INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE DEATH OF A PILOT: THE Κυβερνήτης ἀριστος IN LUCIAN’S VERAE HISTORIAE

Abstract: In Lucian’s Verae Historiae, Lucian ensures the success of his voyage by providing the very best supplies and equipment for his men. As part of his preparation he hires on the best pilot that money could buy, this pilot is only heard from at one other point in the narrative, at his death in the belly of the sea monster. This paper examines the intertextual context of the pilot’s death and how Lucian uses it to further the juxtaposition of himself with that greatest of liars, Odysseus.

Keywords: Greek; literature; intertextuality; Lucian of Samosata

Before beginning his journey into the unknown in the Verae Historiae, Lucian makes sure that his ship is well outfitted and that his men have enough provisions. Along with the materials needed for the voyage, he hired on a gifted pilot: καὶ κυβερνήτην τὸν ἀριστον μισθῷ παρέλαβον [And I secured the best pilot, persuading him with a great deal of money]. After the pilot is singled out in the prologue, the other members of the crew are introduced in a group as fifty like-minded young men: πεντήκοντα δὲ τῶν ἠλικιωτῶν προσεποιησάμην τὴν αὐτὴν ἐμοὶ γνώμην ἔχοντας [I gathered a group of fifty young men, who had the same opinion as I]. The reader expects to hear more about this best of pilots. Were his skills worth the price? The reader’s expectations are dashed, however, and we hear nothing about him until this very expensive pilot is killed in action, along with one other, while the crew battles against the fishy inhabitants of the sea monster.

Despite the expectation that this loss would be mourned, or at least acknowledged, the pilot is merely replaced by Skyntharos, the old man the crew encounters in the belly of the sea monster, and they continue on their voyage. Shortly after, the crew crosses the Sea of Milk and reaches the Underworld, visiting both the Isle of the Blessed and the Isle of the Damned. Here, of all places, where the crew encounters the souls of so many others, we would expect a scene in which Lucian meets the pilot again, or at least mentions seeing him, there is, however, no trace of this pilot on either of these islands. The lack of emotion in the death of the pilot, and the ease by which he was replaced may be accounted for by the nature of the voyage itself: Ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ … ἀπὸ Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν καὶ ἀφεὶς εἰς τὸν ἑσπέριον

1 Lucian Verae Historiae 1. 5.
2 Lucian Verae Historiae 1. 5.
3 Although there seems to be some confusion about whether there is another mariner killed or not.
4 Lucian Verae Historiae 1. 37.
6 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 3-35.
7 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 5-29.
8 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 30-32.
 quarterly [We set forth once from the Pillars of Herakles and sailed into the western ocean]. All the experience this pilot had, which made him the "best" pilot, was of little use in this voyage, as it begins where his knowledge ends, beyond the Mediterranean Sea.

In taking up the concept of intertextuality and the "implied reader" and using it in the interpretation of Lucian's Verae Historiae, the idea of the audience is of paramount importance. Already in the prologue, Lucian tells his audience, all knowing "implied readers" who exist in Lucian's "imagination," that that he alludes to many other authors in his work: ἄλλοι οἱ τῶν ἱστορουμένων ἐκκεντροῦσιν οὐκ ἀκουμανότοις πρὸς τινὰς ἤνεκτι τῶν παλαιῶν ποιητῶν τε καὶ συγγραφέων καὶ φιλοσόφων...καὶ ὀνομαστὶ ἂν ἔχημον, εἰ μὴ καὶ αὐτῷ ὧδε ἐκ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως φαινόταται ἐμεῖσον [Each thing I wrote contains some tacit illusion, not without humor, to ancient poets and historians and philosophers... and I would have mentioned them by name, if they themselves would not be known to you from the reading].

The "implied reader" as the "ideal recipient" of this text is able to understand all of the intertextual allusions Lucian uses; this makes him a foil to the actual reader, who may not understand all of these allusions. The construction of an all knowing "implied reader" allows the actual reader a certain freedom in interpreting the text, contributing to his own interpretation of the various allusions. The interaction of Lucian's intertextuality and the interpretation of the readers creates a multi-layered narrative in which every scene can and should be interpreted as holding allusion to a scene can and should be interpreted as holding allusion to another scene. It is possible that Lucian would add in this other casualty as another irritation that makes the interpretation of the text that much more difficult.

While describing his preparations for the voyage, Lucian tells us that he not only hires on this pilot but: ὅπως δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι πολύ τι πλήθος παρασκευασμένην [What's more, I prepared a great store of weapons], the idea of the audience is of paramount importance. Already in the prologue, Lucian tells his audience, all knowing "implied readers" who exist in Lucian's "imagination," that that he alludes to many other authors in his work: ὅπως δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι πολύ τι πλήθος παρασκευασμένην [What's more, I prepared a great store of weapons], the idea of the audience is of paramount importance. Already in the prologue, Lucian tells his audience, all knowing "implied readers" who exist in Lucian's "imagination," that that he alludes to many other authors in his work: ὅπως δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι πολύ τι πλήθος παρασκευασμένην [What's more, I prepared a great store of weapons], the idea of the audience is of paramount importance. Already in the prologue, Lucian tells his audience, all knowing "implied readers" who exist in Lucian's "imagination," that that he alludes to many other authors in his work: ὅπως δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι πολύ τι πλήθος παρασκευασμένην [What's more, I prepared a great store of weapons].

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THE PILOT'S DEATH

In the belly of the sea monster, the crew decides that they would be safer if they clear out the strange and savage creatures that inhabit it. During the ensuing war, Lucian gives us a casualty list following their first battle: ἀπάθειαν δὲ τῶν μὲν πολεμίων ἤδομικοψαν καὶ ἔκοτον, ἡμῶν δὲ εἰς [καὶ] ὁ κυβερνήτης [Of their troops, one hundred and fifty died, of ours one, and the pilot].

Like much else in the Verae Historiae, however, this death is not as straightforward as it seems.

9 Lucian Verae Historiae I. 5.
12 Lucian Verae Historiae I. 2.
14 And Lucian quickly follows up this praise with several examples of the allusions he is not going to mention.
15 SCHMID 2010, 51-52.
17 Lucian Verae Historiae I. 35.
18 Lucian Verae Historiae I. 37. The [καὶ], which is not seen in the Heinemann edition of 1931 is a bit of an issue. If it is to be ignored, then the pilot is the only one of Lucian's men to die in this battle, if it is to be incorporated in the text, then there is another casualty along with the pilot. This does not, however, pose a problem to the interpretation of the text laid out below, as this mariner remains unnamed and faceless, while the pilot remains the focus of the scene. It is possible that Lucian would add in this other casualty as another irritation that makes the interpretation of the text that much more difficult.

[He, however, sent away the messengers, answering them disdainfully. First the Pseotopades and the Pangouridai, angry with Skintharos (this was his name) attacked with a great rush. We, having anticipated their attack, awaited them fully armed, we organized an ambuscade of twenty five men. Those in the ambush were instructed beforehand to rise up and fall upon the enemy when they saw them passing by; and this they did. Falling on them from behind they struck them, and we, being twenty five in number since Skintharos and his son fought with us, met them, engaging them zealously and hazarded all on our might].

Only after these first peoples are defeated do the mariners turn their sights on the remaining creatures, meeting them head on and defeating them as well: τῇ ύστεραι δὲ καὶ οἱ άλλοι αἰσθόμενοι παρῆσαν, τὸ μὲν δεξίων κέρας ἔχοντες οἱ Ταρχινάνθηστοι δὲ αὐτῶν Πλημμύστου δὲ εἰσόμενοι οἱ Συννοκόραλοι, τὸ μέσον δὲ οἱ Καρκίνοχερες ὑπὸ τρίτους ἑπτάκονταν ἑπτάκονταν
On the next day the others, hearing of what
hap tened, attacked. The Tarichanes held the right flank
under their commander Pelamos, while the Thunnokephaloi
held the left, the center was held by the Karkiniocheires. The
Tritonomendetes were keeping peace, choosing to fight with
neither side. We came upon them at the temple to Poseidon
and we engaged with much shouting, the hollow echoed us
like a cave. Turning them, since they were fighting nude,
and pursuing them to the forest, we ruled over the rest of
the land. Not long after, messengers were sent to ask for
a truce to see to the dead and to propose friendship; we,
however, did not think it right to make an alliance, but on
the following day, attacking them again, we destroyed them
entirely, all except the Tritonomendetes.).

That one of their number, well, perhaps two, Lucian
may have said that the pilot dies "and one other," the focus
of the report and of the parody seems to be on the pilot,
however, as his cause of death is given while the other
is mentioned only in passing, dies in this war is not an
unreasonable possibility, while they are poorly armed, these
sea creatures do outnumber the mariners. It is only when
we read how the pilot is killed: τρίγλης πλευρᾷ διαπαρεὶς τὸ
μετάφρενον [The backbone (or lung) of the mullet pierced
through his back.],

24 That the reader is taken aback. This is
the type of weapon that Skynharos told Lucian the fish
people were using, but it would be difficult to kill an unarmed
man with this kind of a weapon, much less a fully armed
and armored soldier. By having the pilot killed in this way,
Lucian removes his death from the realm of the battlefield
and creates an almost farcical or comic scene of a man who
dies in an almost impossible, easily avoidable way.

OTHER DEATH SCENES
The death of a member of a ship's crew may not have
been an unusual occurrence, the loss of an experienced pilot,
however, especially one who is described as Lucian as "the
best," would certainly have posed a problem to the success of
the mission. Surprisingly, very few of Lucian's men actually
do die in the course of the voyage, the pilot is also the first
dmember of the crew to actually die, along with another,
unnamed member of their crew, possibly, the two men who
succumbed to the attractions of the Vine Women do not die,
they are lost to their comrades, but live on as vines and are
about to bear fruit themselves.

Even when shipwrecked on the other side of the world,
there are no casualties reported

among the crew. The only other men to actually be killed in
the Verae Historiae fall on the island of the Cowheads, shortly
before the shipwreck. Since there are so few instances in
the narrative in which a mariner is killed, the two scenes in
which this happens are immediately linked in the mind of the
reader.

On the Island of the Cowheads the reader is presented
with a dichotomy. Already the name of the island leads the
reader to two points of reference, the myth of Theseus and
the Minotaur, which is underscored in the description of
the inhabitants of this island, who Lucian says: ἔνικεν γε ἐὰν
αὐτὴν ἄνθρωπον ἄργαρον, Βουκεφάλοι, κέρατα ἔχωντες, οἴον
παρ᾽ Ἡμῖν τὸν Μινώταυρον ἀναπλάττουσιν [The savage men
called the Cowheads hold sway here], these men have horns,
which the Minotaur is depicted among us., as well as the horse
of Alexander the Great. This is further underscored by the
fact that the mariners have met both Theseus and Alexander
the Great on the voyage, while they were in the Underworld.

The expectations which these points of reference bring up
in the reader are, to a certain extent, met in the action that
takes place on the island. Like the Minotaur, the cow-headed
inhabitants of the island are aggressive and cannibalistic, the
mariners fall upon the Cowheads while they are "cutting
up the flesh" of the men they had captured in their initial
attack, which seems an ironic reversal of humans butchering
cattle for food. The military activity one would expect from
the name Bukephalos and the relationship this implies
with Alexander the Great is also found in this scene, as
Lucian and his men do not let the capture and death of their
comrades go unavenged, but arm themselves and avenge
them: οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν καταφεύγομεν. εἶτα
μένῳ πάντας ὑπάλληλους ὑπὸ γὰρ ἔνδοκα ἡμῖν ἀντιμήρητος
περιϑέλον τοὺς φίλους ἐμπίπτομεν τοὺς Βουκεφάλοις τὰ κρέα
τῶν ἀνθριμικῶν διαφρόνεσθαι φοβίζαντες δὲ πάντας
διώκομεν, καὶ κτείνομεν γε ὅσον πεντήκοντα καὶ ζῶντας
ὑπάλληλους δύο λαμβάνομεν. [We, who remained, fled to the sea.
Later we armed ourselves, for we did not think it right to leave
our friends unavenged, and fell upon the Cowheads
cutting up the flesh of the men they had captured. We put
them all to flight and pursued them and we killed around
fifty of them and took two of them alive.]

Here the allusions to what seem to be the overt
inspiration for this scene end. Rather, much of the scene
seems to be inspired by a scene from the Odyssey, the island
of Thrinacia. Odysseus is warned not to eat the cattle on
the island, since they belong to the god Helios, who would
be displeased by such sacrilege, which would bring down
disaster on them. Odysseus did attempt to heed this warning:
ὡς ἔρωμαι, τοίσιν δ᾽ ἐπεπέθεπτο θυμός ἀγήνως.
μην δὲ παντι ἀλλικτος ἡ ὅτης, οὐδὲ τοὺς ἄλλος
γίνεται ἐπιτ caul αἰώνας ει μὴ Ἑλώς τὸ ὅτος τε.

οἱ δ᾽ ἦσον μὲν σῖτον ἔχουσι καὶ σώζον ὑερθόν,
tοῦρα βοῶν ἀπέχοντο λιλιαμίνων βιοίτοιο.

All ὅτι ἐμ᾽ ἔρωτο ή γίγνεται ἐπεπέθεπτο
καὶ ἡ ἄγνη ἔρωπεσκον ἄλλημοντες ἀνάγκη,
ἐνδύει δρυίδας τε, φίλας ὁ τι χεῖρας κοίτοι.
we put them to all to flight, killed about fifty Greek, they low like cows. By having the Cowheads not be creatures encountered on the voyage so far, do not speak not entirely bovine, these Cowheads, unlike other strange take on food, if we were able, for we had none.".

ποθεν confronted by a dismal prospect: had no wine to pour over the blazing sacrifice, but they made they had prayed and had cut the throats of the kine and no white barley on board the well-benched ship. Now when the ship were grazing the fair, sleek kine, broad of brow. Around these, then they stood and made prayer to the gods, plucking the tender leaves from off a high-crested oak; these, then they stood and made prayer to the gods, plucking

ἀλλ᾽ ἀυτὰρ φύλλα τὰς βοσκέσκονθ᾽ ἐγγύθεν

definite death by starvation. While Odysseus slept, his men: disregard the warnings, choosing a possibly angry god over pray to the gods in the hope that one of them might show me a way to go.".  

The dire straits the mariners are in leads them to disregard the warnings, choosing a possibly angry god over definite death by starvation. While Odysseus slept, his men: αὐτίκα δ᾽ Ἡλέιοι βοῦδοι ἔλασσαντες ἀρίστας ἐγγύθεν, οὐ γὰρ τῇλε νεός κυανοπόρῳ βοσκένσοι᾽ ἐλίκες καλαὶ βόες εὐρυμέτοποι: τὰς δὲ περίστησαν τε καὶ εὐητέθον τεθεῖσιν, φύλλα δρεψάμενοι τέρενα δρῦς ὑγικόμοι: οὐ γὰρ ἐξον κρτ λουκόν ἐνσσέλμου ἐπὶ νηός, αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ἐξέζαντο καὶ ἔσφαξαν καὶ ἐδειρν, μηροὺς τ᾽ ἐξέταμον κατὰ τε κνηή ἐκάλυψαν δίπυμα ποίησαντες, ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν δ᾽ ὑμοθέτησαν, οὐδ᾽ εἶχον μέθυ λειγάνε ἐπ᾽ αἰθομένοις ἱερεῖσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅσι ἐπὶ ἐπάντων ἐπόσπου ἔκακα πάντα.  

["Straightway they drove off the best of the kine of Helios from near at hand, for not far from the dark-proved ship were grazing the fair, sleek kine, broad of brow. Around these, then, they stood and made prayer to the gods, plucking the tender leaves from off a high-crested oak; for they had no white barley on board the well-benched ship. Now when they had prayed and had cut the throats of the kine and flayed them, they cut out the thigh-pieces and covered them with a double layer of fat and laid raw flesh upon them. They had no wine to pour over the blazing sacrifice, but they made libations with water, and roasted all the entrails over the fire."]

On the island of the Cowheads Lucian too is confronted by a dismal prospect: καὶ σιτία ληψάμονοι, εἶπον δυνήθησαν οὐκέτι γὰρ εἴχομεν ("and we would take on food, if we were able, for we had none."). Like the crew in the Odyssey Lucian’s men face the dire prospect of starvation, and they too come across cattle. Although not entirely bovine, these Cowheads, unlike other strange creatures encountered on the voyage so far, do not speak Greek, they low like cows. By having the Cowheads not be able to speak Greek, they are relegated to a more animal like state than other monsters.  

These cattle, however, do not need the protection of a deity, and the presence of a deity is not to be found, like in the rest of the Verae Historiae, as they are capable of defending themselves. These cattle do not wait patiently to be slaughtered, but, in a preemptive strike, attack Lucian and his men, carrying off the three men they proceed to butcher. The threat posed by these Cowheads parallels the threat posed to Odysseus’ men, in this case the threat of destruction is coming from the cattle themselves rather than through the cattle. The threat also parallels that faced in the belly of the sea monster, a group of aggressive part human part animal creatures are ready to exterminate the intrepid band of explorers, the threat is even more poignant here, as the fish-creatures in the whale would have been content with continued tribute, and it was the cessation of this tribute that prompted the battle. Like the battle in the sea monster, the mariners are well served by their superior weapons and tactics, and are victorious: φοβήσαντες δὲ πάντας δίκωκας, καὶ κτεινοῖν γε δὸν πεντήκοντα καὶ θόντας αὐτῶν δό ομβάνανοι [we put them to all to flight, killed about fifty of them and took two alive.]. The expectation of the reader, built up by the similar setting of the Odyssey and the Verae Historiae is shattered. There is to be no disaster here, unlike Odysseus, Lucian is able to keep his men from consuming the cattle, is able to save his men from certain doom. In this way Lucian sets himself up as a superior to Odysseus as a captain and a leader of men.

**The CONTEXT OF THE ODYSSEY**

In every scene in Lucian’s Verae Historiae, the author layers the parody, allowing the reader to come to a variety of conclusions about what other works are being alluded to. This is one of the most interesting and frustrating aspects of dealing with Lucian. The death of the pilot, as part of the larger battle against the tribes of fish creatures inhabiting the stomach of the sea monster, is no exception. In their commentary on the text, Georgiadou and Larmour point out that Lucian creates a critique of philosophers in the various fish folk they battle, paralleling his work the Piscator: "in which various philosophers are represented by different species of fish;" a critique Lucian continues in the absence of the philosophers in the underworld. Von Möllendorf also discusses this section, linking the battle both to an ambush in Xenophon’s Hellénica, as well as to the battle between the inhabitants of the moon and the inhabitants of the sun in Book I. Both commentaries also point out that this scene does seem to contain "some tacit illusion" as to the Odyssey. Von Möllendorf discusses the battle scene in the context of the slaughter of the suitors by Odysseus, while Georgiadou and Larmour, pointing this out as well, show that Smytharos, the old man Lucian and his men meet in the belly of the sea monster, is: "reminiscent of both Eumaeus,  

33 Homer Odyssey Book 12 Lines 324-334. (MURRAY 1924).  
36 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 44.  
37 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 44.  
38 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 44.  
39 See below pp. 13-14.  
40 GEORGIADOU/LAMOUR 1998, 166.  
41 Xenophon HG 4.8, 37-39.  
42 VON MÖLLENDORF 2000, 251.  
43 Lucian Verae Historiae I.1.
the noble swineherd, and Laertes, Odysseus’ father.44

If, then, the larger battle scene in which the death of the pilot takes place can be, at least on one level, associated with the Odyssey, and the only other scene in which members of the crew are killed also parodies the epic tradition, then the pilot’s death too may offer a parody to the Odyssey. The question becomes, then, what in the Odyssey is being parodied here? The farcical nature of the pilot’s death, makes a possible connection to the death of the youngest member of Odysseus’ crew, Elpenor.

δὲς ἔφαγον, τοίσιν δὲ ἐπεπείθετο θυμὸς ἄγνοιαν· οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδ᾽ ἔνθεν περ ἄπιθαινας ἦν ἡταίρους. Ἐλπινορ δὲ τις ἔσκε νεώτατος, οὕτω τι λίθν ἀλκιμοῦ ἐν πολέμῳ οὕτε φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἀρημῶς: δός μοι ἀνευθύ ἔταρων ἱεροῖς ἐν δόμασι Κηρίκης, ψύχεως ἰμεῖρο, κατελέξατο οἰνοβαρείων. κινιμένων δ’ ἔταρων ὑμῶν καὶ δοῦπον ἄκοκκας ἐξπίνησιν ἀνόροσε καὶ ἐκλάθετο φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἄγορον καταβάνησα ἵνα ἐς κλίμακα μακρινὸν, ἀλλὰ καταντικρὺ τέγεος πέσεν: ἕκ δ’ οὐκ ἂν ὅστον ἀστραγάλων ἐγή, πυγή δ’ Ἀιδόσσε κατῇλθεν.45

[“So I spoke, and their proud hearts consented. But not even from thence could I lead my men unscathed. There was one, Elpenor, the youngest of all, not over valiant in war nor sound of understanding, who had laid him down apart from his comrades in the sacred house of Circe, seeking the cool air, for he was heavy with wine. He heard the noise and the bustle of his comrades as they moved about, and suddenly sprang up, and forgot to go to the long ladder that he might come down again, but fell headlong from the roof, and his neck was broken away from the spine, and his spirit went down to the house of Hades.”].46

Initially, the two death scenes do not seem related. Elpenor, as the junior crewman, can in no way be considered the “best,” as the pilot of Lucian’s vessel is, although he must possess a certain amount of skill (or luck) to have survived the entirety of the Trojan War and all of the dangers faced on the journey home. Nor does he die in battle, like the pilot, or even many adult beverages, the young man slips and falls off of Circe’s roof.

Rather than in a one-on-one emulation, Lucian creates his parody on two levels: 1. In the position of the two scenes in their respective narratives. During their stay on the Island of the Blessed, one of the crewmen becomes enamored of Helen, and they decide to escape with a few confederates. Their plan fails, however, and they are caught; οἱ δὲ ὄπω προσθυμίας ἐλάλουντες περὶ μεσομηδεῖν καταλαμβάνουσιν αὐτοὺς ἄρης εἰς τὸν γαλακτωθὸν τοῦ ὦκανον τόσον ἐμβαίνοντας πληθυν ὃς Τυροεσσῆς παρὰ τοσοῦτον ἦλθον ἀκοδόφαινα [They, driving on with great speed, captured them around noon, just entering the milk ocean near Tyroessa; so close they came to escaping.].47 By making the Island of Cheese the point beyond which the denizens of the Underworld cannot pass, except apparently Helen, Lucian sets up the Sea of Milk, like the River Styx, the border of the Underworld, as both a barrier and a conduit. Using this conduit, Lucian and his men undergo a katabasis. The pilot’s death occurs in the belly of the sea monster, which comes shortly before this katabasis in the narrative, even if temporally relatively far removed from it. In the Odyssey too, Elpenor’s death occurs shortly before their katabasis, so shortly, in fact, that when Odysseus and his men see his ghost in the Underworld, they were surprised:

πράττε δὲ ψυχή Ἐλπήνορος ἥλθεν ἐταίροις: οὐ γὰρ πο ἔτεθατο ὑπὸ χθόνος εὐρυδέεις: σῶμα γάρ ἐν Κηρίκης, μεγάρῳ κατελέπομεν ἡμᾶς ἐκλάθετο καὶ διἀπόκε, ἐπικά πόνον ἄλλον ἔπιες, τόν μὲν ἐγὼ δάκρυσα ἑδύν ἐλέησα τε ψυχή, καὶ μεν φωνήσας ἔπιε περίπετα προσποδόμων. Ἐλπηνορ, πῶς ἥλες ὑπὸ ἄρην ἕμρον; ἔρηθος πεῖρος ἔως ἡ ἔγω σὺν νη μελαινή.48

[. “The first to come was the spirit of my comrade Elpenor. Not yet had he been buried beneath the broad-wayed earth, for we had left his corpse behind us in the hall of Circe, unwept and unburied, since another task was then urging us on. When I saw him I wept, and my heart had compassion on him; and I spoke and addressed him with winged words: ‘Elpenor, how didst thou come beneath the murky darkness? Thou coming on foot hast out-stripped me in my black ship.’”]49

2. The second level through which Lucian builds his narrative is the comical, almost farcical nature of the deaths of the two men, both of which temporally remove the reader from the realm of the epic narrative. We have already discussed the farcical way in which the pilot, armed and armored, is struck down by a fish bone; and in an epic world in which men fall to the aristeia of various heroes, eaten by cannibalistic Laestrygonians and Cyclopes and die by the hand of various other mythical creatures, Elpenor’s death seems too mundane almost banal. After imbibing too many adult beverages, the young man slips and falls off of the roof. This seems an interesting insert of realism into the narrative, drunken accidents certainly being a leading cause of death, even today.

Nearly as interesting as the similarities in the building of the parody are the differences, especially the differences in how the death is reacted to by the rest of the crew. When Elpenor’s ghost is discovered in the underworld, Odysseus is distraught, not having realized that he was dead, and he promises that on his return to Circe’s island they would give him a proper funeral. After the report of the pilot’s death, there is no further mention of him, not even in the Underworld, and they certainly do not take the time to give him proper funeral rites, as they do not even allow a truce long enough for both sides to collect their dead: καὶ μετ’ οὐ πόλο κηρίκας ὀποστείλατες γενόη θεοῦ ἄνθροπον καὶ περὶ φύλασσα διελέγοντο· ἡμῖν δὲ οὐκ ἔδοξε σπεύδοντα [Not long after, they sent an embassy to discuss the collection of the dead and concerning the establishment of friendship. We, however, did not think it wise to make an alliance.]50

When each of these men die too is juxtaposed, while both die shortly before the *katabasis* of their respective crews, the pilot dies just before the fish folk are driven from the inside of the sea monster, allowing Lucian and his men to build themselves a *locus amoenus*. Elpenor dies as Odysseus and his men depart from the *locus amoenus* they found on Circe’s island. This juxtaposition gives us a clue to Lucian’s purpose for the parody in this scene as well, like the scene with the Cowheads, Lucian shows himself surpassing Odysseus as an adventurer and as a leader of men. Where Odysseus’ men are unwilling to set back out on their journey, wishing to remain in their *locus amoenus*, Lucian inspires his own men to continue on their journey, and their reason for leaving the belly of the sea monster is because they grew bored and longed for more adventure.

**LUCIAN AND ODYSSEUS**

Despite saying in the prologue⁵¹ that he will not name those to whom he is alluding, complimenting the knowledge of his audience by saying that they will know to whom he is referring, the reader is still presented by a list of authors/liars to whom he alludes. This opening invites readers to engage in “literary archaeology,”⁵² to search for the possible origins for the various episodes and satires offered in the text. Problematic is, however, that Lucian admits to lying about everything he is writing: κἂν ἐν γὰρ δὴ τὸ τοῦτο ἔλθῃ καὶ λέγων ὃτι ψεῦδομαι [For in one thing only do I tell the truth, that I will lie].⁵³ By creating this uncertainty Lucian is able to work on two levels. He both encourages his audience to search for these sources of inspiration and “…exposes the fallacy of the very idea of origins, and explores the dangers inherent in the cultural privileging of origins through intentionalist readings…, literary *mimēsis*, and the supremacy of origin-related criteria such as the author and authenticity in literary and textual criticism.”⁵⁴ Paradoxically, then, very search for this literary *mimēsis*, for a greater understanding of the text, allows the author to create an ambiguity, not only in the purpose of the text, but in the person of the author.⁵⁵ This ambiguity is reinforced by the absence of the author’s name, which the reader does not know until the underworld scene (V.H. II. 28).⁵⁶ This ambiguity creates a vacuum in the mind of the reader, which is filled with those very authors he has no need to tell his audience about: Ctesias of Cnidos, Iambulus and Homer.⁵⁷ This setup removes the charge of falsehood one step further from Lucian the narrator: “the charge of deception is transferred from the poet to his character: Homer’s Odysseus – not Homer himself – is named as the instructor to all subsequent literary liars. This splitting of author from character is programmatic for the *Verae Historiae*, where Lucian the author professes no intention to deceive his readers, while Lucian the Odyssean character-narrator lies with abandon.”⁶⁰ Although Lucian connects himself with Odysseus in the mind of the reader, he immediately sets himself up as Odysseus’ moral superior, both as author and as “character-narrator.” Although Lucian the author, like Odysseus, lies throughout his work, he as at least told the truth this once, and while the lies, like those of Homer, transfer to the character, this Lucian too is sure of himself: ἐν οἷς καὶ Κτησίας ὁ Κνίδιος ἦν καὶ Ἡρόδοτος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί. τούτους ὁμοίως ἐξ ὀνόματος τῆς ἑλληνικῆς οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ φαινόμενον εἶπον [In which were Ctesias of Cnidos and Herodotus and many others. Seeing them I had great hope for the future, for I am not aware of any lie that I have told.].⁶¹ Interesting is that Odysseus, the greatest liar, is on the Island of the Blessed⁶² while these lesser liars are being punished on the Island of the Damned. Odysseus, however, is not happy on the Island of the Blessed, and wishes to escape and go be with Calypso, a message he has Lucian bring for him,⁶³ despite his physical location he is punished for his lies, while Lucian is able to both leave the island, what Odysseus longs to do, and enjoy further adventure and return to the island for eternal happiness when he does die.⁶⁴

It is not only in the matter of lying that Lucian juxtaposes and connects himself to Odysseus, the very means of driving the narrative underscores this interplay between the two heroes. In both the *Odyssey* and the *Verae Historiae*, the action takes place, to a great extent, on a series of islands,⁶⁵ the “narrative macrostructure”⁶⁶ of the *Verae Historiae* may correspond to that of the *Odyssey* in a narrative *mimēsis* so that in both “the structural implications of episodes and spaces can be identified in the teleology of the narrative.”⁶⁷ Both Odysseus and Lucian begin their voyages with a specific goal in mind, for Odysseus this is a *nostos*, he is returning home, and the place of each episode in the overall narrative of the *Odyssey* is determined by its relation to this *telos*. While the structure of the voyage in the *Verae Historiae* is the same, Lucian setting out with a specific *telos* in mind, the continent on the other side of the world,⁶⁸ he must once again juxtapose himself to Odysseus, this is no *nostos* for Lucian, but a voyage driven by no better reason than curiosity,⁶⁹ this curiosity, however is used to “transform the past into something literally new,”⁷⁰ something beyond what was done by Odysseus. The “relationship between

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⁵¹ Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 1.
⁵³ Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 4.
⁵⁴ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2009, 11.
⁵⁵ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 84-85.
⁵⁶ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 84-85.
⁵⁷ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 85-86.
⁵⁸ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 87.
⁵⁹ Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 3.
⁶⁰ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2014, 207.
⁶¹ NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 87.
⁶² Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 31.
⁶³ Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 22.
⁶⁴ Lucina *Verae Historiae* II. 29.
⁶⁵ Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 27.
⁶⁶ The importance of narrative space in the *Verae Historiae*, especially its implications in the dichotomy of lies and truth in the text is discussed in MOSSMAN 2009.
⁶⁷ MOSSMAN 2009, 49.
⁶⁸ MOSSMAN 2009, 49.
⁶⁹ Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 2.
⁷⁰ Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 2.
geography and narrative”71 becomes especially important in the Odyssey-Lucian relationship in the description Lucian gives of his voyage: ὅρμησις γὰρ ποτὲ ἀπὸ Ἡράκλειον στηλῶν καὶ ἀφεὶς εἰς τὸν ἐκπόρτων ὄρεαν οὐρίῳ ἀνέμῳ τὸν πλοῦν ἐποιούμην [Having set forth beyond the pillars of Herakles and making for the western sea, we started our voyage with a good following wind.].72 By underscoring that his voyage starts out by sailing beyond the pillars of Herakles, Lucian immediately raises his own voyage over that of Odysseus, he has sailed further, even beyond where those greatest of travelers, Dionysus and Herakles have voyaged,73 in more unknown waters, putting to shame the voyage of Odysseus, who gets so lost in the Mediterranean.

The relationship of Odysseus and Lucian is best seen in the numerous intertextual allusions to the Odyssey in the Verae Historiae, which, despite the element of uncertainty in the literary mimēsis, would have struck the reader in almost every episode of the narrative. Since these allusions are so pervasive, it is impossible to discuss them all in the context of this paper.74 The culmination of these allusions occurs in the scene on the Island of the Blessed.75 The denizens of the Island of the Damned escape from their island and attack the Island of the Blessed, they are repulsed and Homer creates a new epic poem to celebrate the victory,76 unfortunately only the first line of this poem survived the rest of Lucian’s voyage: Νῦν δέ μοι ἤνεις, Μοῦσα, μάχην νεκύων ἡρώων [Sing to me now, Muse, of the battle of the dead heroes.].77 By writing a new epic poem, Homer transcends his earlier two works, combining the theme of the Iliad with the style of the opening of the Odyssey: ἢν πάντα τέλησις, μόδος, μάρτης νικῶν ἡρώων [Sing to me now, Muse, of the well-travelled man, who wandered much.].78 By opening this new epic in the same style as the Odyssey, Homer takes the Odyssey away from Odysseus and opens it to include all of the heroes who fought in the battle, a tale which would include Lucian, who was present even if the text does not specify whether he fought in the battle or not.79 Giving Lucian the epic poem to bring home with him also has a transformative effect, especially in light of the author-character ambiguity discussed above.80 Giving the poem to Lucian allows Lucian the author to become Homer, not only does he, if associated with Lucian the character, receive the poem, he, as author, in fact writes the poem. As a result of this, Lucian the author becomes Homer the author, and Lucian the character is able to take on not only the same position in relationship to Lucian the author as Odysseus the character has to Homer the author, but his very identity.

Of these numerous scenes in the Verae Historiae in which Lucian creates an allusion to the Odyssey, the two scenes which are Odysseus’ crew die are especially used to further the image of Lucian as a new and improved Odysseus. On the island of the Cow-Heads, this is because Lucian is able to save his men in a situation in which all of Odysseus’ men die. We have discussed how the juxtaposition of Elpenor and the pilot underscore the adventurous spirit of Lucian and his crew, the connection created by Lucian between the pilot’s death and that of Elpenor, however, helps to build on the same foundation as the scene with the Cow-Heads, Lucian is not only a more adventurous captain, he is a more competent captain. The pilot’s absence in the underworld, a logical place to expect to see him again, especially as Odysseus sees Elpenor there; in the complete lack of response to the death of the pilot, the reader is reminded of the extravagant way in which Elpenor, the youngest of Odysseus’ crew is treated.

νῦν δέ σε τόν ὀπίθην γονόξοιμαι, οὐ παρεόντων, πρὸς τ᾽ ἀνίγκον καὶ πατρός, δύστήνοι τεῦϑον ἐνότα, Ἀθλετάχαμος θ’, ὅν μονόν ἐνε μηγάροισι έλευσις: οἶδα γάρ ὡς ἐνθένδε κιόν δόμον ἐξ Ἀδαι νήσου ἐξ Ἀιαίνει βασιλείας ἐνεργέα νῆσα: ἐνδα σ’ ἐπιτα, ἄνας, κέλομαι μνήσθαι ἔμελο. μη μ᾽ ἀκλάυτον ἀθανάτον ἐνο όθνηθὲν καταλείψει νοσφηθείς, μη τοί τι θεόν μήνιμα γένομαι, ἀλλὰ με κακκηκά σόν τείχεσθε, ἀσοι μοι ἔστιν, σῆμα τέ μοι χείδα γολιά, ἐπὶ θνεῖσθας, ἄνδρι διστάμνοι καὶ ἐσομένοιοι πυθθεῖσθαι, ταυτά τέ μοι τελώσασι πιθαὶ τ’ ἐπὶ τύμβῳ ἐρτέμον, τό και ζωὸς ἔρεθουν ἐνόν μετ᾽ ἔμοις ἐτάροσιν.

[“Now I beseech thee by those whom we left behind, who are not present with us, by thy wife and thy father who reared thee when a babe, and by Telemachus whom thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou goest hence from the house of Hades thou wilt touch at the Aeanean isle with thy well-built ship. There, then, O prince, I goest hence from the house of Hades; for I know that as thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou didst leave an only son in thy halls."

Elpenor’s wish is fulfilled at the beginning of Book XII, and he is given his funeral rites and buried with his oak marking his grave. This is in contrast to so many other warriors who went to Troy with Odysseus, and whose bodies litter the Mediterranean, or were eaten by cannibals. This juxtaposition between the pilot and Elpenor serves to remind the reader of the numerous men, all of them in fact, lost over the course of the voyage to Ithaca, this in contrast to the five men killed and a few captured along the much more perilous journey beyond the Pillars of Hercules, making Lucian not only a new Odysseus, but a better Odysseus.

71 MOSSMAN 2009, pg. 47.
72 Lucian Verae Historiae I. 5.
73 Lucian Verae Historiae I. 7.
74 Several such allusions, the Island of the Cowheads to the cattle of Helios, for example, as well as the battle against the fish people in the belly of the sea monster and its connection to the slaughter of the suitors after Odysseus’ return to Ithaca. For other such allusions please see VON MÖLLENDORF 2000 and GEORGIADOU/LAMOUR 1998.
75 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 23.
76 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 24.
77 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 24.
78 Homer Odyssey I. 1.
79 Lucian Verae Historiae II. 24.
80 See above pg. 14.
81 Homer Odyssey 11. 66-78.
82 Homer Odyssey 11. 66-78. (MURRAY 1924).
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