πηλός and ποικιλία: *Bricolage* and Literary Vulturism in Lucian's Rhetorical Poetics

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Abstract

This thesis uses Lévi-Strauss' concept of *bricolage* in order to examine the aesthetic expression of hybridity in Lucian's *oeuvre* as a device that allows the author to combine invention with adherence to tradition in his works. I will suggest that the heterogenous audience present at sophistic performances in the Imperial Age, consisting of members of the *pepaideumenoi* (the highbrow élite) as well as the less sophisticated lower classes, necessitated a "hybrid" approach on the part of the performer which could accommodate the aesthetic preferences of both audience groups. I will further propose that for Lucian's undertaking to succeed, he had to reject the authority of convention and dogmas, which could potentially undermine his own synthetic show. My hypothesis will be tested on two texts, the *prolalia* (introductory oration) *A Literary Prometheus* and the Menippean satire *Icaromenippus*, and my focus will be on the metapoetic personae of these texts as well as on their associated attributes, *sc*. Prometheus and clay (πηλός) and Menippus and variegation (ποικιλία) respectively. By including a *prolalia* and a Menippean satire in the scope of my investigation, I aim to show that though the generic sub-groups of Lucian's work are often analysed separately by critics, they should in fact be considered as collectively contributing to a distinct kind of Lucianic poetics.

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Translations, titles, and abbreviations

All translations (from Greek and Latin) are mine. In translating Lucian's titles I have for the main part followed the tradition of A. M. Harmon and M. D. MacLeod in the Loeb Classical Library editions of Lucian's works, but in some cases I have opted for translations closer to the Greek original. Abbreviations of ancient authors and their works are those of the fourth edition of Oxford Classical Dictionary (pp. xxvii-liii).

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Introduction

In this thesis I will examine the aesthetic expression of hybridity in Lucian's *prolalia A Literary Prometheus* and the Menippean satire *Icaromenippus* and argue that its pervasiveness throughout Lucian's works can be explained by the rhetorical context in which these works emerged. The period in which Lucian lived and worked was the Imperial Age, a time in which Greece had been subsumed into the now vast Roman Empire and its cultural and political hegemony had come to an end. In such a context there emerged a literary movement, the Second Sophistic, of which Lucian was part. We should begin by taking a closer look at this cultural phenomenon.

The Second Sophistic, a term first employed by the sophist Philostratus,[1] was a group of rhetorical performers who travelled widely and performed epideictic orations for large audiences throughout the Roman Empire. The topics of their orations were usually derived from Greece's historical and mythological past, and the period has for that reason occasionally been interpreted as a "flight from the present".[2] What should rather be emphasised however, is the power of such topics to conjure up a sense of a shared cultural identity for the audience.[3] Thus, a better way to explain the phenomenon of the Second Sophistic may be to see it as the Greeks' attempt to re-establish and renegotiate their identity in a world which now looked entirely different from what it did in the period which saw the creation the works they were formerly accustomed to think defined them. As Froma Zeitlin writes, there was "a growing desire to see, to make visible, either as spectators or performers, and thereby in some way to repossess - even reactualize - in a new age the heritage of a long-vanished past."[4]

Central in this project was the celebration of Greek *paideia*, for through it, Greeks in the empire could access their past. To give an accurate translation of *paideia* is not an easy task, for the term comprehends the modern notion of "culture" as well as "education". According to Tim Whitmarsh, imperial *paideia* should not be seen as "a single, doctrinally coherent system"; instead, he suggests, we should consider it as a "locus for a series of competitions and debates concerning the proper way in which life should be lived."[5] I agree with Whitmarsh' definition but would add that the intended conclusion of such debates was not always ethical; it could also be socio-political or even aesthetic. In this context, we find an

[1] Philostr.*V.S.*481.
[2] Bowie. 1970: 28.
[3] Branham. 1989: 3.
[4] Zeitlin. 2001: 207.
[5] Whitmarsh. 2001. 5.

illuminating passage in Athenaeus' early third century AD work *Deipnosophistai* ("The Learned Banquet"). The passage (Ath. 10. 457f) – a citation from the peripatetic philosopher Clearchus – relates how "the ancients" (οἱ παλαιοί) used to dazzle the other guests at dinner parties with their mastery of *paideia*:

> ὥστε τὴν παιδιὰν μὴ ἄσκεπτον οὖσαν μήνυμα γίνεσθαι τῆς ἑκάστου πρὸς παιδείαν οἰκειότητος· ἐφ'οἷς ἆθλον ἐτίθεσαν στέφανον καὶ εὐφημίαν, οἷς μάλιστα γλυκαίνεται τὸ φιλεῖν ἀλλήλους.
>
> Thus, since their play was not without serious thinking it became an indication of each person's familiarity with culture. As its prize they set up a crown and compliments, through which especially mutual friendship is sweetened.

The citation from Clearchus here reveals Athenaeus' wish of anchoring his dinner-guests' (and hence the Imperial Age's) competitive literary games in an older Greek tradition.[6] Hence we may observe *paideia*'s role as a marker of the enduring continuity between the Greeks in the classical period and the Greeks under Roman occupation; by engagement with Greek *paideia* – with its texts, history and language – the orators of the Second Sophistic could legitimize their present endeavours in the past endeavours of Greek culture as a whole.

However, the passage in *Deipnosophistai* is also a testimony of *paideia*'s secondary function; through the prizes received for a thorough knowledge of Greek culture, the bonds of friendship between the participants in the game are strengthened. What this statement seems to suggest is that in the competitive environment of the Imperial Age, a public broadcasting of your familiarity with Greek culture was not merely a means of self-advertisement, but also a way of claiming your place in a community of élite πεπαιδευμένοι ("educated").[7] In the words of Thomas Schmitz: "[…] in der Wahrnehmung der Zeitgenossen [trennte] eine scharfe Linie die Mächtigen von den Machtlosen, die Gebildeten von den Ungebildeten."[8] The "testing" of the performer's *paideia* was thus an essential part of a Second Sophistic performance; everything from the orator's appearance to his ability to improvise on unfamiliar themes were subject to intense scrutiny on the part of the audience, and even the tiniest misstep would reflect badly on his performance as a whole.[9] As Whitmarsh observes, "To practice *paideia*

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[6] Schmitz. 1997: 128.
[7] Cf. ibid. 1997: 127-128.
[8] Ibid. 1997: 97. Cf. Lada-Richards. 2007: 105: "As the centuries rolled by, élite texts became increasingly obsessed with the erection or preservation of impermissible boundaries between the imaginary landscapes inhabited by those in possession of education and the territories that housed those deprived of it."
[9] Cf. ibid. 1997: 114: "So mußte jeder Redner damit rechnen, daß in der Menge der Zuhörer Sachverständige saßen und etwaige Fehler oder Ungenauigkeiten entdeckten. Regelmäßig ergaben sich daher nach der Deklamation Debatten und Diskussionen, in denen es gegen die Widersacher zu bestehen galt." See also Philostr. *V.S.* 1.491. where the importance of "rivalry" (τὸ φιλότιμον) in sophistic practice is emphasised, as well as Luc. *Rh.Pr.* 22, where the student of rhetoric is advised to abuse the speaker at public lectures so as to become famous himself.

was to strive for a very particular form of identity, a fusion of manliness, elitism, and Greekness."[10] The necessary implication of this, however, was that a failure to practice *paideia* correctly could lead to exclusion from élite community.

Consequently, in the Second Sophistic, or more precisely in the locus of imperial *paideia*, the discourse of literature was inextricably linked with discourse of tradition, socio-political power and identity. Meanwhile, the question of which social groups were represented at a typical Second Sophistic performance is difficult to answer. Schmitz believes that sophistic performances could attract immense audiences which also consisted of a relatively large number of members from the lower social strata.[11] This notion would appear to gain some support from Philostratus who, in his *Lives of the Sophists*, claims that some especially successful sophists, such as Favorinus, who is described in the extract below, gained a near universal acclaim:

> Διαλεγομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν Ῥώμην μεστὰ ἦν σπουδῆς πάντα, καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ ὅσοι τῆς Ἑλλήνων φωνῆς ἀξύνετοι ἦσαν, οὐδὲ τούτοις ἀφ᾽ ἡδονῆς ἡ ἀκρόασις ἦν, ἀλλὰ κἀκείνους ἔθελγε τῇ τε ἠχῇ τοῦ φθέγματος καὶ τῷ σημαίνοντι τοῦ βλέμματος καὶ τῷ ῥυθμῷ τῆς γλώττης.[12]
>
> When he lectured in Rome, there was attention everywhere – indeed, not even those who were ignorant of the Greek tongue wanted their ear to be away from the enjoyment; no, he enchanted even them with the sound of his voice, the expressiveness of his glance and the rhythm of his language.

We should however be cautious about taking Philostratus' testimony at face value, as he in *Lives of the Sophists* is particularly interested in those sophists who clearly distinguished themselves in some way. His expression of "attention everywhere" (σπουδῆς πάντα) therefore, may not be representative for an average Second Sophistic performance.

Such a view is held by Whitmarsh who, based on the comparatively small size of the performance venues available to sophists in the Imperial Age, argues that the audiences cannot have been so large as Schmitz suggests, and concludes that "sophistry was usually performed by the elite before an audience consisting primarily of the elite."[13] A moderation of

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[10] Whitmarsh. 2005: 15. Cf. Whitmarsh. 2001: 27 and Korenjak. 2000: 60. "Manliness" here and in the discussion below designates the kind of dignified and canonically oriented oratory, opposite to the popular-theatrical "effeminate" performances which also flourished in the Second Sophistic.

[11] Schmitz. 1997: 160-75.

[12] Philostr. *V.S.* 1.491-2. Philostratus describes Dio Chrysostom and Hadrian of Tyre in the same way. For the former, see 488: "Indeed, the persuasiveness of the man was such that he bewitched even those who did not have a thorough understanding of Greek." (καὶ γὰρ ἡ πειθὼ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς οἵα καταθέλξαι καὶ τοὺς μὴ τὰ Ἑλλήνων ἀκριβοῦντας·) For the latter, see 589: "When he possessed the higher chair, he turned the attention of Rome towards himself in such a degree that he installed even in those who were ignorant of the Greek tongue a desire to listen." (Κατασχὼν δὲ καὶ τὸν ἄνω θρόνον οὕτως τὴν Ῥώμην ἐς ἑαυτὸν ἐπέστρεψεν, ὡς καὶ τοῖς ἀξυνέτοις γλώττης Ἑλλάδος ἔρωτα παρασχεῖν ἀκροάσεως.) On the theatrical style described by Philostratus, see Branham. 1989: 3-4.

[13] Whitmarsh. 2005: 20.

this position is represented by Martin Korenjak, who, though he argues that the élite *pepaideumenoi* formed the majority of the audience, sees the Second Sophistic as an overall heterogenous crowd and a "Kontinuum der Kompetenzen und Haltungen".[14] In his typology of the different audience groups present at a sophistic performance Korenjak distinguishes between "der ungebildete Hörer", who was mainly tuned to the appearance and gestures of the speaker, and "der gebildete Hörer", who was more interested in the orator's appeal to *paideia* and a shared cultural identity.[15] Indeed, in the passage from Philostratus above, we see that the superficial qualities of Favorinus' performance are associated with the illiterate members of the audience. At the same time, however, it appears that this very aspect of his oration is what made his appearance in Rome stir up attention in every quarter. Indeed, in his discussion of Hadrian of Tyre, Philostratus writes that when the sophist was about to declaim, people left "the ordinary spectacles" (τὰς ἐγκυκλίους θέας), which, Philostratus goes on to specify, were usually "dances" (ὀρχηστῶν), and ran off to listen to Hadrian instead.[16] The implication of these two anecdotes would seem to be that if the sophist could somehow reappropriate the visual and superficial elements from the more theatricalised performances the lower classes generally frequented, he could win the ongoing competition between such performances and sophistic declamations. [17]

This point is demonstrated by Ismene Lada-Richard in her study of *On the Dance*, Lucian's work on pantomime dancing. She contends that the different cultural spheres of the Imperial Age were not entirely closed off from each other, but rather that there was a considerable degree of "cross-fertilizing" in the "forever-sizzling melting-pot" of the Roman empire.[18] She further remarks that:

> […] by peppering old-fashioned rhetorical tradition with frivolity and eccentricity, a taste for the bizarre, the exotic or even the forbidden 'alien', adventurous sophists crossed over into the domain of the theatrical in an attempt to safeguard, and even increase, their own portion of cultural capital vis-à-vis the rapidly accelerating hold of stage-attractions.[19]

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[14] Korenjak. 2000: 45-46: "In der Regel sollten wir uns bei solchen Gelegenheiten ein eher kleines Publikum vorstellen, in dem die gebildete Oberschicht deutlich überrepräsentiert ist." and 52, cf. ní Mheallaigh. 2014: 3-4: "[…] it is clear that sophistic performances were a form of public entertainment which commanded a much more eclectic audience in antiquity than the texts themselves overtly address."

[15] Ibid. 2000: 52-61. Cf. Branham. 1989: 3 and Bowie. 1970: 28 who sees the *pepaideumenoi*'s preoccupation with tradition as a nostalgic memory of a time when Greece was culturally superior. See also Whitmarsh. 2001: 17-20, who problematises Bowie's (false) opposition between power and culture in his discussion of the Second Sophistic's emphasis on the Greek past.

[16] Philostr. *V. S.* 1.589.

[17] It was not only the lower classes who enjoyed such spectacles, however. In Philostratus' anecdote, even the Senate members and members of the equestrian order are said to be present at these "ordinary spectacles". Cf. Korenjak. 2000: 43-44.

[18] Lada-Richards. 2007: 136.

[19] Ibid. 2007: 145.

As Lada-Richards argues, the temptation of gaining the kind of universal acclaim that Philostratus' sophists enjoyed led some sophists to adopt the theatrical tendencies of the popular culture associated with the lower classes, perhaps even at the expense of the more traditional rhetorical elements which the educated élite favoured. As such, the populistic style of sophists like Favorinus and Hadrian of Tyre could arguably be conceived as precarious. As Maud Gleason has shown, there was a great tension between this "effeminate style" of rhetoric, which was acknowledged to be "more successful" in terms of attracting a large audience, and the "hyper-manly style" which the *pepaideumenoi* preferred and which was regarded as "more respectable" for the *ethos* of the orator.[20] Hence we may reasonably suppose that the typical Second Sophistic performer would have tried, like Favorinus and Hadrian of Tyre, to mediate between the aesthetic ideals of the *pepaideumenoi* and his less sophisticated audience-members in order to attract a large crowd to his declamations, but crucially in a way which would prevent him from being expelled from the élite community.

This, then, was the cultural milieu in which Lucian operated, and his works suggest that he too was aware of his difficult position as a sophist. His "ambivalent self-positioning" and state of being "[…] *both* fully saturated in Hellenic *paideia and* an outsider,"[21] which are often commented upon by scholarship is, I would suggest, a direct consequence of this. In the *prolalia Zeuxis*, Lucian employs an anecdote about the painter Zeuxis – presumably intended as a mask for the author – in order to demonstrate how the level of education determines a person's approach in evaluating a work of art. He contrasts "the common men" (οἱ ἰδιῶται) with "the sons of painters" (γραφέων παῖδες), and states that only members of the latter group will be capable of evaluating the degree of adherence to the canon, precision, good proportions and the like in a painting.[22] Meanwhile, the painting Zeuxis exhibits is only admired for "the strangeness of the invention as well as the intention of the work, since it was new and previously unknown to them [*sc*. the audience]." (τῆς ἐπινοίας τὸ ξένον καὶ τὴν γνώμην τῆς γραφῆς ὡς νέαν καὶ τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἀγνῶτα οὖσαν, *Zeux*. 7). When he realises that this is all the praise he is going to get, Zeuxis, whom we learn never paints "popular and common motifs" (τὰ δημώδη καὶ τὰ κοινὰ, *Zeux*. 3), is offended, and he packs up his painting and leaves.

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[20] Gleason. 1995: 129.

[21] Whitmarsh. 2001: 125. Cf. Lada-Richards. 2007: 156-7, who notes Lucian's "liminal position with respect to Hellenism" and his "shockingly nonconformist stance" which she deems "purely 'Lucianic'"; Branham. 1989: 7, who mentions "the distinctive ambivalences of [Lucian's] comic classicizing" and his "oxymoronic appeal". For the opposite (and, as far as I know, no longer common) view, see the conclusion to the monumental work of Bompaire. 1958: 137: "On conclura [...] à l'adoption de la Mimésis complète par Lucien."

[22] Luc.*Zeux*.3. Cf. Möllendorff. 2006: 76; Pretzler. 2009: 165.

The implication of Lucian's anecdote would seem to be that, despite the fact that inventiveness and originality – in other words, violations of the "popular" and "the common" – has the ability shock the audience into applause, it is risky for a painter to found his reputation on such literary components, because they may obscure the traditional craftsmanship of his art and lose him favour with the experts in his audience. Such, I believe, was Lucian's approach to his sophistic practice as well. He was presumably an ambitious man who wanted fame, and the key to achieving this was to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Thus he would have had to strive to ingratiate himself with the adherents of popular culture without damaging his *ethos* in the eyes of the *pepaideumenoi*. This, I would suggest, is the reason why one part of his work, his *prolaliae*, is so obsessively occupied with its position as "a prodigious mixture of different traditions" [23] or a strange "hybrid of genres".[24] It is also the reason why another part, the group of texts usually referred to as Menippean satires, come across as inherently anti-dogmatic, or, for some critics, even nihilistic.[25]

I will argue Lucian's approach in his endeavour to gain a wide audience while protecting his *ethos* was to openly acknowledge the hybridity of his work and try to render it into a positive feature by highlighting the arbitrariness of established value systems. Although Lucianic scholarship tends to analyse the above-mentioned subgroups of texts – Lucian's *prolaliae* and his Menippean satires – separately, the aim of this thesis is to bridge the gap between them by emphasising their poetic function in the Lucianic *oeuvre* as a whole. In my investigation of the Lucianic concepts of hybridity and anti-dogmatism, I will focus on two of Lucian's metapoetic personae – Prometheus, from the *prolalia A Literary Prometheus* and Menippus, from the Menippean satire *Icaromenippus*, as well as their most important attributes, namely clay (πηλός) and variegation (ποικιλία) respectively. In order to place these two Lucianic "masks" on an equal level where they may be compared and contrasted, I will approach them as examples of the "trickster-*bricoleur*" character, a literary type which will be explained presently.

Methodology

The trickster as a disarming tactic

The idea behind using the social anthropological concept of the trickster figure as a hermeneutic tool for this thesis arose from an impression that the equivocal nature of the traditional trickster figure of myth corresponded well to the ambiguity of several of Lucian's

[23] Whitmarsh. 2001: 249.
[24] Möllendorff. 2006: 64.
[25] Weinbrot. 2005: 68.

metapoetic personae. Accordingly, I hypothesised that if this ambiguity was a result of Lucian's precarious position as an imperial sophist, the trickster-like nature of his masks could be explained as a strategy of self-preservation. In her study on Aesop and the Aesopic tradition, Leslie Kurke draws a parallel between Aesop and trickster figures:

> We might say that Aesop, like folktale tricksters in many different cultures, enables the articulation in public of elements of what the political theorist James Scott calls the "hidden transcript," the counterideology and worldview developed by the oppressed when they are "off stage"—that is, free from the public world whose performances are largely scripted by the dominant.[26]

In this thesis I will explore the possibility that Lucian's tricksters, by analogy, may be a disarming device employed by the author in order to make his "hidden transcript" – *sc*. the untraditional aspects of his poetics intended to dazzle the less sophisticated members of his audience – appear less subversive in the eyes of "the dominant", that is, the conservative members of the educated élite. As Lada-Richards observes, a typical representative of this latter class generally took "delight in fashioning himself as the jealous guardian of intellectual pleasures not meant to be wasted on the vulgar many",[27] thus effectively closing off the domain of literature from the influence of the lower classes and making it impossible for a performing sophist to ingratiate himself with them without seriously harming his *ethos*.

Since attempts to capitalise on the broad appeal of such elements as theatricality and innovation could come to be seen as ideologically dubious by the educated élite, any engagement with the "hidden transcript" would consequently have to be effected in a veiled manner. For instance, as Kurke suggests, through the mask of a trickster figure. Hence, we may suppose that Lucian, by turning the potentially subversive elements in his poetics into attributes of his trickster protagonists, and giving them the responsibility of their clarification and defence, could be a cultural transgressor without having to fear repercussions.

The "trickster-*bricoleur*"

As my main resource on the social anthropological concept of the trickster figure, I have used William J. Hynes' "heuristic guide" to the topic in the third chapter of his and William G. Doty's study, entitled *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms* (1997).[28] There, Hynes lists and elaborates on six central features of the typical trickster:

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[26] Kurke. 2010: 11.

[27] Lada-Richards. 2007: 105.

[28] The study is the first comprehensive work on trickster figures since the influential work of the American anthropologist and folklorist Paul Radin. His *The Trickster*, published in 1956, included essays by the classical philologist Karl Kerényi and the psychoanalyst Carl Jung. Central to the work was the idea that the trickster figure is a cultural archetype, common to all societies and representing a primitive stage in human development. This idea is rejected by Hynes and Doty, who follow a middle ground, between those belonging to the Jungian

> At the heart of this cluster of manifest trickster traits is (1) the fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous personality of the trickster. Flowing from this are such other features as (2) deceiver/trick-player, (3) shapeshifter, (4) situation-invertor, (5) messenger/imitator of the gods, and (6) sacred/lewd *bricoleur*. Not every trickster necessarily has all of these characteristics. Still, more times than not, a specific trickster will exhibit many of these similarities.[29]

Although Lucian's Prometheus and Menippus could be seen as presenting several of these traits, it is primarily the last point on the list which will be the focus of my analysis. The idea of the trickster as a "sacred/lewd *bricoleur*" refers to a concept developed by the social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in his influential work on the logic of myth, *The Savage Mind*.

The *bricoleur* is discussed in the first chapter of Lévi-Strauss' study, entitled "The Science of the Concrete" and functions as an analogy for the logic of mythical as opposed to scientific thought. The French noun "bricoleur" is derived from the verb *bricoler* which means "to work in a way that involves no plan" or simply "to tinker". Thus, a "bricoleur" is a sort of handyman, and the product of his efforts – a "bricolage" – is best described as a randomly assembled do-it-yourself project. This is the way mythic thought works in primitive societies, Lévi-Strauss argues, by assembling things that are already known and combining them into a new unity:

> The 'bricoleur' is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with an asset of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions.[30]

The defining characteristic of a *bricoleur* is that he is someone who operates within a "closed universe of instruments" but still manages to succeed in his creative project because of his ability to see the potential inherent in the material he has at hand. I believe this feature is well suited to a discussion of Lucian's poetics which, I will argue, was defined by the "closed" cultural milieu of the Imperial Age.

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school, who argue that the trickster is universal and therefore speaks in one voice across all cultures, and those who believe that the trickster stories of different societies are so culture-specific that they cannot be compared. Instead, Hynes and Doty argue that "the important aspects of a 'trickster figure' can be identified across several different cultures", see Hynes & Doty. 1997: 2.

[29] Hynes & Doty. 1997: 34.

[30] Lévi-Strauss. 1966: 17.

In order to please the educated élite, Lucian had to show reverence to tradition, but if he were to engage his less sophisticated audience-members, he had to ensure that his works had a certain shock-value. Thus Lucian's situation corresponded in a sense to that of the *bricoleur*, since he had to reappropriate traditional elements and combine them together in a new and exciting unity. This recombinatory activity finds a parallel in Alina A. Payne's discussion of the architectural literature of the Renaissance as a form of *bricolage*. She argues that the composite nature of some of the architectural treatises of that period, which attempted to reassemble the disintegrated ruins left over from antiquity in coherent illustrations, presented the reader with an amalgamation of heterogenous elements which mimicked the very process of architectural construction itself:

> Its images – splicing, layering, juxtaposing, seriating, cropping, slicing, reducing, enlarging, reconstructing what was fragmented and fragmenting what was whole – were not only a paper collection of monuments, but they literally mimicked the act of making architecture and raised into the reader's consciousness the nature of its tools.[31]

Thus, the combination of incongruous elements in these treatises highlighted the process of creation. In contrast, other treatises focused on "seamless assemblage" of the elements in question, with the result that the end product seemed unified and smooth, but "the process of artistic manufacturing [was] withdrawn from view."[32] In the ensuing discussion, I will investigate the possibility that Lucian may be presenting his *bricolage* in the former way, emphasising the amalgamous nature of his creations. My hypothesis is that Lucian, by emphasising elements like hybridity and "variegation" (ποικιλία) in his works, is attempting to transform his reappropriation of tradition from a subversive act to an artistic feat.

Lucian's *prolaliae* and their performative background

A Literary Prometheus is an example of an important subgenre within the Lucianic *oeuvre*, usually referred to as *prolaliae* ("pre-talks"). It has become a convention in Lucianic scholarship to employ this term of Lucian's shorter works, which were likely performed before longer orations.[33] However, to contextualise the term's application in antiquity is not easy. Its only link with Lucian is the fact that "*prolalia*" appears as a subtitle to his *Dionysus* and *Heracles* in the manuscripts (the oldest of which, the Vaticanus 90 = Γ, is from the tenth century) as well as in Thomas Magister.[34] The closest we come to an ancient definition is a chapter on a genre called *lalia* in Menander Rhetor's third century work on epideictic oratory

[31] Payne. 1998: 22.
[32] Ibid. 1998: 25.
[33] See Nesselrath. 1990: 115 (n.9) for a list and a history of which Lucianic works have been classified as *prolaliae*. See also Nesselrath's article as a whole for an attempt to order eight of the *prolaliae* chronologically.
[34] Thomas Magister (ed. Ritschl), p. 224. Cf. Stock. 1911: 6-10; Nesselrath. 1990: 111.

(Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν), a type of speech which is described as being "very useful for a sophist" (χρησιμώτατόν ἐστιν ἀνδρὶ σοφιστῇ, 1), with a form that is "simple, artless and unelaborated" (ἁπλοῦν καὶ ἀφελὲς καὶ ἀκατάσκευον, 22) and "not long" (οὐδὲ μακρὰς, 22).[35] Presumably then, *prolalia* was simply another designation for *lalia*,[36] or, alternatively, it was an even shorter text delivered before a *lalia*. If the latter alternative is true, we could perhaps consider the *prolalia* to be a rhetorical equivalent of the poetic προοίμιον, which, as Boris Maslov notes, "most often refers to an opening whose execution determines the success of the following speech or undertaking."[37] This, indeed, appears to have been the primary function of a *prolalia* too.

As Heinz-Günther Nesselrath observes, the popularity of the *prolalia* in the Imperial Age can perhaps be seen as a direct effect of the competitive and declamatory culture of the period, in which rhetoric was transformed from a political instrument to a sophistic form of entertainment:

> "[…] hitherto, the aim of an orator was to sell people a certain political discourse or a certain judgement in a law case – now, one would simply want to sell oneself. […] it was under these circumstances that introductory chapters tended to gain importance and take on a life of their own."[38]

In order to sell himself, the sophist had to strengthen his ethos and win a favourable assessment of his performance. Thus, as Robert Bracht Branham argues, the prologues were a form of mediation between the performer and his audience, and hence a sort of interpretive tool; if the sophist could at once prepare the audience for what it was about to hear and anticipate potential criticism, misunderstandings which would harm his ethos could possibly be avoided.[39] For this reason, Lucian's *prolaliae* usually contain anecdotes – mostly about historical or mythological characters – whose lessons are directly applicable to the interpretation of his own performances. Despite the fact that this is usually acknowledged to be the *prolaliae*'s primary function, critics tend to disagree on the extent to which the explicit aesthetic discussions in Lucian's introductory texts should be seen as contributing to a better understanding of the implicit poetic features of his *oeuvre* as a whole.

One side of this debate is represented by Graham Anderson, who sees Lucian's *prolaliae* as "among the slightest trifles among the vast amount of ephemera produced by the

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[35] Men.Rhet.388 (ed. Russell & Wilson). Cf. Bompaire. 1958: 286 (n.5), who believes that «la προλαλιά est un cas parliculier cle la λαλιά».
[36] This is what Bompaire does, cf. Bompaire. 1958: 286. Bompaire also considers the genre of *dialexeis* to be another equivalent of the *prolalia* and *lalia*, cf. Nesselrath. 1990: 112, who holds a similar opinion.
[37] Maslov. 2012: 196.
[38] Nesselrath. 1990: 112.
[39] Branham. 1985: 240.

Second Sophistic."[40] Branham, on the other hand, considers the Lucianic *prolaliae* to have important "rhetorical and literary functions" which can be analysed to see "what they reveal of the τέλος of Lucian's art in miniature."[41] A middle ground is taken by Nesselrath, who argues that:

> "[a]ll Lucian probably wanted to attain by his introductions was to come across as an interesting, intelligent and enjoyable rhetorical entertainer and (perhaps) as someone who had something more in store than the usual sophist's fare […]."[42]

Of these diverging positions, my own is closest to that of Branham. If we accept that the *prolaliae* are Lucian's way of informing and warning his audience on beforehand of the most important and the most surprising aspects of his performance, I believe we may safely regard his self-conscious remarks as a valuable indicator of what he himself considers to be the defining aspects of his poetics. As such, I would argue that an analysis of Lucian's *prolaliae* would benefit from a comparison to other works within his *oeuvre*, and this will be my approach in this thesis.

You Are a Literary Prometheus

Prometheus as a πηλπολάθος

The *prolalia Against the one who said: 'You are a literary Prometheus'* (hereafter: *A Literary Prometheus*) opens abruptly with a direct question to an anonymous addressee:

> οὐκοῦν Προμηθέα με εἶναι φής; εἰ μὲν κατὰ τοῦτο, ὦ ἄριστε, ὡς πηλίνων κἀμοὶ τῶν ἔργων ὄντων, γνωρίζω τὴν εἰκόνα καί φημι ὅμοιος εἶναι αὐτῷ, οὐδ' ἀναίνομαι πηλοπλάθος ἀκούειν, εἰ καὶ φαυλότερος ἐμοὶ ὁ πηλὸς οἷος ἐκ τριόδου, βόρβορός τις παρὰ μικρόν.[43]
>
> "So you say that I am a Prometheus? If you by this, dear man, mean that my works too are of clay, I recognise the comparison and agree that I am like him. Nor do I refuse to hear myself called a clay-moulder, even if my clay is quite ordinary like the clay from a crossroad, not much better than filth."

This addressee, it would appear, has compared Lucian to the mythical titan Prometheus. Although the opening sentence is formed as a question, the adverb οὐκοῦν, inviting the addressee to affirm that he did indeed say that the narrator was a Prometheus, gives it a challenging tone. This confronting stance on the side of the narrator may be due to the fact that addressee, ironically referred to as ὦ ἄριστε, did not offer any elaboration on the original comment, but simply drew the comparison. Therefore the narrator fears that the ambiguous

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[40] Anderson. 1977: 313. For a similar, though less disparaging position, see Bompaire. 1958: 287: "L'école la [sc. the *lalia*] définit [...] bref par un effort qui n'est que stylistique. [...] Lucien applique ici les méthodes scolaires et il est inutile de chercher un plan dans ses λαλίαι."
[41] Branham. 1985: 237.
[42] Nesselrath. 1990: 140 (n. 54).
[43] Luc.*Prom.Es.*1.

remark may in fact be a hidden insult, and so he feels compelled to go through all the connotations attached to the figure of Prometheus in order to unearth the addressee's original meaning. This is what he does in the remainder of the *prolalia*.

As a starting point, I would argue that the narrator's opening question in *A Literary Prometheus* did not refer to a real-life incident – no one ever called the author Lucian a Prometheus. Instead it should be seen as a rhetorical device, by which Lucian places his narrator in a position where he must explain and defend a certain literary practice.[44] Since *A Literary Prometheus* was in all likelihood performed in front of an audience, it seems probable that Lucian wanted his audience to imagine the anonymous addressee as another audience member, having perhaps offered this comparison at the end of one of his sophistic performances. In this way, Lucian anticipates any criticism the audience present at this performance might potentially have after the delivery and makes it impossible for it to comment on those points which the *prolalia* itself touches upon; censure of a subject already defended would have but a poor effect and instead reveal the critic's lack of creativity. The ambiguity of the fictional comparison, moreover, allows Lucian to selectively compare himself to those aspects of the Prometheus figure which he thinks will have a positive effect on his own *ethos*. Thus we may perhaps say that *A Literary Prometheus* functions both as an apology and as a programmatic statement.

The idea that the situation which forms the premise for *A Literary Prometheus* is a rhetorical device will, I believe, be substantiated by an investigation of the first Promethean feature highlighted by the narrator above. In comparing him to Prometheus, the narrator suggests, the addressee was perhaps referring to the "clay" (πηλός) of his works, because he imagined the narrator to be a kind of "clay-moulder" (πηλοπλάθος) in the fashion of Prometheus. There existed a myth, very popular in the Imperial Age, which presented Prometheus as the creator of humans from clay.[45] We know only the basic outline of this myth from a brief reference in the mythographer Apollodorus' 2nd century A.D. work *Bibliotheca*, where he writes that "Prometheus moulded men out of water and earth, and he also gave them fire in secret, having hidden it in a stalk of fennel." (Προμηθεὺς δὲ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ γῆς

[44] The apology trope is rather common in Lucian's *oeuvre*. Three Lucianic works are written as later apologies for other texts: *Apology*, *The Fisherman* and *Defence of Portraits*. Others have (sometimes metapoetic) apologies integrated in the plot: *Twice Accused*, *Prometheus*, *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting* and *Phalaris*.
[45] Raggio. 1958: 46. Cf. the creation of man in Ovid.*Metam*.1.78-83 (ed. Tarrant): "Man was born, whether that artisan of things, the beginning of this better world, made him from a divine seed, or the earth, just recently separated from high heaven, retained a seed of the related sky, which was mixed with rainwater by Prometheus, and moulded into a complete effigy of the ruling gods." (*Natus homo est, sive hunc divino semine fecit / ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo, /sive recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto / aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli, / quam satus Iapeto mixtam pluvialibus undis / finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum*.)

ἀνθρώπους πλάσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ πῦρ, λάθρᾳ Διὸς ἐν νάρθηκι κρύψας).[46] After alluding to this myth, the narrator immediately avows that he does not in fact object to being called a clay-moulder. There is, however, an ironic twist to his good-natured assurances, for it was he himself who suggested this particular interpretation in the first place, not the addressee. Thus the possibility for a real-life precedent for the Prometheus comparison is further undermined, for while it was possible that someone called the author Lucian a Prometheus, the qualification πηλοπλάθος was in any case the narrator's own addition.

Moreover, if we look closer at the word πηλοπλάθος, there is a further level of irony. There is only one attestation of the word in our entire corpus of Greek literature, namely in this *prolalia* by Lucian. There are however four other Greek words following the same pattern as πηλοπλάθος, that is, a compound of a noun and the verbal root of πλάσσω ("to form, mould"), which is πλαθ-.[47] These words are λογοπλάθος ("story-maker") and χυτροπλάθος ("pot-maker"), two nouns which by Lucian's time are attested in lexicographical works only.[48] There is also ἰπνοπλάθος ("oven-maker") and κοροπλάθος ("figure-maker"), both of which are attested in one passage in Plato's *Theaetetus*. The former is attested only there, while the latter seems to have had a somewhat wider distribution.[49] As the passage in Plato also mentions "clay" (πηλός) however, and Lucian appears to have known Plato's works quite well, I believe it may have an intertextual link to Lucian's *A Literary Prometheus* and thus warrants a closer examination. [50]

In the extract below (*Tht.* 147a-b, ed. Burnet), Socrates has enquired of Theaetetus what he thinks knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is, and the latter has accordingly listed examples of knowledge, such as geometry and shoemaking, without providing a proper definition of the term.[51] Socrates therefore presents him with one of his customary thought experiments.

> ΣΩ. Σκέψαι δὴ καὶ τόδε. εἴ τις ἡμᾶς τῶν φαύλων τι καὶ προχείρων ἔροιτο, οἷον περὶ πηλοῦ ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ ἀποκριναίμεθα αὐτῷ πηλὸς ὁ τῶν χυτρέων καὶ πηλὸς ὁ τῶν ἰπνοπλαθῶν καὶ πηλὸς ὁ τῶν πλινθουργῶν, οὐκ ἂν γελοῖοι εἶμεν; ΘΕΑΙ. Ἴσως. ΣΩ. Πρῶτον μέν γέ που οἰόμενοι συνιέναι ἐκ τῆς ἡμετέρας ἀποκρίσεως τὸν ἐρωτῶντα, ὅταν εἴπωμεν πηλός, εἴτε ὁ τῶν κοροπλαθῶν προσθέντες εἴτε ἄλλων ὡντινωνοῦν δημιουργῶν. ἢ οἴει τίς τι συνίησίν τινος ὄνομα, ὃ μὴ οἶδεν τί ἐστιν; ΘΕΑΙ. Οὐδαμῶς.

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[46] Ps.Apollod.*Bibl*.1.45 (ed. Wagner).
[47] Frisk, s.v. πλάσσω.
[48] λογοπλάθος ("story-maker") occurs only once, in Phryn.86. χυτροπλάθος ("pot-maker") occurs twice, once listed in Phryn.125 and once in Poll.7.163, the latter of whom gives it as a synonym for κοροπλάθος.
[49] κοροπλάθος is attested in Isoc.*Antid*. 2 and in Ach. Tat. 3.15.4. It is also the title of a comedy by Antiphanes, see Antiph.fr.125 (ed. Kassel & Austin).
[50] Householder. 1941: 41 has shown that after Homer and the comic poets, Plato is the author Lucian quotes or alludes to most often in his works.
[51] Pl.*Tht*.146c-e.

> SOCR. "Consider this too: If someone should ask us what some ordinary and readily available thing such as clay is, and we should answer him that it is the clay of potters, the clay of oven-makers and the clay of brickmakers, would we not be ridiculous?" THEA. "Perhaps." SOCR. "In the first place we would surely be ridiculous for thinking that the person who asked would understand from our reply what we mean when we say clay, whether we add that it is the clay of figure-makers or of whichsoever other craftsmen. Or do you think that a person understands the name of something which he does not know what is?" THEA. "Not at all."

Socrates, we see, introduces the topic of clay with the words φαύλων καὶ προχείρων, meaning "slight and readily available". We recall how the narrator described his clay works: they were "φαυλότερος" ("rather ordinary") he claimed, using the comparative form of one of the adjectives in Socrates' example. Next, Socrates and Theaetetus agree that in trying to define a concept in this way they would be γελοῖοι ("ridiculous"), an adjective that is a favourite with Lucian, who uses it as much as 92 times in his extant works. Finally we have the compound words ending in -πλαθος, which in Socrates and Theaetetus' discussion figure in combination with πηλός ("clay").

Based on the cluster of Lucianic words in this passage, Lucian's familiarity with Plato and the scarcity of words ending in -πλαθος elsewhere in Greek literature, we may imagine a scenario in which Lucian read this particular passage, and, noticing Plato's compounds, decided to create a similar one himself. Admittedly, as is always the case with suspected neologisms in ancient literature, we cannot be sure that further attestations of the word did not exist in works now no longer extant. It is however conceivable that Lucian found both elements of his compound, πηλός and -πλαθος, in Plato's discussion, and combined them together to form a neologism which would connect his authorial act with the creative work of Prometheus. If this is true, the irony of the opening of *A Literary Prometheus* would be complete: not only did the narrator call himself a πηλοπλάθος, a "clay-moulder", Lucian the author invented the word specifically for this very purpose. However, whether πηλοπλάθος is Lucian's own coinage or not, I believe we may reasonably conclude that rather than being an epithet given to Lucian by his audience, the qualification was most likely adopted by the author himself, who intended to use it to elucidate certain aspects of his poetics.

In this respect, I would observe that there is an important difference in focus between Lucian and Plato's compounds. In Platos's ἰπνοπλάθος ("oven-maker") and κοροπλάθος ("figure-maker"), the first part of the compound refers to something that is formed out of clay, and this is where the semantic thrust lies: his compounds refer to finished objects, and the process, represented by -πλαθος, is secondary. In Lucian's πηλοπλάθος ("clay-moulder"), this situation is turned on its head: as πηλός designates a material and not a result, the semantic

thrust is now in the latter part of the compound, -πλαθος, and thus the process of creation itself is moved to the fore. Hence Lucian's compound describes a process whereby something is made in a particular material, without any reference to an end product. This, I would argue, is a crucial detail, for if we accept that being a πηλοπλάθος is Lucian's *modus operandi*, it will mean that he is advocating a poetics that is somehow process-oriented, and seemingly less concerned with the results it produces than the act of production itself. I believe this notion is reinforced by the narrator's use of the adjective φαυλότερος ("rather ordinary") to describe the material of his work, a feature which marks his affinity with Lévi-Strauss' description of the *bricoleur*.

For the *bricoleur*, we saw above, "the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand'".[52] Similarly, the narrator's clay is ordinary, so ordinary in fact that it is like "the clay from a crossroad" (οἷος ἐκ τριόδου), a part of the road that had a rather poor reputation in Ancient Greece. The τρίοδος was associated with superstitious beliefs,[53] and was frequented by quacks,[54] and because of this it seems to have attracted the metaphorical meaning "vulgar", with the expression ἐκ τριόδου being a near equivalent of the English "of the street". Indeed, in *How to Write History*, Lucian ridicules a historian who, though he sprinkled his work with the Ionian forms of certain words in an attempt to sound learned, failed utterly, because "the rest was common everyday language, and most of it was like the language of the crossroad" (τὰ δ' ἄλλα ὁμοδίαιτα τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα οἷα ἐκ τριόδου, *Hist.Conscr.*16).[55] The narrator of *A Literary Prometheus* then, is a πηλοπλάθος working in clay of the lowest kind. However, I would argue that with such an unpromising beginning, the emphasis of the clay-moulding process is placed on the creativity of the narrator, who, like the *bricoleur*, manages to overcome his material difficulties and successfully realise his project.

Hence, Lucian's πηλοπλάθος, just like the *bricoleur*, is characterised by his transformative abilities. This aspect of *bricolage* is elaborated by Lévi-Strauss in an analogy:

> Both the scientist and 'bricoleur' might therefore be said to be constantly on the look out for 'messages'. Those which the 'bricoleur' collects are, however, ones which have to some extent been transmitted in advance, like the commercial codes which are summaries of the past experience of the trade and so allow any new situation to be met economically (provided that it belongs to the same class as some earlier one). The scientist on the other hand, whether he is an engineer or a physicist, is always on the look out for that other

[52] Lévi-Strauss. 1966: 17.
[53] Thphr.*Char*.16.5.
[54] Gal.9.823; id.10.786.
[55] Cf. D.C.46.4, who mentions "the type of slander practiced in the work-shops and by the crossroads" (λοιδορίαις τισὶν ἐξ ἐργαστηρίων καὶ τριόδων ἐπιτετηδευμέναις).

> message which might be wrested from an interlocutor in spite of his reticence in pronouncing on questions whose answers have not been rehearsed.[56]

The implication of this, Lévi-Strauss next explains, is that that whereas the scientist may transcend his universe, the *bricoleur* must limit himself to reorganising it. This reorganisation takes place by means of transformations, whereby materials are made to rise above their designated usage categories, so that they may play a different role in the *bricolage* than what they do when they are put to their more conventional use. Thus, for the *bricoleur*, meaning is created not when something is invented afresh, but when elements are first disjoined from their usual context and then recombined so as to form a new expression.

In Lucian's work then, this transformative ability appears to be closely associated with his ordinary clay, which, as Karen ní Mheallaigh observes, represents a "protean, malleable substance".[57] Indeed, I would suggest that this notion is also corroborated by the *prolalia Zeuxis* whose main anecdote, as briefly mentioned in the introduction, gives an account of the exhibition and reception of an innovative painting by Zeuxis. That artist, the narrator of the *prolalia* explains, never painted hackneyed themes like "heroes, gods and wars" (ἥρωας ἢ θεοὺς ἢ πολέμους, *Zeux*.3); instead, he "[…] always tried to innovate, and when he thought of something strange, he would display the accuracy of his craftsmanship in painting it" (ἀεὶ δὲ καινοποιεῖν ἐπειρᾶτο καί τι ἀλλόκοτον ἂν καὶ ξένον ἐπινοήσας ἐπ᾽ ἐκείνῳ τὴν ἀκρίβειαν τῆς τέχνης ἐπεδείκνυτο). One of the inventions of Zeuxis, we learn, was a female centaur:

> ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις τολμήμασι καὶ θήλειαν Ἱπποκένταυρον ὁ Ζεῦξις οὗτος ἐποίησεν, ἀνατρέφουσάν γε προσέτι παιδίω Ἱπποκενταύρω διδύμω κομιδῇ νηπίω.[58]
>
> Among the daring enterprises of this Zeuxis was the creation of a female centaur –one moreover, who was feeding twin centaur children, no more than infants.

The extraordinary aspect of Zeuxis' painting is the fact that he has painted a female centaur – for centaurs in Greek art tended to be portrayed as men – and moreover that the centaur appears engaged in a civilised family scene, as opposed to the more violent activities with which that species was normally associated.[59] Thus Zeuxis reinvents the centaur by defamiliarizing it; removed from its conventional setting, the centaur appears like a novelty to those who see the painting.

When the work is exhibited, this is the very point Zeuxis' audience admires, but the artist himself is dissatisfied, and orders his apprentice Micio to cover up the painting, complaining that "these people praise only the clay of our craft (οὗτοι γὰρ ἡμῶν τὸν πηλὸν

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[56] Lévi-Strauss. 1966: 20.
[57] ní Mheallaigh. 2014: 3. Cf. Branham. 1989: 5, who also speaks of Lucian's "protean ability".
[58] Luc.*Zeux*.3.
[59] Hancock. 2019: 99.

τῆς τέχνης ἐπαινοῦσι, *Zeux*.7). Here clay (πηλός) appears as a metaphor for the inventive aspects of Zeuxis' art, more precisely his ability to render a trite subject fresh in the eyes of the audience. This inventiveness, moreover, is imagined in terms of hybridity. The extraordinary innovation in Zeuxis' subject was a female centaur – the paradigmatic hybrid species (Zeux.5-6) – and in describing her, the narrator dwells in particular on her state of being both horse and human. Although the lower part of her body was that of a horse, she was not lying with her legs "outstretched" (ἀποτάδην, *Zeux*.4) as one would expect; instead, one of the legs (ὁ μὲν) was "bent" (καμπύλος) so that she was like "someone crouching" (ὀκλάζοντι ἔοικεν), while the other (ὁ δὲ) "was set straight, supporting itself on the ground, as is the case with horses trying to jump up" (ἐπανίσταται ἐδάφους ἀντιλαμβάνεται οἷοί εἰσιν ἵπποι πειρώμενοι ἀναπηδᾶν). In addition, the female centaur was nursing "two newborns" (τοῖν νεογνοῖν); one she "fed in the human way" (τρέφει ἀνθρωπικῶς), and the other "in the fashion of horses" (ἐς τὸν πωλικὸν τρόπον). At the end of the description, the narrator refers to her as "she who is sucking her babies in two ways" (τῆς τὰ βρέφη ἀμφοτέρωθεν τιθηνουμένης).

The narrator, who claims to have seen a copy of Zeuxis' painting in Athens, admits that he is not fit to evaluate its technical accuracy, and declares that what he himself "particularly praised" (μάλιστα ἐπῄνεσα, *Zeux*.5) was how Zeuxis "displayed his extraordinary craftsmanship in a variegated way" (ποικίλως τὸ περιττὸν ἐπεδείξατο τῆς τέχνης, Zeux.5). The adjective "variegated" (ποικίλος), from which the adverb ποικίλως is derived and to which I will return later in this thesis, was used to designate an object in whose appearance several different elements or colours were combined. For this reason, the adjective was used to describe such varying objects as leopard skins (*Il*.10.29-30: παρδαλέῃ ποικίλῃ), serpents (Pi.*P*.8.46: δράκοντα ποικίλον), stones (Hdt.7.61: λίθου ποικίλου) and embroidered robes (*Il*.734-35: πέπλον ποικίλον); in short, anything that was dappled or multifarious in its visual expression. Thus, in the narrator's praise, the adverb ποικίλως picks up the visible hybridity of the painting he has just described, and Zeuxis is represented as a master of creative intercombination, or, alternatively, of *bricolage*.

In fact, it would appear that ancient literature in general associated Zeuxis with an amalgamous form of composition. In the second book of *On Invention*, Cicero's early treatise on rhetoric, the author relates an anecdote about Zeuxis' visit to the city of Croton (*Inv.rhet*.2.1, ed. Stroebel).[60] The painter went to the Crotons, Cicero writes, because he had

[60] Pliny the elder recounts the same anecdote, but in fewer words, and he changes the location from Croton to Agrigentum, see Plin.*Nat*.35.36.

been commissioned to paint "several paintings" (*complures tabulas*) for them, but when he was there, he also "said that he wanted to paint a likeness of Helen" (*Helenae pingere simulacrum velle dixit*). He therefore asked the Crotons to send him their most beautiful women for inspiration, "so that the truth might be transferred from the living examples to the mute likeness" (*ut mutum in simulacrum ex animali exemplo veritas transferatur*). In the end, Cicero explains, Zeuxis chose five women as his models because he did not "suppose" (*putavit*) that "everything he sought with respect to beauty could be found in one single body" (*omnia, quae quaereret ad venustatem, uno se in corpore reperire posse*). Hence, we notice that there is an important difference in the approaches of Cicero and Lucian's Zeuxises. In the *simulacrum* of Cicero's Zeuxis, the different elements are so thoroughly combined and integrated in the whole that the result is not hybrid in its appearance[61]; it rather appears as a symbol of ideal *mimēsis* by which art may improve on nature.[62] In the painting of Lucian's Zeuxis on the other hand, the visible hybridity is an essential part of the work, and the very reason why the artist is celebrated for his inventiveness.

Thus, a clearer picture of the πηλοπλάθος of *A Literary Prometheus* is beginning to emerge. As James Romm comments, Lucian's "Promethean artist" is defined by "his ability to hybridize the world of physical form, treating it as fodder for creative intercombination rather than strict imitation", and the essential instrument to such hybridization, or *bricolage*, is his πηλός ("clay"), which allows the πηλοπλάθος to convert what he encounters "into plasma within his imagination."[63] Here we may observe the similarity between the narrator's clay and Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the genre of "grotesque realism" as opposed to the canonical aesthetics of classical antiquity and the Renaissance:

> The concept of the body in grotesque realism as discussed in this introduction is of course in flagrant contradiction with the literary and artistic canon of antiquity, which formed the basis of Renaissance aesthetics and was connected to the further development of art. […] As conceived by these canons, the body was first of all a strictly completed, finished

[61] Cf. Payne. 1998: 25, who contrasts (Cicero's) Zeuxis' ideal woman with the hybrid monster described in the opening of Horace's *Ars.P*. 1-13. There, Horace asks his friend Piso to imagine a strange hybrid creature, with a human head and a horse's body, covered in "variegated feathers" (*varias plumas*, 2, ed. Klingner). If Piso were "admitted to such a sight" (*spectatum admissi*, 5), Horace believes he would not be able to keep from laughing. Horace goes on to say that the same holds true for poetry and painting, for to "mix the savage with the tame" (*placidis coeant inmitia*) is to overexploit one's privilege as an artist (9-13). In short then, Horace's monstrosity could be seen as a mark of creative licentiousness and consequently as standing in stark contrast to the Lucianic narrator's enthusiastic celebration of Zeuxis' "variegated" (ποικίλως) displaying of his craftsmanship.
[62] This, in any case, is how it has been interpreted in later historical periods. Cf. Mansfield. 2007: 39-74 who examines the importance of the Zeuxis myth in European Renaissance and eighteenth-century literary discourse. However, in *On Invention*, the story of Zeuxis serves a more immediate purpose, as it illustrates Cicero's eclectic methodological approach in the treatise. Having told the story, Cicero next relates how he looked at several rhetorical treatises by other authors and "from various qualities [we] culled whatever feature was the most excellent" (*ex variis ingeniis excellentissima quaeque libavimus*, *Inv.rhet*.2.2).
[63] Romm. 1990: 86.

> product. Furthermore, it was isolated, alone, fenced off from all other bodies. […] It is quite obvious that from the point of view of these canons the body of grotesque realism was hideous and formless.[64]

There are certain fundamental problems with Bakhtin's notion of the "grotesque" or "carnivalesque" genre of literature,[65] some of which will be explained below (p.52-3), but in this context, his definition is nevertheless useful, as it may be seen as expressive of the challenge a πηλοπλάθος encounters.

From the vantage point of the mimetically inclined class of *pepaideumenoi*, the strange and formless nature of the πηλοπλάθος' works, in which the established canon is seen as a mere source of exploitable plasma, could be conceived as aesthetically dubious or even subversive.[66] Invention and originality may by the educated be perceived as cheap tricks, the sole purpose of which is to humour the less educated among the audience who are unable to evaluate such things as technical craftsmanship, and who therefore looks to the more superficial embellishments of the work instead. Indeed, at the end of *Zeuxis*, the narrator ends his oration with an appeal to his audience; they are "well versed in the art of painting" (γραφικοὶ, *Zeux*.12) he claims, and so he expects them to "look at each thing with the craftsman's eyes" (μετὰ τέχνης ἕκαστα ὁρᾶτε). With this statement, I believe the narrator, who I have argued is a mask for the author, signals his ultimate desire to be included in the élite community of the *pepaideumenoi*. Though his work is innovative, and his method is hybrid, he suggests, this does not have to mean that it is worthless when evaluated against more traditional parameters. This indeed is the very advantage of the *bricolage*-approach in literary creation, for though the *bricoleur* does innovate, his innovations are not strictly speaking original – they are unfamiliar transformations of familiar elements, and so they do have a relationship to tradition. This aspect of hybridity is further explored in *A Literary*

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[64] Bakhtin. 1984b: 28-9.

[65] One of the most obvious is the fact that Bakhtin does not consider issues related to the transmission of ancient texts. According to Bakhtin, although the classical age had expelled the "grotesque mode" from its aesthetic concept, it was preserved in some low genres of classical literature and "attained its flowering and renewal" in the literature of late antiquity, see Bakhtin. 1984b: 28 (n.10) and 30-1. However, we cannot be certain that the grotesque mode of literature as it is described by him was not represented in more ephemeral genres of classical antiquity which have later been lost in transmission. In addition, Bakhtin seems surprisingly reluctant to include Aristophanic old comedy – a canonical genre of classical antiquity – in his concept of the popular grotesque, despite its affinity to Bakhtin's definition criteria for that genre. Anthony T. Edwards has convincingly argued for the possibility that this reluctance may be ideologically motivated, as Bakhtin sees the popular grotesque as essentially anti-authoritarian and democratic. In contrast, Edwards shows, the group of old comedians represented by Aristophanes and Cratinus "exploit the implicitly antiauthoritarian character of the grotesque in order to convey undisguised political messages opposed in intent and origin to the selfsame popular class in which the grotesque finds its roots." Thus, he concludes, "Political comedy constitutes an appropriation of the popular grotesque." See Edwards. 2002: 39.

[66] Romm. 1990: 86.

Prometheus and will be discussed shortly, but first we should have a look at what the narrator of *A Literary Prometheus* reveals about the intended effect of his works.

The anti-dogmatic properties of clay

After having introduced the clay metaphor in *A Literary Prometheus*, the narrator elaborates on his poetic practice and explains what the result of it is:

> Ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἐς τὰ πλήθη παριόντες καὶ τὰς τοιαύτας τῶν ἀκροάσεων ἐπαγγέλλοντες εἴδωλα ἄττα ἐπιδεικνύμεθα, καὶ τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἐν πηλῷ, καθάπερ ἔφην μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν, ἡ πλαστικὴ κατὰ ταὐτὰ τοῖς κοροπλάθοις· τὰ δ᾽ ἄλλα οὔτε κίνησις ὁμοία πρόσεστιν οὔτε ψυχῆς δεῖγμά τι, ἀλλὰ τέρψις ἄλλως καὶ παιδιὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα.[67]
>
> "We, who deliver to the crowd and recite such lectures, we show them some sort of effigies, and the whole affair is in clay, just like I said a bit earlier; it is moulding in the very manner of figure-makers. Besides, there is nothing like movement in them and no evidence of spirit; the business is aimless pleasure and play."

The creative process of the narrator is like "moulding" (ἡ πλαστικὴ), and in performing for "the crowd" (τὰ πλήθη), he exhibits "some sort of effigies" (ἄττα εἴδωλα). The noun εἴδωλον ("effigy") was in use from the archaic period up to and beyond Lucian's own time and had a variety of possible meanings.[68] Common to all of them, however, is the idea that an εἴδωλον designates something which is similar to, but not actually, the real thing – whatever the real thing may be in the specific context. As such, we may say that an εἴδωλον is a representation of reality, or of an object belonging to the sphere of reality. Consequently, in describing his clay works thus, the narrator would appear to disqualify their claim to truth, a notion that is strengthened by the indefinite pronoun ἄττα, meaning "some" or "of a sort".

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[67] Lucian. *Prom.Es*.2.

[68] In *Il*.23.71-74 (ed. West) εἴδωλον is used of ghosts: "Bury me as quickly as possible so that I can pass through the gates of Hades. The spirits, *ghosts* of those who have died, keep me far away, nor yet do they allow me to pass over the river; I roam up and down to Hades' wide-gated house." (θάπτε με ὅττι τάχιστα, πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω· / τῆλε μ᾽ εέργουσι ψυχαί, εἴδωλα καμόντων, / οὐδέ μέ πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐῶσιν, / ἀλλ᾽ αὔτως ἀλάλημαι ἀν᾽ εὐρυπυλὲς Ἄϊδος δῶ) | In *Od*.4.796-98 (ed. West) of dream apparitions: "She made an *apparition* and likened it to a woman, Iphthime, in form, the daughter of great-hearted Icarius, whom Eumelus who dwelled in Pherae married." (εἴδωλον ποίησε, δέμας δ᾽ ἤϊκτο γυναικί, / Ἰφθίμῃ, κούρῃ μεγαλήτορος Ἰκαρίοιο, / τὴν Εὔμηλος ὄπυιε Φερῆς ἔνι οἰκία ναίων.) | In Hdt.6.58 (ed. Wilson) of substitutes used in Spartan funerals when the body of the deceased could not be recovered: "Whenever one of the kings die in war, they prepare a *substitute* for him and carry it out on a well-made bed." (ὃς δ᾽ ἂν ἐν πολέμῳ τῶν βασιλέων ἀποθάνῃ, τούτῳ δὲ εἴδωλον σκευάσαντες ἐν κλίνῃ εὖ ἐστρωμένῃ ἐκφέρουσι) | In Epicurus *Ep.Hdt*.10.46 (ed. Arrighetti) of the tiny substances that were believed to be emitted from physical objects to our eyes, enabling us to see: "Moreover, there are impressions which are like solid objects in form, but far different from the things which are seen because of their thinness. […] These impressions we call '*films*'." (Καὶμὴν καὶ τύποι ὁμοιοσχήμονες τοῖς στερεμνίοις εἰσί, λεπτότησιν ἀπέχοντες μακρὰν τῶν φαινομένων. […] τούτους δὲ τοὺς τύπους εἴδωλα προσαγορεύομεν.) | In Eur.*Hel*. 31-35 (ed. Diggle) of the phantom who, in Euripides' version of the Trojan myth, went to Troy while the real Helen stayed in Egypt: "Hera, angry that she did not defeat the other goddesses, inflated mine (*sc*. Helen's) and Alexander's marriage bed, and she gave to king Priam's son not me, but a vivified *phantom* she made like me, formed from heaven." (Ἥρα δὲ μεμφθεῖσ᾽ οὕνεκ᾽ οὐ νικᾷ θεὰς / ἐξηνέμωσε τἄμ᾽ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ λέχη, / δίδωσι δ᾽ οὐκ ἔμ᾽ ἀλλ᾽ ὁμοιώσασ᾽ ἐμοὶ / εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν οὐρανοῦ ξυνθεῖσ᾽ ἄπο / Πριάμου τυράννου παιδί·)

Indeed, if we return to Plato's *Theaetetus* and a passage (150b-c) almost immediately following the one cited above, we see that this very quality of an εἴδωλον, *sc*. its relative "fakeness", is corroborated by Socrates' use of γόνιμος ("genuine") and εἴδωλον as opposite terms. Socrates has just announced that his function as a dialogic philosopher is essentially the same as that of midwives, and this is a claim which requires some clarification:

> Τῇ δέ γ' ἐμῇ τέχνῃ τῆς μαιεύσεως τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ὑπάρχει ὅσα ἐκείναις, διαφέρει δὲ τῷ τε ἄνδρας ἀλλὰ μὴ γυναῖκας μαιεύεσθαι καὶ τῷ τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν τικτούσας ἐπισκοπεῖν ἀλλὰ μὴ τὰ σώματα. μέγιστον δὲ τοῦτ' ἔνι τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ τέχνῃ, βασανίζειν δυνατὸν εἶναι παντὶ τρόπῳ πότερον εἴδωλον καὶ ψεῦδος ἀποτίκτει τοῦ νέου ἡ διάνοια ἢ γόνιμόν τε καὶ ἀληθές.
>
> All the other things that are true of their art of midwifery are true also of mine, but mine differs in that it practices midwifery upon men, not women, and in that it tends to their souls when they give birth and not their bodies. But the greatest thing about my art is that it has the power to examine in every way whether the mind of the young man gives birth to what is an effigy and false or what is genuine and true.

Despite their initial similarity, there is a difference between Socrates and midwives, and it is more fundamental than the fact that midwives help women give birth to children and Socrates helps young men give birth to knowledge; while the only concern of actual midwives is the delivery of a baby, Socrates must also examine whether the thing delivered by his method of elenchus is "true" (ἀληθές) and "genuine" (γόνιμον) or "false" (ψεῦδος) and an "effigy" (εἴδωλον). Here εἴδωλον is used as the opposite of γόνιμος, in order to designate a mistaken representation of reality which, according to Plato, could be dangerous as it may lead to false opinions (δόξαι). Although such opinions initially appear to the possessor to be true, they are eventually revealed as λῆρον ("nonsense") by Socrates' dialogic method, and are therefore directly opposed to the true knowledge, or truth, which is that same method's ultimate goal. [69]

Based on Socrates and Theaetetus' discussion, a possible interpretation of the narrator's εἴδωλα presents itself. It would appear that his works are not in fact meant to put forward the objective kind of truth which Socrates and his interlocuters are seeking; on the contrary, if subjected to philosophical scrutiny they would be worthless. This interpretation gains some support from the narrator's subsequent extension of his clay metaphor. The Athenians, he observes, used to call their potters Prometheuses, because they fired their clay creations in the oven in order to turn them into solid ceramic. He then fears that this was the interpretation of Prometheus that his addressee had in mind, admitting that "our works too are fragile like their little pots, and if you threw a small stone, you would break them all" (εὔθρυπτα ἡμῖν τὰ ἔργα ὥσπερ ἐκείνοις τὰ χυτρίδια, καὶ μικρόν τις λίθον ἐμβαλὼν συντρίψειεν ἂν πάντα, *Prom.Es*.2.). Lucianic scholarship has tended to see this passage as

[69] Pl.*Tht*.151c.

expressive of Lucian's worry with regards to his orations' performance context and their subsequent reception,[70] but I would argue that we should rather consider it as a self-conscious reflection on the ontological status of his works. To treat them like fired ceramic, Lucian would seem to suggest – that is fixed and objective truths which can be tested philosophically – would be to misunderstand the nature of his sophistic orations.

This seems moreover to be the reason why the narrator declares that his works are entirely lacking in "movement" (κίνησις) and "spirit" (ψυχῆς).[71] If we again return to Plato, more specifically to his *Sophist* (248e-249a), a dialogue whose discussion apparently arose on the day after the investigation in the *Theaetetus*, we notice that precisely these terms are presented as requirements for philosophical "absolute being" (τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι):

> Τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἢ ῥᾳδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μὴ παρεῖναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἑστὸς εἶναι;
>
> But by Zeus! Will we be easily persuaded that movement and life and spirit and mind is truly not present in absolute being, that it neither lives nor thinks, but – while revered and holy – is without mind and stands immovable?

The Eleatic stranger, who is the speaker of these lines, inquires of Theaetetus whether he thinks "absolute being" (τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι) could exist without "movement" (κίνησις), "life" (ζωή), "spirit" (ψυχή) and "mind" (φρόνησις), to which Theaetetus emphatically replies that to agree with such a statement would be "terrible indeed" (δεινὸν μεντἄν, *Sph*.249a). For an object to have independent being then, "movement" and "spirit" – the very features the narrator declares that his works are entirely without – are required. Of course, an "effigy" (εἴδωλον), which shares only some general outwardly characteristics with a "genuine" (γόνιμος) being, does not have these features either, and consequently it would appear to be a fitting label for the narrator's works.

Based on Lucian's possible allusion to this passage, I would propose that the lack of philosophical "being" in the narrator's works is analogous to their lack of objective truth. In order to explore this interpretation, I would like to retrace my steps and point to the

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[70] Romm. 1990: 93: "[…] but clearly he [*sc*. Lucian] feels himself most when he attempts to give his work a lasting outline, that is, by firing it." and ní Mheallaigh. 2014: 20: "This is the point of the anxiety he expresses in You are a literary Prometheus, where the hard-wearing ceramic of the fired clay represents for Lucian the fragility of his finished work. […] Underlying this image is an analogy between the clayey and adaptable text-in-performance, and the fragile ceramic of the polished product."

[71] Ibid. 1990: 91-92, based on the narrator's following suggestion that the addressee perhaps called him a Prometheus in order to compare him to the populist Cleon (*Prom.Es*.2), sees the lack of κίνησις and ψυχῆς as having "less to do with 'lifelessness' than with the instability of his [*sc*. Lucian's] clay figurines". However, as the comparison to Cleon introduces a new interpretation of the addressee's original statement the points appear to me to be unconnected.

comparison the narrator draws between himself and forensic lawyers in the very first paragraph of *A Literary Prometheus*.

> καίτοι πόσῳ δικαιότερον ὑμεῖς ἂν εἰκάζοισθε τῷ Προμηθεῖ, ὁπόσοι ἐν δίκαις εὐδοκιμεῖτε ξὺν ἀληθείᾳ ποιούμενοι τοὺς ἀγῶνας. ζῶα γοῦν ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ ἔμψυχα ὑμῖν τὰ ἔργα, καὶ νὴ Δία καὶ τὸ θερμὸν αὐτῶν ἐστι διάπυρον· καὶ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ Προμηθέως ἂν εἴη, πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἑνὶ διαλλάττοιτε, ὅτι μὴ ἐκ πηλοῦ πλάττετε ἀλλὰ χρυσᾶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰ πλάσματα.
>
> Still, how much more just would it not be to liken you to Prometheus, all you who win glory in the courtrooms, fighting battles with truth on your side! At least your works are truly alive and spirited, and by Zeus, even their heat is fiery. This too would be a Promethean feature, were it not for the fact that you differ from him in one respect, for you do not mould in clay; on the contrary, for the most part your figures are golden.

Unlike the works of the narrator, the works of forensic orators are not lacking in life, for they are described as both ζῶα ("alive") and ἔμψυχα ("spirited"). On the immediate level, and as Peter von Möllendorff observes, these adjectives refer to the subjects of forensic orations which are after all taken from real life.[72] However, following the interpretation proposed above, these two adjectives could also be seen as corresponding to the Eleatic stranger's concepts of "life" (ζωή) and "spirit" (ψυχή), and consequently, forensic orations would appear to partake of philosophical being. Hence, they are not "effigies" (εἴδωλα) like the works of the narrator; rather, they are quite the opposite, for the forensic orators are said to be "fighting battles with truth on [their] side" (ξὺν ἀληθείᾳ ποιούμενοι τοὺς ἀγῶνας). The aim of a forensic orator, whether he is speaking on behalf of the defendant or the prosecuted, is to defeat his opponent in a search for the "objective" truth about a case; though his motivation and methods are perhaps different, his goal is arguably the same as that of the philosopher.

In contrast to such serious endeavours, the narrator, in describing his own works, declares that "the business is aimless pleasure and play" (τέρψις ἄλλως καὶ παιδιὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα, *Prom.Es*.2). As such, the project of the narrator displays yet another typical feature of *bricolage*. In his reassessment of Lévi-Strauss' *bricoleur* concept, Christopher Johnson explains the role of play involved in the creation of a *bricolage*:

> These elements are, so to speak, multivalent, that is, they retain a certain determinate use value, but because of their abstraction from their original functional context there is a degree of manoeuvre, or play, in their redeployment: they are overdetermined in their history but underdetermined as to their potential use.[73]

Johnson imagines the rearrangement of elements which is the business of a *bricoleur* as a kind of play with tradition. In the process of collecting his materials, the *bricoleur* removes them from their designated context, and thus he also releases them from a position in which they

[72] Möllendorff. 2001: 136.
[73] Johnson. 2012: 362.

have but one single meaning. Through the rearrangement, or play, which constitutes a *bricolage*, the worn-out elements of tradition become multivalent, and from their inclusion in the *bricolage*, they provide new insights.

Above, I argued that an εἴδωλον could be interpreted as a representation of reality. Thus, we may observe an important difference in the function of the narrator's works and those of philosophers and forensic authors. While the latter work with a clear aim, *sc*. to uncover an objective kind of truth, and their method thus involves having to dispel wrongful representations of reality (εἴδωλα) as they may lead to false opinions (δόξαι), the narrator presents his works as *being* εἴδωλα. Their creation is a kind of "play" (παιδιά), and the insight they may provoke – that is, the perspectival shift which occurs when traditional elements are rearranged – is portrayed as a secondary and quite incidental consequence. I believe Branham expresses this aspect of Lucian's poetics very well in his discussion of the Lucianic dialogue *Anacharsis*, which he refers to as in a sense "platonic":[74]

> If the humorous gropings of Lucian's interlocutors can yield neither the proof nor the refutation required for Socratic truth, they may at least produce for the audience a sense for the perspectival nature of traditional truths and, with it, a sophist's awareness of the potential incongruity of any single way of seeing a subject.[75]

Moreover, Lucian's relativistic approach to traditional truths may, I believe, be conceived as a subtle defence mechanism. For the πηλοπλάθος, as we have seen, the literary tradition is a source of plasma, of building blocks to be used in his creative *bricolage*. Hence, the prerequisite for his hybridising enterprise is the notion that any established whole is arbitrary and temporary; if arrangements were to be seen as fixed, the creative freedom of the πηλοπλάθος would be diminished.

Consequently, an important part of the πηλοπλάθος' project must be to destabilise what is usually seen as permanent and true. Therefore, I believe there is good reason to distrust the narrator of *A Literary Prometheus*' compliment about the truth of forensic orations, which in any case is surprising in light of forensic orators' general reputation in antiquity. In the investigation of rhetoric's relation to truth in *Phaedrus* (*Phdr*.272d-e), Socrates famously complains that "the one who is to be sufficiently rhetorical" (τὸν μέλλοντα ἱκανῶς ῥητορικὸν), "need not have any part in truth" (οὐδὲν ἀληθείας μετέχειν δέοι). Moreover, he says, "[They say] that in the courts, no one gives the slightest care about the truth of these matters; only about what is persuasive." (τὸ παράπαν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς

[74] See Branham. 1989: 101-4 for an excellent analysis of the difference between Lucianic and Platonic dialogue.
[75] Ibid. 1989: 103-4.

δικαστηρίοις τούτων ἀληθείας μέλειν οὐδενί, ἀλλὰ τοῦ πιθανοῦ.).[76] This is also the subject of a joke in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (*Vesp*.562-86), where Philocleon, the juror who is addicted to the lawcourt, lists all the spectacles that are to be seen in a courtroom; defendants groan over their poverty, drag in their children to be pitied or tell funny anecdotes about Aesop in order to make the listeners complacent – all so that the jurors will be persuaded and acquit them of their crime.[77] It seems likely, in short, that the narrator's description of forensic orators as having the truth' on their side was meant to hint at the irony pervading his comment.

This notion is supported by the narrator's mention of "the heat" (τὸ θερμὸν) of forensic oratory, which he calls "fiery" (διάπυρον). This adjective presumably refers to the candour with which the orators delivered their works in court, but there is a further level to it, for in combination with the expletive "by Zeus" (νὴ Δία), διάπυρον evokes the traditional image of Prometheus, who was punished by Zeus for giving the fire (πῦρ) to mortals. Indeed, this allusion is expressed in somewhat clearer terms a moment after, when the narrator remarks that this fiery heat is "a Promethean feature" (τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ Προμηθέως). Though the comparison between forensic orators and Prometheus is almost immediately retracted, I would argue that it nevertheless serves a significant and specifically devaluating function here, for the punishment of Prometheus' theft of fire is the subject of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*,[78] a tragedy which was most likely one of the main sources for the (educated) audience's mental perception of the mythical character of Prometheus, and one moreover, in which the titan is portrayed in a much more ambivalent light than he is in Hesiod's epics.[79]

Most importantly, in *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus is repeatedly presented as someone who obscures the truth by talking in riddles. In lines 609-10, Prometheus promises to tell Io what she will suffer in the future and adds that he will do it "not by weaving riddles, but in simple speech" (οὐκ ἐμπλέκων αἰνίγματ', ἀλλ' ἁπλῷ λόγῳ). And yet, despite his promise to talk plainly, Io has to remind him to get to the point when he starts talking and

[76] Plato, of course, is seriously biased against rhetoric and most likely not a trustworthy witness to the actual proceedings in court. See Gagarin. 2014: 15-29 who traces the historical development of *eikos* ("probability") arguments in the Athenian court. Gagarin argues that though forensic orations from the fifth century B.C. generally testify a clear distinction between *eikos* arguments and objective truth (and indeed displays a preference for the latter), the increased use of written documents as a source of objective facts in the following centuries led to a greater dependence on subjective arguments establishing the relevance or reality of those facts. However, I would argue that historical facts were of minor relevance to Lucian, whose project was presumably more influenced by the literary tradition (esp. Plato) and the topos of courtroom deceitfulness.

[77] Aristophanes account is no doubt a comical exaggeration, but the general importance of theatrical performance for forensic oratory has been convincingly demonstrated by Hall. 1995.

[78] The question of authorship was not raised until well after antiquity and consequently does not concern my analysis. Lucian in any case considered *Prometheus Bound* – which is an important intertext for his own dialogue *Prometheus* – to be a play by Aeschylus.

[79] Cf. Podlecki. 2005: 3: "It is as though the author of Prometheus Bound were deliberately trying to undo all the positive feelings that this amiable and familiar figure [*sc*. Prometheus] would have evoked in the audience."

distinctly requests him not to use "false stories" (μύθοις ψευδέσιν) or "complex words" (συνθέτους λόγους, 685-86). This request is later seconded by Hermes in lines 949-50: "And by all means, do not do this in a riddling way, but tell each thing separately" (καὶ ταῦτα μέντοι μηδὲν αἰνικτηρίως / ἀλλ' αὖθ' ἕκαστα φράζε).[80] Thus, by comparing the forensic orators to this specific aspect of the Prometheus myth, *sc*. his theft of fire, Lucian conjures up the Aeschylean image of Prometheus as someone who has a complicated relationship to truth.

This image is later strengthened when the narrator admits that forensic orators are not like Prometheus after all, for whereas he used to mould in clay, "the figures" (τὰ πλάσματα) of forensic oratory are "golden" (χρυσᾶ). Although this at first glance appears to be a compliment, I believe the connotations of (χρυσός) elsewhere in the Lucianic *oeuvre* suggest that we should not take it at face value. In a near parallel to this passage, the narrator of the *prolalia* called *Amber or The Swans* claims that other orators "distil gold itself in [their] orations" (χρυσὸς αὐτὸς ἀποστάζει τῶν λόγων, *Electr*.6.) whereas his own works are associated with the less precious material amber. Significantly however, this comparison appears in a passage which deals with those who deceive their listeners by exaggerating everything, so that the reality of what they are saying never live up to the expectations of their audience. The narrator explicitly warns the audience that this is not the case with his own orations, which he vows are "unvarnished and matter-of-fact" (ἁπλοϊκὸν καὶ ἄμυθον), but his silence on the gold-distilling orations of others hints that such truthful simplicity cannot be claimed in their case. Thus, in *Amber or The Swans*, gold is portrayed as something deceitful, an idea which I would argue functions as a *leitmotif* throughout Lucian's works.

In the comical dialogue *Zeus Rants*, a comparable discussion of the aesthetic quality of different materials is camouflaged as a troublesome seating arrangement at a meeting of the gods (*JTr*.7-8). The meeting has been instigated by Zeus, who is worried that the philosophers might succeed in convincing men that the gods do not exist. Before the meeting can begin, however, the participants have to be seated, and this task is proving surprisingly difficult. In a humorous reflection on the Greek tradition, Lucian has his gods arrive in the shapes of

[80] In addition, Prometheus is explicitly called a σοφιστής ("sophist") twice by the other characters – by Kratos in line 62 and Hermes in line 944 – probably to evoke the word's negative connotations, cf. Griffith, 1983: 95 (commentary to line 62). He also employs sophistic terms and gestures: Prometheus explains how he switched sides during the titanomachy, turning his back on the titans and joining the Olympians instead, because it seemed "the best of the alternatives at hand (κράτιστα τῶν παρεστώτων) (216-18) | Okeanos suggests that Prometheus should try to persuade Zeus, and Prometheus emphasises the importance of doing so "at the opportune moment" (ἐν καιρῷ) (377-80) | Prometheus states that he will tell "the whole matter in a short summary" (βραχεῖ μύθῳ πάντα συλλήβδην), lest he should "babble in vain" (μάτην φλύσαι) (504-506) | Prometheus tells Io and the Chorus about the sufferings Io has already gone through, so that they can use that tale as a "proof" (τεκμήριον) of his honesty when telling of sufferings to come (826).

famous works of art; Poseidon for instance, arrives as a bronze statue by Lysippus and Aphrodite as a marble statue by Praxiteles. This causes some trouble, as Hermes, who has been tasked with seating them all, does not know whether to arrange them according to the cost of their material or the level of craft with which they were made. Zeus finally decides that statues of gold must always have preference over those of any other material and thus be seated further toward the front, but this is an unhelpful solution, as Hermes points out, for some statues are only golden on the outside; if one looked at the inside, one would see that the entire construction was held up by cheap wood and housed hordes of mice.[81]

I would argue that the act of looking inside a precious statue in order to test its true value here evokes Alcibiades' famous comparison of Socrates to a Silenus figure. Toward the end of Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades arrives drunk at the dinner party and, interrupting the other dinner guests' speeches on the nature of love (ἔρως), he delivers an encomium of Socrates' person instead. Part of this encomium consists in likening Socrates to Sileni – small statues of the unattractive satyr Silenus used as caskets for attractive images of the gods:

> φημὶ γὰρ δὴ ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸν εἶναι τοῖς σιληνοῖς τούτοις τοῖς ἐν τοῖς ἑρμογλυφείοις καθημένοις, οὕστινας ἐργάζονται οἱ δημιουργοὶ σύριγγας ἢ αὐλοὺς ἔχοντας, οἳ διχάδε διοιχθέντες φαίνονται ἔνδοθεν ἀγάλματα ἔχοντες θεῶν.[82]
>
> For I say that he is most like those Sileni who sit in the statuary shops – such ones as the craftsmen make with pipes or flutes – which, when they are opened in two halves, appear to have images of the gods inside.

Whereas Lucian's precious statues contain only emptiness and cheap materials, the Sileni in Alcibiades' comparison reveal a marvellous interior when opened, much more exquisite than their outside appearance. As Ruby Blondell notes, this image is a reversal of the traditional Greek concept of *kalokagathia*, which held that the outward characteristics of a person were representative of their inside character.[83] She further observes that:

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[81] Cf. Luc.*Gall*.24, where the cock tells the cobbler Micyllus of his former life as a wealthy king and compares that kingly existence with a statue made by one of the great sculptors of old. He explains that it was "very beautiful, wrought from gold and ivory" (πάγκαλος ἐκ χρυσίου καὶ ἐλέφαντος συνειργασμένος) on the outside but ends the sentence with a polysyndeton emphasising the conglomeration of rubbish inside: "if one bowed down and looked at the inside, one would see some bars and bolts and nails pierced right through it and logs and wedges and resin and clay and a lot of such ugliness lying hidden." (ἢν δὲ ὑποκύψας ἴδῃς τά γ᾽ ἔνδον, ὄψει μοχλούς τινας καὶ γόμφους καὶ ἥλους διαμπὰξ πεπερονημένους καὶ κορμοὺς καὶ σφῆνας καὶ πίτταν καὶ πηλὸν καὶ τοιαύτην τινὰ πολλὴν ἀμορφίαν ὑποικουροῦσαν·). See also *Merc*.*Cond*.22 where the prospect of working for a wealthy Roman family as an educated Greek and the ensuing disappointment brought on by the experience is compared to "golden hopes" (χρυσαῖ ἐλπίδες) which turn out to be nothing more than "some gilded bubbles" (φῦσαί τινες ἐπίχρυσοι) and ibid.41 where ignorant Greek house-teachers who profess to be educated are compared to gilded papyrus rolls which contain only tragedy.

[82] Pl.*Phdr*.215a-b.

[83] Blondell. 2002: 73. Kurke. 2014: 333-40 convincingly argues that the traditional image of Aesop influenced this portrayal of Socrates.

> In Plato's hands, Sokrates' physical appearance continues to manifest his moral and intellectual character, but in a subversive, provocative fashion. His strange body and self-presentation not only conceal a marvellous interior, but actually come to stand for his moral and intellectual superiority.[84]

In the case of Socrates then, his unsightly looks are seen as a symbol, or even a guarantee, for the validity of his philosophical stance. Moreover, the act of looking inside the statues of the Sileni is in this comparison figurative of the process of qualifying or disqualifying an intellectual position.

In Lucian's ironic revision of this topos however, the superiority of the surface material of an object becomes a mark of the object's inside deficiency; as Hermes remarks, the statues that are well-wrought and expensive-looking are usually those which are held up by cheap materials. Thus, gold for Lucian would seem to be emblematic of something which does not hold up under closer inspection, and this general devaluation of the material could, in the more specific context of *A Literary Prometheus* and its discussion of "golden figures" (τὰ πλάσματα χρυσᾶ), arguably be interpreted as a devaluation of the truth value of the forensic orators' works. Though forensic authors profess to have truth on their side, the narrator would appear to suggest, a thorough testing of their works would lead to an intellectual *impasse*. In this way, the narrator's own "aimless pleasure and play" (τέρψις ἄλλως καὶ παιδιὰ, *Prom.Es*.2) with clay, which need not advocate an objective kind of truth in order to create insight, but whose insight is rather a secondary consequence of the creative rearrangement (*bricolage*) or effigy (εἴδωλον) they present of reality, emerge as a potent alternative. Thus, I would argue, the narrator has sufficiently cleared the ground in time for the introduction of his *bricolage*, the hybrid genre of the comical dialogue.

The comical dialogue: Lucian's hybrid genre

Concluding his investigation of the connotations of clay, the narrator launches a new interpretation of the addressee's original Prometheus-comparison, namely that the addressee simply meant to paint a picture of him as an innovator.

> Καίτοι, φαίη τις ἂν παραμυθούμενος, οὐ ταῦτα εἴκασέ σε τῷ Προμηθεῖ, ἀλλὰ τὸ καινουργὸν τοῦτο ἐπαινῶν καὶ μὴ πρός τι ἄλλο ἀρχέτυπον μεμιμημένον, ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ὄντων ἀνθρώπων τέως ἐννοήσας αὐτοὺς ἀνέπλασεν, τοιαῦτα ζῷα μορφώσας καὶ διακοσμήσας ὡς εὐκίνητά τε εἴη καὶ ὀφθῆναι χαρίεντα.[85]

> And still someone may say – trying to comfort me – that 'it was not with respect to these things that he likened you to Prometheus. He was rather praising the innovation and the fact that you have not imitated some other model, just as Prometheus invented and moulded men at a time when they did not exist, shaping such creatures and adorning them so that they would be agile and graceful to look at.'

[84] Blondell. 2002: 73.
[85] Luc.*Prom.Es*.3.

The narrator imagines a third person, a bystander listening in on the affair, trying to comfort him by assuring him that it was not the addressee's intention to disparage his works of clay; he was rather offering him a compliment about his innovative skills. In the same way Prometheus created men when no men existed, the comforter suggests, the narrator has invented something without "imitating another model" (μή πρὸς τι ἄλλο ἀρχέτυπον μεμιμημένον).

The innovation in question, the narrator later informs us, is "the combination of two very beautiful things, dialogue and comedy" (τὸ ἐκ δυοῖν τοῖν καλλίστοιν συγκεῖσθαι, διαλόγου καὶ κωμῳδίας, *Prom.Es*.5.). This was not an uncomplicated feat, for the genres of philosophic dialogue and comedy were not "originally accustomed or friendly to each other" (συνήθη καὶ φίλα ἐξ ἀρχῆς), and consequently did not go particularly well together. Nevertheless, the narrator boasts, he was brave enough to combine them:

> καὶ ὅμως ἐτολμήσαμεν ἡμεῖς τὰ οὕτως ἔχοντα πρὸς ἄλληλα ξυναγαγεῖν καὶ ξυναρμόσαι οὐ πάνυ πειθόμενα οὐδὲ εὐμαρῶς ἀνεχόμενα τὴν κοινωνίαν.[86]
>
> And yet, though they behaved in such a way toward each other I dared to bring them together and combine them, despite the fact that they do not really obey or tolerate the union easily.

In the true manner of the *bricoleur*, the narrator has transcended conventional usage categories[87] and combined two genres which were traditionally kept separate, and this, the friendly comforter proposes, must be the reason why the anonymous addressee chose to call him a Prometheus.

As the *prolalia* progresses however, it turns out that the consoling words of the bystander have little effect on the narrator's peace of mind:

> ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐ πάνυ ἱκανόν, εἰ καινοποιεῖν δοκοίην, μηδὲ ἔχοι τις λέγειν ἀρχαιότερόν τι τοῦ πλάσματος οὗ τοῦτο ἀπόγονόν ἐστιν. ἀλλὰ εἰ μὴ καὶ χάριεν φαίνοιτο, αἰσχυνοίμην ἄν, εὖ ἴσθι, ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ καὶ ξυμπατήσας ἂν ἀφανίσαιμι. οὐδ᾽ ἂν ὠφελήσειεν αὐτό, παρὰ γοῦν ἐμοί, ἡ καινότης, μὴ οὐχὶ συντετρῖφθαι ἄμορφον ὄν. καὶ εἴ γε μὴ οὕτω φρονοίην, ἄξιος ἄν εἶναι μοι δοκῶ ὑπὸ ἑκκαίδεκα γυπῶν κείρεσθαι, οὐ συνιεὶς ὡς πολὺ ἀμορφότερα τὰ μετὰ τοῦ ξένου αὐτὸ πεπονθότα.
>
> And yet, for me it would certainly not be enough that they thought I was innovating if they could not name something older than my figure, from which that figure was descended. No, believe me when I say that if it did not seem graceful too, I would be ashamed, and I would step on it and destroy it. Nor would the novelty benefit it – at least not on my part – so as to prevent it from being destroyed if it were shapeless. Indeed, if I thought otherwise, I would deem myself worthy of being torn apart by sixteen vultures for not understanding how much more shapeless the same thing is when it is combined with the strange.

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[86] Luc.*Prom.Es*.6.
[87] Hynes. 1995: 42.

"Innovation" (καινοποιεῖν), the narrator states, should not be praised if the innovated object is in itself "misshapen" (ἄμορφον); in fact, he argues, an object which is already misshapen becomes even more so when it is combined with the "strange" (τοῦ ξένου). If this were the case with his own work, he vows, he would personally destroy it, as well as condemn himself to a punishment even worse than the eagle Zeus sent to eat at Prometheus' liver.

The adjective ἄμορφος is here usually translated as "ugly".[88] Although ἄμορφος does often have negative connotations, suggesting that the object in question does not have the external form it ought to have, I have opted for the more literal translation "shapeless", as I believe the adjective in this context is meant to reflect the situation the narrator fears the audience imagines his works to be in. The state of being shapeless is here analogous to the state of being in between two genres, for as the narrator remarked earlier, there is no older "model" (ἀρχέτυπον) or genre that directly corresponds to his comical dialogue. Indeed, at the end of *A Literary Prometheus*, the narrator imagines such excessive dependence on previous literary models as "theft" (τῆς κλεπτικῆς, *Prom.Es.*7), stating that this at least is something no one could accuse him of.[89] However, to be "innovating" (καινοποιεῖν) is a no less hazardous enterprise, for if one's creation were to become too "strange" (ξένος), that is, entirely without generic precedents, it would be detrimental for its aesthetic value, at least in the eyes of the *pepaideumenoi*. Nevertheless, it should be noted that with the optative and ἄν construction, such a scenario is presented by the narrator as a mere potential possibility. His own hybrid, the comical dialogue, is after all a true "descendant" (ἀπόγονος) with two generic parents – comedy and philosophical dialogue – and as such, its "shapelessness" need not be an injurious feature.

This point is further explored in the anecdote immediately following this passage, in which the narrator tells of Ptolemy son of Lagus (= Ptolemy I Soter, c. 367-282 BCE) who "brought two novelties to Egypt; a completely black Bactrian camel and a two-coloured man" (δύο καινὰ ἐς Αἴγυπτον ἄγων, κάμηλόν τε Βακτριανὴν παμμέλαιναν καὶ δίχρωμον ἄνθρωπον, *Prom.Es*.4.). The man, the narrator elaborates, was divided in two, so that one of his sides were black and the other white. Thus, both the camel and the man were different from what one usually imagines camels and men to look like; the camel was black, whereas most camels are brown, and the man was both white and black, whereas most men have only one colour. Despite their unusual appearance, the camel and the man do have their traditional shapes, and

[88] Cf. Kilburn.1959: 423; Ní Mheallaigh. 2014: 5.
[89] Cf. ní Mheallaigh.2014: 5-6, who, referencing [Longinus] *Subl*.13.4; observes that "in contemporary discussions of literary *mimēsis*, the metaphor of 'theft' (*klopē*) is used to denote the mindless pilfering of the canon or artless imitation […]."

so we may say that the two novelties both combine the familiar with the unfamiliar.[90] In addition, the visible hybridity of the man is emphasised several times throughout the anecdote; he is "two-coloured" (δίχρωμον), "divided in two equal parts" (ἐπ᾽ ἴσης δὲ μεμερισμένον) and he is "double" (διττὸν). Thus, the hybrid form of Ptolemy's entertainment mirrors the hybrid form of the narrator's literary creation, the comical dialogue. Indeed, after telling this anecdote, the narrator concludes with the admission that "I am afraid that my work too is a camel in Egypt […]." (Δέδοικα δὲ μὴ καὶ τοὐμὸν κάμηλος ἐν Αἰγυπτίοις ᾖ, *Prom.Es*.5).[91]

The narrator next informs us that having such unusual exhibits as a black camel and a two-coloured man, Ptolemy is confident that he will "amaze" (ἐκπλήξειν) the Egyptians with his "spectacle" (τῷ θεάματι). And yet, despite Ptolemy's excitement, his exhibition ends up having the exact opposite effect.

> ὥστε ὁ Πτολεμαῖος συνεὶς ὅτι οὐκ εὐδοκιμεῖ ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ θαυμάζεται ὑπὸ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἡ καινότης, ἀλλὰ πρὸ αὐτῆς τὸ εὔρυθμον καὶ τὸ εὔμορφον κρίνουσι, μετέστησεν αὐτὰ καὶ οὐκέτι διὰ τιμῆς ἦγεν ὡς πρὸ τοῦ. ἀλλ᾽ ἡ μὲν κάμηλος ἀπέθανεν ἀμελουμένη, τὸν ἄνθρωπον δὲ τὸν διττὸν Θέσπιδι τῷ αὐλητῇ ἐδωρήσατο καλῶς αὐλήσαντι παρὰ τὸν πότον.[92]
>
> "When Ptolemy accordingly realised that novelty was not popular with, nor admired by the Egyptians, who preferred the orderly and the well-shaped instead, he removed the camel and the man and no longer valued them like he had used to. On the contrary, the camel died from neglect, and the double man he gave to the aulos-player Thespis who had played well at a drinking bout."

To Ptolemy's surprise, the Egyptians do not care for novelty. On the contrary, they are terrified by the unfamiliar camel, and they either laugh at or are disgusted by the hybrid man – in fact, most of them end up running away from the exhibition. The anecdote ends with Ptolemy's realisation of the fact that what the Egyptians actually like is "the orderly and the well-shaped" (τὸ εὔρυθμον καὶ τὸ εὔμορφον).[93] In light of the narrator's use of ἄμορφος

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[90] In contrast, Möllendorff. 2006: 66-7 argues that the form of the (two-humped) Bactrian camel – which is native to Central Asia – must have been unknown to the Egyptians, who, he believes, knew only the (one-humped) dromedary, native to the Arabian Peninsula and Africa, and consequently that the Bactrian camel stands for literary excess. I believe this is a too elaborate interpretation, which would involve an abrupt thematic shift from the discussion of ἀρχέτυποι and ἀπόγονοι in the preceding passage. As Branham. 1985: 241 notes, the anecdotes in Lucian's *prolaliae* had a relevant *applicatio* for the reception of the author's own works, and hence, a reference to literary excess seems to me to be somewhat inopportune here. That the Bactrian camel was well known outside its native homeland at this time is in any case clear from Aristotle's description of it in *HA*.499a.
[91] Luc.*Prom.Es.*5.
[92] Luc.*Prom.*4.
[93] Compare the formulation of Ptolemy's realisation, "When Ptolemy accordingly realised that […]" (ὥστε ὁ Πτολεμαῖος συνεὶς ὅτι) in *Prom. Es*. 4 with the painter Zeuxis' realisation in *Zeux*. 7: "When Zeuxis accordingly realised that […]" (ὥστε ὁ Ζεῦξις συνεὶς ὅτι). Zeuxis is in a similar, although inverted, position as that of Ptolemy. While the audience's distaste for novelty takes Ptolemy completely by surprise, Zeuxis is shocked to find that novelty is the only thing his audience cares about. The formula "when X accordingly realised, he + aor.

("shapeless") in reference to the appearance of his own works, the Egyptians' aesthetic preference is interesting – rather than the narrator and Ptolemy's creative play with tradition, the Egyptians enjoy adherence to familiar patterns.

It is difficult not to read this anecdote metapoetically and see Ptolemy's exhibition of hybrids as representing the author Lucian's performance of his comical dialogue and the Egyptians as representing the élite *pepaideumenoi*. By mixing comedy and philosophical dialogue, Lucian has disrupted the established literary genres, and he fears that from the point of view of the educated élite, this shapelessness may be perceived as a subversive act. Indeed, in her discussion of the ambivalent reception of pantomime dancing in the Imperial Age, Lada-Richards observes that the transformative power of the dancer was perceived as a threat by the upper strata of society:

> "If for the spectating masses the dancer's endless transformative capacity is a liberating and empowering principle, a locus of fantasy, desire and inspiration, for a society's moral guardians it is often a force that must be curbed, polished and regulated. […] From the vantage point of the hegemonic classes, setting great store by social stratification and the preservation of the status quo, the dancer can offend by means of his shape-shifting, 'protean' nature."[94]

Similarly, Lucian worries that his mixing of traditions may be seen as a hubristic cultural act. This is even more clearly stated in the following paragraph, where the narrator compares his literary mix to another kind of hybrid, namely the centaur:

> ἔστι γοῦν ἐκ δύο καλῶν ἀλλόκοτον τὴν ξυνθήκην εἶναι, οἷον ἐκεῖνο τὸ προχειρότατον, ὁ ἱπποκένταυρος· οὐ γὰρ ἂν φαίης ἐπέραστόν τι ζῷον τουτὶ γενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑβριστότατον, εἰ χρὴ πιστεύειν τοῖς ζωγράφοις ἐπιδεικνυμένοις τὰς παροινίας καὶ σφαγὰς αὐτῶν.
>
> Certainly, the synthesis of two beautiful things may be freakish, just like that most obvious example, the centaur. For you would not call it a lovely animal, but a most hubristic one, if we are to believe the painters who portray its drunkenness and slaughtering.

Centaurs were traditionally seen as the embodiment of uncivilised behaviour and were thus directly opposed to the qualities cherished by society's "moral guardians". To further underline this point, the narrator calls his centaur "most hubristic" (ὑβριστότατον). The verb ὑβρίζω, from which the adjective ὕβριστος is derived, has multiple shades of meaning, one of which is "excessive self-assertion in the face of others' claims".[95] By this definition, Lucian would seem to imagine the cultural transgressiveness of his literary creation as an offence against the educated classes' claims on cultural capital.

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ind." seems to be Lucian's favoured expression when introducing the outcome of failed artistic exhibitions and their consequent *applicatio*.

[94] Lada-Richards. 2007: 74.

[95] Cairns. 1996: 32 (n. 149).

His seemingly shapeless works – the results of his treatment of the literary tradition as a mere source of clay or plasma – may be seen as violating the literary aesthetic of the élite in an attempt to cater to the innovative thirst of "the crowd" (τὰ πλήθη, *Prom.Es*.2). However, as Whitmarsh observes:

> Lucian's synthetic technique is set up as an offence to literary propriety; but it is the reader who is really challenged, for her or his overinvestment in received categories and cultural values.[96]

As we saw above, the narrator of *A Literary Prometheus* subtly hinted that his innovative works, being as they are a combination of traditional elements, need not be regarded as overturning literary convention. This issue is the main theme of Lucian's *Prometheus*, a comical dialogue which has a strong intertextual link with *A Literary Prometheus*,[97] and whose dramatic setting bears a strong similarity to the opening of *Prometheus Bound*. As with the Aeschylean tragedy, Lucian's *Prometheus* begins with the crucifixion, ordered by Zeus, of Prometheus in Caucasus by Hermes and Hephaestus (*Prom*.1-3). However, unlike its tragic model, Lucian's comic dialogue has Prometheus give a sophistic speech in defence of his crimes as soon as he is hung up (*Prom*.4.-5); his deceiving of Zeus he explains as good-natured dinner entertainment (*Prom*.7-9), his theft of fire as an aversion to the gods' stinginess (*Prom*.18-19), but the major part of his apology he dedicates to a defence of his creation of men (*Prom*.11-18).

Prometheus informs his accusers that he decided to "mould their [*sc*. men's] shapes to be like ours" (ἀναπλάσαι τὰς μορφὰς μὲν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς προσεοικότα, *Prom*. 12) but at the same time make them "extremely inventive" (εὐμηχανώτατον), and now he confesses himself to be rather surprised by the amount of anger his modelling has provoked, remarking that "now Zeus is angry, as if the gods would be made less by the creation of humans" (ἀγανακτεῖ νῦν ὁ Ζεὺς ὥσπερ ἐλαττουμένων τῶν θεῶν ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων γενέσεως, *Prom*. 13.). And yet, he argues, Zeus is wrong and should rather see his invention as a favour:

> Ἔτι δέ μοι, ὦ Ἑρμῆ, καὶ τόδε ἐννόησον, εἴ τι σοι δοκεῖ ἀγαθὸν ἀμάρτυρον, οἷον κτῆμα ἢ ποίημα ὃ μηδεὶς ὄψεται μηδὲ ἐπαινέσεται, ὁμοίως ἡδὺ καὶ τερπνὸν ἔσεσθαι τῷ ἔχοντι. πρὸς δὴ τί τοῦτ᾽ ἔφην; ὅτι μὴ γενομένων τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀμάρτυρον συνέβαινε τὸ κάλλος εἶναι τῶν ὅλων, καὶ πλοῦτόν τινα πλουτήσειν ἐμέλλομεν οὔτε ὑπ᾽ ἄλλου τινὸς θαυμασθησόμενον οὔτε ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ὁμοίως τίμιον·[98]

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[96] Cf. Whitmarsh. 2001: 77.

[97] Prometheus' sculpting of men in *Prometheus* is referred by to as "innovation" (καινουργῆσαι, *Prom*.6) by Hermes and "moulding" (τῆς πλαστικῆς, *Prom*.2 and 11) by Prometheus himself, two words which we already saw the narrator of A Literary Prometheus use of his literary creation (τὸ καινουργὸν, *Prom.Es*.3; ἡ πλαστική, *Prom.Es*.4). Similarly, the verb for used to designate Prometheus' moulding is in both texts πλάττω; it occurs in without prefix in *Prom*.11, 14 and *Prom.Es*.1, and as ἀναπλάττω in *Prom*.3, 6, 12, 13, 17 and in *Prom.Es*.3.

[98] Luc.*Prom*.15.

> Moreover Hermes, I want you to consider this too: do you suppose that some good but unattested thing – for example a possession or a creation – neither seen nor praised would be equally pleasant and delightful to the one who had it? Why do I ask such a question? Because if men did not exist it follows that the beauty of the whole would be unattested, and we would end up being wealthy with a wealth that was not admired by someone else, and neither would we ourselves value it in the same way.

Without his humans, Prometheus argues, "the beauty of the whole" (τὸ κάλλος τῶν ὅλων) would be "unattested" (ἀμάρτυρον). In a metapoetic interpretation, I would suggest that "the whole" represents the Greek tradition, and I concur with ní Mheallaigh, who proposes that "unattested" be transposed to literary terms as "unquoted".[99] If tradition is not engaged with, Lucian would seem to say, its cultural value would be diminished. Lucian's works, which are tradition's literary progeny, thus keep said tradition alive simply by existing. Here I would cite Barbara Babcock-Abrahams' study on marginality in which she argues that the manipulation, or even the negation of a system need not be regarded as a subversive act:

> "More generally, all semiotic systems are defined in terms of what they are not. Marginality is, therefore, universal in that it is the defining condition as well as the by-product of all ordered systems. We not only tolerate but need 'a margin of mess'."[100]

In a similar way, Lucian demonstrates that contrary to the fears of the *pepaideumenoi*, literary innovations should not be seen as encroaching on the cultural authority of the established conventions. Rather, the change of perspective that occurs when something is located outside, that is, in "the margin" of a system, could be seen as a form of defamiliarization which prevents the system from growing stale. I have argued that Lucian creates such perspectival shifts by means of his εἴδωλα, which are representations of reality made by inventive recombination of traditional elements. When we now turn our discussion to the *Icaromenippus*, we will see this shift in perspective dramatized.

Lucian's Menippean satires

Lucian and Menippus

The protagonist of the *Icaromenippus* is a character called Menippus who figures in several of Lucian's works.[101] The author modelled him on the Cynic philosopher Menippus of Gadara from the third century B.C., but, as Branham observes we should not consider Lucian's Menippus as a true portrayal of the historical figure, but "a parodic elaboration of the literary

[99] ní Mheallaigh. 2014: 7.
[100] Babcock-Abrahams. 1975: 152.
[101] In addition to the *Icaromenippus*, Menippus is the protagonist of *Menippus or The Descent Into Hades* and *Dialogues of the Dead*.

stereotype his works helped to create".[102] According to tradition,[103] the Cynic Menippus wrote satirical works in which he mixed prose and verse as well as comedy and philosophy, but since none of the works survive, attempts to further detail their form and content must necessarily be conjecture. That said, Menippus the historical person is explicitly mentioned twice in Lucian's *oeuvre*, both times in connection with Lucian's literary invention, the comical dialogue. In *Twice Accused*, the personified (philosophical) Dialogue complains to the gods that "the Syrian" (ὁ Σύρος) has "dug up" (ἀνορύξας) Menippus, "one of the old dogs" (τινα τῶν παλαιῶν κυνῶν) who "used to laugh when he bit" (γελῶν ἅμα ἔδακνεν), so that, whereas Dialogue used to be very solemn and dignified, he is now forced to "act like a comedian and make laughter" (κωμῳδῶν καὶ γελωτοποιῶν).[104] In *The Fisherman*, we have a similar situation, wherein Parresiades (Παρρησιάδης, "Mr. Frankness"), another of Lucian's masks, is accused of slandering the gods and the ancient philosophers. The prosecution is conducted by the philosopher Diogenes, who claims that Parresiades "persuaded Menippus, a man who was our friend, to join him in his many farces" (Μένιππον ἀναπείσας ἑταῖρον ἡμῶν ἄνδρα συγκωμῳδεῖν αὐτῷ τὰ πολλά).[105]

It is impossible to determine what Lucian meant when he presented Parresiades as having "dug up" the Cynic philosopher; did it mean that he had reinvigorated a genre invented by Menippus or simply that he decided to employ Menippus as one of his masks because the associations attached to his character were useful for Lucian's own literary project? The issue is particularly puzzling in light of Lucian's supposed invention of the comical dialogue. If a similar mix of comedy and philosophy was already associated with Menippus, it seems likely that Lucian's audience, which consisted at least in part of representatives of the educated elite, would object to Lucian's then exaggerated claim to inventiveness.[106] As Jennifer Hall

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[102] Branham. 1989: 14. Cf. Deriu. 2017: 48-9: "A interessare Luciano, infatti, è il Menippo letterario, una figura che si muove sulle orme dello spoudaiogeloion e che rende protagonista di una catabasi e di un'ascesa alle sedi olimpie, in maniera degna degli eroi della migliore commedia."

[103] Evidence for such a tradition is given by Strabo, who describes Menippus as σπουδογέλοιος, an adjective made up of σπουδαῖος ("serious, earnest") and γέλοιος ("comic, ridiculous"), and usually translated as "serio-comical", see Str.16.2.29. The word, which is poorly attested, seems primarily to have been associated with Cynics, cf. Branham. 1989: 27. In addition, σπουδαῖος and γέλοιος are attested (separately) in Ar.*Ran*.389-90. Diogenes Laertius gives a short biography of Menippus' life in Diog.Laert.6.99-101 and says that Menippus wrote a total of thirteen works, but he lists only six of them.

[104] Luc.*Bis.Acc*.33.

[105] Luc.*Pisc*.26.

[106] Cf. Hall. 1981: 69. Alexiou. 1990: 5-6, sees no reason to doubt Lucian's assertion without evidence to the contrary and concludes that "Lucian was most likely the inventor of the genre of satiric dialogue in which he so excelled." Similarly, Storey. 2015: 167-68 argues that although Lucian used Menippus "almost as an alter ego", "he regarded his real models as (Platonic) dialogue and (Aristophanic) comedy."

remarks, the answer to the question of whether or not Lucian's comical dialogue was his own creation "depends to a large extent on one's estimate of Lucian as a writer."[107]

This question was originally posed (and answered) by Rudolph Helm in 1906, who argued that "man mag von der Erfindungskraft Lucians nicht hoch denken" because his method, as Helm supposed, was to reuse material from other authors, and "schließlich liefert auch er nur, was die Komiker vor ihm ausgestaltet hatten."[108] However, Helm based most of his discussion on personal conjectures of what Menippus' works were like. Hall's study therefore, which compares Lucian's *oeuvre* with the extant evidence of Menippus' works and other works supposedly inspired by them, rightly rejects Helm's criticism on the grounds that it "is hardly borne out by the facts" and sometimes "sheer divination", and concludes that Lucian, if he did imitate a genre which had originally been invented by Menippus, did so "in such a way as to create afresh."[109] We may safely suppose then that even if Lucian was influenced by the works of Menippus, he in any case felt that the degree to which he had adapted them to suit his own purpose warranted an open assertion of originality.

Lucian and the genre of the Menippea

Despite its harsh judgement on Lucian's creative abilities, Helm's study did mark the beginning of Lucian's association with the genre called Menippea or Menippean satires.[110] This genre is a modern construct – there was no ancient genre referred to as "Menippea",[111] but the modern understanding of the genre has as its foundation the ancient "serio-comical" (σπουδογέλοιος) tradition associated with the historical Menippus. There have been several attempts at describing the general features of the Menippean satires, but the most influential by far has been Bakhtin's account in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*,[112] where the Menippea is defined as one of two genres within "the realm of the serio-comical", the other

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[107] Hall. 1981: 64.

[108] Helm. 1906: 214 and 386.

[109] Hall. 1981: 146 and 150. Cf. Dudley. 1937: 70: who argues that Menippus was responsible for "the adaptation of the dialogue for comic and satiric purposes", but that Lucian modified the original framework and that "[i]t is not therefore likely that from the dialogues of Lucian we can reconstruct in any detail the Menippean original." and Bompaire. 1958: 553: "Les possibilités de reconstitution de la Ménippée et de comparaison avec Lucien restent donc faibles." Hall nevertheless regards it as likely that certain Lucianic themes and motifs (such as the idea of looking at the world from above, (possibly) also found in the fragments of Varro, see Hall. 1981: 95-104), may be traced back to a specific (and now lost) work by Menippus.

[110] Ibid. 1981: 466 (n.1) offers a tentative list of Lucian's Menippean works: *Nec*., *Catapl*., *Dial.Mort*., *Char*., *Icar*., *Iupp.trag*., *Iupp.conf*., *Dial.D*., *Symp.*, *Gall*., *Vit.auct*., *Pisc*., *Fug*., *Bis.acc*., *Sat*., *Tim*.

[111] Relihan. 1984.

[112] Bakhtin's study was originally published in 1929 (then republished in 1963 in its present, revised form), but as it was not widely read in the West before its translation into English in 1973 (and again in 1984), the most important definition was for a while that of Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* from 1957. Frye described the genre of the Menippean satire, which he later referred to as "anatomy", as being "usually a dialogue or colloquy, in which the dramatic interest is in a conflict of ideas rather than of character", cf. Frye. 1957: 310. His definition has since been entirely overshadowed by that of Bakhtin.

being the Socratic dialogue. Bakhtin argued that the most important characteristic of the Menippean satire was "the creation of *extraordinary situations* [original emphasis] for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea, a discourse, a truth", and he specifies that this testing happens in an "atmosphere of joyful relativity characteristic of a carnival sense of the world".[113]

A crucial point in Bakhtin's definition is the idea that due to its joyful relativity and carnivalistic outlook, the ancient Menippean satire was inherently anti-dogmatic and rejected "one-sided rhetorical seriousness".[114] For this reason Bakhtin maintained that the Menippea's carnival laughter was weakened as it developed into the eighteenth century European satire; as laughter became the means to a goal, it lost its polyvalence and its creative value was diminished.[115] This issue is stated in even clearer terms in Bakhtin's later study on Rabelais, where he writes that during the Pre-Romantic and Romantic eras (ca. 1740-1850):

> "It [*sc*. laughter] became the expression of subjective, individualistic world outlook very different from the carnival folk concept of previous ages, although still containing some carnival elements."[116]

In my ensuing analysis of *Icaromenippus*, I aim to show that Bakhtin's theory of the carnival laughter of antiquity – and, by implication, laughter's degeneration in later European satire – is problematic from the point of view of Lucian's Menippea. Although Menippus' fantastic journey in *Icaromenippus* certainly has anti-dogmatic features, I would argue that these features are a means of strengthening Lucian's ethos, and as such, that their goal is in fact less polyvalent and more one-sidedly rhetorical than Bakhtin's definition would seem to allow.

Indeed, precisely this element in Bakhtin's description of the Menippean satires is also rejected by Howard Weinbrot, who, in his re-evaluation of the genre – the professed aim of which is to "[…] diminish the number of works called Menippean satires so that the genre

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[113] Bakhtin. 1984a: 109 and 114.
[114] Ibid. 1984a: 107.
[115] As Emerson. 2002: 10-11 observes, this historical decline of laughter constitutes a paradox in Bakhtin's authorship. In general, it seems, Bakhtin considered meaning to accumulate over time, and consequently that genres and literature matured. Hence, instead of rendering a genre such as the novel or the Menippea more specific and sharply defined, the passing of time rather adds new elements, resulting in a more complex genre. Cf. Bakhtin. 1984a: 136, where he writes that between antiquity and Dostoevsky, "[…] the generic tradition [of the Menippea] continued to develop, to become more complex, to change its shape and be reconceptualized (while preserving throughout its unity and continuity)." In contrast, he argues that laughter, a crucial element in the Menippea, experienced a "degradation" in the eighteenth century after having reached "the high point of its summit" in Rabelais, cf. Bakhtin. 1984b: 101-102. See the discussion below, p.52-53. How these two opposite historical processes could result in Dostoevsky as the very peak in the development of the Menippea is something of a mystery, cf. Bakhtin. 1984a: 121: "Essentially all of the defining features of the menippea (with, of course, the appropriate modifications and complications) we will find also in Dostoevsky. This is in fact one and the same generic world, although present in the menippea at the beginning of its development, in Dostoevsky at its very peak."
[116] Bakhtin. 1984b: 36.

who ate the world can be put on a diet" – argues that "[…] much of Bakhtin's theory of the Menippea is alien to actual events in literary history so far as we can reclaim them." In Weinbrot's study, which re-examines many of the ancient (and modern) works traditionally referred to as "Menippean", Bakhtin's "joyful relativity" is forced to give up its position as the Menippea's defining characteristic to what the author refers to as "opposition to a threatening orthodoxy".[117] As opposed to Bakhtin, Weinbrot maintains that the ancient Menippea did in fact urge for real change, both on a personal and a national level, and that it was this framework the later European satirists inherited. While I agree with the conclusion of Weinbrot's engagement with Bakhtin, I believe his interest in explaining the history of the European satire – which is his area of expertise – leads him to a simplification of Lucian's Menippean texts.

In order to explain why later European satirists rejected some ancient Menippean works and accepted others, Weinbrot distinguishes between two modes of Menippean satires; the "severe" or "harsh mode", in which the "angry satirist fails and becomes angrier still", and the "muted" or "softer mode", in which the "satirist offers a partial antidote to the poison" he is trying to combat.[118] Precisely because of this lack of an antidote, Weinbrot demonstrates, the practitioners of the harsh mode were met with scepticism by later satirists, and their works had to be modified before they could be used as models. Lucian, who, according to Weinbrot, is "mocking, cynical, normless" in his tone and "uniformly negative" in his conclusions, is placed in this latter, "harsh" group of Menippea.[119] Ironically then, in the case of Lucian's Menippean works, Weinbrot's analysis would seem to converge with Bakhtin's; in both cases the adventures of Lucian's Menippus is seen as a *reductio ad nihilum* of the dogmas the protagonist encounters, but whereas Bakhtin sees this as a liberating experience, Weinbrot sees it as hopelessly nihilist one. None, however, sees Menippus' adventures as leading to a positive discovery. Both positions, I will argue, are problematic, because neither considers the fact that Menippus journey is not primarily of ethical, but of rhetorical importance.

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[117] Weinbrot. 2005: 297 and 84. The importance of this criteria – and thus the difference between Weinbrot and Bakhtin's definitions – is most clearly indicated by Weinbrot's exclusion of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* from the genre of the Menippea on the grounds that it is "far to jolly a work to oppose a threatening orthodoxy" (p. 297). Cf. p. 8, "Readers also acknowledged the *Golden Ass* as too raunchy to be taken seriously, *as Menippean satire requires* [my emphasis]."
[118] Ibid. 2005: 6 and 17-18.
[119] Ibid. 2005: 63 and 298.

Icaromenippus

Menippus and the philosophers

The major part of the *Icaromenippus* is a first-person narrative in the voice of Menippus, but the work is framed as a dialogue, opening with a meeting between Menippus and an anonymous friend. Menippus is walking around talking about celestial objects, and his friend enquires of him why, to which the former replies that his strange talk is due to his recent trip to heaven, which he then goes on to relate (*Icar*.1-3). He informs his friend that he, when he "investigated the things in life" (ἐξετάζων τὰ κατὰ τὸν βίον, *Icar*.4), found "all human affairs" (τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πάντα) to be "ridiculous, lowly and unreliable" (γελοῖα καὶ ταπεινὰ καὶ ἀβέβαια). Accordingly he tried to find something else worthwhile, so he "lifted [his] head up and tried to focus on the totality" (ἀνακύπτειν τε καὶ πρὸς τὸ πᾶν ἀποβλέπειν ἐπειρώμην). However, his attempt at investigating the cosmos is overwhelming and only plunges him into a "high degree of perplexity" (πολλήν τινα τὴν ἀπορίαν), and hence he changes tactics and begins to observe the universe "one part at a time" (κατὰ μέρος). This fails too however, and he is "forced into even greater perplexity" (πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀπορεῖν ἠναγκαζόμην), for even though he can see the totality of things he does not understand the laws that govern them. The world appears to Menippus to be entirely inconsistent and unpredictable.

The stars, he learns, are scattered "randomly" (ὡς ἔτυχε) in the sky, the moon is "strange and entirely paradoxical" (ἄτοπά καὶ παντελῶς παράδοξα) and the different meteorological phenomena are "baffling and difficult to make out" (δυσείκαστα καὶ ἀτέκμαρτα). In short, although Menippus is observing all of the celestial phenomena closely, he is unable to find one single principle, the application of which would give the heterogenous elements coherence and unity. Consequently he realises that mere observation is not sufficient for the discovery of "the whole truth" (πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, *Icar*.5). He therefore decides to visit the philosophers, whom he assumes must be an authority on such matters. Indeed, his assumption is not without foundation, for the philosophers all have external markers of wisdom; Menippus explains that he "was able to conclude based on evidence" (ἐνῆν τεκμήρασθαι) which of them were "the best" (τοὺς ἀρίστους), because these had "a sullen face, pale skin and a copious beard" (προσώπου τε σκυθρωπότητι καὶ χρόας ὠχρότητι καὶ γενείου βαθύτητι). Moreover, when Menippus approaches them, they seem to him to be "high-talkers and interpreters of heaven" (ὑψαγόραι καὶ οὐρανογνώμονες), and from this he is convinced that it would be a good idea to place himself under their authority and pay them "a good deal of money" (συχνὸν ἀργύριον) in order for them to teach him how to "fully understand the order of the whole" (τὴν τῶν ὅλων διακόσμησιν καταμαθεῖν).

After spending some time with the philosophers, however, Menippus is bitterly disappointed. Instead of "dispelling [his] old ignorance" (τῆς παλαιᾶς ἐκείνης ἀγνοίας ἀπαλλάξαι), the philosophers only "plunged him into greater perplexity" (εἰς μείζους ἀπορίας ἐνέβαλον). And this was not even the worst part of his stay, Menippus explains to his friend:

> ὃ δὲ πάντων ἐμοί γοῦν ἐδόκει χαλεπώτατον, ὅτι μηδὲν ἅτερος θατέρῳ λέγοντες ἀκόλουθον ἀλλὰ μαχόμενα πάντα καὶ ὑπεναντία, ὅμως πείθεσθαί τέ με ἠξίουν καὶ πρὸς τὸν αὑτοῦ λόγον ἕκαστος ὑπάγειν ἐπειρῶντο.[120]
>
> The hardest part of all – at least it seemed so to me – was the fact that no one said anything in agreement with another. On the contrary, everything was polemical and contradictory, and each one expected to persuade me and tried to draw me into his own doctrine.

Ironically, the complete disagreement of the philosophers mirrors the diverging nature of the phenomena their doctrines are trying to explain, and in the end, it turns out that despite their promising external appearance, the philosophers are no more capable than Menippus of finding the world's unifying principle.

The disagreement of the philosophers is in fact something of a Lucianic *leitmotif*, surfacing in several of his works,[121] and as Branham observes, it is a topos which is "pointedly Skeptical".[122] Menippus' complaint of the divergency of the dogmatic philosophers and their inability to teach him "the order of the whole" (τὴν τῶν ὅλων διακόσμησιν) in fact resembles an account of the Skeptic Pyrrho's philosophy given by Eusebius in his *Preparation for the Gospel* (*Praep.evang*.18.3, ed. Mras).[123] "Matters" (τὰ πράγματά), Pyrrho held, were "undifferentiated and unstable and indeterminate" (ἀδιάφορα καὶ ἀστάθμητα καὶ ἀνεπίκριτα), and he concluded that we cannot rely on our "perceptions" (τὰς αἰσθήσεις) or our "beliefs" (τὰς δόξας), and that we should:

> […] ἀλλ' ἀδοξάστους καὶ ἀκλινεῖς καὶ ἀκραδάντους εἶναι, περὶ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου λέγοντας ὅτι οὐ μᾶλλον ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ καὶ ἔστι καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ οὔτε ἔστιν οὔτε οὐκ ἔστιν.
>
> […] rather be without opinions and uninclined and unwavering, saying about each one [*sc*. matter, *pragma*] that it no more is than it is not or that it is and is not or that it neither is nor is not.

For the Pyrrhonist, the inherent lack of logic in the world results in a belief that those who adhere to dogmas are only practicing self-delusion (*alazoneia*). In *Icaromenippus*, this view is expressed by Zeus who, after lamenting the philosophers' way of making "diverging word-mazes" (διαφόρους λόγων λαβυρίνθους, *Icar*. 29), begins an invective against them:

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[120] Luc.*Icar*.5.
[121] E.g. *Nec*.; *Vit.auc*.; *Pisc*.; *Sym*.; *Hermot*.; *Eun*.; *Ver.hist*.2.
[122] Branham. 1989: 224-25 (n.10). However, Branham, noting how Lucian ridicules the Skeptics elsewhere, rightly concludes that "Lucian's skepticism is invasive but not programmatic."
[123] In the passage, Eusebius is citing Aristocles of Messene who is citing a lost dialogue (*Pythō*) by Timon of Phlius, a student of Pyrrho. See Beckwith. 2015: 22.

> ἔπειτα δὲ ὄνομα σεμνὸν τὴν ἀρετὴν περιθέμενοι καὶ τὰς ὀφρῦς ἐπάραντες καὶ τὰ μέτωπα ῥυτιδώσαντες καὶ τοὺς πώγωνας ἐπισπασάμενοι περιέρχονται ἐπιπλάστῳ σχήματι κατάπτυστα ἤθη περιστέλλοντες, ἐμφερεῖς μάλιστα τοῖς τραγικοῖς ἐκείνοις ὑποκριταῖς, ὧν ἢν ἀφέλῃ τις τὰ προσωπεῖα καὶ τὴν χρυσόπαστον ἐκείνην στολήν, τὸ καταλειπόμενόν ἐστι γελοῖον ἀνθρώπιον ἑπτὰ δραχμῶν ἐς τὸν ἀγῶνα μεμισθωμένον.
>
> Then they envelop themselves in the solemn name of virtue, and, lifting their eyebrows, wrinkling their forehead, and dragging their beards behind them, they walk around with a feigned appearance, dressed in abominable costumes and carrying themselves exactly like those tragic actors, of whom, if someone took away their masks and that gold-sprinkled robe, only a small, ridiculous man hired to a contest for seven drachmas would be left.

If stripped of his fancy garments, *sc*. his habits of self-delusion, the philosopher would appear most like "a small, ridiculous man" (γελοῖον ἀνθρώπιον), Zeus claims, his asyndetic description serving to reinforce and validate Menippus' initial and more innocent observations. As with the golden works discussed in this thesis' first part, the external markers of wisdom which attracted Menippus to the philosophers in the first place become emblematic of the inadequacy of their doctrines.[124]

This inadequacy is reemphasised in the next passage (*Icar*.6.), when Menippus remarks that what he found particularly amusing in this situation was the fact that all the while the philosophers professed to know the truth about phenomena high up in the air, they were walking around on the ground like any other man:

> Καὶ μήν, ὦ ἑταῖρε, γελάσῃ ἀκούσας τήν τε ἀλαζονείαν αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τερατουργίαν, οἵ γε πρῶτα μὲν ἐπὶ γῆς βεβηκότες καὶ μηδὲν τῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων ἡμῶν ὑπερέχοντες, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ ὀξύτερον τοῦ πλησίον δεδορκότες, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ γήρως ἢ ἀργίας ἀμβλυώττοντες […].
>
> Indeed you will laugh, my friend, when you hear about their false pretension and the wonder-working in their speeches. In the first place, they were standing on the earth, and they did not once rise above us who walk on the ground; no, they were not even sharper-sighted than the next man – on the contrary, some of them were weak-sighted due to old age or idleness […].

There is in itself a considerable degree of irony in the image of high-talking philosophers walking on the ground, but Menippus' initial observation is even more interesting in light of his next statement, namely that the philosophers were not merely earth-bound, they were also weak-sighted (ἀμβλυώττοντες). Menippus' purposely naïve logic would dictate that someone claiming to perceive the truth about heavenly bodies – which are after all very far away – would require an unusually keen eyesight. In the case of the delusive philosophers however,

[124] Cf. Whitmarsh. 2001: 259-62 and Hall. 1981: 188-9. For the roots of the "false philosopher" topos in other literary genres, see Alexiou. 1990: 39.

the very opposite is the case. Their sight, Menippus is delighted to perceive, is poorer even than "the next man's" (τοῦ πλησίον) – in other words, the common non-philosophical man.[125]

Here Lucian would appear to translate a philosophical ability into a physical symptom; because the philosophers are lacking in intellectual insight, they do not have a proper eyesight either. This defect, moreover, seems to be a result of self-delusion (*alazoneia*). In Lucian's *Timon or The Misanthrope* (*Tim*.27.), the verb ἀμβλυώσσω ("to be weak-sighted") figures again, this time in a discussion between Hermes and "Wealth" (Πλοῦτος). Hermes is enquiring of Wealth why men seem to love the latter even though he is really quite ugly and unappealing and suggests that it might be because men are all "blind" (τυφλοί). Wealth replies that men are not blind, rather, "ignorance and deceit" (ἡ ἄγνοια καὶ ἡ ἀπάτη) "overshadow" (ἐπισκιάζουσιν) their vision. In addition, Wealth says, he tries his best to ingratiate himself with men by putting on a beautiful costume, and as men's vision is overshadowed, they are unable to see through his superficial appearance:

> ὡς εἴ γέ τις αὐτοῖς ὅλον ἀπογυμνώσας ἐπέδειξέ με, δῆλον ὡς κατεγίνωσκον ἂν αὑτῶν ἀμβλυώττοντες τὰ τηλικαῦτα καὶ ἐρῶντες ἀνεράστων καὶ ἀμόρφων πραγμάτων.
>
> If someone should strip the whole of me bare and show me to them, it is clear that they would reproach themselves for having been weak-sighted to such a degree and for loving unlovely and unsightly matters.

Delusion then, prevents men form perceiving the world as it really is. By implication, Wealth would seem to say, if they were to be removed from the ignorance and deceit which normally cloud their sense of perception, men would be able to strip the truth bare, as it were, and see each thing clearly.

In relation to this, I would cite Carlo Ginzburg, who, using Shklovsky's theory of art's defamiliarizing function in an analysis of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, remarks that:[126]

> Moral self-education requires of us above all that we erase mistaken representations, reject seemingly obvious postulates, and refuse the familiar recognitions that have become trite through repetition, thanks to our habits of perception. In order to see things, we must first of all look at them as if they had no meaning, as if they were a riddle.

Ginzburg argues that one such way of "eras[ing] mistaken representations" is to look at the world as if from a distance, for to a gaze "at once impassioned and detached, things reveal[ed] themselves 'as they really are' […]."[127] Similarly, I propose that we see the attributes of

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[125] Thus this passage adheres to the Lucianic *topos* that the common man is superior to the philosopher, see. Luc.*Nec*.4 and 21; *Sym*.35; *Pisc*.34; *Gall*.15. See also Robinson. 1979: 30-40 who analyses this topos in what he refers to as Lucian's ingénu satires.

[126] The first chapter of Ginzburg's book, entitled "Making it Strange: the Prehistry of a Literary Device" is, as the title suggests, an attempt to trace the "prehistory" of art as a defamiliarizing device. This function of art was famously proposed by Viktor Shklovsky in his *Theory of Prose*, published in 1925.

[127] Ginzburg. 2001: 7.

Lucian's philosophers – their state of being earth bound and their weak sight – as being in a sense connected. As the philosophers are entirely caught up in their self-delusion and unable to rise above it, their sight remains dim, and their doctrines are doomed to fail. In contrast, we will soon see that Menippus is able to embark on a journey to the moon, a vantage point from which he is able to see the world clearly, with eyes that are unclouded by the habits of convention.

Taking flight: Menippus as a hybrid man

Though he was disillusioned with the philosophers, Menippus says to his friend, he did not despair of finding "an unassailable doctrine" (τῶν λόγων ἀνεπίληπτόν τι, *Icar*.10), "not to be refuted in any way by someone else" (ὑπὸ θατέρου μηδαμῆ περιτρεπόμενον). Hence, he decided on a new strategy, informing his friend that "[…] I thought that if I somehow grew wings and went up to heaven, then that would be one way of escaping the whole perplexity." (μίαν δὲ τῆς συμπάσης ἀπορίας ἀπαλλαγήν ᾤμην ἔσεσθαι, εἰ αὐτὸς πτερωθείς πως ἀνέλθοιμι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν.)[128] With this statement, Menippus reveals himself as a *bricoleur*; unlike the Pyrrhonists, he is not satisfied with a mere "suspension of judgement" (*epokhē*) when confronted with the seemingly inexplicable nature of the world, rather, he perseveres in his quest for insight, employing the materials he has at hand in order to find "a way out" (ἀπαλλαγήν).[129] One possible option, he proposes, could be to "somehow grow[ing] wings" (πτερωθείς πως), where the open-ended πως ("somehow") suggests that like the *bricoleur*, he has the ability to improvise and manipulate the situation to his advantage. Thus, the contrast between the philosophers and Menippus is clear; whereas the former's abstract though led them to an intellectual *impasse* which they could not escape due to their clouded vision, Menippus uses his creative resourcefulness in order to find an alternative route to insight.

Indeed, the rejection of abstract thought resurfaces later in the same passage (Icar.10), when Menippus explains to his friend how he managed to acquire wings:

> αὐτὸν μὲν οὖν πτεροφυῆσαί ποτε οὐδεμιᾷ μηχανῇ δυνατὸν εἶναί μοι κατεφαίνετο· εἰ δὲ γυπὸς ἢ ἀετοῦ περιθείμην πτερά—ταῦτα γὰρ μόνα ἂν διαρκέσαι πρὸς μέγεθος ἀνθρωπίνου σώματος—τάχα ἄν μοι τὴν πεῖραν προχωρῆσαι.
>
> "Well, that I could ever grow wings myself did not appear to me to be possible by any means whatsoever, but if I attached the wings of a vulture or an eagle – for these are the only birds large enough for a human body – my attempt would perhaps succeed."

Emphatically dismissing the possibility of growing wings, Menippus conjectures that he can use his creativity and construct them instead. I believe there is an echo of Plato's *Phaedrus* in

[128] Luc.*Icar*.10.
[129] Cf. Branham. 1989: 16.

this passage, more specifically to the allegory told in 246a-257a, in which Plato likens the human soul to a winged chariot. Souls, Plato explains, are "perfect" (τελέα, *Phd*.246b) when they are "winged" (ἐπτερωμένη, *Phd*.246c), because the wings carry them upwards to the place "in which the divine race dwells" (ᾗ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ, *Phd*.246d) and where the soul, "seeing, for a time, Being, rejoices, and it nourishes and indulges itself by contemplating the truth" (ἰδοῦσα διὰ χρόνου τὸ ὂν ἀγαπᾷ τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τἀληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ, *Phd*.247d). I would argue that by alluding to this allegory, Menippus sets up his own journey as antithesis to the metaphysical journey described by Plato.

For Plato, the wings enable the soul to embark on a transcendental journey is the result of a philosophical process; in Menippus' case, the journey and whatever insights it may lead to is the direct result of his *bricoleur*-like abilities. Indeed, this notion is supported by the opening frame of the dialogue, in which Menippus is compared by his friend to Daedalus, the archetypal master-craftsman of myth (*Icar*.2). His wings he refers to once as a "clever device" (σόφισμα, *Icar*.3) and another time as an "invention" (ἐπίνοιαν, *Icar*.4), all the while placing the focus on his creativity. Moreover, before he begins to relate the actual construction-process, Menippus admits that what sparked his wing-making idea in the first place was not merely his own "desire" (ἐπιθυμία) of reaching heaven; in fact, his incredible journey had a literary precedent.[130] This precedent was "the storymaker Aesop, who shows heaven to be accessible to eagles and dung-beetles, and sometimes even to camels." (ὁ λογοποιὸς Αἴσωπος ἀετοῖς καὶ κανθάροις, ἐνίοτε καὶ καμήλοις βάσιμον ἀποφαίνων τὸν οὐρανόν.)

Interestingly, in her study on the Aesopic tradition as it is presented in *Life of Aesop*, Leslie Kurke has shown that Aesop had, already in the classical age, come to be perceived as "a vehicle or focalizer for parodic commentary and critique" of "popular conceptualizations of *sophia*".[131] In the Aesopic tradition, Aesop was usually portrayed as an ugly, yet extremely cunning slave, who composed fables and repeatedly made a fool of his philosopher master.[132] Kurke observes that:

> "For insofar as Aesop embodies a distinctive *sophia* of the abjected and disempowered, the Aesop tradition contests the established forms of high wisdom; thus we might say that it has as its necessary concomitant parodic demystification of those forms"[133]

[130] There is also an unacknowledged echo of Aristophanes' *Peace*, where the protagonist Trygaeus travels to the gods on a giant dung-beetle in order to make them end the war in Greece, see Ar.*Pax*: 90-106.
[131] Kurke. 2010: 203.
[132] See ibid. 2010: 1-49 for an introduction to the Aesopic tradition and the content and circumstances surrounding the rather mysterious text called *Life of Aesop*.
[133] Ibid. 2010: 203.

It is significant then, that in the moment Menippus embarks on a journey which rejects the philosophers' monopoly on wisdom and truth, Lucian mentions Aesop as the literary precedent which made his endeavour possible.

Encouraged by Aesop, Menippus constructs a pair of wings, and these wings, as we saw above, are a hybrid creation – half eagle and half vulture. I believe the inspiration for this passage came to Lucian from Aristophanes' *Birds*, a play which bears some similarity to *Icaromenippus*.[134] There too, the endeavour of the protagonists, Peisetaerus and Euelpides, is brought about by a general dissatisfaction with life in Athens. Leaving Athens behind, the protagonists decide to build a new city in heaven where the birds will be gods instead of the Olympians. When the city walls of Νεφελοκοκκυγία ("Cloud-cuckoo-land") are finished, Peisetaerus begins to sacrifice in order to establish the birds as the new gods, but when the priest assisting him invokes an ever-increasing number of bird species, Peisetaerus eventually exclaims:

> παῦ᾽· ἐς κόρακας· παῦσαι καλῶν. ἰοὺ ἰού· / ἐπὶ ποῖον, ὦ κακόδαιμον, ἱερεῖον καλεῖς / ἁλιαιέτους καὶ γῦπας; οὐχ ὁρᾷς ὅτι / ἰκτῖνος εἷς ἂν τοῦτό γ᾽ οἴχοιθ᾽ ἁρπάσας;[135]
>
> Stop! Damn you, stop invoking! Oh no! Why are you invoking eagles and vultures, you idiot! Do you not see that one single kite would snatch it and carry this sacrifice away?

The essence of Peisetaerus' complaint is that the sacrificial portion is not big enough for eagles (ἁλιαιέτους)[136] and vultures (γῦπας) – let alone all the other birds the priest has called on – to share; in fact, he observes, even a small bird of prey such as a kite could manage to fly away with it. Since this passage mentions the eagle and the vulture in a discussion of size, it seems likely that it was what motivated Menippus' remark about these two species' suitability for human dimensions, and thus the reason why he decided to use one wing of each.[137] However, I would argue that Lucian has also elaborated the Aristophanic reference in order to emphasise a certain aspect of his own hybrid poetics.

When Menippus has caught his birds, he carefully cuts of the right wing of the eagle and the left wing of the vulture (*Icar*. 10) and attaches the wings to his own arms. Having practised for a while, flapping his new wings like a goose, he finally ventures upwards,

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[134] For a comparison of "Promethean modernity" in Aristophanes' *Birds* and Lucian's works, see Cooper. 2019: 589ff. On the similarity between Lucian's Menippus and the heroes of ancient comedy, see Deriu. 2017: 37-42, and on their differences, see Branham. 1989: 15-17. On the relationship between Lucian's works and ancient comedy in general, see Rosen. 2016 and Storey. 2016.

[135] Ar.*Av.*890-92.

[136] The ἁλιάετος/ἁλιαίετος was a large species of eagle, associated with the sea. Arnott identifies it as the White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaetus albicilla*), cf. Arnott. 2007: 93.

[137] For a different view, see Georgiadou and Larmour. 1998: 95, who, referencing *J.Conf.*17 and *Prom.*20, argue that the vulture, like the eagle, was associated with Zeus and consequently that these two birds were the obvious choice for Menippus, who is flying to heaven to talk to Zeus. However, this explanation does not account for the hybridity of Menippus' creation.

stopping for a moment in the theatre on the Acropolis, but soon ascending higher (*Icar.* 10-11). Still, when he is getting close to the moon, Menippus feels himself growing tired (ᾐσθόμην κάμνοντος ἐμαυτοῦ), especially, as he informs us, in the vulture wing on his left side (μάλιστα κατὰ τὴν ἀριστερὰν πτέρυγα τὴν γυπίνην). Because of this weakness in his wing construction, Menippus must rest for a while on the moon, and when he is there, he looks down on the earth. In the beginning however, he is "unable to see properly because of the height" (οὐχ οἷός ἦν καθορᾶν ὑπὸ τοῦ βάθους), and his vison is "not just a little dim" (δὴ λημᾶν οὐ μετρίως, *Icar*. 13-14). Luckily, he happens to meet "the wise Empedocles" (ὁ σοφὸς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς) on the moon, and the natural philosopher kindly informs Menippus what he has to do in order to become "sharp-sighted" (ὀξυδερκής, *Icar*. 13). He need only flap the eagle wing in order to see clearly with the eye on the eagle side, Empedocles tells him, for the eagle has better eyes than any other bird (*Icar*. 14).

Menippus' construction, it would seem, has both a weak and a strong element. The vulture wing on the left side burdens Menippus in his flight, and the eagle wing makes him clear-sighted. The association between the eagle and clear sight Lucian would seem have got from the *Iliad*, where a simile describes Menelaus as "looking about him in every direction like an eagle, whom men say / has the sharpest sight of all the winged creatures below heaven" (πάντοσε παπταίνων ὥς τ' αἰετός, ὅν ῥά τέ φασιν / ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν).[138] The expression ὀξύτατον δέρκεσθαι ("to see sharpest") is presumably the source for Lucian's adjective ὀξυδερκής ("sharp-sighted"). Throughout the *Iliad*, eagles are consistently linked with positive and majestic characteristics,[139] and this appears to be representative of their image elsewhere.[140] In Pindar's odes for instance, the highflying eagle who prefers to perch on summits usually symbolises the poet's (or the victor's) superiority over his rivals, and its swooping method of catching prey mirrors the potent effect of the odes' language and imagery.[141] Vultures, conversely, are only mentioned in the *Iliad* in reference to their grotesque habit of devouring corpses,[142] and their reputation in Greek literature in general was equally bad; as they were known for eating carrion, they were often

[138] *Il*.17.674-75. However, this quality of the bird is attested in scientific literature as well, cf. Arist.*HA*.492a9, who remarks that "the White-tailed Eagle is very sharp-sighted" (ὁ ἁλιάετος ὀξυωπέστατος).
[139] The other epithets used of eagles are τελειότατος in *Il*.8.247; 24.315 | ὑψιπέτης in 12.201; 12.219; 13.822; 22.308 | αἴθων in 15.690 | μέλανος in 21.252.
[140] Arnott. 2007: 5.
[141] Pfeijffer. 1994: 308.
[142] *Il*.4.237; 11.162; 16.836; 18.271; 22.42.

described as quarrelsome and cowardly.[143] Where eagles were seen as self-sufficient agents, as it were, vultures were regarded as passive beings entirely dependent on others.

Menippus' hybrid construction then, is decidedly ambiguous. In his own words: "As things are now, I have come in a half-finished state and without being royally outfitted in every respect" (ὡς νῦν γε ἡμιτελὴς ἀφῖγμαι καὶ οὐ πάντα βασιλικῶς ἐνεσκευασμένος, *Icar*. 14). I would argue that on the metapoetic level, Menippus' journey could be seen as a self-conscious comment on the Lucianic literary form. The vulture-wing represents the mimetic strand of Lucian's work – in metaphorical terms, Lucian too feeds on dead material. His mix of comedy and dialogue is a recycling of traditional genres, and we remember how one of his masks, the Syrian in *Twice Accused*, was even accused of having "dug up" (ἀνορύξας) the character of Menippus.[144] This process of feeding on tradition – what could arguably be referred to as "literary vulturism" – corresponds, I would argue, to the method of the πηλοπλάθος in *A Literary Prometheus*. In both cases, the creative artist is represented as approaching the tradition as a source of plasma, that is, material to be exploited for his own project. This does not mean, however, that he is merely copying tradition, for as we saw in *A Literary Prometheus*, such a pure form of mimēsis was evaluated in negative terms, as κλεπτική ("theft", *Prom.Es*.7). Rather, Lucian's literary vulturism consists of a reappropriation of tradition, in which the traditional elements are made to serve a new and inventive purpose.

I believe this idea surfaces in *Icaromenippus* as well. We saw that the left-side vulture wing was explicitly called "the inferior" (τῆς χείρονος, *Icar*. 14) by Empedocles, and that its weakness was the reason why Menippus had to rest on the moon. On its own, Lucian would seem to say, the aesthetic ideal of pure mimēsis cannot carry a literary work, and hence its adherents could easily end up metaphorically crashing in the manner of Icarus, the man from whom Menippus got his epithet. Instead, a literary creation needs some kind of mainstay to carry its weight. This, in the metaphor of Menippus' winged adventure, would be the eagle wing, in other words, some kind of poetical agency. In the context of Lucian's works, I believe this agency could be transposed as innovation. As I argued in this thesis' first part, the innovative act of the Lucianic πηλοπλάθος' is in fact better described as a form of transformation; in his *bricolage* the traditional elements he has appropriated are rearranged, and in their new combination they become productive of new meaning. Similarly, when

[143] Arnott. 2007: 92. The Suda has an entry on an expression, γυπὸς σκιά ("vulture's shadow"), which was apparently used "in reference to those worthy of no account" (ἐπὶ τῶν μηδενὸς λόγου ἀξίων.), cf. *Suda*. s.v. γ 507.
[144] Luc.*Bis.Acc*.33.

Menippus looks at the world through the eagle wing – i.e. through the inventive strand in his hybrid construction – he becomes clear sighted and gains a new perspective on the world below. This idea, I believe, is supported by Menippus description of his view from the moon.

Having heard how Menippus became clear-sighted, his friend begs him to tell him what he saw from above, to which Menippus replies that it would be impossible, seeing that so many things happened at the same time, so that "even to see them was quite a task" (καὶ ὁρᾶν αὐτὰ ἔργον ἦν, *Icar.*16). However, he adds, "the main features of the business were like the things Homer says were on the shield" (τὰ κεφάλαια τῶν πραγμάτων τοιαῦτα ἐφαίνετο οἷά φησιν Ὅμηρος τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀσπίδος). The shield in question is of course Achilles' famous shield from the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*, the description of which spans nearly two hundred lines (*Il.*18.468-608). The immediate impression given by Homer's ecphrasis is nicely summed up by Cedric H. Whitman, who drily remarks that Homer "[…] seems to stand a little bewildered between the realism of the finished panels, and the limitations of the material."[145] Indeed, this the very quality of Achilles' shield Menippus' reference evokes too. The image Menippus sees from above is said to be almost impossible to reproduce; the only way one might succeed, he would seem to suggest, is if its various elements could somehow be combined in a composite creation. Thus I would argue that Homer's ecphrasis here comes to stand for the *bricolage* of the Lucianic artist. The business of the Lucianic *bricoleur* is to combine elements from seemingly incongruous sources, thus creating a representation of reality – an εἴδωλον – which is not true (ἀληθής) by philosophical standards, but which may still convey some insight to its audience because of the perspectival shift it provokes. This perspectival shift is what the remainder of the *Icaromenippus* dramatizes.

The world's ποικιλία

When Menippus has become clear-sighted he is able to see what the philosophers could not, namely "the order of the whole" (τὴν τῶν ὅλων διακόσμησιν, *Icar*. 5); in the very moment (ἤδη) he looked down at the world through the eagle wing, he informs his friend, "human life in its whole was revealed" (ἅπας ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίος ἤδη κατεφαίνετο, *Icar*. 12). The reason why the philosophers led Menippus into great perplexities, we remember, was because they were weak-sighted and earth-bound. In contrast, Menippus is now clear-sighted and looking down at the earth from a great height. As Douglas Duncan rightly observes in his discussion of Lucian's influence on Ben Jonson: "All his [*sc*. Lucian's] writings reflect in

[145] Whitman. 1958: 205. However, Andrew Sprague-Becker has showed that the kind of "true description" (echte Beschreibung) called for by Whitman, where focus is put on describing the physical appearance of the medium in a way that corresponds as closely as possible to its real referent, was not the intended function of an ancient *ekphrasis*. See Sprague-Becker. 1995: 9-10.

some way the search for a detached point of vantage, a rejection of prior commitments, a compulsion to get out in order to look in."[146] This tendency is often commented upon in Lucianic scholarship,[147] but the precise mechanism behind Lucian's scenes of detached contemplation is rarely examined. In the ensuing analysis of such a scene in the *Icaromenippus*, I will argue that Menippus' careful inspection of the earth is figurative of Lucianic poetics' power to produce an alternative image of reality and a resulting perspectival shift on the part of the audience. In this context Menippus' laughter is essential and will form an important part of my analysis.

After he has compared the view of the earth to Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, Menippus begins to describe the scene in further detail, lingering on both "the affairs of kings" (τὰ μὲν τῶν βασιλέων) and "the affairs of men" (τὰ δὲ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν), and concluding that "overall, it was a variegated and manifold sight." (ὅλως γὰρ ποικίλη καὶ παντοδαπή τις ἦν ἡ θέα., *Icar.*16). He then elaborates this statement in a striking metaphor (*Icar.*17):

> Καὶ μήν, ὦ ἑταῖρε, τοιοῦτοι πάντες εἰσὶν οἱ ἐπὶ γῆς χορευταὶ κἀκ τοιαύτης ἀναρμοστίας ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίος συντέτακται, οὐ μόνον ἀπῳδὰ φθεγγομένων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνομοίων τὰ σχήματα καὶ τἀναντία κινουμένων καὶ ταὐτὸν οὐδὲν ἐπινοούντων, ἄχρι ἂν αὐτῶν ἕκαστον ὁ χορηγὸς ἀπελάσῃ τῆς σκηνῆς οὐκέτι δεῖσθαι λέγων· τοὐντεῦθεν δὲ ὅμοιοι πάντες ἤδη σιωπῶντες, οὐκέτι τὴν συμμιγῆ καὶ ἄτακτον ἐκείνην ᾠδὴν ἀπᾴδοντες. ἀλλ᾽ ἐν αὐτῷ γε ποικίλῳ καὶ πολυειδεῖ τῷ θεάτρῳ πάντα μὲν γελοῖα δήπουθεν ἦν τὰ γινόμενα.
>
> And yet, my friend, so are all the choreuts on earth and of such a discord is the life of men put together. Not only are they singing out of tune, but even their costumes are unlike and they move in opposite directions and think nothing like the same, all until the chorus-leader drives each one off the stage saying that he no longer needs him. But from that time on they are all alike and keep quiet, no longer singing that mixed and disorderly song. But within the variegated and many-shaped theatre itself, there indeed, everything that happened was ridiculous.

The view from above, he explains, was like a dramatic performance, and humans themselves were similar to the "choreuts" (χορευταί) of a play. While real choreuts normally move in a graceful and synchronised dance however, the metaphorical choreuts all appeared to have individual choreographies, songs, and costumes. Hence human existence seemed to Menippus to be most like a "variegated and many-shaped theatre" (ποικίλῳ καὶ πολυειδεῖ τῷ θεάτρῳ), and the things that were going on in this theatre appeared to be truly "ridiculous" (γελοῖα).

This discovery of Menippus has usually been devaluated by Lucianic scholarship, which sometimes sees it as an (outdated) example of a "standard ornament[s] in sophistic

[146] Duncan. 1979: 16.
[147] See also Branham. 1989: 23 and Halliwell. 2008: 445.

literature,"[148] other times as "a typical manifestation of Cynicism,"[149] or, as is more often the case, as a purely negative and unconstructive judgment. This position is illustrated well by Douglas Duncan's remark that "Lucian's kataskopoi are expert at pointing to the vanity and absurdity of the human spectacle, but they rarely offer a more positive response."[150] We also recall how Weinbrot categorised Lucian as a practitioner of the "harsh" mode of Menippean satire, in which no real alternative to the ridicule is presented. Having summarised Lucian's *Icaromenippus* Weinbrot concludes that "Wherever Lucian's Menippus goes, he sees only the world's horrors."[151] By these critics, Menippus' laughter is interpreted as a grim or even malicious laughter, filled with Bergsonian *Schadenfreude* at the apparent meaninglessness of the human condition. I believe however, that what all of these analyses fail to consider is the fact that Lucianic laughter is essentially an exulting laughter. Indeed, as his friend understatedly observes, the view from above seems like it "provided [Menippus] with not just any kind of enjoyment" (οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν τερπωλήν σοι παρεσχῆσθαι, Icar. 16).

For this reason, I believe Stephen Halliwell comes much closer to a proper definition of Lucianic laughter when he observes than one important aspect of laughter's thematization in Lucian's *oeuvre* is "[…] its capacity to transmute what ordinarily counts as horrific – choking, attempted murder, death by poison at the dinner table – into an occasion for somebody's unabashed mirth […]."[152] I would suggest that an analysis of Lucian's journey in the *Icaromenippus* could help further qualify this observation. In his study on the mechanisms behind laughter, the anthropologist Alexander Kozintsev argues that laughter is essentially "detachment from our collective self"[153] or, alternatively, detachment from the conventions instilled in us by culture:

> The duality of man, this unique animal adapted to culture, accounts for his ability to take a detached view of his situation from the standpoint of nature. From this position, culture appears to be a result of ludicrous conceit, something like a Tower of Babel project or a clown's attempts to imitate a strongman, acrobat, or magician. Each failure of such an attempt, each invalidation of human reason, skill, and worth is a potential cause for laughter. […] Looking at the situation from the metalevel, […] we descend from the level

[148] Anderson. 1993: 80. Cf. Duncan. 1979. For an even harsher assessment of the satirical quality of Lucian's Second Sophistic works, see Highet. 1962: 42: "To put it bluntly, most of Lucian's problems are dead, and were dead when he wrote about them […]."
[149] Hadot. 1995: 246.
[150] Duncan. 1979: 20. Cf. Robinson. 1979: 52: "As in Menippus, the questing spirit is again rewarded by a magical revelation, via the properties of the eagle's wing; but the revelation is an empty one, a lesson in ethics for which one hardly needed a trip to the moon."
[151] Weinbrot. 2005: 65.
[152] Halliwell. 2008. 442.
[153] Kozintsev. 2010: 58.

> of fully acculturated beings to the level where culture still seemed foreign to our ancestors.[154]

According to Kozintsev, when we "[look] at the situation from the metalevel," we perceive the arbitrariness of any synthetic set of values (and indeed, from the viewpoint of nature, every set of values is synthetic), and this realisation – that although we are "here" we could just as easily be "there" – is ridiculous and conducive to laughter. This, I would suggest, is the true essence of Lucianic laughter too. Its primary function is not to tear down every value humankind has instituted, but to point to their arbitrariness.[155] As a consequence of this, I would suggest that Menippus' journey to heaven could in fact be seen as a "physical" embodiment of Kozintsev's cognitive jump to the metalevel, and that his joyful laughter is the result of his realisation that on the metalevel, conventions are suspended.

As such, Menippus' exulting laughter is a rhetorical laughter, for it is the direct result of the rhetorical import of his discovery. This discovery consists in a recognition of the fact that the world is "variegated" (ποικίλος) and "manifold" (παντοδαπός). The former adjective is an important word in Lucian's *oeuvre*, appearing as much as sixty-two times in its adjective form, twice as the adverb ποικίλως and once as the noun ποικιλία. Five of these in all sixty-five occurrences are found in *Icaromenippus*[156] – a relatively large number considering we have a total of seventy-one genuine works by Lucian. The adjective ποικίλος' high frequency in *Icaromenippus* can, I believe, be explained by its important role in validating Lucian's rhetorical stance. Menippus' journey, we remember, was motivated by his desire to find "an unassailable doctrine" (τῶν λόγων ἀνεπίληπτόν τι, *Icar*.10) which would help him understand "the order of the whole" (τὴν τῶν ὅλων διακόσμησιν, *Icar*.5). Throughout the *Icaromenippus*, this plan is repeatedly shown to be futile, for wherever Menippus goes, he is faced with the world's ποικιλία, and a world which is so variegated that it is nearly impossible to describe (cf. my discussion of the shield of Achilles above) cannot be explained by single doctrines.

In fact, the adjective ποικίλος figures in relation to each of the three stages or levels Menippus goes through in his search for wisdom. In *Icar*.6 it is used in relation to the philosophers' doctrines, what I would call the level of personal belief. In *Icar*.11, 16 and 17 it describes the view from the moon, *sc*. the level of the human condition. Finally, in *Icar*.25 it labels the prayers Zeus has to deal with, and the king of the Olympians, I would argue, could be seen *pars pro toto* as a symbol for (Greek) culture as a whole. On each of these levels,

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[154] Kozintsev. 2010: 58.
[155] Cf. Branham. 1989: 25: "For if we are all actors in Chance's pageant […] a suspension of seriousness, a festive detachment from our own role in the play, is the best antidote to alazoneia, or delusion."
[156] Lucian. *Icar*. 6; 11; 16; 17; 25.

Menippus is confirmed in his suspicion that there is no doctrine which can explain the whole. This gradual process of confirmation reaches its culmination at the very end of the work, when Zeus decides that "everyone [*sc*. the philosophers] will be crushed along with their dialectics" (πάντες ἐπιτρίψονται αὐτῇ διαλεκτικῇ, *Icar*. 33).[157] For Menippus this is not a disheartening conclusion; on the contrary it is an encouraging one, for while it demonstrates the inefficacy of his journey, it validates his *modus operandi*. The suspension of convention legitimises his *bricoleur*-approach, which, as I have argued, requires that any established whole be seen as arbitrary and available for the *bricoleur*'s recombinatory project. In addition, if single truths only lead to an intellectual *impasse*, it would mean that the *bricoleur*'s own composite creations may prove to be a better way of gaining insight.

This latter notion will be explored in my concluding chapter, but first we should examine what the present analysis means for our interpretation of Lucianic laughter. Above, I briefly suggested that Lucian's exulting laughter is rhetorical. For Kozintsev, this proposition would be problematic, since in his theory of laughter, humour does not work if its function is merely to encase a serious message. In order to be effective, he argues, humour must appropriate the very message itself:

> Humor is never satisfied with the role of form and means; it seeks to become content and purpose, supplanting any seriousness. Hence the internal discord that is so typical of satirists. Satire is based on a serious – moral – motive. A person seeking to make fun of what appears evil to him/her tries to combine what can only alternate: a serious attitude to the object and a humorous metarelation disabling this attitude. In other words, the satirist tries to attack seriously and in jest at the same time, which is clearly impossible. Therefore satire is intrinsically doomed to failure.[158]

In Kozintsev's reflections on the ontological status of satire we hear the echo of Bakhtin's definition of carnivalistic laughter. For Bakhtin too, the combination of "one single tone of seriousness" and grotesque laughter is an impossibility.[159] As briefly mentioned above (p.36-7), this is his main issue with the development of satirical laughter in the eighteenth century:

> We have already described the fate of laughter in the eighteenth century: it loses its essential link with a universal outlook, it is combined with negation, and with a negation that is dogmatic. Limited to the area of the private, eighteenth-century humor is deprived of its historical color […][160]

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[157] Cf. Branham. 1989: 22, who sums up Menippus' journey as "[…] a process of discovery, a comic quest, leading to recognition of the basic perceptions that authenticate Menippus' satiric stance […]."
[158] Kozintsev. 2010: 64-65.
[159] Bakhtin. 1984b: 101. The similarity of Kozintsev and Bakhtin's positions is made clear by the summary Edwards. 2002: 35 gives of Bakhtin's carnival laughter: "The grotesque's attack upon the powerful is generic; beyond that is does not choose sides. The negative voice of laughter can espouse a position of its own only at the risk of becoming its opposite – seriousness."
[160] Ibid. 1984b: 101.

In contrast, the ancient carnivalesque, or alternatively, Menippean laughter, is for Bakhtin a truly free and uninhibited laughter which resists reduction to a single meaning. It was this "historical color" the eighteenth-century laughter supposedly lost.

In view of my present analysis of the *Icaromenippus*, however, Bakhtin's description of the historical development of laughter would appear to be somewhat imprecise. As I have argued earlier in this thesis, the prerequisite of the hybridising enterprises of Lucian's *bricoleur*-like protagonists is the idea that established wholes are arbitrary; as arrangements are variable, Menippus and the πηλοπλάθος of *A Literary Prometheus* are free to reorganise their elements. Thus, Menippus' exuberant laughter in *Icaromenippus* appears to have triumphant overtones on the metapoetic level: the realisation that the world is "variegated" (ποικίλος), and consequently that overinvestment in the established conventions does not contribute to insight, legitimises Lucian's own conventionally subversive poetics. Thus, paradoxically, the anti-dogmatic stance of Menippus in *Icaromenippus*, a feature which both Bakhtin and Weinbrot associates with Menippean satires and which they perceive as a mark of "joyful relativity" and nihilism respectively, is in fact instrumental to the triumph of Lucian the author's agenda. As Whitmarsh observes, "Rhetoric […] by intervening in a larger system of competing 'realities' […] seeks to naturalize certain (necessarily partisan) perspectives."[161] Similarly, I have tried to demonstrate that Lucianic laughter is a self-affirmative laughter, celebrating one outlook's triumph over another. By this description, Menippus' exultant laughter would seem to be, if not exactly dogmatic, then at least "one-sidedly rhetorical". If this surmise is correct, it would warrant a revision not only of Bakhtin's description of the genre of the Menippea, but also of his idea of laughter's degradation in the eighteenth century. If Menippean laughter could be expressive of an individualistic agenda at the very beginning of its development, I believe it would be difficult to use this criterion as a mark of its degradation in later stages of literary history.

Examining the arrangement: some closing remarks on Lucian's rhetorical poetics

As a way of concluding the discussion part of this thesis, I would point to one last passage in the *Icaromenippus*, which I believe can be construed as a programmatic statement. When Menippus relates how he landed on the moon, he first sums up the view from above in one concise sentence: "Well, from all of these things I had my fill of a certain variegated pleasure." (ἐξ ὧν ἁπάντων ποικίλης τινὸς ἡδονῆς ἐνεπιμπλάμην. *Icar.*11). His friend, however, is not satisfied with this brief summary, and immediately demands a fuller account:

[161] Whitmarsh. 2001: 190.

> ΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ οὐκοῦν καὶ ταῦτα λέγοις ἄν, ὦ Μένιππε, ἵνα μηδὲ καθ' ἓν ἀπολειπώμεθα τῆς ἀποδημίας, ἀλλ' εἴ τί σοι καὶ ὁδοῦ πάρεργον ἱστόρηται, καὶ τοῦτο εἰδῶμεν· ὡς ἔγωγε οὐκ ὀλίγα προσδοκῶ ἀκούσεσθαι σχήματός τε πέρι γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐπ' αὐτῆς ἁπάντων, οἷα σοι ἄνωθεν ἐπισκοποῦντι κατεφαίνετο. ΜΕΝΙΠΠΟΣ καὶ ὀρθῶς γε, ὦ ἑταῖρε, εἰκάζεις· διόπερ ὡς οἷον τε ἀναβὰς ἐπὶ τὴν σελήνην τῷ λόγῳ συναποδήμει τε καὶ συνεπισκόπει τὴν ὅλην τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς διάθεσιν.
>
> FRIEND Then would you tell me about it, Menippus, so that I may not miss a single thing about your journey, but, if you were informed of some random thing incidentally, that I may see even this. I for my part look forward to hearing about the shape of the earth and every other thing on it, as it was revealed to you examining it from above. MENIPPOS Your image is correct, my friend, so, step onto the moon in words as well as you can and journey and examine the whole of the earth's arrangement with me.

I believe this passage sums up Lucian's rhetorical poetics quite well. Lucian's literature is an inventive "arrangement" (διάθεσιν) of reality "in words" (τῷ λόγῳ). When confronted with Lucian's literary arrangement, the audience gains a new perspective on tradition. This perspectival shift is imagined in terms of a journey (τῆς ἀποδημίας), and the act of looking at the tradition with new eyes is represented metaphorically as "examining [the world] from above" (ἄνωθεν ἐπισκοποῦντι). Its result is a "random" (πάρεργον) insight gained quite "incidentally" (ὁδοῦ).

Conclusion

The main texts examined in this thesis share some distinct features on the level of the protagonists. Most importantly, they are both creators of *bricolages*. The Promethean narrator of *A Literary Prometheus* is a πηλοπλάθος, a role which allows him to treat the tradition as a source of clay, or plasma to be reused in his own project. Similarly, I have showed that Menippus in *Icaromenippus* is a proponent of a literary form of vulturism, in which he reappropriates traditional elements for his own creative purpose. Both characters nevertheless emphasise the innovative aspect of their works, which is moreover closely linked to the works' hybridity. For the narrator of *A Literary Prometheus*, the clay (πηλός) in which he moulds is figurative of his hybridising ability, which allows him to reinvent tradition by recombining its elements. Meanwhile, in *Icaromenippus* the journey of the protagonist enables him to assemble the world's "variegation" (ποικιλία) in one picture. In both cases, the result is an amalgamous composition, which is portrayed as being more productive of insight than philosophical truth and doctrines. While the latter can be refuted by counterarguments, the former are quite safe from such philosophical scrutinization, because they need not rely on their truth-value in order to convey some wisdom to the audience. The insight the Lucianic artist creates with his hybrid and composite works is rather a perspectival shift, through which tradition may be reappreciated and reassessed.

I have also argued that the features listed above could be seen collectively as a defence mechanism, a direct result of Lucian's position as a sophist in the Imperial Age. In this period, the Greek tradition had become a "closed universe" which the sophist could not escape without harming his *ethos* in the eyes of the élite *pepaideumenoi*, but which he still needed to manipulate in order to attract the attention of the less sophisticated crowd. By presenting his protagonists – and, by extension, himself – as masters of creative recombination, Lucian could call attention to this aspect of his poetics, defend it against his critics and demonstrate why it was an adequate alternative to other more conventional aesthetic approaches.

On a broader level, by highlighting the similarities between the narrator of *A Literary Prometheus* and Menippus in *Icaromenippus*, I have attempted to demonstrate two things in particular. Firstly that Lucian's explicit discussion of his literature in the *prolaliae* should be seen in connection with the implicit poetics in the remainder of his *oeuvre*, and secondly that his *Icaromenippus* is not merely an example of a nihilist Menippean satire, but that it serves a distinctly rhetorical purpose. As such, both of these subgenres should be seen as contributing toward the Lucianic kind of poetics I have outlined in this thesis.

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I am following the APA referencing system, though with footnotes. Titles of journals and other title abbreviations follow L'Année philologique.

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