοῦτον γυναικώδη καὶ ἄτολμον τοῖς πολλοῖς δοκοῦντα, (I chose to live out the rest of my days at home, and I took on this womanish sort of existence that most people think is cowardly.) As Nigrinus’ own statements make clear, Anaxagoras is an appropriate foil only in terms of his characterization as a failed philosopher and teacher.

In addition to evoking the figure of Anaxagoras, μετέωρος also calls to mind Socrates of the Clouds as a potential point of comparison for Nigrinus. There are, in fact, certain similarities between the Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates and Lucian’s characterization of Nigrinus. Many scholars have noted, in particular Dover, that

---

67 The Student describes his initial impression of Nigrinus as follows: “καὶ παρελθὼν εἶσο καταλαμβάνω τὸν μὲν ἐν χερσί βιβλίον ἔχοντα, πολλὰς δὲ εἰκόνας παλαιῶν φιλοσόφων ἐν κύκλῳ κειμένας.” (I went in and found him with a book in his hands, surrounded by portrait-busts of the ancient philosophers.)
68 I have quoted the majority of the passage above.
Aristophanes’ representation of Socrates is an amalgamation of stereotypes of the Pre-Socratic philosophers as well as those of sophists.\(^6^9\) Nigrinus is likewise a figure that has roots in several different traditions. As I have suggested, though Nigrinus espouses stereotypical views of the moral philosophers of his day, Lucian incorporates Homeric allusions and theatrical language that suggests that he is not unlike a sophist. In addition to this, Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates and his Thinkery indicates that Socrates and his followers are removed from society, and I would like to suggest that Nigrinus’ seclusion is along similar lines.\(^7^0\) Lucian’s choice to structure his comic dialogues in such a way as to have a serious philosophical surface that hides more comic elements precludes Nigrinus from having an overtly humorous or ridiculous nature. It is only after careful attention is paid not only to the arguments he makes but also to the very language of those arguments that Nigrinus begins to appear less like a philosopher worthy of our admiration and more like a charlatan philosopher whom Lucian incites us to scorn.

As a description of the effects of Nigrinus’ teachings, μετέωρος characterizes Nigrinus’ philosophy, like that of Anaxagoras in the Phaedrus and Socrates in the Clouds, as lacking in substance. The Student, however, did not come up with this term on his own, but, like the image of the Sirens, appropriated it from Nigrinus’ teachings. As Nigrinus describes his philosophical practices, he removes himself from society, choosing instead to converse with Plato and philosophy as he sits at the top of theatre observing the depravity of those below him. Nigrinus’ use of Plato to characterize his


\(^7^0\) I do not want, however, to suggest that Nigrinus is necessarily directly modeled exclusively off of Socrates in the Clouds, but rather that the two figures share similar characteristics.
life as a philosopher signals a self-fashioning on his part as Platonic and suggests that the language employed here should be viewed as such. As Nigrinus claims, his μετέωρος perspective offers him enjoyment in the form of ψυχαγωγία. This enjoyment that Nigrinus receives from the lofty perspective that conversing with Plato evokes, however, characterizes him in the specific language of Socrates’ definition of rhetoric found in the Phaedrus. As Nigrinus’ use of this word makes clear, rhetoric has a very different purpose in Nigrinus’ time than in Socrates’. According to Socrates’ discussion of orators in the Phaedrus, sophists and rhetoricians used rhetoric both in the political arena and more private affairs. By Lucian’s time, those who practiced the skill of rhetoric, namely sophists, with a few exceptions were no longer doing so in the political arena, but rather for purposes of entertainment.71 Nigrinus’ appropriation of ψυχαγωγία highlights this change. As Lucian indicates in this passage, Nigrinus is a follower not of philosophy but of rhetoric. Though Nigrinus may call himself a follower of Plato, Lucian shows this to be impossible. For, even if he is a follower of rhetoric, rhetoric has lost the serious role Socrates once attributed to it and taken on the role of entertainment.

As Lucian’s use of μετέωρος and ψυχαγωγία within Nigrinus’ speech makes clear, Nigrinus is ultimately nothing more than a sophist calling himself a philosopher. This characterization of Nigrinus is never clearer than in the type of student that Nigrinus has inspired. In his letter to Nigrinus, Lucian focuses on the effects of Nigrinus’ teachings to illustrate what type of Student he has produced, namely a fanatic, and as Clay argues, he is a fanatic of rhetoric. Though Clay’s discussion of the Nigrinus focuses

71 Dio represents an obvious exception to this rule.
almost solely on the figure of the Student, Lucian’s allusion to the *Phaedrus* and the *Clouds* in Nigrinus’ speech indicates Nigrinus is no different. For the Student, his discussion with Nigrinus opened the eyes of his soul, thus indicating that Nigrinus’ rhetoric possess the power of “ψυχαγωγία.” As Lucian’s characterization of the Student shows, the changes Nigrinus inspired in the Student have made him ridiculous and worthy of censure in the eyes of his friend. Nigrinus’ rhetoric does not produce philosophers but rather comical figures that walk around with their heads in the clouds. Nigrinus’ devotion to Plato thus becomes for Lucian a corrective tool and it is ultimately through his own reliance on Plato that Lucian reveals Nigrinus’ true colors.

As we have seen, though not usually grouped among Lucian’s common dialogues, the *Nigrinus* fits the requirements established by Lucian in the *Literary Prometheus* and Lucian’s use of the adjective μετέωρος exemplifies his ability to unite the two genres. While the *Nigrinus* has a clear philosophical surface, which like Prometheus’ fat entices us, Lucian’s use of the adjective μετέωρος as a double allusion to the *Phaedrus* and the *Clouds* indicates that we should look beyond the philosophical outer layer of the text. For as μετέωρος suggests, Nigrinus’ failure to impart anything meaningful to the Student calls into question his very role as a philosopher. In my final section, I will look more broadly at how the *Phaedrus* informs the structure of the *Nigrinus* and how we can now reevaluate the philosophical surface of the text.

**IV. Conclusions: the *Phaedrus* and the *Nigrinus***

As we saw in the preceding section, Lucian uses the adjective μετέωρος to
highlight Nigrinus’ failure as a teacher of philosophy and to challenge his claims to be a philosopher. In addition to the similarity between Nigrinus and such figures as Anaxagoras and Socrates of the *Clouds*, as I have suggested earlier, there is a certain structural similarity between Nigrinus, whose words are being relayed by a fanatical Student, and the figure of Lysias in the *Phaedrus*. In this section I will look more broadly at the similarities both between the two texts and between characters. I will argue that the likenesses between the *Phaedrus* and the *Nigrinus* are an essential part of the *Nigrinus*’ philosophical outer layer. For it is through a comparison with the *Phaedrus* that we can begin to see Lucian casting himself in the role of Plato as the author of the text and founder of the new genre of the comic dialogue.

In such dialogues as the *Phaedrus*, Socrates’ interlocutors are lucky to have Socrates steer them away from following such errant figures as Lysias. In Lucian’s *Nigrinus*, however, the Student lacks a Socrates figure to guide him away from the Sirens that are Nigrinus’ words. While his companion plays the Socratic role, he does so only in the sense that he incites the Student to relate Nigrinus’ speech, like Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, and at times responds ironically to what the Student has to say. Although admittedly there are no clear verbal allusions in any of the comments that the companion makes (not to mention that his role in the dialogue is rather minor), he displays a certain amount of incredulity and sarcasm at his friend’s experience typical of Socrates himself. As I have already quoted above, Socrates declares upon hearing Phaedrus recite Lysias’ speech that he began to share in Phaedrus’ enthusiasm for Lysias’ speech. If the irony of Socrates’ statement is not clear, Phaedrus does not leave us in doubt it when he asks
Socrates, Εἶελ· νὕησ δὴ δνθεῖ παίζειν; (Hmmm…does it strike you as something to joke about like this? Phdr. 234d) Like Socrates, the Student’s companion asserts that

Nigrinus’ speech has brought on a kind of madness in him:

What a noble, marvelous, --yes, divine tale you have told, my dear fellow! I did not realize it, but you certainly were chock-full of your ambrosia and your lotus! The consequence is that as you talked I felt something like a change of heart and now that you have stopped I am put out: to speak in your own style, I am wounded. And no wonder! For you know that people bitten by mad dogs not only go mad themselves but if in their fury they treat others as the dogs treated them, the others take leave of their senses too. Something of the affection is transmitted with the bite; the disease multiplies, and there is a great run of madness. (Nigr. 38)

Anderson says of this passage that, despite such imagery, Lucian intends the bite of a mad dog to be a compliment to Nigrinus. Yet, as Anderson notes, elsewhere in Lucian’s corpus the image of mad dog is not as complimentary as he would read it here.

At the end of the Hermotimus, to use one of Anderson’s examples, Hermotimus declares that he will avoid a philosopher just as he avoids a mad dog: φιλοσόφω δὲ εἰς τὸ λοιπὸν κἂν άκων ποτὲ ὀδὸ βαδίζων ἐντύχω, οὔτως ἑκτραπῆσομαι καὶ περιστῆσομαι ὦσπερ τοὺς λυττόντας τῶν κυνῶν, (Henceforth, if I meet a philosopher on my walks (and it will not be with my will), I shall turn aside and avoid him as I would a mad dog, Herm. 86). In

72 Anderson says the following about this passage: “The comparison of Nigrinus’ speech to the bite of a mad dog might seem uncomplimentary (cf. Herm. 86), but the author of De Saltatione uses it as a compliment,” (1978: n. 18).
light of this example from the *Hermotimus*, I disagree with Anderson’s analysis of this passage. As Clay has already pointed out, it is clear that Lucian satirizes the Student’s frenzy for Nigrinus in the embedded dialogue. In this context, it makes little sense for that frenzy suddenly to become a point of praise for Nigrinus, and it is hard not to read the companion’s final statements as anything but ironic. Like Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, he too claims that the madness has spread. Unlike Phaedrus, however, this is lost on the Student and he asks his companion: Οὐθνῦλ θαὶ αὐηὸο ἡκῖλ ἐξᾶλ ὁκνινγεῖο; (Then you admit your madness? *Nigr.* 38)

As a paradigm for the figure of the Student, Phaedrus exhibits a passion for Lysias, the extent of which is only revealed when Socrates calls into question the value of the arguments espoused by Lysias (*Phaedrus*, 235a-b). In the context of the *Nigrinus*, however, Lucian leaves no hope that the Student will realize the error of his ways, as his friend’s incredulity is completely lost on him. In addition to this, Lucian ends the *Nigrinus* where we might expect, if we have the *Phaedrus* in mind, a discussion of Nigrinus’ speech to ensue. Since no attempts are made to correct the Student, it would seem that in the context of the text the real object of correction is not the Student, but ironically the presumed reader and protagonist of his text, Nigrinus himself.

Irony thus colors the end of the *Nigrinus*. When asked how they should treat this madness, the Student replies that they should do as Telephus did and go back to the source of the illness:

Student: Τὸ τοῦ ἄρα Τηλέφου ἀνάγκη ποιεῖν.
    Companion: Ποίον αὐτὸ λέγεις;
Student: Ἐπὶ τὸν τρώσαντα ἐλθόντας ἰᾶσθαι παρακαλεῖν.

Student: We must do as Telephus did, I suppose.
Companion: What’s your meaning now?
Student: Go to the man who inflicted the wound and beg him to heal us!
(Nigr. 38)

The context of the dialogue between these two figures and for that matter Nigrinus’ speech is the letter that opened the Nigrinus. As a rather witty conclusion to this letter, Lucian here has the Student declare that they must return to Nigrinus because that is precisely the destination of the letter.

With its proclamation that the two participants in the dialogue should return to Nigrinus, the end of the Nigrinus demands that we go back to the prefatory letter. By the end of Lucian’s letter to Nigrinus, and by this I now mean the work as a whole, Lucian’s opinion of Nigrinus is crystal clear. He is nothing more than another Lysias, who has not inspired in his follower a passion for philosophy but a passion for Nigrinus himself. In addition to this, Lucian uses the adjective μετέωρος to evoke two failed educative relationships: that of Strepsiades and Socrates in the Clouds and that of Pericles and Anaxagoras in the Phaedrus, both of which highlight Nigrinus’ own failure as a teacher. Nigrinus may have brought philosophy into the Student’s line of sight, much like Anaxagoras instilled Pericles with questions about mind and mindlessness, but he ultimately did not inspire a philosophical conversion in the Student. As such, it is impossible to read the Nigrinus as anything but Lucian’s critique of Nigrinus’ philosophical method, and this is supported by the fact that his speech lacks any philosophical ingenuity. Ingenuity, in fact, is located solely in the figure of Lucian.

74 For the failure of the Student’s conversion see Clay (1992:3423-3424) and Whitmarsh (2001:275-8).
himself. Lucian’s passion for philosophical arguments (ὁ πρὸς τοὺς λόγους ἔρως) is not a passion for Nigrinus’ arguments but speaks rather to the lack of good philosophers in Lucian’s time. As the founder of the philosophical dialogue, Plato represents a source of ingenuity for Lucian. Though Nigrinus is labeled as a Platonic philosopher, his cliché descriptions of Athens and Rome show that he is anything but like Plato.

Lucian’s imitation of the Phaedrus within the embedded dialogue further speaks to this point. With the exception of the μετέωρος allusion, the similarities between the two texts come from the discussion surrounding Lysias’ speech. It is important to notice that Lucian focuses solely on the parts that describe the effects of Lysias’ speech on Phaedrus as well as Socrates. His imitation of the dialogue stops once Socrates begins to show Phaedrus, through question and answering, the flaws of Lysias’ argument. Moreover, the text excludes any reference to the two speeches Socrates offers Phaedrus to compare and ultimately to prefer to that of Lysias. Though Lucian alludes to Plato throughout the Nigrinus, and not just to the Phaedrus, the embedded dialogue cannot ultimately be seen as Platonic because it lacks any imitation of the Socratic elenchus. It is this lack that ultimately illustrates the void left behind by Nigrinus and his philosophy.

In the context of the Phaedrus, Socrates is able to successfully instill in Phaedrus a love of philosophy, yet Lucian does not provide us with such a resolution. Instead, he leaves open the question if we, his readers, will fall into the trap of Nigrinus or follow Lucian’s new way of conducting philosophy, namely uniting philosophy with Old Comedy and using it as a lens through separate the true philosophers from the fake. As a letter to Nigrinus, the Nigrinus not only allows Nigrinus to experience his own words like
his dictum regarding the song of the Sirens, but it also allows Lucian to highlight for a 
broader audience the failures of a philosopher such as Nigrinus at the same time as he 
one-ups Nigrinus when it comes to a love of Plato. Nigrinus might claim to follow in 
Plato's footsteps, but it is Lucian’s *Nigrinus* as a whole and its use of such dialogues as 
the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* as well as its incorporation of elements from Old Comedy 
that allows Lucian to assert his own devotion to Plato and to proclaim himself the 
defender of philosophy.
Conclusion:
A Brief Look at What Happened to the Comic Dialogue

The preceding chapters have examined Lucian’s comic dialogues with the clarity of hindsight, which has revealed Lucian’s philosophical approach to be grounded in Old Comedy, the social critique that it offered, and its portrayal of Socrates. Now, I want to look forward and consider briefly what happened to the Lucianic dialogue in the centuries after his death. My dissertation’s primary contribution, I believe, has been to disentangle Lucian’s hybrid genre, which has allowed us to approach with greater precision Lucian’s relationship to philosophy: his attacks on philosophers are not directed at philosophy per se but at its bastardization and degradation by contemporary philosophical schools. Previously understood as solely a Cynic, perhaps with Skeptic or Epicurean leanings, Lucian, at least the Lucian viewed through the lens of this study, called for a return to the Socratic search for knowledge by reinventing the genre of the philosophical dialogue. In light of Lucian’s attempts to establish his comic dialogues as a philosophical approach worthy of emulation in their own right, I want to see what, if any, impact Lucian’s comic dialogue had on his ancient reader and thus I intend to explore how Lucian’s reception of comedy and philosophy was itself received. Although this is too large a topic to be examined sufficiently here, and in fact one best suited for a study in its own right, I want to briefly examine the comic dialogue’s reception in the
Byzantine era, taking one text, *The Patriot or Student*, as a test case in order to articulate how my approach will be useful for future study. As I will show, this text adopts Lucian’s union of Aristophanic comedy and Platonic dialogue to argue not for the Lucianic purpose of philosophical questioning but instead Christian doctrine.

Transmitted among the manuscripts of Lucian, the *Patriot* is of uncertain authorship, date, and purpose. Despite this uncertainty, some have suggested that it was penned during reign of Julian or, more likely, later in the Byzantine period. In addition to this, the dialogue has been conversely interpreted as anti-Christian, anti-pagan, and as mocking both religions. For the purposes of this discussion, I will accept Hilhorst’s suggestion that the author of this text in fact takes a “Christian stand,” an argument which is based on a careful reexamination of the treatment of several Biblical references in this work. While Baldwin has already chronicled the wealth of Lucianic allusions found in this dialogue, I will focus my attention on how the author of this dialogue employs Lucian, in particular his use Aristophanic comedy for philosophical purposes, to promote Christianity as a truer source of knowledge than pagan philosophy. As I will contend, the author of this dialogue mimics Lucian’s philosophical reinvention of Aristophanic comedy by reworking Lucian’s genre for a new Christian purpose.

Before I begin my discussion, however, I will first provide a brief summary of the text. The *Patriot* opens with a scene familiar to us from Lucian’s *Icaromenippus*, *Parasite*, and *Hermotimus*: the Christian Tripheo encounters his pagan friend, Critias.

---

1 From this point forward, I will refer to this text as the *Patriot*.
2 For a discussion of the problems surrounding dating this manuscript, see Baldwin (1982: 322-3).
3 For a summary of the dating issues surrounding this text, see Baldwin (1982: 322-3). For the dialogue’s treatment of Christianity, see Baldwin (1982:343) and Hilhorst (1993:39).
who is himself lost in thought. From Triepho’s interrogation about Critias’ unusual demeanor, we learn that it is the result of the latter’s frustration with his professors (σοφιστῶν, 2). Although we, as readers of Lucian, might expect further exploration of these problematic figures, the discussion that ensues covers a range of topics including the problematic conduct of the pagan gods (4-11), the Trinity (12), and an unusual encounter that Critias had with a gathering of naysayers about the future of the empire (20-27). These pessimists, however, are eventually refuted when a messenger appears and reports that the Emperor has been victorious in battle. The dialogue then concludes with both men thanking heaven for the Emperor’s success.

If we read the opening of the Patriot in tandem with Lucian’s dialogues, we can begin to see how the author casts Critias as a Hermotimus or Menippus and Triepho as a Lucianic and, therefore, Socratic interlocutor. Like his Lucianic predecessors, Critias initially appears interested in philosophy, a characterization reinforced by a variety of Platonic allusions surrounding his character. The most obvious of these is his name, which by its very nature recalls Socrates’ interlocutor in such dialogues as the Timaeus-Critias, and potentially the Charmides. In addition to this, when we first meet him, he is lost in thought in a manner that evokes Socrates’ behavior on his way to Agathon’s house.

---

5 For a discussion of the significance of this word during the later period, see Baldwin (1982:328).
6 This could refer to the resolution of the Cappadocian Fathers, famously expressed in the Nicene Creed, that the Trinity comprises three persons (hypostases) in one substance (ousia). For further discussion, see McGrath (2006).
7 There remains disagreement among scholars of Plato whether the Critias of the Charmides is the same as that of the Timaeus and Critias, but this is most likely a modern, not an ancient debate. There is no way to tell whether the author of the Patriot would have had the same reservations. For a discussion of this issue, see Labarbe (1989) and Nails (2002). I disagree here with Baldwin who suggests “an identification of this character with the most vehement critic of mythological folly, Lucian himself. Perhaps the author uses the figure of Lucian kritikos both to assail modern enemies and also to show that the shrewd and critical pagan could come to appreciate the truths of Christianity.” (1982:341).
and Alcibiades’ subsequent description of him at Potidea found in the Symposium (174d-e and 221a-c). Moreover, although he is initially hesitant to disclose his thoughts to Triepho, he eventually concedes with language that directly alludes to the setting of the Phaedrus:

\[
\text{ἀπίστωμεν ἐνθά αἱ πλάτανοι τὸν ἦλιον εἰργουσιν, ἀηδόνες δὲ καὶ χελιδόνες ἐνήχα κελαδοῦσιν, ἵνα μελῳδία τῶν ὄρνεων τὰς ἀκοὰς ἐνηδύνουσα τὸ τε ὑδωρ ἣρέμα κελαρύζον τὰς ψυχὰς καταθέλζειν}
\]

Let us depart to where the plane-trees keep off the sun, and nightingales and swallows pour forth sweet melodies, so that our souls may be enchanted by the melody of the birds that delights the ears, and by the gentle murmur of the water. (3)

Combined with the other Platonic allusions, this reference to the Phaedrus has the effect of establishing Critias and his Platonic-pagan leanings as the topic of discussion here at the opening of the dialogue.

The tool by which Triepho forces Critias to reconsider what he has believed to be true, however, is not initially Christian doctrine but Lucian. This point is highlighted by Triepho’s response to Critias’ Platonic suggestion that they conduct their discussion under the plane trees: \[
\text{Ἰομεν, ὦ Κριτία: ἄλλα δέδηα μὴ που ἐπωθῆ ἢ ἥκουσμένον ἐστὶ καὶ μὲ ὑπέρον ἢ θύρητρον ἢ ἀλλο τὶ τῶν ἀψύχων ἀπεργάσεται ἢ θαυμασία σοῦ αὕτη κατάπληξις (Let us go, Critias. But I am afraid that perhaps what you’ve heard is a magic incantation and the wonders which amazed you will make into a pestle or a door or some other inanimate object, 4).}
\]

In contrast to Critias’ Platonic language, Triepho’s tongue-in-cheek concern about the potential magical powers of what Critias has heard from his

---

8 This reference to the Symposium perhaps offer further proof of a Platonic resonance for Critias’ name, since in the Charmides Socrates has just returned from Potidea and engages in a dialogue with Charmides and his uncle Critias.
teachers directly recalls a tale from Lucian’s *Lover of Lies*. According to Arignotus, one of the participants in Lucian’s dialogue, a certain Pancrates had the power to make the bar of a door, a broom, or a pestle behave as if human (35). This opening scene thus pits the Platonic language of Critias against the Lucianic style of Triepho. Whereas Lucian drew on different aspects of the comic tradition in his quest to reveal philosophical corruption, here we find the author of the *Patriot* turning to Lucian to interrogate not contemporary philosophers but pagan religion and possibly even theurgy.

This point is reinforced when we consider how this single Lucianic allusion affects the dynamics of the rest of the dialogue. Critias’ attempt to assuage Triepho’s anxiety by invoking Zeus fails when the latter points to Zeus’ many indiscretions with young maidens. Perplexed by Triepho’s rejection of Zeus, Critias offers the other Olympians as alternatives, each of which is summarily rejected on the basis of their sexual indiscretions or, in the case of Athena, connections to the Gorgon. After rejecting the Olympian gods, Triepho shifts the focus away from Critias’ pagan interests by offering the Christian God as the proper figure to swear by in language intended to invoke the Trinity: ἑλθηξῆταὶ ἐμὲλὸοηξία, ἡνὺηλλόκηδεΖῆλα, ἡόλδ’ ἡγνῦζεόλ (one from three and three from one, consider him your Zeus, believe him to be your God, 12). From this point onward, the roles are reversed: Triepho is no longer concerned with Critias’ intellectual dissatisfaction but turns his focus to illustrating the superior value of the Christian god. Read in light of what ensues, we can see Triepho invoking Lucianic

---

9 Macleod (1967: 423 n.7).
10 According to Struck (2004) and Johnston (2008), this is precisely what practitioners of theurgy could do, namely to animate inanimate object through *symbola* or potentially even “charms.”
language as tool to shift the Platonic Critias away from pagan interests to a more Christian themed discussion.

The unknown author of this dialogue thus juxtaposes Critias’ Platonic language with the Lucianic-Christian outlook of Triepho. This characterization of Triepho is further emphasized in a description of St. Paul that Triepho offers in response to Critias’ confusion about the Trinity:

σίγα τά νέρθε καὶ τὰ σιγῆς ἀξία.
οὐκ ἔσθ’ ὄδε μετρεῖν τὰ ψυλλὸν ἱχνη. ἐγὼ γὰρ σε διδάξω τί τό πᾶν καὶ τίς ὁ προήν πάντον και τί τὸ σύστημα του παντός· και γάρ πρὸς κάγῳ ταῦτα ἐπαυγοῦν ἄπερ σύ, ἣνίκα δὲ μοι Γαλιλαίος ἐνέπνευ, ἀγαπητίας, ἐπίρροις, ἐς τρίτον οὐρανὸν ἀεροβατῆς καὶ τὰ κάλλιστα ἕκμεμαθηκῶν, δι’ ὅδατος ἡμᾶς ἀνεγέννησαν, ἐς τὰ τόν μακάρων ἱχνα παρεισώδεις καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἁσβέδων χώρων ἡμᾶς ἐλυτρώσατο. καὶ σε πούῃσω, ἦν μου ἀκούης, ἐπ’ ἀληθείας ἀνθρωπον.

“Be quiet about the things below and the things worthy of silence.” We don’t measure the footprints of fleas here. For I shall teach you what is all, who existed before all else and how the universe works. For only the other day I too was in the same state as you, but, when I was met by a Galilean with receding hair and a long nose, who had walked on the air into the third heaven and acquired the most glorious knowledge, he regenerated us with water, led us into the paths of the blessed and ransomed us from the impious places. If you listen to me, I shall make you too a man in truth. (12)

While the first line of this speech is generally regarded as a comic line of unknown origin, what is striking about this passage is its merging of language borrowed directly from the *Clouds* (μετρεῖν τὰ ψυλλὸν ἱχνη and ἀεροβατῆς) with references to the New Testament. As we have seen, Lucian pinpoints the source of the conflict between comedy and philosophy specifically in the *Clouds* and Plato’s reaction to that the play. The *Clouds* therefore represents the source of Lucian’s problem and, ultimately, a significant part of its solution. Lucian signals this fact to us in his repeated use of
language evocative of the play to characterize both the current non-Lucianic form of
dialogue and the negative philosophical paradigm offered by such figures as Nigrinus.

The *Clouds* thus plays a dual role in Lucian’s creation of his literary program and
here the anonymous author of the *Patriot* uses it to similar effect. As I have already
suggested, Critias is initially portrayed as Socratic. In this passage, Triepho directly
responds to Critias’ assumed Socratic persona but, in a Lucianic move, does so through
the *Clouds*. By referencing Strepsiades’ initial encounter with Socrates’ Thinkery
(*Clouds* 145), Triepho invokes the *Clouds* and its representation of Socrates in order to
undermine the Platonic authority that Critias is attempting to assume. Triepho’s use of
the *Clouds*, however, is not solely negative. As he proceeds in his speech, he attributes
the participle ἀεξνβαηήζαο, which once again directly recalls Aristophanes’ portrayal of
Socrates, to describe St. Paul. Similar to Lucian’s use of the *Clouds* as a tool to both
articulate the problems of the contemporary dialogue form and create a new philosophical
approach, here we find Triepho invoking the *Clouds* first to distinguish what type of
knowledge he will not impart, specifically the worthless kind associated with Socrates’
Thinkery, and then to position that comic language within a Christian context. The
anonymous author of the *Patriot* thus mimics Lucian’s literary project but recasts
Lucian’s philosophical reinvention of comedy through a Christian lens.

Whereas Lucian turned to Aristophanes to reveal the corruption of philosophy,
Triepho invokes the comic poet to promote a Christian world view to Critias. Following
Triepho’s description of the promise of knowledge found in the figure of St. Paul, Critias
labels Triepho most learned (πολυμαθέστατε) and asks to hear more. Instead of focusing
on St. Paul, as we might expect, Triepho comes back to Aristophanes, asking his companion if he as ever read the *Birds* (13). When Critias acknowledges that he has, Triepho proceeds to quote from the parabasis’ description of the origins of birds:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{ἐγκεκάρακται παρ’ αὐτοῦ τοιόννως:} \\
\text{Χάος ἦν καὶ Νύξ Ἑρεβός τε μέλαν πρὸτον καὶ Τάρταρος εὐρύς:} \\
\text{γῆ δ’ οὐδ’ ἀὴρ οὐδ’ οὐρανὸς ἦν.}
\end{align*}\]

He recorded the following thing: “At the start of time there was Chaos and Night, black Erebus, and Tartarus deep, but earth and air and heaven were not.” (13)

In what follows, these Aristophanic lines introduce a summary of creation designed to illustrate the omnipotence of the Christian god. As the tale proceeds, however, Triepho employs language that, as Macleod has noted, evokes not just the Old Testament but the Gospel of Mathew, the Acts of the Apostles, and the book of Revelation as well. For Triepho, Aristophanes or, rather, a Christian reinterpretation of him, which is itself indebted to Lucian, represents an important stepping stone by which he will lead Critias to accept Christianity.

In his discussion of this dialogue, Hilhorst contends that the *Patriot* depicts a clear “loyalty to Christian belief involving a rejection of pagan religion.” To this I would add that this is largely achieved through a reliance on Lucian. Whereas Lucian challenged the pervading philosophical approaches with his philosophical reinvention of comedy, in the *Patriot* we find the figure of Critias, who initially is the embodiment of Plato and the subsequent religion that arose from his school, convinced to accept Christianity through Lucian and a Christian reworking of his comedic-philosophical approach. The *Patriot*

---

thus points to the fact that Lucian’s literary achievement of uniting Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue did not go unrecognized by later authors, who continued to view the comic dialogue as useful for achieving their own purposes. Just as Lucian turned to the power of Old Comedy to offer social critique, the *Patriot* suggests that later authors viewed Lucian as achieving a similar purpose. If this hypothesis, which will require further study, is correct, then it allows us to regard Lucian as achieving his goal of situating himself as the heir to Aristophanes and the comic tradition.
Appendix: The Nebulous Genre of the Sophistic Prolalia

Lucian’s prologues are generally considered to be one of the few extant examples of the *prolalia* from the period known as the Second Sophistic. As Schmitz explains, a typical performance by a traveling sophist began with a *captatio benevolentiae* in the form of a *prolalia* before moving on to a longer speech, usually devoted to a mythological or historical theme proffered by the audience.¹ Used to describe this type of introductory speech, however, the term *prolalia* is problematic since, as Stock has shown, it is not well attested in antiquity.² In fact, Menander Rhetor’s third century analysis of these types of speeches, which he refers to not as *prolalia* but as *lalia*, represents their earliest mention.³ According to his discussion, the *lalia* was one of the more useful forms of speech that a sophist had at his disposal.⁴ Composed of both epideictic and deliberative rhetoric, these

---

1 For a discussion of the typical sophistic performance and the meaning behind it, see Schmitz (1997:197-209). For an example of a non-Lucianic prologue, see the so-called “False Preface” to Apuleius’ *de Deo Socratis*.
2 See Stock (1911:6-10).
3 As Nesselrath points out, however, Dio and Apuleius wrote short rhetorical works similar to those of Lucian, which might indicate, “as in most other developments, theory followed several steps behind the actual emergence of prolalia in lectures.” Within the manuscripts, however, the term is used as a subtitle for only the *Dionysus* and the *Heracles*, (1990:113-117). As Stock has demonstrated, Lucian’s pieces are not unlike similar examples found among the works of Dio Chrysostom, Apuleius, and in Philostratus’ *Lives of the Sophists*. For discussions of Dio, see Stock (1911: 41-66) and Mras (1949:74-7). For discussions of Apuleius see Stock (1911: 69-74) and Mras (1949:81). For a discussion of Philostratus, see Stock (1911:85-94).
4 Τὸ τῆς λαλιᾶς εἴδος χρησιμοτάτον ἠστεν ἀνδρὶ σοφιστῇ, (*The talk form is extremely useful to a sophist, 388*). All translations of Menander Rhetor are those of Russell and Wilson (1981).
speeches were intended to convey the mindset of the sophist to his audience. The definition of these speeches provided by Menander is thus broad enough that Lucian’s pieces fit well within this category, yet the at times vitriolic attacks on those who have failed to grasp his work raise the question of whether they would have achieved the captatio benevolentiae imagined by Schmitz.

The inclusion of Lucianic texts in the category of sophistic prologue has led some to attempt to reconstruct their performative context. Most notably, Georgiadou and Larmour have suggested that the *Heracles* and the *Dionysus* could have introduced each of the two books of the *True Histories*, which they conjecture would not have been performed at the same time, but over several performances. Yet as Georgiadou and Larmour eventually concede, there is no hard evidence to support this hypothesis and it is equally plausible, if not more so, that they were not attached to one particular text but rather could have introduced any number of longer pieces.

Consequently Lucian’s texts themselves provide a clearer, though certainly not unambiguous, sense of the role these pieces may have placed. Though these texts are quite varied in their subject matter and themes, certain patterns can be detected. In several of the prologues, for example, Lucian reacts to misconceptions about himself or his work that have caused him to be overlooked or snubbed by his audience. In the *Heracles*, Lucian responds to what he sees as an ageist critique of him, while in the

---

5 Ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἐγκομιάζειν καὶ ψέγειν καὶ <προτρέπειν καὶ̄> ἀποτρέπειν διὰ ἱλικίας ἔξεστι, καὶ δι’ ἀποδείξεως τῆς ψυχῆς καταμενόνειν δέδομαι δι’ ἱλικίας, οἷον λυπηθέον τό ῥήγην ἢ τε τῶν τοιούτων, ἰκανός ἦμι προείρηται, “(I have now explained sufficiently how it is possible to praise, blame, <encourage, and> dissuade in the medium of the ‘talk,’ and how this may also be used to express mental attitudes of one’s own, such as pain, pleasure, anger, etc. 393).

Dionysus, the Literary Prometheus, and the Zeuxis he expresses annoyance that audiences notice only the novel and comic aspects of his work, while they fail to observe its more serious and traditional elements. Within these discussions we also find references to Lucian’s rivals and critics. Though Lucian at no point names who they might be, such references create the sense of a sophistic rivalry, whether real or imagined, that these prologues are engaging in.

As a period, the Second Sophistic is often characterized by the figure of the sophist who demonstrates the large breadth of his learning through literary allusions and references. Through his incorporation and manipulation of external genres into his prologues, Lucian engages with the contemporary literary style at the same time as he seeks to differentiate himself from them. In comparing Lucian’s prologues to the Aristophanic parabasis, I have proposed that we move away from the generic label of the prolalia, which does little to elucidate these texts, and instead focus on the ways in which Lucian uses intertextual references to comment on the trends of his day.
Bibliography

Editions, Translations, and Other Primary Works
Greek works are cited from the most recent Oxford Classical Text (or, where none exists, from the most recent Teubner edition), excepting the following:


Diogenes Laertius  *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, 1925)/


Homer  *Iliad*, trans. Lombardo (Indianapolis, 1997)

Twice Prosecuted, ed. Harmon (Cambridge, 1921).


Plato

*Protagoras*, trans. Lombardo and Bell (Indianapolis, 1997).
*Theaetetus*, trans. Levett and Burnyeat (Indianapolis, 1997).

Plutarch


Pseudo-Lucian


Thucydides


**Scholarly Works**

Periodicals are indexed according to the abbreviations used in *L'Année philologique*


Quacquerelli, Antonio (1956) *La Retorica al Bivio: L’Ad Nigranum e l’Ad Donatum*.


Stock, Aloysius. (1911) *De Prolaliarum usu rhetorico*. Regimonti, ex Officina Hartungiana.


Tate, J. (1929) “Cornutus and the Poets” *CQ*: 41-45.


Webster, T. B. L. (1953) *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*. Manchester University Press.


