Karen ní Mheallaigh

GREEK CULTURE IN THE ROMAN WORLD

Reading Fiction with Lucian

Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality

READING FICTION WITH LUCIAN

This book offers a captivating new interpretation of Lucian as a fictional theorist and writer to stand alongside the novelists of the day, bringing to bear on his works a whole new set of reading strategies. It argues that the aesthetic and cultural issues Lucian faced, in a world of *mimēsis* and replication, were akin to those found in postmodern contexts: the ubiquity of the fake, the erasure of origins, the focus on the freakish and weird at the expense of the traditional. In addition to exploring the texture of Lucian's own writing, Dr ní Mheallaigh uses Lucian as a focal point through which to examine other fictional texts of the period, including Antonius Diogenes' *The incredible things beyond Thule*, Dictys' *Journal of the Trojan War* and Ptolemy Chennus' *Novel history*, and reveals the importance of fiction's engagement with its contemporary culture of writing, entertainment and wonder.

KAREN NÍ MHEALLAIGH is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Exeter. Her research focuses on the postclassical literary cultures of the Hellenistic and Romano-Greek worlds, especially ancient fiction.

GREEK CULTURE IN THE ROMAN WORLD

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Preface

This book invites you to read the postclassical literary culture of the imperial period through Lucian as through a prism, for much of what I have to say about Lucian here has a direct bearing on what other writers of this period are doing too, and parallels can be found both then and in our own postmodern period as well. The book also invites you to read with imagination, and with pleasure. My exploration of parallels is eclectic and meant to be suggestive, not comprehensive. There is much more to be said than I can possibly say in just one book: Lucian's place in the contemporary culture of wonder-entertainment with its *Wunderkammer*, horror-stories, religious and scholarly hoaxes, stage illusions, and mechanical wonders will be the subject of another study, for example, and he shares much in common, too, with the writers of pseudo-documentary fictions (Dictys, Dares, Ptolemy Chennus, Antonius Diogenes and many others) who also require a book of their own. Many other parallels or contrasts will not have occurred to me at all; I *hope* this book creates much more to be said.

A few words about the book's shape and architecture. I have not adhered to a rigid structure throughout; rather, each of the chapters is designed so that it can be read as a stand-alone essay on Lucian as well part of a cumulative analysis which moves gradually towards an ever-deepening and broadening appraisal of Lucian's importance as a literary theorist and writer of fiction both within the context of his own postclassical culture then and in the light of our postmodern culture today. The fundamental idea which will, I hope, emerge is that Lucian's creative and critical energies are inextricably interconnected, and even Lucian's wildest fictions are centrally *about* what makes postclassical culture tick. The first chapter is introductory in nature: it provides an entry-point to Lucian's literary-theoretical interests and his work's affinity with postmodern ideas, and it lays the foundations for my reading of individual works in subsequent parts of the book. In the five following chapters, I examine particular Lucianic works in the context of the contemporary literary tradition, and suggest parallels with the works

of modern authors which show how Lucian speaks to readers in our era as well. It will be noticeable that I have devoted more space here to *True stories* than to any other work. That is because, more than any other single work, I regard *True stories* as *the* iconic work of its age, a work of striking postmodernity which encapsulates in its two short books the entire world of Greek literary culture in the imperial era – as well as, in many ways, our world of post-modernist literature and thought, too. Features which stand out for me include its obsession with copies, fakes and *simulacra*; its fascination with the fragmentary text (*True stories* is the only ancient work I know of which creates a fiction of its *own* fragmentary status); its refusal to distinguish in ontological terms between the characters inside a text and the authors who write them, between fiction and the 'real' world; and its disconcerting play with the peritextual boundaries of the text itself. Far from viewing this as the most self-indulgently and exclusively literary of Lucian's experiments, *True stories* leads us straight out into the heart of the entertainment-culture and thought-world of the imperial period; how it does so, I will explore in the book's conclusion, which I see as a jumping-off point to bigger questions about *Wunderkultur* in the imperial period.

Some of the material in these chapters appeared, in slightly different form, in articles previously published. My ideas in chapter 5, '*True stories*: travels in hyperreality' grew out of an earlier article, 'Monumental fallacy: the teleology of origins in Lucian's *Verae historiae*', in A. Bartley (ed.), *A Lucian for our times* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), 11–28. The section on onymity in *True stories* in Chapter 4 is adapted from an article, 'The game of the name: onymity and the contract of reading in Lucian', in F. Mestre and P. Gomez (edd.), *Lucian of Samosata, Greek writer and Roman citizen* (Barcelona, 2010), 121–132. And Chapter 3, which reads *Onos* intertextually with *The Name of the Rose*, is based on an article 'Ec[h]oing the ass-novel: reading and desire in *Onos*, *Metamorphoses* and *The name of the Rose*', *Ramus* 38.1 (2009), 109–122. In all cases, I have revised and expanded the arguments from the original articles. I am very grateful to the editors and publishers in each case who generously permitted me to draw on this material here.

CHAPTER 1

Lucian's Promethean poetics
Hybridity, fiction and the postmodern

Lucian, more than any other author of the imperial period, speaks to us boldly about the modernity and fictionality of his own work. He speaks proudly of his literary innovations – his iconoclastic scrambling of Classical models, his invention of a brand new literary genre (the comic dialogue), and his ground-breaking experiments in the nature of fiction itself. He is also intensely preoccupied with how his work will be received and understood within the tightly conservative, Classicizing culture for which it was written. He addresses these and other, related concerns in a sequence of short introductory speeches (*prolaliai*) and essays where he evolves a language – using images of monstrous freaks, the plastic artist, the experience of cultural crossings and similar estrangements – to talk about his own modernity, his work's place within the literary canon, and to orientate his audience towards a finely tuned appreciation of his novel fictions.

Until the turn of the millennium, the critical reception of Lucian's *prolaliai*, generally speaking, hovered between outright excoriation of their otiose rhetoric,[1] and a trivializing interpretation which viewed them as entertainment-pieces which were devoid of any profound literary function – even in the wake of Branham's argument that they were crucial for understanding Lucian's serio-comic mixture of genres.[2] With the recognition that strategies and ironies of self-representation are a key theme in Lucian's work,[3] however, there has been a new wave of interest in

[1] Anderson (1977, 313): 'they are among the slightest trifles among the vast amount of ephemera produced by the Second Sophistic'.

[2] Although Nesselrath (1990) emphasizes the rhetorical artfulness of the *prolaliai*, he finds them ultimately insignificant: 'All 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; and in getting this across he probably succeeded' (Nesselrath 1990, 140 n. 34).

[3] As shown in rich studies of Lucian's exploration of the complexities of producing cultural identity (e.g. Elsner 2001; Diarra 2013) and different dimensions of what it means to be educated and/or Greek in the Roman empire, e.g. Goldhill (2001 and 2002) and Whitmarsh (2001, 75–8; 122–9; 247–94).

the *prolaliai* which, as formal rhetorical introductions, have a particularly important role to play in mediating the author to his public.[4] But whilst the tension between innovation and traditionalism in these works has been well mapped out in the critical literature, its aesthetic implications for a reading of Lucian's longer fictional works have by no means been fully explored.[5] There is more, still, to be said about how Lucian builds a literary theory into these essays and its ramifications for his own work more broadly.

My exploration of Lucian's fiction in this book will therefore begin with Lucian's own introductions. My aim is first to explore Lucian's use of the hybrid creature (predominantly, the centaur) and the myth of the rebellious inventor Prometheus to prompt the reader to think about his own artistic enterprise. I will show how Lucian uses these images to form a coherent poetics which is distinctive both from modernist manifestos in the earlier Greek literary tradition and from contemporary theoretical positions as well. What will emerge, I hope, is a clear sense of Lucian as an innovative literary theorist as well as creative artist (indeed, Lucian's creativity is fuelled by his critical interests); one whose work speaks straight to the heart of postclassicism in the ancient world, as well as postmodernism in our own culture. We can then begin to see how the ideals and anxieties which are expressed in these overtly self-theorizing essays animate Lucian's creative experiments in narrative fiction.

Lucian and the shock of the new

In the *prolalia Zeuxis* Lucian describes a conversation which he had with a group of audience-members after one of his lecture-performances. Despite their enthusiastic admiration, the fans' praise rang hollow in Lucian's ears for he began to notice, to his chagrin, that what they singled out for praise was not the beauty or precision of his speech, but only the novelty of his subject. Realizing that they were praising him for the talents of a cheap

[4] Whitmarsh 2001, 75–8.

[5] Our understanding of the literary-theoretical ramifications of Lucian's *prolaliai* and related essays has been vastly expanded by Branham 1989, 38–46 (Lucian's hybrids as a metaphor for the hybrid and serio-comic nature of his work); Romm 1990 (the literary-critical implications of wax and clay as artistic materials in Lucian's works); Whitmarsh 2001, 75–8 (Lucian's postclassical self-positioning through promoting the artificial nature of his *mimēsis*); von Möllendorff 2006a (Lucian's exploration, through hybrid animals, of the aesthetic of *charis*); and Popescu 2009 and Popescu forthcoming b (Lucian's use of *paradoxa* as paradigms for the exoticism of his own cultural *persona* and his work). Brandão (2001) is a neglected study of Lucian's hybridity. In spite of its promising title, Weissenberger 1996 is limited in the scope of its analysis, focusing mainly on Lucian's Atticism and entirely omitting the *prolaliai* from its survey of Lucian's literary-critical works.

conjurer rather than a literary or rhetorical artist, Lucian felt the gold of their admiration turn to dust.[6]

Two examples serve to illustrate this painful situation: Antiochus of Macedon's defeat of the Galatians by shocking them into panic with the mere sight of his elephants,[7] and the Greek painter Zeuxis' disappointment to find that people who viewed his painting of a centaur family were struck only by the unusual domesticity of the scene, for centaurs were familiar as the predominantly masculine and aggressive creatures of the centauromachy theme.[8] Lucian, similarly, is anxious that his own oratorical victory may be due merely to his arsenal of 'strange monsters' (*xena mormolykeia*) and 'magic tricks' (*thaumatopoiia*) which amaze the crowd, and that their praise is due to the novelty and unconventionality (*kainon kai terastion*) of his work rather than to his technical skill.[9] Zeuxis' protest echoes Lucian's own:

> 'These people are praising the mere clay (*pēlon*) of my art. They care little about the beauty of the colours and the artistry of their application; the novelty (*kainotomia*) of the subject is of greater importance to them than the precision of the work.'[10]

On the one hand, Zeuxis devalues the aesthetic of novelty by equating the wondrous nature of his painting with the worthless sculptural medium of clay. On the other hand, this allusion to clay creates an intertextual link with the essay *You are a literary Prometheus*, whose sustained sculptural metaphor opens up the opportunity for a redemptive reading of Zeuxis' artistic experimentation by aligning it with a protean, malleable substance which is resistant to fixity of form. There is therefore a measure of duplicity about this display of artistic snobbery in *Zeuxis*, for we should not, I think, discount the ways in which Lucian draws repeatedly on images of wonder – monsters, magic and centaurs – to talk about (even, perhaps, to advertise) the crowd-pleasing aspects of his own marvellous new genre. In the *prolaliai* he appears frequently at pains to distance himself from this more debased and popular appeal – but it is clear that sophistic performances were a

[6] *Zeux.* 2. [7] *Zeux.* 8–11.

[8] On the centauromachy theme in classical Greek art, see DuBois 1982, 49–77; on reading centaurs in classical Greek art, see Osborne 1994; see also Padgett 2003.

[9] *Zeux.* 12.

[10] *Zeux.* 7: οὗτοι γὰρ ἡμῶν τὸν πηλὸν τῆς τέχνης ἐπαινοῦσι, τῶν δὲ αὖ φώτων εἰ καλῶς ἔχει καὶ κατὰ τὴν τέχνην, οὐ πολὺν ποιοῦνται λόγον, ἀλλὰ παρευδοκιμεῖ τὴν ἀκρίβειαν τῶν ἔργων ἡ τῆς ὑποθέσεως καινοτομία. Pretzler (2009) considers (rightly in my view) the possibility that Zeuxis' centaur-painting is a Lucianic invention. Female centaurs were also the subject of a painting described in Philostratus' *Imagines* 2.3; for comparison of the two, see Pretzler 2009, 167–8 with further bibliography. Translations, unless otherwise attributed, are mine.

form of public entertainment which commanded a much more eclectic audience in antiquity than the texts themselves overtly address.[11] As Romm points out, this disdain must be a dissimulative strategy on Lucian's part, which cannot be interpreted at face value.[12] Through the semiotically rich centaur theme, he also redeems his literary enterprise by assimilating it to the spirit of Promethean, anti-Olympian rebelliousness which dominated the Centaurs' battles, as Romm has argued.[13] Lucian's fascination with Zeuxis' centaurs focuses on the artist's naturalistic treatment of the hybridity of the centaurs' bodies and their expression, especially the mixture of wildness and tender vulnerability in the babies.[14] In this way, the centaur becomes, explicitly, an icon for Lucian's own artistic enterprise which is both a confection of canonical models (just as the centaur is itself part-man, part-horse) and a rebellion against the traditions of the canon which wreaks havoc with the literary-critical maxim that works should have a natural organic unity, like a living animal.[15] As Whitmarsh notes, the centaur, as a prodigy (*teras*), is 'a deviation from nature, an affront to traditional, Aristotelian taxonomy, an image brilliantly evocative of Lucian's self-construction as a writer both threatening and thrilling';[16] moreover, by describing his work as an 'innovation' (*neōterismos*), a word which is suggestive of political revolution, Lucian adds a hint of political subversion to his genre-transgression: 'the implication is that innovative art actually threatens social hierarchies.'[17] The message is clear: instead of performing straightforward homage to the models of the past, *mimēsis* in Lucian's hands will become a weapon with which to assault the strictures

[11] See the fine analysis of the audience's heterogeneity in terms of age, class and level of education in Korenjak 2000, 41–65.

[12] Romm 1990, 85 n. 31: 'The question of Lucian's audience has been somewhat clouded by the satirist's own contradictory statements on the subject, and by a scholarly tendency to emphasize his higher cultural aspirations over his desire for popularity . . . [I]t should be clear . . . that Lucian felt attracted to both the high artistic standing conferred by the πεπαιδευμένοι and the loud applause of the πλήθη, and that he often promotes the former over the latter as a way of gaining cultural capital on the cheap.'

[13] Romm 1990, 84 n. 17. The centaur may have been used as a metaphor for literary innovation by the tragedian Chaeremon as early as in the fourth century BCE, for he used it as the title for a work of indeterminate nature which was both polymetric and designed, according to Aristotle, for *reading* (rather than performance). On Chaeremon's *Centaur*, see Ford 1988, 303–5 and Collard 1970 (who argues that it was a satyr play). Bompaire (1958, 559) makes this point, but in connection with Lucian and Menippean satire. My thanks to Peter Bing for drawing my attention to Chaeremon's work.

[14] *Zeux.* 6.

[15] Branham 1989, 43; Whitmarsh 2001, 75–8. For the concept or organic unity in ancient literary theory, see Plato *Phaedrus* 264c; Horace *AP* 1–23.

[16] Whitmarsh 2001, 78.

[17] Whitmarsh 2001, 77 n. 138. For the anarchic ramifications of collapsed genre-boundaries in Petronius' *Satyrica*, see Zeitlin 1999, esp. 3–13.

of a stifling Classicism. Lucian's 'worthless clay' will, paradoxically, redeem the originality of mimetic literature by reversing the dynamics of appropriation as envisaged by contemporary theorists, and remoulding them according to his own, distinctly subversive, Promethean poetics.[18]

In the essay *You are a literary Prometheus*, Lucian approaches the topic of his work's originality again.[19] Here he discusses his invention of a new literary genre, the comic dialogue. Tongue in cheek once again as he advertises his skill whilst grumbling about it,[20] Lucian professes doubts about the success of his audacious enterprise, for on the one hand, the game is lost if one's models (here, dialogue and comedy) have been innovated beyond all recognition, and on the other hand, originality can in no way compensate for the aesthetic crudity of the result:

> It's no great satisfaction for me to be considered an innovator, or if no-one can identify an older model of composition from which mine is an offshoot . . . Nor, for me at least, would the originality of a work save it from destruction if it were ugly.[21]

Once again, Lucian glosses his adventurous eclecticism as monstrous and unnatural, describing his new genre as a 'freakish hybrid' (*allokotos xynthēkē*) like a hippocentaur, which affirms the intertextual link with *Zeuxis*.[22] The only comfort Lucian derives from being such a literary 'Prometheus' or inventor is that no-one can charge him with theft – for he has no predecessor from whom to steal:

> As far as theft (*hē kleptikē*) goes – for he is also the god of theft – away with the charge! This is the one fault you cannot find in my works, for who would I steal from, unless someone has already invented such hybrid hippocamps and tragelaphs without my knowledge?[23]

Prometheus' mythical theft (of fire, which he then bestowed on humankind) is overlaid in this passage with theft of a literary-critical nature, for in contemporary discussions of literary *mimēsis*, the metaphor of 'theft'

[18] See further discussion below pp. 13–17.

[19] Romm 1990 is indispensable here.

[20] Branham (1985, 239–40) reads this as 'Socratic irony'; cf. Branham (1989, 42): 'an ironic apology for Lucian's principal literary innovation, the comic dialogue'. For Lucian's pride in his generic invention, see *Twice Accused* 34–5.

[21] *Prom. es* 3: ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐ πάνυ ἱκανόν, εἰ καινοποιεῖν δοκοίην, μηδὲ ἔχοι τις λέγειν ἀρχαιότερόν τι τοῦ πλάσματος οὗ τοῦτο ἀπόγονόν ἐστιν . . . οὐδ᾽ ἂν ὠφελήσειεν αὐτό, παρὰ γοῦν ἐμοί, ἡ καινότης, μὴ οὐχὶ συντετρῖφθαι ἄμορφον ὄν.

[22] *Prom. es* 5.

[23] *Prom. es* 7: τὸ γὰρ τῆς κλεπτικῆς – καὶ γὰρ κλεπτικῆς ὁ θεός – ἄπαγε. τοῦτο μόνον οὐκ ἂν εἴποις ἐνεῖναι τοῖς ἡμετέροις. ἢ παρὰ τοῦ γὰρ ἂν ἐκλέπτομεν; εἰ μὴ ἄρα τις ἐμὲ διέλαθεν τοιούτους ἱπποκάμπους καὶ τραγελάφους καὶ αὐτὸς συντεθεικώς.

(*klopē*) is used to denote the mindless pilfering of the canon or artless imitation – a charge which Lucian unequivocally eschews here.[24]

Lucian's treatment of the myth of Prometheus elsewhere in his *oeuvre* reinforces Prometheus' status as a metaliterary icon for Lucian himself. Prometheus is famous in mythology for his pro-human acts of rebellion against the Olympian gods;[25] his complex associations with theft, culture and innovation, as well as his connection in the Greek literary tradition with a diversity of genres (he was equally at home in Hesiodic epic, tragedy, comedy and philosophy)[26] made him particularly appropriate as an icon for Lucian's modernity. In his dialogue *Prometheus*, Lucian depicts the Titan as a mirror image of himself: Prometheus delivers a 'sophistic lecture' in the Caucasus Mountains to Hermes and Hephaestus,[27] and like Lucian, he too is an artist proud of his sculptural innovation in the creation of mankind.[28] Prometheus' act of creation becomes entwined with the poetics of *mimēsis*, as he describes how he created humans out of a mixture of clay and water to be mortal copies of the Olympian gods, whose purpose, he claims, was to reaffirm the greatness and superiority of their Olympian archetypes:[29]

> But consider this too, Hermes: do you think any blessing if unattested (*amarturon*) will seem just as pleasing and charming to its owner – for example something which is acquired (*ktēma*) or made (*poiēma*) which no-one will see or praise? Why do I ask this? Because if there were no humans, the beauty of everything would go unattested (*amarturon*), and we would be rich with wealth which nobody else would admire, and which we ourselves would not value in the same way, for we would not have anything inferior to compare it to, nor would we be aware of the extent of our blessings if we could not see others who had no share in our belongings. For the great seems great only if it is measured against what is small.[30]

Prometheus' words are freighted with the rhetoric of decadent Classicism: from humans as mimetic sculptures which present the Olympians with

[24] [Longinus] *On the Sublime* 13.4; cf. pp. 213–14.

[25] The classic account is by Hesiod *Works and days* 42–105 and Aeschylus in his Prometheus trilogy, from which the tragedy *Prometheus Bound* survives. Lucian himself tells the story in his own dialogue *Prometheus* 1–3 and in *Dialogues of the gods* 5.1.

[26] Mossman (2007, esp. 157–8) examines Prometheus as a representative of the polyphony of the Lucianic *Amores*.

[27] *Prom.* 4.

[28] *Prom.* 6: *kainourgēsai*; *Prom.* 1, 2 and 11: *plasmata*, *plastikē*.

[29] *Prom.* 12.

[30] *Prom.* 15: 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· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν εἴχομεν πρὸς ὅ τι ἔλαττον παραθεωρῶμεν αὐτόν, οὐδ᾽ ἂν συνίεμεν ἡλίκα εὐδαιμονοῦμεν οὐχ ὁρῶντες ἀμοίρους τῶν ἡμετέρων τινάς· οὕτω γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὸ μέγα δόξειεν ἂν μέγα, εἰ τῷ μικρῷ παραμετροῖτο.

an inferior image of themselves, to the conservative role of *mimēsis* itself, which is the creation of works of art whose sole purpose is to highlight the greatness of earlier works of art, for note here that the divine 'possessions or creations' which Prometheus speaks of (in Greek, *ktēma* and *poiēma*) can connote specifically works of *literature* as well other types of possession. This mimetic tradition is deficient specifically because it is mortal and therefore transient and perishable; it serves only to bear witness to the riches and beauty of the divine and everlasting generation that existed before. Should that past go *unattested* – in literary terms, 'unquoted', 'without witness' (*amarturon*) – it would diminish in value; it is the allusive, reiterative power of the mimetic tradition which therefore sustains (and exists to sustain) the canon.

But to compensate for their mortality, Prometheus also gave his humans the gift of supreme inventiveness (*eumēkhanōtaton*) and intelligence (*sunetōtaton*), and the knowledge of what is better (*tou beltionos aisthanomenon*).[31] As a result, some of them exhibit wayward behaviour, 'committing adultery, making war, marrying their sisters and plotting against their fathers'.[32] Clearly, then, the mimetic tradition which Prometheus created is far from docile; it is guilty of criminal attempts to thwart the dynamics of appropriation through illicit interbreeding (adultery, endogamy), Oedipal rebellion (parricide) and general belligerence. This idea emerges again in the later part of Prometheus' story where he warns Zeus against having sex with the Nereid Thetis, because of the prophecy relating to her offspring:

PROMETHEUS: Do not, Zeus, have any association with the Nereid. For if she conceives a child by you, the child that is born will be as powerful as you and will do the things which you did . . .
ZEUS: You mean – I will be overthrown from my rule?
PROMETHEUS: May it not be so, Zeus! But that's the danger of mating (*mixis*) with her.[33]

In several ways, then, Prometheus' story perturbs traditional ways of thinking about how the (literary) generations interrelate, for not only do his own

[31] *Prom.* 12: θνητὸν μέντοι εἶναι τοῦτο, εὐμηχανώτατον δ' ἄλλως καὶ συνετώτατον καὶ τοῦ βελτίονος αἰσθανόμενον.

[32] *Prom.* 16: Ἀλλὰ κακοῦργοί τινες, φής, ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ μοιχεύουσι καὶ πολεμοῦσι καὶ ἀδελφὰς γαμοῦσι καὶ πατράσιν ἐπιβουλεύουσι.

[33] *Dialogues of the gods* 5.2: ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ: Μηδέν, ὦ Ζεῦ, κοινωνήσῃς τῇ Νηρεΐδι· ἢν γὰρ αὕτη κυοφορήσῃ ἐκ σοῦ, τὸ τεχθὲν ἴσα ἐργάσεταί σε οἷα καὶ σὺ ἔδρασας –
ΖΕΥΣ: Τοῦτο φῄς, ἐκπεσεῖσθαί με τῆς ἀρχῆς;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ: Μὴ γένοιτο, ὦ Ζεῦ. πλὴν τοιοῦτό γε ἡ μῖξις αὐτῆς ἀπειλεῖ.

mimetic creations, the humans, challenge their forebears, but his prophecy about the son of Thetis who would one day overthrow his father is itself a warning about the dangers of literary innovation, particularly through the cross-fertilization (*mixis*) of genres: the outcome of such hybridization may, one day, exceed the models which were germane to it – and the canon could be rewritten and replaced. Even in Prometheus' own rebellions against the Olympians, it is unexpectedly the *older* god, the Titan, who takes on the role of the rebel innovator against the younger generation.[34] This is what makes Prometheus the ideal icon for Lucian's modernity: because his mythology represents, not just the conflict between generations but, more subversively, it opens up the unsettling possibility that the mimetic rebels may, in fact, be more original than their predecessors. Prometheus, in Lucian's hands, becomes a champion of a defiant and inventive postclassical poetics.[35]

Lucian and the poetics of (post)modernity

Lucian's claims to literary innovation were, as a gesture in themselves, by no means new; they belonged, rather, to a long tradition of aesthetic rupture and innovation which was coextensive with the Greek literary tradition itself.[36] Lest we succumb to any simplistic narrative about the modernity of the literature of the principate, it is wise to remember that such narratives are not historically descriptive; through their imaginative reconfigurations of what has gone before – as well as their constructed ruptures with their past – they express, rather, the ideologies, anxieties and desires of the present.[37] The poetics of innovation can be found already in the first book of the *Odyssey* when Telemachus, in defiance of his mother

[34] Lucian underlines this paradox in *Prometheus* 7 where Prometheus points out the incongruity of Zeus' 'childish' behaviour (*hōs meirakiou*) in penalizing such an 'ancient' (*palaios*) deity.

[35] Radke (2007, 117–24) interprets the description of Prometheus's agony in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* (2. 1246–59) in similarly metapoetic terms as Apollonius' self-distancing from the archaic epic tradition, though Apollonius' Prometheus, who has been reduced to a disabled voice, represents the withering of the old, not the rebellion of the new.

[36] See D'Angour 2011, 198–202 on the 'tradition of innovation' in ancient Greek music.

[37] Whitmarsh's comments (2013a, 207) on postclassical literature's prosographical construction of rupture with its poetical, classical past are apposite here: 'The creation of a "classical" period is the function of a dynamic and ever unresolved struggle within contemporary culture: to inveigh against the tyranny, barbarism, or effeminacy of poetry was to seek not to replace it with prose but to re-place it as prose's spectral but potent "other" . . . That is to say, Roman Greece's ambiguous relationship to its poetical "classical" past . . . is isomorphous with its ambiguous relationship to its "poetical" elements (the tyrannical, the female, the barbaric, the "other") in the present . . . "The past" is not – cannot ever be – simply a historical descriptive but is (also) a function of desire, a desire that disavows even as it lusts.'

(a generation-conflict which has conspicuous metapoetic significance in the context), praises the Ithacan bard Phemius for his modern repertoire.[38] Modernity pervades the literature of fifth-century Athens, too, in the vehement egotism and polemic of medical writers;[39] through the impact of the sophists' radical new thinking which infiltrated Euripidean tragedy;[40] in Aristophanes' and his fellow comic poets' competitive boasting about the crowd-pleasing novelty of their plots and jokes;[41] and in the theme of generation conflict, where the clash between old and new was exploited for comic effect, especially in the *agōn* of the *Frogs* where the poet Euripides was presented as a slick modernist pitted against crusty traditionalist Aeschylus.[42] In the fifth and fourth centuries, political theorists Damon of Oa (who was also a musician) and Plato worried about the politically unsettling and morally corrupting influence of a new wave of musicians, the dithyrambists Cinesias, Philoxenus and Timotheus.[43]

But although it is nonsensical to draw rigid boundaries, there is nevertheless a sense in which modernity acquired a stronger momentum and a new, hard edge in the postclassical period, for a variety of reasons which are very well known but which, nevertheless, it is worth pointing out briefly.[44] First, the reconfiguration of Greek societies into the great Hellenistic *metropoleis* underscored the breach in continuity with the (largely Athenocentric) culture of the classical past, which in turn stimulated artists' consciousness about the interplay of past and present, tradition and innovation. Secondly, the new literature of the Hellenistic period was itself embedded in a more dynamic modernizing culture and involved the florescence of scientific and technological invention under the sponsorship of the Ptolemies in

[38] D'Angour 2011, 184–9. [39] Lloyd 1987, 56–70.

[40] On the 'innovationist turn' in fifth century Athens, see D'Angour 2011, 216–24. Euripides is often viewed as a modernist, especially on the strength of his claims to mythic innovation (McDermott 1991), but Wright (2010, 179–81) cautions against reading such claims at face value.

[41] On the slippery, dissimulative nature of the comedians' claims to comedy, however, see the excellent discussion in Wright 2012, 70–102; D'Angour (2011, 211–6) discusses the theme of novelty in *Clouds*.

[42] On the *agōn* of *Frogs* and the literary-critical tradition, see Hunter 2010, 10–52 with further bibliography. Wright 2012 explores the critical gravamen of Old Comedy more broadly (including fragmentary texts).

[43] Plato *Rep.* 424b–c. On the 'new music' of the fourth century BCE, see D'Angour 2011, 202–6, who notes: 'The new musical styles that became popular in Athens in these decades were associated by conservative thinkers with educational laxness, sexual permissiveness and antisocial individualism, attributes inevitably attached to the rebellious "younger generation"' (204). On Timotheus and his influence, see Csapo and Wilson 2009.

[44] It is recognized that many of the tendencies which are so marked in the literature of the Hellenistic period are present already in the literature of the fourth century: for discussion, see Acosta-Hughes 2010, with further bibliography; Whitmarsh (2013a, 192–4) discusses Isocrates' 'anxiety of influence'. Radke (2007, 145–50) discusses the distinctive epochal qualities of Hellenistic literature.

Alexandria and dynasties in other Hellenistic cities as well.[45] Third, with the building of an archive in the library of the *Mouseion*, the classical canon had begun to harden into a more solid and dominating influence. There may, thereafter, have been novel ways of interacting with its influence (refinement, eclecticism, revisionism), but interaction itself was unavoidable. This gave rise to what D'Angour calls 'the paradox of innovation', the conditions whereby the 'strong consciousness of the weight of tradition can . . . be a springboard for innovative thought and expression'.[46]

Now, it is fairly obvious that each ostensible attempt to break free of tradition is, at the same time, an invitation to be read as a distinctive voice *within* that tradition; equally, each protest is itself an assertion of allegiance to a tradition of counter-culture and a provocation to be measured against other similar gestures of literary-cultural rebellion. In Lucian's case, it is clear enough what he was rattling *against*: a stifling and over-rigid Classicism. But how do his claims to modernity measure up within the continuum of such claims to counter-cultural innovation? How does Lucian's modernity compare, for example, with that of Callimachus? To be clear: I am not advocating any teleological connections between the two, for none (to my mind) exists. Lucian happily cites other classical innovators (Zeuxis and Timotheus, for example) as models for his artistic experimentation, but there is no evidence to suggest that he adopted Callimachus as a model for his own modernism. Still, and notwithstanding Lucian's general eschewal of Hellenistic literature in favour of emulating authors from the classical and archaic past, it is clear that he was better acquainted with his postclassical predecessors than he likes to confess, and that he knew Callimachus.[47] Both Callimachus and Lucian offer us distinctive voices of modernity, and a closer examination of the differences between them will enable us to discover discrete and subtler currents within the tide of postclassical modernism.

[45] On royal patronage for the development of science and technology in Alexandria and in other Hellenistic cities, see Schürmann 1991, 13–32 and White 1993. For discussions which contextualize Hellenistic literature within this wider culture of innovation, see Strootman 2010, esp. 32–7.

[46] D'Angour 2011, 62.

[47] Lucian probably knows Theocritus (*Dialogues of the sea-gods* 1) and – by reputation at least – Nicander (*Dipsads* 3 and 9), the bucolic poet Dosiades and Lycophron (*Lexiphanes* 25); see Bompaire (1958, 571–8) on the minor dialogues and Hellenistic poetry. When the charlatan teacher in *A professor in public speaking* 17 advises his student, for the purposes of evading exposure, to study less familiar literary models, he recommends declamatory exercises (*meletai*) and 'the works of those who lived just shortly before our time' (*tous tōn oligon pro hēmōn logous*). The latter category certainly includes postclassical writers, even if it strains Lucian's *oligon* to reach back as far as the early Alexandrian period.

In his famous prologue to his *Aetia*, Callimachus dramatizes his polemic against the malevolence of his detractors, who are represented in the poem by the sinister wizard-sculptors of myth, the Telchines, and he uses a complex of images from the natural world (the child, nightingale, cicada, dew, the untrodden path) to characterize his new poetry as playful, artistically refined, melodious, light and esoteric – in contrast with the brash, weighty and cacophonous noise of his more traditionalist rivals.[48] In the *Hymn to Apollo* (106–12), Callimachus once again inveighs against the traditional literary aesthetic, this time through the polemic between Envy and Apollo, the god of poetry. The poet draws once again on the natural world, using water-imagery and the metaphor of the bee to reinforce vividly the aesthetic of the *Aetia* prologue:

> 'I do not admire the poet who does not sing as much as the sea.'
> Apollo kicked Envy with his foot and spoke as follows:
> 'Great is the stream of the Assyrian river,
> but it drags with it vast quantities of earthly scum and rubbish in its water.
> The bees do not bring water for Demeter from all over –
> but from whatever tiny spring trickles up pure and untainted
> from a holy source,
> only the barest, choicest drop.'[49]

Here Callimachus reworks the Pindaric metaphor of the poet-as-bee[50] to emphasize the exquisite refinement of his new literary aesthetic, in stark contrast with the vast but polluted 'oceanic' expanses of traditional, epic poetry.[51] Through his rich figurative vocabulary, Callimachus' poetry is converted into a numinous landscape of holy springs and pure streams, inhabited by minute, melodious creatures who are devoted to the gods.

Lucian also uses the bee as a metaliterary metaphor – but to make a strikingly different point. In *Fisherman*, Parrhesiades, who is a cipher for the author, defends his attack on sham philosophers in the essay *Philosophies*

[48] The poet's desire to cast off the burden of old age (33–6) seems to point, in both a literal and a metaliterary sense, to the yearning for youth and also liberation from the weight of tradition. Callimachus' striking image of the poet as child has traditionally been interpreted as an indication of his work's playfulness and lack of serious purpose (e.g. Snell 1982, 264–80), but Cozzoli (2011) re-evaluates it as an expression of the poet's childlike ability to marvel and craving for knowledge, as well as a light-hearted aesthetic which is characteristic of both Hellenistic and postmodernist literature such as the work of Calvino (Cozzoli 2011, 428).

[49] Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 110–12.

[50] For the bee in Pindar, see *Pythian* 10. 54 (poet as bee); *Olympian* 7.7–8 (poetry and song as nectar). For honey and bees as images for poetry see Waszink 1974. Poliakoff (1980) examines Callimachus' debt to Pindaric metapoetic imagery more generally.

[51] On water-imagery in ancient literary criticism, see Hunter 2003, 219–25, with further bibliography.

for sale and affirms to the great philosophers of the past the enormous debt he owes to them:

> At what point or where have I insulted you – I who have never wavered in my admiration for philosophy, in my extravagant praise for you yourselves and in my constant use of the works which you have left behind? These words which I am saying now – where else did I get them from, if not from you? I make my display before people after harvesting flowers like the bee (*kata tēn melittan apanthisamenos*); the audience who cheer and recognize where, from whom and how I have gathered each individual flower – they appear to admire me for my flower-gathering (*anthologia*), but in fact it's *you* and *your* meadow (*leimōn*) they are admiring: you who have produced blossoms of such varied and variegated hues, that they need only someone who knows how to (*epistaito*) select (*analexasthai*), interweave (*anaplexai*) and join them together (*harmosai*) so that there is no disharmony (*hōs mē apaidein*) between any one bloom and another.[52]

In the *Hymn to Apollo*, Callimachus emphasizes the minute quantity of the bee's precious load to represent the refinement of his own poetry; the bee itself is the mere porter for poetic influences. In Lucian's *Fisherman*, however, Lucian refocuses on the synthesizing expertise (*epistēmē*) of the bee as a metaphor for his own creative hybridizing of influences from the literary past. With an imaginative sleight of hand, Lucian's bee appears not simply to gather pollen from the flowers, but to cull and arrange the flowers themselves into aesthetically pleasing bouquets. This assimilates the bee's activity to other programmatic metaphors elsewhere in Lucian's works such as the sculptor or painter who aim similarly to dispose their media and influences in creative new forms. The Lucianic bee therefore imports a process of cultured refinement from nature (the meadow or *leimōn* of the past) which is absent from the Callimachean passage, giving Lucian's modernity a synthetic quality which Callimachus does not envisage. To reinforce this, Lucian also turns boldly to the *un*natural world of hippocentaurs and other fantastic animals, presenting his literary innovations in terms of a Frankensteinian hybridisation of his predecessors' work. Where Callimachus assimilated the poet to miniature, winged creatures like the bee,

[52] *Fisherman* 6: Ποῦ γὰρ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἢ πότε ὕβρικα, ὃς ἀεὶ φιλοσοφίαν τε θαυμάζων διατετέλεκα καὶ ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς ὑπερεπαινῶν καὶ τοῖς λόγοις οἷς καταλελοίπατε ὁμιλῶν; αὐτὰ γοῦν ἅ φημι ταῦτα, πόθεν ἄλλοθεν ἢ παρ᾿ ὑμῶν λαβὼν καὶ κατὰ τὴν μέλιτταν ἀπανθισάμενος ἐπιδείκνυμαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις; οἱ δὲ ἐπαινοῦσι καὶ γνωρίζουσιν ἕκαστον τὸ ἄνθος ὅθεν καὶ παρ᾿ ὅτου καὶ ὅπως ἀνελεξάμην, καὶ λόγῳ μὲν ἐμὲ ζηλοῦσι τῆς ἀνθολογίας, τὸ δ᾿ ἀληθὲς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὸν λειμῶνα τὸν ὑμέτερον, οἳ τοιαῦτα ἐξηνθήκατε ποικίλα καὶ πολυειδῆ τὰς βαφάς, εἴ τις ἀναλέξασθαί τε αὐτὰ ἐπίσταιτο καὶ ἀναπλέξαι καὶ ἁρμόσαι, ὡς μὴ ἀπᾴδειν θάτερον θατέρου. See Camerotto 1998, 263–302.

nightingale and cicada which are contrasted in the *Aetia* prologue with the Telchines, Lucian assimilates himself to inventive culture-heroes and artists like the rebel-god Prometheus, the painter Zeuxis and the musician Timotheus.[53]

The hybridity which is central to Lucian's rich metaphorical lexicon – the hippocentaur, the bee, Promethean clay – is easy to accommodate to the contemporary poetics of eclectic *mimēsis*,[54] which is theorized in the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Maximus of Tyre and the author of the treatise *On the sublime* (in the first century BCE, second and late second/early third centuries CE respectively).[55] In a well-known passage from his treatise *On imitation*, Dionysius explains the technique of eclectic *mimēsis* with two parables, the first of which involves an ugly farmer who, by making his wife contemplate paintings before sex, used art to ensure they begat beautiful offspring, since his own nature could not be guaranteed to do so.

> That it is necessary to read the writings of the ancients so that we may draw from that source not only the raw material for our project but also the desire to emulate their forms of expression. For by continual observation, the reader's soul draws into itself similarity of character, just like what happened to the farmer's wife in the story. For they say a farmer who was ugly in appearance was afraid that he would beget children in his own likeness. But this very fear taught him the skill of culture: he showed beautiful pictures to his wife and accustomed her to looking at them; having sex with her after that, he benefited from the pictures' beauty. In this way, similarity is produced through imitation of words when one strives to surpass each of the

[53] Timotheus is the representative of artistic innovation and fame-seeking in the *prolalia Harmonides*. Zeuxis is invoked primarily as a model for artistic innovation, but as both Billault (2006, 56–7) and Pretzler (2009, 165) note, Zeuxis also had a reputation for self-promotion (e.g. the story that he appeared in Olympia wearing a cloak which bore his own name embroidered in golden thread, Pliny, *NH* 35.62) – and arrogance, too (e.g. demanding fees for the privilege of looking at his work, Aelian *VH* 4.12). Although Pretzler is surely right that Zeuxis' showmanship must have appealed to Lucian's own desire for fame, there are indications that he wished to distance himself from the Classical painter's haughty disdain for his popular audience: Lucian reproves Zeuxis gently for acting 'with too much anger, perhaps' (*orgilōteron isōs*, *Zeuxis* 8), and in contrast with him, he decides to have faith in his audience's judgement. Pretzler (2009, 166) also suggests that Zeuxis, as painter of the fantastic centaur, was a symbol for the artist's ability to make the unbelievable credible.

[54] This holds equally well for Lucian's hybrid monsters for, as Romm (1990, 84 n. 17) points out, 'ancient theories of perception and cognition held that every hybrid image had to be composed of elements from objects that had once been taken in by the senses', for example Lucretius *On the nature of things* 4. 731–48. Sillitti (1980) examines the philosophical implications of the hybrid animal.

[55] For discussion of these passages, see Hunter (2010, 107–27) and also Whitmarsh (2001, 41–89), with a slant on the poetics of posteriority. On Dionysius' theory of eclectic *mimēsis* see Hidber 1996, 56–75.

> ancient authors and, as if gathering one stream from many sources, channels that into the soul.[56]

In this anecdote, the husband's insemination of his wife is assimilated to the aestheticizing effects of the past which figuratively impregnates the present. There is an obvious analogy to be made with the image which is used in *On the sublime* of the Delphic priestess as she receives the inspiration of the god Apollo, which is used to illustrate the inseminating influence which the literary genius of the past exerts on a sterile present – a process which, as I shall argue later, is played out subversively through Lucian's own encounters with the Vine-women and Ass-legs in *True stories*.[57] Through the husband's skilful (*tekhnē*) collocation of raw material (his wife) and the aesthetic resources of the past (the pictures), the beauty of the classical images effectively sculpts the inert but plastic embryo in the wife's womb like clay; in a similar way, Dionysius claims, the past can shape the rude material of the present through the artifice of *mimēsis*.[58]

There is a clear difference, however, between the obedience to the past that is implied in both Dionysius' sculptural metaphor and in the cognate model of inspiration in *On the sublime*, and the more wayward mimetic animation which Lucian envisages in *You are a literary Prometheus*. Comparison of Dionysius' and Lucian's use of the same artistic metaphor for eclectic *mimēsis* will highlight the difference between their poetics more clearly. In the same treatise, to provide a working example of how the mimetic technique works,[59] Dionysius tells the anecdote about Zeuxis

[56] *On imitation*, p. 31.1–3 Aujac: Ὅτι δεῖ τοῖς τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐντυγχάνειν συγγράμμασιν, ἵν᾽ ἐντεῦθεν μὴ μόνον τῆς ὑποθέσεως τὴν ὕλην ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν τῶν ἰδιωμάτων ζῆλον χορηγηθῶμεν. ἡ γὰρ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος ὑπὸ τῆς συνεχοῦς παρατηρήσεως τὴν ὁμοιότητα τοῦ χαρακτῆρος ἐφέλκεται. ὁποῖόν τι καὶ γυναῖκα ἀγροίκου παθεῖν ὁ μῦθος λέγει· ἀνδρί, φασί, γεωργῷ τὴν ὄψιν αἰσχρῷ παρέστη δέος, μὴ τέκνων ὁμοίων γένηται πατήρ· ὁ φόβος δὲ αὐτὸν οὗτος εὐπαιδίας ἐδίδαξε τέχνην. καὶ εἰκόνας παραδείξας εὐπρεπεῖς εἰς αὐτὰς βλέπειν εἴθισε τὴν γυναῖκα· καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα συγγενόμενος αὐτῇ τὸ κάλλος εὐτύχησε τῶν εἰκόνων. οὕτω καὶ λόγων μιμήσεσιν ὁμοιότης τίκτεται, ἐπὰν ζηλώσῃ τις τὸ παρ᾽ ἑκάστῳ τῶν παλαιῶν βέλτιον εἶναι δοκοῦν καὶ καθά περ ἐκ πολλῶν ναμάτων ἕν τι συγκομίσας ῥεῦμα τοῦτ᾽ εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν μετοχετεύσῃ. On this passage, see Whitmarsh 2001, 73.

[57] *On the sublime* 13.2; for discussion, see Chapter 6, pp. 208–16.

[58] See Whitmarsh 2001, 73: 'Procreation is normally a paradeigmatically 'natural' process . . . but on this occasion, the farmer artfully improvises . . . Thanks to human ingenuity, the weaknesses of nature may be transcended.' On the idea of 'maternal impression' in ancient literature, see Reeve 1989. Whitmarsh (2013a, 286) complicates the androcentrism of Dionysius' theory of *mimēsis* by pointing out that the operation of male artifice in this anecdote 'depends on a cooperation with female reproductivity.' Whitmarsh (1998 and 2001, 81–7) explores the metaliterary ramifications of the interplay between nature and culture in both Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* and Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Tales*.

[59] Dionysius (*On imitation* p. 31.4 Aujac) introduces the Zeuxis anecdote as 'authentication in real life' of the story of the ugly farmer: καί μοι παρίσταται πιστώσασθαι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον ἔργῳ·

painting a picture of Helen out of a composite of the most beautiful features of a multitude of girls from Croton.[60]

> The individual picture-worthy features in each were assembled (*ēthroisthē*) into a single image of a body (*eis mian . . . sōmatos eikona*), and out of a composite of many parts, art (*hē tekhnē*) composed (*sunethēken*) one perfect image. And so it is possible for you too, just as in a theatre, to survey the forms of ancient bodies and harvest (*apanthizesthai*) the better part of their soul and, as you gather together (*sullegonti*) the store of erudition, to fashion (*tupoun*), not an image of art which will be perishable with time, but the everlasting beauty of art itself.[61]

Dionysius' use of the verb *apanthizesthai* 'to cull flowers' (precisely the verb used by Lucian also in *Fisherman*) hints that the eclectic technique is analogous to the nectar-gathering bee, though the metaphor is not made explicit.[62]

This Zeuxis-story is obviously the model for Lucian's neo-Zeuxidian eclecticism in his *Portraits* dialogues where Lycinus declares that he will 'join together (*sunarmosas*) as best I can parts of all these [most beautiful statues] and show you one image (*mian eikona*) which possesses the choice qualities of each'.[63] By a process of meta-sculpture, in which he selects and combines (figuratively) the choice parts of the sculptures of the past, Lycinus depicts the imperial consort Panthea for Polystratus and, at the same time, dramatizes his own eclectic and mimetic compositional technique:[64] Polystratus' doubts about the overall harmony of Lycinus' eclectic image are

[60] Dionysius, *On imitation* pp. 31–2 Aujac; cf. Cicero, *de Inv.* 2.1–4; Pliny *NH*. 35.64. For discussion, see Whitmarsh 2001, 73–4 and Hunter 2010, 109–20.

[61] Dionysius, *On imitation* p. 32.4–5 Aujac: ὅ δ' ἦν ἄξιον παρ' ἑκάστῃ γραφῆς, ἐς μίαν ἠθροίσθη σώματος εἰκόνα, κἀκ πολλῶν μερῶν συλλογῆς ἕν τι συνέθηκεν ἡ τέχνη τέλειον [καλὸν] εἶδος. τοιγαροῦν πάρεστι καὶ σοὶ καθά περ ἐν θεάτρῳ παλαιῶν σωμάτων ἰδέας ἐξιστορεῖν καὶ τῆς ἐκείνων ψυχῆς ἀπανθίζεσθαι τὸ κρεῖττον, καὶ τὸν τῆς πολυμαθείας ἔρανον συλλέγοντι οὐκ ἐξίτηλον χρόνῳ γενησομένην εἰκόνα τυποῦν ἀλλ' ἀθάνατον τέχνης κάλλος. As Hunter (2010, 114) points out, there is a similarity between this passage in Dionysius and the sculptural metaphor used by Maximus of Tyre (17.3) to describe artists who 'gathering together (*sunagagontes*) the beautiful part of each and assembling (*athroisantes*) with skill (*kata tēn tekhnēn*) all of the disparate bodies into a single copy (*eis mimēsin mian*), produced a single, sound work of beauty, perfection and internal harmony (*hērmosmenon auto hautōi*)'.

[62] On the language of 'collecting' in the Dionysius passage, see Hunter (2010, 124–5), who cites additional examples (not, however, Lucian), including Cicero *De Inv.* 2.4 *libauimus* 'we have sampled', and Horace's 'bee of Matina' in his Pindar ode, *Odes* 4.2.17–34 (the latter image, however, reads to me – especially in connection with the water-imagery of the poem – as a version of the Callimachean bee and a metaphor for the poet's exquisite refinement, rather than his eclecticism).

[63] *Portraits* 5: ἐξ ἁπασῶν ἤδη τούτων ὡς οἷόν τε συναρμόσας μίαν σοι εἰκόνα ἐπιδείξω, τὸ ἐξαίρετον παρ' ἑκάστης ἔχουσαν.

[64] Both Goldhill (2001, 184–93) and Zeitlin (2001, 224–33) read the *Portraits* dialogues as concerned principally with panegyric rhetoric; for Goldhill, they constitute an 'unresolved *agon* about the proprieties of social exchange' (193), whereas Zeitlin emphasizes how Lucian explores the relation

identical to Lucian's own concerns about the harmony of his compositions in *You are a literary Prometheus*, for example,[65] and Lycinus also expresses a general anxiety about mimetic artwork with his fear that the copy will actually taint the originals after which it is fashioned.[66] However, if Dionysius' anecdote shows *mimēsis* (Zeuxis' painting) to be an improvement on nature (the girls of Croton) through artifice,[67] by changing a key detail in the story so that Lycinus combines elements from *works of art* rather than from the natural models in Dionysius' version, Lucian reverses the dialectic between nature and art in a way that not only foregrounds the unabashed syntheticism of his approach, but also (pointedly, I think) distinguishes Lucian's poetics from Dionysius'.[68] Dionysius represented the classical canon with a pageant of girls which the artist uses, eclectically, as his model. The gender politics of this anecdote are entwined with the dialectic between nature and culture in a way that reinforces the message in the earlier anecdote about the ugly farmer and his wife: both stories present the canon as a female and natural resource which is refined through the artifice of a male agent. For Lycinus in *Portraits*, however, the pageant of girls has hardened into a museum of beautiful but lifeless statues – which are converted imaginatively, through Lucian's *mimēsis*, into the real woman Panthea herself, whose name evokes Pandora, the archetypal product of eclectic *mimēsis*.[69]

In a complete reversal of Dionysius' version where Zeuxis transforms life into art, in Lucian's hands, *mimēsis* has become a quasi-magical process

between image and text and 'calls into question the very foundation of anthropomorphic representations of divinity' (225). My own reading here is closer to Maffei (1986), who emphasizes the metapoetic dimension of the dialogues and contextualizes Lucian's *mimetic* technique against the contemporary trend for classicizing eclecticism in art. The importance of the Zeuxis anecdote is widely recognized in the scholarship: Maffei 1986, 154–7; Bretzigheimer 1992, 170; Zeitlin 2001, 227; Hunter 2010, 118–20.

[65] *Portraits* 5. Later in the dialogue, when it is Polystratus' turn to present an image of the woman's soul, he eschews the eclectic technique altogether (*Portraits* 15).

[66] *Portraits* 3: ἐγὼ δὲ λυμανοῦμαι τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἀσθενείᾳ τῆς τέχνης.

[67] See Whitmarsh 2001, 74: 'In Dionysius' anecdote . . . art (*tekhnē*) creates something unnatural and hybrid . . . Dionysius' "rescue" of *mimēsis*, however, is premised upon the notion that the artful, artificial, and secondary is, in fact, superior to the natural; or, rather, nature is best represented through non-natural combinations.'

[68] Thinking along similar lines, Maffei (1986, 157–64) also observes Lucian's substitution of art for nature in his version of the Zeuxis-anecdote, which she reads in terms of the dialectic between art and nature in the aesthetics of the imperial period; the denser artificiality of Lucian's *mimēsis* is, in her view, 'connected to the formulation of a new concept of imitation which is consistent with the changing demands of contemporary tastes' (160–1).

[69] The description of Pandora's creation is in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 59–82. Korus (1981, 52–4) argues that the harmony between Panthea's moral values and physical beauty in *Portraits* is meant to contrast positively with Pandora who, in spite of her beauty, was a curse for mankind; Sidwell (2002, 123–4), polemically, emphasizes the subversive ironies of the allusion instead. Zeitlin (2001, 231–2) notes the similarity between Panthea and Pandora inasmuch are both are composite products of hybridizing artistry.

which animates – or better, *revivifies* – art, for in the second essay of the diptych, *In defence of portraits*, the actual woman Panthea *talks back* to the author, questions the propriety of her own representation and demands rewriting.[70] As Goldhill argues, Panthea's response converts the *Portraits* dialogues from encomium into discussion of the politics of representation: 'The proffering of praise has become an exchange about the proprieties of praise';[71] moreover, the unresolved ending of the diptych engages the reader in an open-ended way with its central questions about representation: 'by withholding finally an answer to the distinction between praise and flattery, and whether it will be accepted by Panthea, Lucian engages the reader in the business of recognizing the complexity of the social positioning of giving and receiving praise.'[72] But this indeterminacy can be interpreted in terms of Lucian's own poetics too: in the fictional quarrel between Lycinus and Panthea we may read the struggle between author and reader for semiotic control of the text. In the diptych of the *Portraits* dialogues, in other words, Lucian dramatizes his failure to control the reception of his own text, which in turn ironizes his attempts to assert that control in his prologal speeches, the *prolaliai*.[73] If Dionysius presents his poetics as postclassical and conservatively classicizing, Lucian presents *his* poetics as *post*-postclassical, liberating and anarchic.[74]

High culture, low culture

The monstrous hybridity of Lucian's works plays out too in his omnivorous appetite for a mixture of elements from both high culture and low, a facet of his compositional technique (and authorial persona) which is

[70] *In defence of portraits* 1–12. [71] Goldhill 2001, 190–2; citation from p. 191.

[72] Goldhill 2001, 193.

[73] See Whitmarsh (2006, 110): 'Lucian's texts focus obsessively upon the process of reception of literary and artistic product. These highly mobile satires portray a dynamic cultural environment in which the aesthetic work is not a sealed monument, but the object of debate. In three cases, Lucian composes separate epilogues to earlier texts of his, describing and countering reactions to the latter.' These three works are *In defence of portraits* (redressing *Portraits*), *Apology* (redressing *Scholars for hire*) and *Fisherman* (redressing *Philosophers for sale*). There is also a clear sense in which *True stories* opens up the theory of lies which is developed in *Philopseudes* – and that Lucian intends these two works to be read cross-referentially to one another: see ní Mheallaigh 2009, 128 (on the cross-referentiality), and also pp. 174–7 below.

[74] This anarchic tendency is played out in scholarship on the *Portraits* dialogues, where the traditional assumption that they are straightforwardly encomiastic has been exploded by interpretations which emphasize their subversive nature (Sidwell 2002) or view Lucian's mischievous ambiguity as a dramatization of the delicate business of talking about public figures like the emperor (Goldhill 2001). For a critical overview of scholarly opinion, see Sidwell 2002, 108–9.

only slowly getting due acknowledgement in scholarship. Lucian gives his literary hybridity social traction in *Saturnalia*, a work whose bumpy, hybrid literary form (consisting of a mixture of dialogue, letters and a set of festival laws) reflects the social subversion which was the hallmark of the *Saturnalia* festival itself.[75] Throughout his work more generally, he cites not only the authors of the high canon (Homer, Plato, etc.), but Christian literature as well;[76] *Philopseudes* shows particularly clearly the imprint of paradoxography, wonder-literature, and subliterary ghost-stories and folklore;[77] and as author of the *Onos* (for, recent trenchant arguments notwithstanding, I still believe this possibility remains open),[78] Lucian was dabbling in a current of subliterary comic narrative that, as papyrus discoveries have shown, also fed popular genres like the mime.[79] Comedy and mime are clear influences on the *Dialogues of the courtesans*,[80] and he devoted an entire treatise *On the dance* to elevate the cultural prestige of pantomime, an enormously popular art-form in the Roman world, but one which was distinctly *déclassé*.[81]

On the dance is particularly audacious for the way in which Lucian assimilates a low-cultural art-form to his own poetics. Among the aspects of performance which the speaker Lycinus singles out most for praise is the aesthetic of hybridity itself: the pantomime-dancer's extraordinary – and dangerous – ability to transcend the boundaries of his or her own body, apparently, and to embody, through a sequence of sinuous movements, different characters, moods and stories.[82] For this reason, Lycinus argues, the shape-shifters of mythology, Proteus and the monstrous Empousa, must originally have been dancers:

[75] Goldhill 2001, 162–3; Slater 2013. [76] von Möllendorff 2005. [77] Cf. pp. 94–7 below.

[78] For discussion of this controversial question, see p. 126, n. 74. Irrespective of who actually wrote this version of the ass-tale, it is still valuable that the work was *believed* to be by Lucian, as this tells us that Lucian was perceived as an author who could plausibly have written low-brow, comic fiction.

[79] For discussion, see Whitmarsh 2009, esp. 134–5. *POxy* 4762 seems to reference a different version of the *Ass* story which may have been part of a mime (see *Ad POxy* 4762, 23).

[80] See Bompaire 1958, 569–71 on Lucian's minor dialogues and New Comedy, and 579–84 on the minor dialogues and mime.

[81] Lucian's contemporary, Aelius Aristides, excoriated pantomime in a treatise which is now lost (but whose invective can be reconstructed out of Libanius' later response *On behalf of dancers*, *Or.* 64). Lucian's polemical assertion of pantomime's aesthetic and cultural value in *On the dance* is usually interpreted as flattery of the emperor Lucius Verus, who favoured the genre. Sidwell (2002, 125), however, tentatively suggests that Lucian's praise could be ironic, making this essay a companion to the 'paradoxical eulogy' of the emperor's consort Panthea in Lucian's *Portraits* dialogues. On pantomime itself as a hybrid discourse, see Lada-Richards 2007, 127–34.

[82] On the dangers which the dance's kinetic fluidity posed to the classical ideal of the elite body, see Lada-Richards 2007, 64–78.

> For it seems to me that the ancient myth about Proteus the Egyptian means nothing other than that he was a dancer, for he was a mimic (*mimētikon anthrōpon*) and able to adapt and change his form to every shape: to imitate (*mimeisthai*) the fluidity of water and the rapidity of fire in the forcefulness of his movement, or the ferocity of a lion, a leopard's courage and the bending of the bole of a tree – absolutely anything he wanted. The myth took that and transformed it into a weirder story about his nature, as if he actually became the very things which he was imitating (*emimeito*). But that's the ability which the dancers of today have, too; you would see them changing rapidly in form at the required time and imitating (*mimoumenous*) Proteus himself. One must surmise that Empousa who, according to the traditional myth, transformed herself into myriad shapes, was a similar sort of being as well.[83]

Through Lycinus' euhemeristic logic, Proteus and Empousa become models for mimetic virtuosity not only because of their kaleidoscopic kinetic repertoire but also because of the astonishing realism of their mimetic fictions;[84] in such a skilled performance, the boundaries between the mimic and what is imitated seem to vanish, and the imitated entity is instantiated *as reality*, through the skill of the mimetic artist. This very slippage is replicated in the myths which converted Proteus and Empousa from mimics into actual shape-shifters, creatures of unstable identities. It was no wonder that the pantomime fascinated Lucian: with its resistance to fixity of form and its ideal of perfect mimetic illusion, it provided a compelling analogue for Lucian's own Promethean fictions – and, more pragmatically – one which had the imperial seal of approval. Lucian's defence, therefore, of the aesthetic value of the pantomimes' outsider art may have been more than a straightforward attempt to ingratiate himself with the emperor by concocting an acceptable genealogy for the lowbrow imperial tastes; it may equally have been a bid for imperial favour for his own pantomimic literary creations. As Lada-Richards shows, Lycinus' attempts to reclaim pantomime by freighting it with the symbolic capital of the cultural elite in fact distort

[83] *On the dance* 19: δοκεῖ γάρ μοι ὁ παλαιὸς μῦθος καὶ Πρωτέα τὸν Αἰγύπτιον οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ ὀρχηστήν τινα γενέσθαι λέγειν, μιμητικὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ πρὸς πάντα σχηματίζεσθαι καὶ μεταβάλλεσθαι δυνάμενον, ὡς καὶ ὕδατος ὑγρότητα μιμεῖσθαι καὶ πυρὸς ὀξύτητα ἐν τῇ τῆς κινήσεως σφοδρότητι καὶ λέοντος ἀγριότητα καὶ παρδάλεως θυμὸν καὶ δένδρου δόνημα, καὶ ὅλως ὅ τι καὶ θελήσειεν. ὁ δὲ μῦθος παραλαβὼν πρὸς τὸ παραδοξότερον τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ διηγήσατο, ὡς γιγνομένου ταῦτα ἅπερ ἐμιμεῖτο. ὅπερ δὴ καὶ τοῖς νῦν ὀρχουμένοις πρόσεστιν, ἴδοις τ᾽ ἂν οὖν αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν ὠκέως διαλλαττομένους καὶ αὐτὸν μιμουμένους τὸν Πρωτέα. εἰκάζειν δὲ χρὴ καὶ τὴν Ἔμπουσαν τὴν ἐς μυρίας μορφὰς μεταβαλλομένην τοιαύτην τινὰ ἄνθρωπον ὑπὸ τοῦ μύθου παραδεδόσθαι.

[84] At *On the dance* 37–61 Lycinus enumerates all of the different plots from mythology which the ideal pantomime-dancer will have at his command. On the technologies of the body in the pantomime's art, see Lada-Richards 2007, 38–55.

it into a 'designer brand' of pantomime which was probably unrecognizable to 'the man in the street, the non-urbane, uncultured spectator'.[85] This not only tells us that the ability to adapt to the exigencies of a variety of cultural narratives was characteristic of pantomime's 'chameleon nature', as Lada-Richards argues;[86] it also reveals something of Lucian's synoptic, cannibalizing view of culture which assimilated so many contemporary art-forms, both high *and* low (tragedy, comedy, painting, sculpture, dance) to his own.[87]

In his essay *You are a literary Prometheus*, Lucian turns away from the perfectly sculpted artefacts of the high culture of the past; not for him the unique achievements of Pheidias, Praxiteles and Myron, individually renowned artists who carved the Olympian gods in crystalline forms of marble, ivory and gold; instead, Lucian presents his works as cheap and ephemeral creations, mass-produced like the pots of so many low-rate (and unindividuated) artisans or 'Prometheuses' in Athens' potters' quarter, in forms of wax or clay.[88] Wax, as the basic writing-material in antiquity, is particularly apposite for this metaliterary metaphor. By choosing pliant materials for his literary 'sculptures', in contrast with the hard and precious substances of the classical masters, Lucian constructs a poetics which privileges the supple manipulation of forms over the creation of rigid archetypes, as Romm argues.[89] Lucian's poetics emerge as a preference for pliability, in contrast with rigid Classicism, and for exuberant hybridity, both of which combine in a power-struggle with the classical canon.

Lucian's creative energies thrive in the formative flux of his work rather than in the finished product, which represents for him a potentially dangerous hardening into dogma that renders the author vulnerable to attack. 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:[90]

[85] Lada-Richards 2007, 102; see pp. 79–97 for discussion of Lycinus' attempts 'to annex the dancer's art to high culture' (129), and pp. 130–4 on the resulting distortion.

[86] Lada-Richards 2007, 102.

[87] Lycinus presents pantomime itself as an amalgam of philosophy, music, rhetoric, painting and sculpture (*On the dance* 35) and argues that acting (*hypokrisis*) is the shared goal of both pantomime-dancers and public speakers (*On the dance* 65).

[88] *You are a literary Prometheus* 2.

[89] Romm 1990, 75. Romm draws a contrast with the sculptural metaphor used by the author of the treatise *On the sublime*: 'whereas [Longinus] . . . describes his era's imitation of ancient masters as an ἀποτύπωσις, a rigid "stamping" of their dies onto wax or clay, Lucian prefers a more free-handed and original manipulation of his materials, though he remains wary of the complex problems that his freedom creates.'

[90] See Romm 1990, 93 (on this passage): 'We cannot tell from this brief analogy just what kind of stoning Lucian fears, but clearly he feels himself most vulnerable before his critics when he attempts

> Cleon was a Prometheus-after-the-event. And the Athenians themselves jokingly called potters and oven-makers and all clay-workers of that sort 'Prometheuses' because of their clay or, I suppose, the baking of their wares in fire. Now if *that's* what you mean by calling me 'Prometheus', then you've hit the nail on the head with the Attic wit of your jokes, since my works are indeed fragile, just like their little pots, and one small stone's throw would smash them all.[91]

Underlying this image is an analogy between the clayey and adaptable text-in-performance, and the fragile ceramic of the polished product. The paradox of the monumental text which is at once durable and susceptible to the eroding force of time is common in the literature of the Roman empire – as are the lapidary and deathly associations of writing itself;[92] in Lucian's work, as we shall see, written texts are often provisional and fragmentary.[93] But Lucian's anxiety in this case is founded also on the fact that for him, evasion is a key strategy for the sophist's self-preservation, as the reference in the quoted passage to Cleon, the famously slippery demagogue of fifth-century Athens, suggests.[94] What is spoken in the heat of *ex tempore* performance can be denied, qualified or otherwise explained away; but once thoughts and expressions have been unleashed on the world in the form of the published text, they are exposed to censure, impossible to *un*write and vastly more tricky to defend – as Lucian discovers to his embarrassment when a change in his personal circumstances makes it necessary for him to write an *Apology* for his vitriolic satire in *On scholars for hire*.[95] For this reason too, the specious teacher in *A professor in public speaking* cautions the student never to write a word:

to give his work a definitive, lasting outline, that is, by firing it. For a Promethean πηλοπλάθος, fragility and frangibility, the qualities of the finished pot, impose rather serious limitations; to retain his most vital artistic powers he must keep his clay wet.'

[91] *You are a literary Prometheus* 2: Κλέων Προμηθεύς ἐστι μετὰ τὰ πράγματα. καὶ αὐτοὶ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι τοὺς χυτρέας καὶ ἰπνοποιοὺς καὶ πάντας ὅσοι πηλουργοί Προμηθέας ἀπεκάλουν ἐπισκώπτοντες ἐς τὸν πηλὸν ἢ καὶ τὴν ἐν πυρὶ οἶμαι τῶν σκευῶν ὄπτησιν. καὶ εἴ γε σοι τοῦτο βούλεται εἶναι ὁ Προμηθεύς, πάνυ εὐστόχως ἀποτετόξευται καὶ ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν δριμύτητα τῶν σκωμμάτων, ἐπεὶ καὶ εὔθρυπτα ἡμῖν τὰ ἔργα ὥσπερ ἐκείνοις τὰ χυτρίδια, καὶ μικρόν τις λίθον ἐμβαλὼν συντρίψειεν ἂν πάντα.

[92] On the deathly associations of writing in fiction of the Roman empire, see König 2007, esp. 16–17 (on the motif of writing in Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*); on writing and monumentality in Petronius, see Rimell 2007c, xiii and 2007a, 70–1 and *passim*.

[93] This is especially true of *True stories* which I discuss at pp. 182 and 254–5 below.

[94] Romm (1990, 92): 'Clay offers Lucian an infinitely versatile medium, in which any creation can be instantly collapsed and remade, but for that very reason opens him up to charges of slipperiness and opportunism; his work can be made to follow facilely the tastes of the moment, like the protean career of Athens' most infamous demagogue.'

[95] See *Apology* 1–7, especially 3 where Sabinus advises Lucian not to let anyone hear him *reading* the former essay, and not to allow *copies of the written text* to reach anyone who can observe his current lifestyle.

> Besides, this speed in delivery will provide you with the astonishment (*thauma*) of the crowd – and no small line of defence (*apologian*), too. For this reason, see to it that you never write anything or perform with a prepared speech, for this will expose you clearly.[96]

In a radical literary-critical move, then, Lucian invites readers to contemplate his literary innovations as Promethean inventions under construction, not as masterpieces of classical perfection to be marvelled at. This is not work which has been smoothed and sealed *eis onukha,* 'to the nail';[97] it is clayey stuff which is designed to get *under* the nail, to respond to the critic's touch.

Lucian's avowed poetics speak eloquently to the spirit of postclassical literary criticism, which Whitmarsh has described using the self-same metaphor of sculpture which dominates Lucian's own self-theorizing *prolaliai*: 'This is the nub of postclassicism as methodology: *think not of the well-wrought urn but of the working of it, its breaking, its contents, its storage, the points of juncture between it and abutting objects*.'[98] Even if Lucian's materials appear to be comparatively valueless (wax and clay were in fact the disposable materials which sculptors used for mock-ups or *maquettes* in preparation for the 'real' sculpture in more costly and durable materials such as bronze or marble),[99] nevertheless they have redemptive postclassical qualities which the much-admired classical models do not: wax and clay can be endlessly shaped, erased, moulded again.[100] As materials, they retain the intimate imprint of the artist (fingerprints, pinches, scraping) and are sensitive to the pressures of their subsequent treatment and surroundings. The surfaces of wax and clay objects therefore contain the narrative of

[96] *Professor in public speaking* 20: ἄλλως τε καὶ τὸ ταχὺ τοῦτο οὐ μικρὰν ἔχει τὴν ἀπολογίαν καὶ θαῦμα παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς· ὥστε ὅρα μή ποτε γράψῃς ἢ σκεψάμενος παρέλθῃς, ἔλεγχος γὰρ σαφὴς ταῦτά γε.

[97] It is clear from Persius *Satires* 1.63–5 and ps.-Acro's comment on Horace's *AP* 294 that the phrase 'to the nail' (*eis onukha* or *ad unguem*) refers to the ideal of flawless finish in ancient marble-sculpture (and this holds true even though ps-Acro's interpretation of the process which is envisaged by Horace is incorrect, as D'Angour 1999 shows); for discussion of the general use of the phrase with its connection with sculpture, see Mattusch 1988, 159–61. According to ps-Acro, marble-workers would run their nails over the surface of the completed statue to detect any remaining imperfections.

[98] Whitmarsh 2013a, 2 (my italics).

[99] Both were used in the process of hollow-casting known as the 'lost wax' method for making bronze statues: see Mattusch 1988, 161.

[100] Notably, however, in his essay *In defence of images* 14, Lucian describes Pheidias' painstaking modification of his statue of Olympian Zeus in response to the criticisms of its first viewers. Lucian himself probably invented the anecdote; as Romm (1990, 78) observes, it converts sculpture into an 'analogue not for the literary masterpiece, but for the more impermanent and flexible essays cultivated by Lucian's circle – in this case the author's own *Imagines*'. On Lucian's iconoclastic treatment of Pheidias and classical statuary more generally, see Romm 1990, 76–82.

their very own genesis, which enables them to speak of themselves, of their coming-into-being, and of their symbiosis with other, adjacent objects – just as Lucian's Promethean essay is itself a narrative of the processes and reception of his own work.[101] In terms of poetics, Lucian's redemption of the copy speaks also to the postmodern critical and aesthetic pleasure in replicas; Lucian's hybrid and mutable 'sculptures' hint at the imaginative possibilities of the 'open' literary work, whilst the glutinous plasticity of Lucian's wax and clay evokes the visceral abandon of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque and suggests, too, an honesty or openness about the creative processes that lurk behind every completed artefact, but which the more refined 'classical' materials such as gold or marble less readily disclose.[102]

Postclassicism and postmodernism

The current trend for interpreting the literary Classicism of the Roman empire is to emphasize the self-conscious creativity of this literary activity. Whitmarsh in particular insists on a dynamic reading of literary *mimēsis* as a process of negotiation between past and present which emphasizes cultural discontinuity even as it attempts to establish connections with the past:

> Imitative repetition can be (and was for Roman Greeks) a creative, dynamic, articulate *poiēsis* in the present, not simply a neurotic obsession with the past . . . it [*mimēsis*] was not a pathological symptom of a pre-existent cultural mentality, but an active, dynamic means of creating cultural identity[103]

My own interpretation of Lucian's work in this book identifies strongly with this way of reading Greek imperial literature, but, more specifically, I wish to emphasize how Lucian's bold advertisement of his work's fictive, synthetic nature expresses something distinctive about the modernity of imperial literary culture, as opposed to earlier modernities in the past: a delight in the artificial and the copy which lies cunningly concealed beneath the veneer of a high culture which privileges the authentic and the original, and so is often overlooked.

[101] In fact, Maffei (1986, 161–4) reads the imprint of the real sculptural techniques and activities of imperial workshops in the sustained eclectic sculptural metaphor of Lucian's *Portraits* dialogues.

[102] See Romm 1990, 80 n. 19, where he points out the contrast between the hard, unbroken surfaces of marble statues which have been smoothed to perfection and Lucian's Rabelaisian delight in perforating the human form, for example in his 'grotesque descriptions' of the marsupial Moonmen in *True stories* (1.21–6), or his presentation of Homeric heroes as naked skeletons in the *Dialogues of the dead* (esp. 5, 6, 9). For Bakhtinian readings of *True stories*, see Fusillo 1990 (focusing on the lunar episode) and Whitmarsh 2006.

[103] Whitmarsh 2001, 88.

We tend to identify such preoccupations as the preserve of postmodernist literature from (roughly speaking) the 1940s onwards, with its fascination with replicas and its pleasure in its own artifice and textual surface, but it is a central tenet of my approach in this book that postmodernism cannot be confined to a specific historical period in this way. To this extent, my concept of postmodernism is close to that of Eco, for whom postmodernism is not a style which is specific to one particular cultural-historical moment, but an attitude which may underlie cultural production in *any* era:[104] 'Actually, I believe that postmodernism is not a trend to be chronologically defined but, rather, an ideal category – or, better still, a *Kunstwollen*, a way of operating. We could say that every period has its own postmodernism . . . ' Eco, somewhat wryly, also notes the 'retroactive' tendency to push the boundaries of postmodernism further and further back into the past, so that 'soon the postmodern category will include Homer.'[105] But here I would intervene. Whilst there is nothing in Eco's theory of postmodernism to discount arguments in favour of a postmodern Homer, in my view there are serious objections. This is because, whilst I share the notion of postmodernism as an attitude, voice or tendency in art, the term, for me, also carries epochal ramifications which distinguish it from other adjectives which are commonly (but inaccurately) used synonymously with it, such as 'ironic', 'self-conscious' or 'ludic'. These adjectives simply describe qualities that could exist in any work of literature, but to describe a work of art as 'postmodern' is to make a statement about its qualities *in relation to its era or culture*. A novel, therefore, could be self-consciously ludic, writerly and ironic, and yet *not* be postmodern if those qualities are not also, in some way, in dialogue with larger tendencies within its embedding culture, such as the sense of the inauthenticity of experience and fictionality of authority which characterizes our own era of media-saturation and which also, for different reasons, characterized the culture of the Roman empire as well, since it too was a culture of *mimēsis* and spectacle, of inescapable quotation and frames of reference, a condition of semiotic overload which is often loosely described as 'anxiety of influence'.[106] Because of these pervading conditions, the playful, evasive and ironic qualities of the literature of this period had traction in the broader cultural context in a way that the *Odyssey,* for all its undeniable ironies, did not. Even in the highly self-conscious postclassical literature of the Hellenistic period, we do not,

[104] Here I paraphrase Nicol 2009, 14. The citation is from Eco 1994a, 66. [105] Eco 1994a, 66.
[106] For a squaring of the Roman empire's culture of the spectacular with the mimetic tendencies of its literature – through a reading of Lucian – see Whitmarsh 2001, 247–94.

I think, find the same levels of hyperreal exuberance within a globalized context which characterize some fiction of the imperial era (though this point about postmodernism and Hellenistic literature can be disputed and I am reluctant to draw hard lines across the postclassical literary landscape in this way). To put my cards on the table, however, it is the first three centuries of our era which, in my view, provide us with the earliest category of literature which can sensibly be described as postmodern. And Lucian, who not only expands the boundaries of the literary fashions of his time but also analyses them with such extraordinary penetration, is a unique exponent of this postmodernist turn in the ancient world.

I have occasionally encountered an embarrassment about reading ancient texts in this way, as if there is something unclassical and inauthentic in itself about finding such affinities between ancient culture and our own, founded on a sceptical disbelief that ancient writers *could* think in these terms. This strikes me as odd. The differences are many, to be sure, but there are also obvious affinities, besides the more particular ones which I have just pointed out, between the literary culture of the Roman empire and the modern literary culture of the West (and I should be clear that I isolate this culture for no reason other than it's the only modern reading-context that I feel qualified, in some measure, to talk about).[107] Both are literary cultures in which the medium of prose dominates.[108] Both are part of an increasingly globalized context in which there is greater cultural diversity than ever before; in fact, there is a parallel to be drawn between the application of the postmodernist lens to the literary culture of the Roman empire, and the application of theories of globalization (which are also commonly – and misguidedly – identified solely with the information era) to that same context. In their critical exploration of the Roman world as a globalized culture, Pitts and Versluys identify several core characteristics which are shared by the society of 'proto globalization' in the period 1600–1800 (as well as later periods) and the Hellenistic and Roman world:

[107] In a similar vein, Whitmarsh (2001, 254) argues for affinities between the culture of the spectacular in imperial Rome and the postmodern present: 'Of course, there are fundamental (and obvious) differences between postmodern capitalism and the culture of the Roman principate; but, conversely, *it is a form of twenty-first century vanity to claim that ours has been the first period in human history to have expressed and explored its own ideological and epistemological crises through the spectactular*' (my emphasis). The same argument can be made for the fictional literature of both periods, the poetics and themes of which intersect strikingly with spectacular culture – a topic which I shall discuss further in the Conclusion to this book.

[108] See Whitmarsh (2013a, 186–208) which examines the 'prosifying trajectory' of postclassical culture in the imperial period as central to this culture's narrative of its own modernity.

> Increased connectivity, the existence of a common market, the domestic impact of market integration, the idea of belonging to one world, a stress on the local as a part of global developments, the universalisation of the particular in combination with a particularisation of the universal, relatively dramatic time–space compressions, and cosmopolitism. If we can study the world from around AD 1600 onwards through these themes, then we can certainly study the Roman (and Hellenistic) world from very similar perspectives. In structural terms, with regard to the topics that interest us as indicators of globalisation, the Roman world fits this framework very well.[109]

Moreover, the authors explicitly connect the elite Graeco-Roman culture with this globalized phenomenon: 'This global network . . . shared a common cultural framework, which put notions of *paideia* and *humanitas* central.'[110] In both our modern cultures and that of the postclassical Roman world there is a heightened awareness of the relationship between the present and the past, and in which the past is a repository of cultural prestige. In terms of artistic output in both cultures, moreover, the fetishization of the past generates an industry of the fake: in the imperial period, for example, great value was attached to the autograph manuscripts of authors like Cicero and Virgil, which generated a market for pseudo-antique texts,[111] just as the admiration for works of Greek or European art sparked the zeal for collection and copy-making both in the Roman past and in modern cultures of the west. But in both cultures, there is also a tipping-point between fervour for the past, and the fascination with what is produced in the attempt to recreate it in the present. At some point in the competitive jockeying between the copy and its original, the copy begins to vye seriously for its own critical and aesthetic value.[112] In this respect more than any other, I see a fascinating affinity between the

[109] Pitts and Versluys 2014, 16–17. [110] Pitts and Versluys 2014, 18.

[111] Ní Mheallaigh (2008) discusses the literary ramifications of this in fictional literature of the imperial period. On bibliomania and antiquarianism in the imperial era, see Sandy (1997, 42–91), and on forgery in ancient literature, see Speyer 1971.

[112] Bergmann (1995) argues that Roman viewers perceived no difference between the original and copies of statues or artwork, but I have doubts about how widespread this insensitivity can have been. After all, Lucian makes a point of this very distinction in *Zeuxis* 3 (even if, as Pretzler (2009, 163–5) warns, we need to take Lucian's word with a dose of salt). In the literary-cultural sphere more broadly, moreover, there are clear signs of connoisseurship in the greater prestige and financial value, which was attached to original autographs or more ancient copies of works, than to more recent ones, and to the value which accrued to objects which were associated personally with ancient artists – a fetishization which Lucian himself satirizes in his essay *On the ignorant book collector*, e.g. autograph texts of Demosthenes and other ancient books (4); the *auloi* of Timotheus (5); the lyre of Orpheus (12); the lamp of Epictetus the Stoic (13); the walking-stick of Peregrinus 'Proteus' the Cynic (14); Aeschylus' writing-tablets (15).

literary culture of the Roman empire and what we are used to calling postmodernism: a certain levelling of the cultural playing-ground between the original and its copy, between past and present, between the 'authentic' and the 'fake'. At a certain point, the creation of synthetic imitations acquires a new status of originality in its own right. It is this tipping-point which Lucian, as a self-conscious innovator of the models of the past, constantly pushes.

I freely use the term 'postmodernism', then, to describe a quality which I see as distinctive in and peculiar to the literary works which are analysed in this book and the culture of which they were a part. That distinctive quality is a combination of an epistemological crisis – a perplexity about *how* we know what we know, and about what constitutes truth, lies and fiction – with pleasure in the fake, a combination which is the motor for all sorts of metafictional exploration and play. I should be clear however that although I invite connections between ancient and modern contexts, I am not constructing a teleological narrative between the two: I am neither invested in, nor sympathetic to, any argument that sees the 'roots' of our postmodernism in Lucian and his literary contemporaries. As cultural phenomena, they are not coextensive: postmodernism in our era is a phenomenon of ubiquitous cultural impact which impinges on science, religious and political ideologies as well as literature and the arts; in contrast, the postmodernist qualities of ancient culture were more limited to the sphere of literary culture and entertainment. There is simply no analogue in the ancient world for the watershed event of the Second World War and the paradigm-shifting scientific developments which took place in relation to that, or for 'late' or postindustrial capitalism and mass-media – to name a few of the factors which are usually thought to be germane to postmodernism in the thought, art and literature of our times. But the postmodernism of our own era provides us with a lens which illuminates dimensions of imperial literature particularly well, and which makes it a critically useful framework through which to think. What we are dealing with – as I hope to this book will show – is literature which insistently draws on its contemporary intellectual culture (philosophy, art, spectacle) for its own themes; literature which dramatizes its own writtenness and its written culture, dismantles its own authority and flaunts its inauthenticity in a provocative, playful way. The idea that such a heady mixture should be confined to works produced from roughly the 1940s onwards is a vanity; as a reader of postmodern literary culture, I find much that speaks to my critical interests in the works of first three centuries of our era, and in Lucian more than any author of that time.

Lucian and the pragmatics of fiction: theory and experience

The theoretical implications which Lucian's work has for understanding fiction and reading cultures in the Roman empire are immense. To give some idea of the unique importance of his contribution, some orientation in the vast bibliographical landscape is needed. Modern fiction-theory is dominated by the attempt to define fiction in binary opposition to concepts such as 'history', 'truth', 'reality'.[113] Iser breaks polemically with this binary opposition, proposing instead a more nuanced triad of the 'real', the 'fictive' (which is characterized by constant cross-checking with reality) and the 'imaginary' (which is liberated entirely from reference to reality).[114] Iser's innovation lies in his consideration of fiction within the anthropological framework of 'play'; in fact, his triadic scheme is actually a reprisal of the *tria genera* of ancient rhetoric, as we shall see. A different modern approach is to conceptualize fiction as a world-making, representational force with the theory of possible worlds.[115]

Scholarship on ancient fiction, in turn, is dominated by the tropes of *definition* (the attempt to name what fiction is, often in opposition to history, but also through study of the term *pseudos* and related words) and *invention* (the attempt to construct an origin and history of fiction). The most influential models for defining the concept are the *tria genera* of ancient texts of rhetorical instruction;[116] philosophical and semantic conceptualizations of fiction in relation to 'lies' and 'truth';[117] and (a more fruitful line of inquiry in my view) the analogy of the illusion in painting and in the theatre, which we get in anecdotes about Zeuxis' *trompe l'oeil* paintings,[118]

[113] The following works will impart some sense of the diversity of modern approaches, most of which dance around the same basic conceptual dichotomy. Cohn (1999) examines the modern problems with 'fiction' itself as a concept and develops a theory of fiction through analysis of the defining features which distinguish fictional narratives from historical ones. Genette (1991) adopts a similarly pragmatic approach, examining narratological structures which can be considered characteristic of fiction. Lamarque and Olsen (1994) approach literary fiction through philosophical and aesthetic concerns with truth.

[114] Iser 1993.

[115] Pavel (1986) is the classic work here; also relevant are Doležel (1998), which examines the process of the creation of fiction (how new stories and new fictional worlds are created through texts), and Doležel (2010), which uses the theory of possible worlds to examine the familiar question of the relation between fiction and history.

[116] See Barwick 1928, a neglected study which explores the importance of the rhetorical conceptualization of fiction in novelistic narrative.

[117] Franz (1991) examines the concepts of truth and fiction in the works of Gorgias and Aristotle. Fuchs (1993) is a valuable exploration of the terminology of *pseudos* in ancient literature.

[118] Maffei (1986, 155–9) discusses these in relation to Lucian's subversion of the interplay between art and nature in *Portraits*. For analysis of how the interplay between reality and illusion in the ancient ekphrastic tradition maps onto a theory of fiction, see Webb 2009, esp. 167–91; Zeitlin 2013.

or about theatrical misapprehensions (such as the Roman soldier who ran on stage to assist the Emperor Nero when he saw him in the rags required by his role in the tragedy *The madness of Hercules*), and Gorgias' famous dictum that, in the theatre, those who succumb to the madness are wiser than those who do not.[119] As Denis Feeney points out, '[k]nowing what (or how) *not* to believe is as integral a part of the experience as knowing what (or how) to believe – otherwise everything collapses.'[120] What is at stake in these anecdotes is the confusion between reality and representation, which is a measure either of the audience's lack of sophistication, or of the artist's supreme skill; appreciation of the fictionality of either drama or painting requires that the viewer become emotionally involved, whilst retaining the awareness that it is representation, not reality itself.[121] Competing claims are made for the 'invention' of fiction in the Homeric epics, in response to the development of textual culture in classical Athens, in Plato, or in Hellenistic poetry.[122] These tropes are combined in the collection of essays edited by Gill and Wiseman, an excellent introduction to the subject which examines ancient definitions of fiction through exploring a variety of ancient authors and genres, from archaic poetry to the Greek and Roman novels,[123] while other insightful studies focus on individual works or genres including archaic poetry, Euhemerus, classical oratory, declamation, Homeric revisionist fictions and ancient biography.[124] Recently, there has also been a growth of interest in the metafictional dynamics which are internal to ancient texts, and the theoretical ramifications thereof.[125]

[119] The reference to the soldier's response to Nero's performance is in Suetonius *Nero* 21. Gorgias' statement can be found in DK 82 B 23 (= Plutarch, *On how to read literature* 15D). For further discussion, see Chapter 3, p. 78 below.

[120] Feeney 1993, 237.

[121] Webb 2009, 168–9.

[122] See Finkelberg (1998) on the invention of fiction in the Homeric epics; Rösler (1980) on its invention in classical Athens; Gill (1979) on Plato's invention of fiction in the Atlantis myth – qualified by Gill 1993; and Payne (2007) on its invention in Theocritus' *Idylls*. For a critique of the 'invention of fiction' trope, see Whitmarsh 2013a, 11–34.

[123] Gill and Wiseman 1993.

[124] See Pratt (1983) on metapoetical dimensions of deception and lying in archaic poetry and Hesk (2000) on deceptive strategies in classical Athenian oratory; Whitmarsh (2013a, 49–62) examines the pivotal role played by Euhemerus' *Sacred Inscription* in the development of fiction. On fiction and declamation, see van Mal-Maeder 2007; on fiction and rewritings of the Homeric epics in literature of the imperial period, see Kim 2010 and Hodkinson 2011 (on Philostratus' *Heroicus*). Schirren (2005, 15–68) is an important analysis of contracts of fictionality in ancient literature, which is geared towards an understanding of the fictionality of the genre of the *philosophos bios*, especially Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*.

[125] A forthcoming collection of essays on truth, lies and metafiction edited by John Morgan and Ian Repath is keenly anticipated, as is Owen Hodkinson's forthcoming monograph on ancient metafiction.

Lucian combines many of these elements in his approach to understanding fiction – but a striking aspect of his approach, which will emerge in the following chapters, is his insistence on fiction as an embodied, sensory and psychological experience which is analogous to the experience of disorientation one has when watching a magic-performance, when one is deranged or fevered, or when drunk.[126] He talks about fiction through the experience of dislocation, estrangement and transition – whether that is through physical transformation into the body of an ass,[127] transportation to the Moon,[128] or transition into more mundane microcosms, such as a house which is dominated by the talk of weird and otherworldly things.[129] He insists on the psychological pleasures of fiction for both storyteller and listener – conceptualizing it as a sexual encounter, with the dangerous *frisson* of seduction.[130] This dialogic element is crucial, for Lucian understands fiction, not as a crude, uni-directional phenomenon like deception, but as an experience that is shared contractually between author and reader. Lucian also invites us to ponder the ways in which the physical text itself colludes in this fictional experience, especially in the book's role as the threshhold between real and imaginative worlds.[131] Not all of these ideas are new or unique to Lucian; the associations between storytelling and intoxication, bewitchment and erotic attraction, for example, are as old as the *Odyssey* itself;[132] other authors of the period are demonstrably interested in the role of the book (though this topic, as yet, is relatively underexplored in the literature of the imperial era, in contrast with the Hellenistic period);[133] and the motifs of magic, deception and intoxication have a distinctly metafictional thrust in the novels of Antonius Diogenes, Petronius and Apuleius too.[134] But Lucian *is* unique for the way in which he concentrates these

[126] The quasi-initiatory Vine-women episode in *True stories*, with its motif of intoxication, is also interpretable in this way; cf. pp. 208–16 below.

[127] As in *Onos*; see pp. 132–5 below.

[128] *VH* and *Icaromenippus*; see pp. 216–27 below.

[129] For this interpretation of Eucrates' house in *Philopseudes*, see pp. 83–9 below.

[130] Again, *Onos* is a key text here, with its framing sexual encounters, but the twin episodes involving the Vine-women and Ass-legs in *True stories* have also been interpreted this way; see Chapter 6, pp. 208–16 with n. 134 below.

[131] For discussion of the role of the book itself in fiction, see discussion in Chapter 3, esp. pp. 89–91 ('Eucrates the living book') and pp. 97–105 (dramatizations of the text in the novels of Chariton and Achilles Tatius); also discussion of peritextual transitions in Chapter 5.

[132] See the fine analyses in Goldhill (1991, 1–68) and Segal 1994, 113–83.

[133] Interactions between Alexandrian poetry, its written culture and its own textual medium are explored in excellent studies by Bing (1988 and 2009) and Hutchinson 2008. The collected essays in Rimell (2007c) explore the interplay of orality and textuality in the ancient novels.

[134] See, for example, Morgan (2009, 130) on the role of the metafictional magic of the wizard Paapis in Antonius Diogenes; Laird (1993) on dreaming and intoxication as metaphors for fiction in Apuleius and Keulen (2003) on the sword-swallowing show as a metaphor for fiction in Apuleius; Slater (1997) on the metafictional dimension of visual delusion in the Roman novels.

themes in a systematic and quasi-theoretical manner to provoke the reader into thinking about the experience of fiction – through the reading of fiction.

Of course, Lucian can and does speak of fiction in more purely literary and theoretical terms as well – and in these respects, too, he makes a landmark contribution. As a self-conscious heir to a long literary tradition, he is interested in a history of fiction and talks about its evolution from the earliest Greek poetry, through Hellenistic writers to his own more radical experiments.[135] And in his quasi-philosophical musings about why people seem to *enjoy* listening to stories which they know are not true, his emphasis on the psychological dimensions of this phenomenon liberate the concept of *pseudos* (falsehood) from the philosophical straitjacket which, prior to Lucian, could only define fiction in terms of what was expedient or morally and didactically justified.[136] Lucian developed a new and vastly more sophisticated theoretical framework for understanding not just *what* ancient readers did when they read fiction – but also *why* they did it. And by embedding this in the language of quotidian experience, he offered ancient readers a far more intuitive approach to understanding fiction than the more abstract formulations of the rhetorical manuals with their triadic categorization of narrative according to its truth-value,[137] or Platonic-style theories about author-intentionality,[138] or awkward concessions to fiction-as-entertainment in geographical writers like Eratosthenes and Strabo.[139]

In spite of this, Lucian's contribution to the evolving history and theory of fiction in the ancient world is, with some notable exceptions, vastly

[135] *VH* 1.1–4 and *Philops.* 2; see pp. 82 and 172–5 below for discussion.

[136] I discuss this more fully at pp. 73–83 below.

[137] In ancient rhetorical texts (*Rhet. ad Her.* 1.8.13, Cicero *De Inv.* 1.19.27, Quintilian *Inst.Or.* 2.4.2), narrative was divided into three categories: *historia* (factual narrative), *argumentum* (plausible or realistic fiction, such as the plots of comedy), and *fabula* (non-realistic fiction, such as the mythological plots of tragedy). Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 1.263–4), who was probably a contemporary of Lucian, also envisaged three categories of narrative along the same lines, citing further examples for each: *historia* (the exposition of true events that had actually happened, such as how Alexander died in Babylon), *plasma* (a narrative of realistic events which had not actually happened, such as the plots in comedy and mime) and *mythos* (exposition of events and creatures that were non-existent and fantastical, such as the stories about how the race of venomous spiders and snakes sprang from the Titans' blood, or how Pegasus sprang from the head of the Gorgon and similar metamorphoses). It is interesting that both Sextus Empiricus and Lucian (*Philops.* 2) choose the same examples from mythology (Gorgons, Titans, Pegasus, and metamorphoses) to illustrate the category of *mythic* fiction; the idea probably leads back, ultimately, to Socrates' and Phaedrus' discussion of the truth-value of myths in Plato *Phdr.* 229 c7—e4. On Sextus' date, see Blank 1998, xv. On the importance of the *tria genera* of narrative in the novels, see Barwick 1928.

[138] Chapter 3, pp. 73–83.

[139] On historiographical and geographical writers' conflicting responses to Homeric fiction in antiquity, see Romm (1992, 172–202) and Kim (2010, 47–84).

under-examined. Sciolla's structuralist analysis of Lucian's fiction in *True stories* is overly schematic.[140] Fuchs devotes an entire chapter to Lucian in her rich analysis of the vocabulary of *pseudos* in ancient literature,[141] but does not pay consideration to Lucian's interest in the psychology of the fictional experience or to the significance of the complex cultural hinterland to Lucian's works, which Lucian mines constantly as a resource not only for the themes of his fictions, but also to provide ways to think about fiction itself. In his study of Lucian's poetics and fiction, Brandão asserts, promisingly, that Lucian 'discovered' fiction and defined it in terms of a contractual understanding between the author and reader (a point which I also emphasize in the following chapters), but he retreats from the idea that there is any systematic theory about literature to be found in Lucian's work.[142] Bowersock stakes a claim for Lucian in the fierce polemic between truth and lies that dominated the literature of the imperial period, and explores the historical ramifications of Lucian's fiction,[143] whilst Andrew Laird and Lawrence Kim both approach Lucian's fiction by a more literary route: Laird through analysis of the role of Plato in Lucian, and Kim through his study of Lucian's Homeric fictions.[144] Both Laird and Kim find that Lucian conceives of fiction as an autonomous imaginative world, which establishes a connection between Lucian and the theory of possible worlds.[145] Whilst Laird emphasizes the philosophical ramifications of Lucian's fiction, particularly as a vehicle for intellectual speculation (*theōria*) and thought-experiment, Kim examines Lucian's works, especially *True stories*, within the tradition of the reception of the Homeric epics in the imperial period, in which Homer is used repeatedly to provoke readers to think about the concepts of truth and lies, fiction and history. Von Möllendorff analyses Lucian's *Philopseudes* within the modern critical framework of the literary fantastic, finding in it a destabilizing challenge to the educated reader's world-view,[146] while Popescu shows how Lucian uses *paradoxa* programmatically (in his *prolaliai*, but also in *Philopseudes* and *True stories*) to distinguish himself from other (lying) writers of marvels.[147]

140 Sciolla 1988. 141 Fuchs 1993, 189–241. 142 Brandão 2001. 143 Bowersock 1994, 1–27.

144 Kim 2010, 140–74. Laird 2003 explores the role of Plato in *True stories* and *True stories* itself as an important text in the reception of Plato's political philosophy.

145 Laird 2003, esp. 120–4 and Kim 2010, 151–74. This idea is mentioned, but without theoretical expansion, in Futre Pinheiro 2009, 23.

146 Von Möllendorff 2006b, esp. 199.

147 Popescu 2009; forthcoming a and b. Much remains to be said about Lucian's metafictional use of paradoxography to engage his audience in thinking actively about the boundaries of belief – a game which is central to Antonius Diogenes' paradoxographical novel *The incredible things beyond Thule* as well; see pp. 183–5 below.

It is a central tenet of *this* study that fiction cannot be understood fully by examining it in isolation as a narratological or structural phenomenon, in semantic terms or as a proposition of logic – *without reference to the broader culture in which it is situated*. Readers do not read in a literary-theoretical laboratory, and Lucian (happily) does not think in one; on the contrary, his thoughts on fiction, as I have pointed out, are refreshingly concrete, drawing on common experiences in both the individual and contemporary culture. My approach, therefore, has much in common with Bowersock's historically contextualized reading of Lucian, though I will focus primarily on reading Lucian within the context of his contemporary written culture (a mode of analysis which is informed especially by Chartier),[148] and on his contemporary culture of wonder and spectacle (expanding on Whitmarsh's approach to the mimetic literature of the imperial period).[149] Like Laird, I am interested in the intersection of philosophy and fiction in Lucian's work, which, for Laird, is embodied especially in the figure of Plato; my analysis explores the ways in which Lucian appropriates Plato's theories on the nature of lies as a framework for developing a new theory of fiction; it is largely through his use of Plato that he gives his fictional dialogues theoretical punch. In the fifth chapter, my analysis of Homer's role in Lucian's *True stories* overlaps to a degree with Kim, but in contrast with Kim, Homer and indeed fiction itself represent (for me) merely one aspect of Lucian's more radical exploration of replicant, hyperreal culture in this work. Ultimately, I hope this book leads, through Lucian's work, to an understanding of fiction as a cultural experience – and one that had particular traction in the postclassical culture of the imperial period, where the artificiality and also the imaginative abandon of fiction interlocked with a broader cultural sense of postmodernity.

Lucian's introductory *prolaliai*, with their emphasis on audience expectations, are (as we have seen) masterpieces of metafictional transition-engineering, of a kind that is similar to Calvino's introduction to his novel *If on a winter's night a traveller*. Not that I wish to press any systematic comparison with Calvino's text here, but there are similarities, for example in the quasi-peritextual status of the *prolaliai* and Calvino's opening chapter (both are prologal in function, if not exactly in form),[150] as well

[148] Chartier 2007; see Chapter 5. [149] Whitmarsh 2001, esp. 254–94.

[150] In Lucian's case, the suggestion that the *prolalia Dionysus* introduced Book 2 of *True stories* was made first by Thimme 1888; for discussion and references, see Georgiadou and Larmour 1995 (esp. n. 7), who argue that both *Dionysus* and *Heracles* could have been used interchangeably to introduce *True stories*. For the relation between the *prolalia* and the *prooemion*, see Mras 1949. In Calvino's novel, the first chapter is a virtual prologue as it is part of the book but not (ostensibly,

as in their evocation of real and sensory aspects of the reader's world in order to transport the reader, imaginatively, away from that world and in order, too, to stimulate him or her to ponder the business in which (s)he is participating *right now* – be that of reading or listening. Calvino, for example, uses the quotidian experience of facial recognition to trope the reader's experience of entering a new fictional world for the first time, and the rest of his chapter narrates, in fascinating detail, the physical circumstances of the reader as (s)he prepares to make this transition upon opening the new book:

> 'Adjust the light so you won't strain your eyes. Do it now, because once you're absorbed in reading there will be no budging you . . . Try to foresee now everything that might make you interrupt your reading. Cigarettes within reach, if you smoke, and the ashtray. Anything else? Do you have to pee? All right, you know best.'[151]

Now, there is no parallel in Lucian's work for such sustained and metaleptic narration of the *minutiae* of the reader's circumstances (and Calvino himself acknowledges the modernity of the mode of reading which he evokes here),[152] but there *is* an analogy to be made in a more general way with how Lucian draws on his contemporary wonder-culture as an entry-point into his world of fictions which can help us to understand the experience, for the ancient reader, of fiction. Lucian's approach suggests that fiction-reading was embedded in a much wider and more complex matrix of fantasy-experience which was engineered in the Roman empire through the resources of art, architecture and technology as well as through performance itself.[153]

Lucian did not invent fiction (in any case, the notion that fiction was thus 'invented' is a fallacy), but his relentless questioning of fiction, his development of a language to talk about it, and his creative boundary-pushing made him a game-changing figure in fiction's 'changing inflection' in Greek literary history writ large.[154] I do not find convincing evidence to show that Lucian's theorizing exerted any direct influence outwards on other ancient writers of his time, though that is not wholly surprising,

at least) a part of the fiction (though in this novel about novel-reading, the boundaries between worlds are not so clear); however, it too addresses the reader directly and sets the scene for reading the following narrative in an overtly self-reflexive way.

151 Calvino 1998, 4.

152 'In the old days they used to read standing up, at a lectern' (Calvino 1998, 3).

153 I discuss this in Chapter 7.

154 I borrow the phrase from Whitmarsh (2013a, 12): 'while . . . fiction is not "invented" like the process of uranium enrichment or "discovered" like the moons of Jupiter, it should be possible to track its changing inflection throughout Greek literary history.'

given that the literary models which writers of the imperial period looked to were not, principally, contemporary authors but, rather, those from the archaic and classical canon. Nevertheless, Lucian is an iconic writer. The resonances – by which I mean, precisely, shared preoccupations without necessarily any genealogical connection – between his work and that of his (near-)contemporaries are rich and diverse. Lucian may be resolutely marginal on the literary scene of his own period, but his work is paradigmatic of that scene: it is surely no accident that such an author was himself contemporary with the burgeoning of prose fiction in the Roman Empire, and that the two great moments when Lucian was read as a master-text thereafter – the Renaissance and the nineteenth century – are both periods of the invention or dominance of the novel and of utopian narratives.[155] It is significant, too, that, as Romm observes, during the period of Lucian's greatest popularity in Renaissance Europe, some artists, in the spirit of Promethean rebelliousness, provocatively flouted the classicist aesthetic by reproducing the hybrid monstrosity which Horace expressly forbade in the opening lines of his *Ars poetica*.[156] So it is no accident, either, that this quasi-theorist and metafictional writer should resonate so strongly again with our own postmodern period, with its dismantling of dominant narratives and its fascination, both epistemological and ontological, with replicas, fakes and simulacra; and no accident, consequently, that our poetics of postmodernism should find affinities with Lucian's own.

Postmodern soundings: Lucian's Ec[h]o

So this is a book about fiction, but it is also about a specific author, who is both paradigmatic of his contemporary context and exceptional to it. There is a deeply compelling paradox about this author who is, on the one hand, resolutely marginal: a Greek-speaking Syrian in the Roman empire whose first language may not have been Greek;[157] a writer of prose fiction but not in a recognizable form, neither a paradoxographer (for example) nor a

[155] The bibliography on Lucian's influence on European art and literature is substantial. On the revival of interest in Lucian not only as a moralist but also as a writer of fantasy among Renaissance humanists see Robinson 1979; Lauvergnat-Gagnière 1988 (French literature of the sixteenth century); Marsh 1998 (focusing on the influence of Lucian's minor dialogues and the motif of the fantastic voyage); Baumbach 2002 (Lucian's reception in Germany from humanist writers to the scholarship in the 1990s); Goldhill 2002, 93–107 (Lucian's role as a 'lightning rod' in modern European thought about racial theory, cultural purity and empire). The collection of essays in Ligota and Panizza (2007) explores Lucian's influence on later philosophy and art as well.

[156] Romm 1990, 86 n. 33.

[157] For discussion of Lucian's three cultural 'faces' (Greek, Roman and Semitic), including the possibility that he was bilingual in Greek and Aramaic, see Swain 2007.

novelist; a theoretician, but one who did not write treatises; a writer who could not be confined to any one genre, but who invented his own genre instead; a writer who was obsessively evasive with his own name and identity in his works,[158] and about whom, for all his voracious cannibalizing of his contemporary literary culture, antiquity, curiously, is almost completely silent.[159] And yet, this marginal, category-defying author is absolutely at the heart and on the pulse of so much that is characteristic of and germane to the literature and thought-world of this period, in particular in his fascination with how authority is constructed (and falsified), with written culture, with fakery, wonder, fiction and the hoax.

Although my focus in the following chapters will be on a selection of Lucian's works (for reasons which I shall explain below), I have also tried to open up, through sections of parallel readings, ways in which Lucian's works resonate with trends and specific works in his contemporary culture, as well as with postmodernist fictions of our own era. For this purpose I have drawn especially on works by Umberto Eco. I emphasize Eco as a point of comparison for several reasons. First: because Eco, in addition to his professional, academic interest in the field of semiotics, is both a literary theorist *and* a ground-breaking writer of his own fictions. In this respect, he is a good match for Lucian, whose interests in fiction are similarly theoretical as well as practical, and who also draws on his own profession and literary works as an aesthetic resource for his *prolaliai* and related essays.

Second, there are obvious parallels between Eco's specific interests and Lucian's. Both are intrigued by how authority is constructed in narratives, by authenticity and the fake;[160] both are fascinated with the dynamics of intertextuality and with how it becomes possible, through citation, to create something distinctly *new* – a peculiar magic which is linked, more or less explicitly, by both authors to their broader literary cultures. Both authors

[158] For discussion of Lucian's play with onymity, see pp. 171–81 below.

[159] Famously, there is only one reference to him in contemporary sources: Galen's note about Lucian's Heraclitean forgery, which Anderson (1989, 197–8 and again 1994, 1435) tentatively identifies as the treatise *On Astrology* – an intriguing idea, but not, I think, convincing; see Strohmaier 1976 and p. 124 below. Lucian is not mentioned in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*. For a lucid account of Lucian's *Nachleben* in antiquity and the Byzantine world, see Ligota and Panizza (2007, 1–11), according to whom there is 'inferential evidence' that Lucian was read by authors between the second and early sixth centuries (Alciphron, Athenaeus, Julian, Libanius, Claudian and Aristaenetus), but only three references to Lucian throughout the rest of antiquity, as far as present evidence suggests: by the Christian writers Lactantius and Isidore of Pelusium, and by Eunapius. With Photius in the ninth century, however, interest in Lucian seems suddenly to have been revived.

[160] Eco (1994a, 174–202) is an essay on fakes and forgeries; on Eco's semiotic fiction and postmodernity, see Farronato 2009.

are also interested in their own status as postmodern writers, sharing a celebration of their own belatedness as a means for dynamic *new* expression. For it seems to me that one way of reading Lucian's eclecticism in *Portraits* is as a gesture of defiance against the narrative of artistic decadence and exhaustion, by demonstrating how it is possible to create new life out of recycled fragments of art. (*Portraits* is a particularly vivid example of this, but the same case could be made for the intertextual collage of *True stories* too.) This principle of irony as a means for *transcending* the oppression of the past is at the core of Eco's much-quoted riposte to the criticism that postmodernist art is inherently shallow, cynical or nihilistic:

> The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently. I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, 'I love you madly,' because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly.' At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her, but he loves her in an age of lost innocence. If the woman goes along with this, she will have received a declaration of love all the same. Neither of the two speakers will feel innocent, both will have accepted the challenge of the past; both will consciously and with pleasure play the game of irony . . . But both will have succeeded, once again, in speaking of love.[161]

The irony that pervades Lucian's work, similarly, is not a symptom of exhaustion but of exuberance, of a relentless creative energy finding ways to comment on its own cultural frames *from within* that culture and using the language of the past.

Third: Eco is a writer of high culture who unexpectedly commands both popular and more esoteric 'high-brow' appeal. He and other critics have written about this paradoxically mixed readership, in particular in response to his first novel *The name of the rose* which not only became an international bestseller in its own right, but was adapted also into a successful Hollywood film.[162] As well as novels, Eco has also regularly written serio-comical newspaper-columns with musings on apparently nugatory topics such as the philosophical insights that were prompted when his jeans became too

[161] Eco 1994b, 67–8.
[162] See Eco's own essay on 'Postmodernism, irony, the enjoyable', in Eco 1994b, 65–72.

tight.[163] He shows an omnivorous appetite for both high culture and low across the range of his works: the intertextual fabric of *The name of the rose* is composed, kaleidoscopically, of allusions to Wittgenstein, Borges, Snoopy and Sherlock Holmes as well as a virtual library of medieval and ancient writers.[164] Comic strips, film posters, newspapers and memories of *Mickey Mouse* and *Flash Gordon* pepper the narrative of *The mysterious flame of Queen Loana*, a novel which can be read on multiple levels, from a history of popular culture to a narrative of how memory (personal and collective cultural) is reconstructed out of signs.[165] Eco also turns frequently to popular culture (James Bond, the Superman comics, *Casablanca*) to illustrate theories in his academic writing as well.[166] Lucian's cultural omnivoracity may appear somewhat less spectacular in comparison, but written within the confines of an austerely classicizing elite culture, they are arguably even more radical.

Lucian, then, was (and deliberately styled himself as) a Promethean innovator, both as a writer and a literary theorist. The analogy was more apt than he may have imagined, for, like Prometheus, he was in one sense a marginal figure within his own culture, but in another sense an embodiment of postclassicism, not unlike the Titan himself who, though exiled to a remote mountain far from the Olympian centre, nevertheless had a privileged understanding of the contemporary regime. So much, then, for prolegomena and Lucian's more overtly theoretical works: it is time now to explore how these theoretical interests play out in the works of fiction themselves.

[163] 'Lumbar thought', Eco 1998, 191–5.
[164] On Eco and popular culture, see Bouchard 2009; on the pleasures of intertextuality in *The name of the rose*, see Capozzi 1989.
[165] See Capozzi 2006; Spruyt 2010.
[166] See, for example, the essay 'Casablanca: cult movies and intertextual collage', in Eco 1998, 197–211.

CHAPTER 2

Toxaris

Microfiction and the Greek novel

> Of all Greek authors of the first and second centuries CE [Lucian] shows the most signs of writing in a literary environment where prose fiction was a significant player.[1]

It has long been argued that Lucian's work shows an awareness of the Greek novels, those contemporary giants of prose narrative fiction of travel, love and adventure. At the same time, it is often lamented that no literary criticism on the novels has survived from antiquity – if any such works ever even existed in the first place.[2] This lack of external evidence has prompted a successful search for self-theorization within the novels themselves: through examination of particular allusive strategies or patterns of imagery within the narrative which call attention to the novel's artifice,[3] or by exploring the metanarrative force of philosophical attitudes such as curiosity and the device of rumour.[4] Digressive elements such as dreams and *ekphrases* have also proved fruitful for metafictional analysis,[5] as have embedded scenes of self-referential storytelling,[6] and the interactions between the

[1] Bowie 2008, 27.

[2] See Morgan 1995, 132; Bowie (1994, 441–2) connects the novels' lack of genre-classification with the late and post-Hellenistic development of the genre.

[3] König (2008, 137–44) examines the role of novelistic bodies as a metaphor for the experience of reading; Rimell (2002) explores imagery of consumption and digestion in Petronius' *Satytrica* as metaphors for reading. Morales (2004) analyses the metaphorical role of vision in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*. For the metafictional thrust of allusions to Plato in Achilles Tatius, see Morales (2004, esp. 50–60) and Repath forthcoming. The prominent theatricality of some of the novels can also be interpreted as a gloss on the fictionality of the story-world itself; on theatricality in Petronius' *Satyrica*, see Rosati 1999, and Slater 1997 for a metafictional slant on the motif.

[4] Morales 2004, 84–7 (on Achilles Tatius) and Hunter 2009 conceptualize novel-reading within the framework of *polypragmosunē*. On curiosity (*periergia*) and rumour as 'metanarrative forces' in the Greek novels (esp. Chariton), see Whitmarsh 2013a, 185–91. The metanarrative ramficiations of *curiositas* in the Roman novels has long been recognised, esp. in Apuleius, e.g. DeFilippo 1999.

[5] See, for example, Bartsch 1989 (on the dramatization of reading in ekphrases in Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus).

[6] Morgan 1994 and 1999 examines readers and reading-strategies embedded in Heliodorus' *Ethiopian tales*; more generally, see Hunter 2008, 267–70. Hunter argues persuasively that the infamous story

principal characters, who, in their varying reactions to the unfolding sequence of events, can be read as different dramatizations of readerly responses to the plot.[7] The role of the male friends in the novels has played a particularly important role in this more recent approach to the novels' fictionality.

Lucian's *Toxaris* is a dialogue between a Greek, Mnesippus, and a Scythian, Toxaris. The subject of their discussion is friendship. In their determination to find out whether Greeks or Scythians make the better friends, they agree to tell five stories each which will demonstrate the excellent qualities of Greek and Scythian friends. If Toxaris wins the storytelling contest, the loser Mnesippus agrees to forfeit his tongue, the symbol of Greek eloquence. Contrariwise, if Mnesippus wins, Toxaris will forfeit his hand, the symbol of Scythian strength in action. Each man swears a solemn oath by his native gods to tell only the truth about events that really happened, involving real people in the recent past; they are expressly forbidden from drawing on legendary *exempla* from myth and history.[8] The plots of their stories, however, are strongly redolent of the world of the Greek novels, and during the course of the contest, each speaker comments with admiration and scepticism in turn on the nature of the other's narratives. As the two speakers become engrossed in one another's tales, they entirely forget the original point of the competition, so that, in the end, instead of deciding on a winner, they agree to become friends themselves, as they have both proved themselves worthy of friendship – not with their actions, but with their stories. The dialogue is therefore ultimately transformed from a contest on the theme of friendship, to a contest in (and commentary on) novelistic narrative, such that *Toxaris* provides us with a rare and surprising glimpse into the world of the ancient novel-reader.

Toxaris, quirkily, conflates novelistic narrative with dialogue, in that hybridizing of genres which (as we have seen) is absolutely the hallmark of Lucian's work. In fact, this underexplored work is a star example of Lucian's cultural omnivoracity, for it has absorbed features of the novel, which is itself already a product of literary hybridity and innovation, another genre without (apparently) a name or a classical pedigree of its own, which

of agalmatophilia in the (pseudo?) Lucianic *Amores* 'may be paradigmatic for a real or imagined response to the impossibly beautiful and statue-like heroines of the novel' (269–70). Cf. Chapter 3, n. 93.

[7] Whitmarsh 2003, Morales (2004, 77–95) and Whitmarsh (2011, 206–10) are especially illuminating here. All three focus mainly on readerly characters in Achilles Tatius, the most overtly metafictional of the surviving Greek novelists.

[8] *Tox.* 10.

evidently appealed to Lucian's iconoclastic creativity.[9] Lucian also clashes cultural categories in the dialogue between a Scythian and a Greek, and makes us watch as, through the sheer smelting force of narrative itself, genres and cultures are forged together to produce friendship, the triumphant union of Scythian and Greek attitudes and a distinctive literary organism. In this way, the theme of intercultural friendship in *Toxaris* becomes a metaphor for Lucian's own blending of genres. When Mnesippus suggests that they should ignore their original agreement and celebrate their mutual victory by joining together in friendship instead, he appeals to the image of Geryon the three-headed monster as a symbol for the unity of separate persons in friendship:

> Rather, inasmuch as you yourself clearly praised friendship, and I, for my part, believe there is no possession more beneficial and noble for mankind, why don't we enter into a mutual agreement to be friends ourselves from here on and forever more, and cherish each other as victors, taking the greatest prizes? Instead of gaining one tongue and one right hand, each of us will gain two in addition to his own; and, he will have four eyes and four feet and – in short – double of everything. For that's what the combination of two or three friends is – like the paintings of Geryon which artists produce: a man with six hands and three heads. To my mind, he was once three men acting in unison in all things, which is exactly the right way for friends to behave.[10]

Framed against Lucian's ubiquitous use of the monster as a metaliterary symbol in his *prolaliai*, Mnesippus' allusion to allegorical paintings of Geryon here hints at metaliterary union of genres in *Toxaris* as well as the thematic union of friends.[11]

What particular insight does *Toxaris* give us into ancient thinking about fiction, as well as ancient modes of reading novelistic narrative itself? I shall argue here that, in their cross-fire of criticisms and exchange of stories about friendships, Toxaris and Mnesippus repeatedly draw attention to the vividness and also the fictionality of each other's stories in a way that suggests how ancient readers may have responded to novels as well.

[9] On the hybridity and artifice of the novel genre, see Whitmarsh 1998 (on Heliodorus) and 2001, 78–87.

[10] *Tox.* 62: ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ σὺ φιλίαν ἐπαινεῖν ἔδοξας, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἡγοῦμαι ἀνθρώποις εἶναι τούτου κτῆμα ἄμεινον ἢ κάλλιον, τί οὐχὶ καὶ ἡμεῖς συνθέμενοι πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς φίλοι τε αὐτόθεν εἶναι καὶ εἰσαεὶ ἔσεσθαι ἀγαπῶμεν ἄμφω νικήσαντες, τὰ μέγιστα ἆθλα προσλαβόντες, ἀντὶ μιᾶς γλώττης καὶ μιᾶς δεξιᾶς δύο ἑκάτερος ἐπικτησάμενοι καὶ προσέτι γε καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς τέτταρας καὶ πόδας τέτταρας καὶ ὅλως διπλᾶ πάντα; τοιοῦτόν τι γάρ ἐστι συνελθόντες δύο ἢ τρεῖς φίλοι, ὁποῖον τὸν Γηρυόνην οἱ γραφεῖς ἐνδείκνυνται, ἄνθρωπον ἑξάχειρα καὶ τρικέφαλον· ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖν, τρεῖς ἐκεῖνοι ἦσαν ἅμα πράττοντες πάντα, ὥσπερ ἐστὶ δίκαιον φίλους γε ὄντας.

[11] Camerotto 1998, 84.

Furthermore, Lucian invites us, through the structure of the dialogue itself, to think about fiction as a contractual agreement between an implied author and reader; and by staging the discussion as a game with its own explicit set of rules, which each speaker must swear, in turn, to uphold, he also evokes the concept of *fiction as play*, offering us a new paradigm for understanding the reader's interaction with narrative in literary make-believe.[12]

But – and I wish to emphasize this point – *Toxaris* is also an important work of fiction *in its own right*. True, several of its stories are tantalizingly close to the Greek novels. Mostly, I think, this relationship should be understood as one of broad pastiche of the genre, although there are one or two occasions where a more specific intertext looks likely (with Chariton, who looks as if he had a prominent reputation in antiquity for the development and shaping of the novel genre, even if he did not, in my view, invent it).[13] But what we are talking about overall is a journalistic transposition of novelistic narrative and a creative – often funny – adaptation of the genre which (as I hope to show) offers us a new perspective on the novels but can equally be appreciated on its own merits as rip-roaring adventure fiction. You do not have to have read the Greek novels to appreciate what Lucian is doing, but familiarity with the genre certainly enriches the reader's experience of *Toxaris*, sometimes by heightening the poignancy of a friend's sacrifice (as in the sad story of Agathocles and Deinias, which reads like a lost subplot from Chariton), and sometimes by enhancing the ludicrousness of their noble gestures (as in the funny and touching tale of the very ordinary lovers Zenothemis and Cydimache). Toxaris, in turn, usurps the genre's grand scope of adventure to imbue his Scythians with the status of swashbuckling heroes for friendship and love. Without the novels, *Toxaris* is a good read; with them, it is even better.

We do not have a good functional term for the type of short story which Lucian wrote in *Toxaris*; the characters simply refer to their stories as *logoi*. It seems desirable to invent a name, because this type of 'short story' is by no means an isolated phenomenon; there are numerous comparable collections of differing nature, including Parthenius' *Love Stories*, Plutarch's *Love Affairs*, Aristides' *Milesian Tales*, Phlegon's *Marvellous Tales*, some of Lucian's own *prolaliai* and the narratives in his *Ship* and *Philopseudes*, to name but a few. The short fictions are self-contained (which distinguishes them from novelistic subplots), and they constitute an important

[12] The concept of game-playing is used in some modern approaches to understanding fiction, notably Newsom 1988 and (with an anthropological slant) Iser 1993.

[13] For the more radical view of Chariton as the inventor of the Greek novel, see Tilg 2010.

(and greatly neglected) part of the topography of ancient fictional narrative. I propose the umbrella-term 'microfictions' – not, admittedly, a pretty word – but its very plainness gives it advantage over alternatives like 'novella' or 'fable', which can raise expectations about the subject matter, literary quality or broader generic affiliations of these narratives, which are not always helpful. 'Microfiction' also evokes the idea of the 'short story' without raising the expectations readers may have of that modern genre, either.[14]

In this chapter, therefore, I wish, through a series of close readings, to present the case for affirming Lucian's familiarity with the genre of the novel, and for considering the microfictions of *Toxaris* as a point of reception for the genre which is critically engaged with it.[15] But I wish also to explore the artistry and ambition of Lucian's microfictions in their own right, and to begin to gain a sense of Lucian's critical interest in the world of story and of storytelling.

Lucian and Chariton: adultery and conspiracy (*Tox.* 12–18)

Mnesippus' first narrative, which has been described as 'a sad little melodrama . . . suitable for a sub-plot in a novel',[16] is about the friendship of Agathocles of Samos and Deinias of Ephesus. When Deinias embarks on a libertine lifestyle after inheriting his father's fortune, he becomes increasingly estranged from his childhood friend Agathocles. Their friendship is sorely tested as he consumes not only his own wealth, but Agathocles' as well, through a ruinous affair with a woman called Charicleia. Agathocles, however, remains loyal to Deinias, standing by him even when he

[14] On the history and problematic definition of the term 'novella', see de Jong (2002, esp. 257–8), who describes novellae as 'short and entertaining stories about real people, situated in a certain place and at a certain time (in contrast to the folktale), and including a great deal of direct speech' (257). Trenkner (1958, xiii–xv) emphasizes the purpose of entertainment as characteristic of the novella, which distinguishes it from the fable, myth and legend; its length is also sufficient to distinguish it from the anecdote. Gray (2002, 292) takes a different approach, and argues (following Shaw 1983) that it is the particular shape and closural thrust of the narrative which is key to the short-story's distinction: 'The modern short story amasses its whole weight toward the ending, and the closure or denouement is more concentrated than the anticipation or dilemma that precedes it. This distinctive narrative "shape" makes a short story distinct from a story that happens to be short.' None of these definitions is supple enough, however, to accommodate the sparser narratives of Plutarch's *Love affairs* or Parthenius' summary erotic stories as well. On the place of Parthenius' *Love stories* in the tradition of ancient fiction, see Lightfoot 1999, 256–63. Bowie 2013b reviews and expands the *status quaestionis* relating to the definition of *Milesiaka* and their influence on the Greek novel; on Milesian tales and the Roman novel, see Harrison 2013, 57–68.

[15] See the sophisticated discussion of the novel genre in Goldhill 2008, especially the comments on the genre's place within the diffusion of prose narrative in the imperial period (pp. 198–9).

[16] Pervo 1997, 167.

is arrested for double murder and sentenced to lifelong exile on a remote island, where he remains loyally devoted to him even after death.

Agathocles' devotion to Deinias – his wise counsel, his loyalty, and especially the manner in which he supports him through manual labour in their life of gruelling hardship in exile and attends to him throughout his long illness (*Tox.* 18) – is reminiscent of the selflessness of male friends in the Greek novels, in particular Chariton's Polycharmus who shares Chaereas' many ordeals, restrains and advises him, and readily takes on his share of hard labour when they are chained in servitude in Caria (e.g. *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 4.2.1–3, a passage which Lucian knew, as I shall argue presently). In the novel Chariton hints strongly at the erotic nature of his friends' devotion by comparing it to the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.[17] In *Toxaris*, Mnesippus eschews any such explicit allusion to Achilles and Patroclus within his narrative in accordance with the rules of the competition, which forbid the use of stories from Greek myth or literature, but the Achilles–Patroclus dyad casts its shadow over his story nevertheless, as Toxaris had named them first in his list of legendary friends immediately prior to Mnesippus' commencement of his tale (*Tox.* 10): arguably, therefore, Achilles and Patroclus, who are inscribed explicitly as paradigms in Chariton's novel, hover implicitly over the friends in Mnesippus' story as well. Mnesippus' tale focuses on the erotic (?) friendship between Deinias and Agathocles, and incorporates within this framework the story about the devastatingly unequal affair between Deinias and Charicleia.

In this way, Lucian inverts the hierarchy within the novel which assigns central importance to the male–female lovers and incorporates homoerotic plots in the side-lines.[18] In *Toxaris* therefore Lucian has externalized a self-deconstructing tendency which is already built into the novels themselves for, as Tim Whitmarsh argues, the novels' homoerotic subplots play an important role in denaturalizing dominant conventions in the genre.[19] In

[17] At *C&C* 1.5.2, Chariton describes Polycharmus as Chaereas' 'extraordinary friend, such as Homer made Patroclus to Achilles'. Chariton also uses Patroclus and Achilles as a paradigm for the central relationship between Chaereas and Callirhoe, thus inviting readers implicitly to compare the two relationships – the married lovers and the lover-friends – and even to read them as representative of two competing 'roles' which the hero must decide between; see Hunter 1994, 1083 with n. 139; Sanz Morales and Mariscal 2003 and, more generally, Whitmarsh 2011, 206–10.

[18] For the political ramifications of the novels' marginalization of the homoerotic, see discussion in Konstan 1994, 26–30; Goldhill 1995, 46–111 (on constructions of sexuality) and Whitmarsh 2011, 159–63 (with a slant towards the interplay of conflicting readerly desires).

[19] See Whitmarsh 2011, 159–63, esp. 161: 'Gay subplots . . . can denaturalise the dominant, marital ideology by exposing its constructedness, the economy of selections and prioritisations that underlie any narrative of desire.' I will draw attention again to this tendentious tendency in *Toxaris* in my discussion of Mnesippus' second and fourth stories in particular (see pp. 49–55 and 57–60).

Toxaris, Agathocles and Deinias, who are separated but reunited, thereafter to remain together for the rest of their lives, usurp the role of the idealized couple in the novels; it is as if we were reading a distorted version of Chariton's novel which focused on the Polycharmus–Chaereas friendship, and contained within that plot a disastrous version of the relationship between Chaereas and Callirhoe.

In fact, Chariton himself toys with the possibility of just such as a distortion in the first book of his novel where Callirhoe's rejected suitors, to exact revenge on her new husband, contrive what appears to be a clandestine nocturnal meeting between Callirhoe and her lover, and arrange for Chaereas to witness his wife's 'infidelity'; what Chaereas in fact sees (and predictably misinterprets) is a parasite calling on Callirhoe's maid, whom he has seduced.[20] The entire episode is rippled with theatrical metaphor, to emphasize the staged nature of the plot and enfold Chaereas' misreading in dramatic irony: the parasite who plays the 'role of lover' (*hypokritēs erōtos*)[21] acts as if he were trying to avoid notice, but by clever use of costume and cosmetics renders himself conspicuous even by night;[22] the suitor who arranged the plot is 'the ringleader of the play' (*ho dēmiourgos tou dramatos*);[23] the man who informs Chaereas of the adultery is 'another actor' (*hypokritēs heteros*) who 'set the scene' for the deception (*sunetatte tēn skēnēn*).[24]

The intrigue with Charicleia in *Toxaris* is similarly orchestrated with the aim of ruining Deinias, and here too we find copious theatrical metaphors, from the flatterers who 'play supporting role' (*hypekōmōidoun*) while Charicleia flawlessly 'acts' her part as love-struck woman (*hypokrinamenē*).[25] Like the parasite in Chariton's intrigue who is 'suave and full to the brim of every social grace' (*stōmulos kai pasēs kharitos homilēktēs empleōs*) Charicleia in *Toxaris* is gifted in the art of pleasurable conversation (*pros hēdonēn . . . homilēsai epistamenē*).[26] Her expertise stretches to crying on cue, as well as feigning other symptoms of love which include holding onto Deinias when he is about to leave, and running eagerly towards him on his return (*eiselthonti prosdramein*) – something Callirhoe does too, when Chaereas comes home (*khairousa autōi prosedramen*).[27] Even the 'speechless servants' (*oiketai aphōnoi*)[28] who witness Charicleia's murder evoke the *aphōna prosōpa*, the unspeaking serving-characters who silently populate the theatrical stage.

[20] *C&C* 1.4. [21] *C&C* 1.4.1. [22] *C&C* 1.4.9. [23] *C&C* 1.4.2. [24] *C&C* 1.4.2 and 1.4.8.
[25] *Tox.* 14. [26] *C&C* 1.4.1; *Tox.* 15. [27] *C&C* 1.4.11. [28] *Tox.* 17.

Both intrigues result in a shocking outburst of violence against the woman: Chaereas delivers a single, brutal kick to Callirhoe (who is pregnant, though neither parent realizes it yet), causing her to collapse, apparently dead.[29] Deinias commits a double murder, dispatching Charicleia's husband Demonax with a single, efficient blow to the head, but unleashing more frenetic violence against Charicleia herself, whom he believes (wrongly) to be pregnant with his child. He kills her with several blows of the door-bar, then mutilates her corpse with repeated stabs of her husband's sword.[30] The expression of violence in both narratives is significant: Chaereas' hotheaded outburst constitutes a direct threat to his unborn progeny, underlining the self-destructive nature of his rage, whilst Deinias' weapons of choice hint at the sexual rage motivating his violence: the door-bar represents the husband's authority, which had (so Charicleia claimed) blocked their sexual liaisons, driving Deinias to 'madness',[31] and his use of the husband's sword to mutilate her body represents his attempt to assert phallic control over the woman who had so abused him.

Within the brief scale of his story, Mnesippus even shares with Chariton the technique of commenting knowingly on his narrative with *gnōmai*, remarks which map the particular onto more general patterns of human behaviour. On the effectiveness, as a catalyst to the love-affair, of convincing the young man that he is loved, he remarks 'for this is a most seductive method, especially for those who believe themselves to be beautiful'.[32] Chariton similarly comments on the parasite's method for seducing Callirhoe's maid by threatening suicide unless she requites his love: 'A woman is easy prey when she believes she is loved.'[33] Moreover, these *gnōmai*, which are a notable feature of Chariton's narrative technique with its distinctive 'moralising flavour',[34] are unique in *Toxaris* to Mnesippus' first narrative, the most distinctly Charitonian.

Further clues in the narrative point towards Chariton's novel as an intertext as well, for example when Mnesippus introduces the story by announcing that 'I shall tell the story of a friendship that has become famous among the Ionians' (*philian diēgēsomai aoidimon en tois Iōsi genomenēn*).[35]

[29] Hunter (1994, 1081, with n. 128) also points out the similarity, citing Apuleius, *Met.* 9.25 and Hld. 1.11–12 as additional parallels. More generally, Bowersock (1994, 45) observes that the stories in *Toxaris* 'reflect the literary tastes of which Chariton is a prime example'.

[30] *Tox.* 17. As Schwartz (2000–1, 98) notes: 'In the novels, crimes of passion are the rule', and most trials arise as a result of adultery or murder. Lucian gives us both adultery and (multiple) murder.

[31] *Tox.* 15. [32] *Tox.* 13: ἐπαγωγότατον γὰρ τοῦτό γε, καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς καλοῖς εἶναι οἰομένοις.

[33] *C&C* 1.4.2: γυνὴ δὲ εὐάλωτόν ἐστιν, ὅταν ἐρᾶσθαι δοκῇ.

[34] Hunter 1994, 1061. [35] *Tox.* 12.

Primarily, this is because the story is set largely in the Ionian world of Ephesus and the Cycladic Islands and involves prominent members of Ephesian society.[36] However, the adjective *aoidimos*, which denotes fame *through song*, or *literary* fame, invests the narrator's remark with a metaliterary dimension, flagging his story's affinity to Ionian narrative. Lucian may have Aristides' *Milēsiaka* in mind here, as they were notorious for their adultery plots, but given the resonances with Chariton (and Lucian's familiarity elsewhere with Xenophon's novel, as I shall argue presently), it more probably points to the Greek novel, which had strong connections with the Ionian world, especially Aphrodisias and Ephesus.[37] Lucian may even wish to indicate more specifically *Chaereas and Callirhoe* itself, a novel whose plot encompasses the Ionian islands and sea-board as well as the farther Greek east, and whose author asserts his Ionian identity Herodotean-style, in the very first sentence of the novel ('I, Chariton from Aphrodisias, shall tell . . . '). Throughout the narrative, Mnesippus emphasizes the celebrity of the events he relates: Deinias' rapid arrest is the direct result of the status of his crime as a *cause célèbre*: 'the affair had already been bruited abroad' (*ēdē gar to pragma diebeboēto*).[38] Rumour also spread varying interpretations of Demonax's complicity in Charicleia and Deinias' affair: some say she was genuinely shocked by her husband's sudden irruption – others that he arrived on her cue; Mnesippus' assertion that *both versions are told* (*amphō gar legetai*)[39] draws attention to the story's currency, reinforcing its status as a narrative that is *well-known*. On a metaliterary level, these multiple references to the narrative's celebrity collude with the reader about its relation to a story already well-known throughout Ionia, Chariton's novel, in a manner analogous to the 'Alexandrian footnote'.[40] This too mirrors a Charitonian technique, for Chariton himself uses 'rumour' (*phēmē*) self-reflexively throughout his narrative to trope the celebrity of the novel.[41]

[36] Charicleia, for instance, is the wife of Demonax, 'a distinguished man and first among the Ephesians in public life' (*Tox.* 13).

[37] On the importance of Chariton and Xenophon (of Aphrodisias and Ephesus respectively) for shaping the genre of the Greek novel as we know it, see Whitmarsh 2011, 25–68.

[38] *Tox.* 17. Lucian's language here is strikingly Charitonian, e.g. Theron is reluctant to make his business *periboēton* (1.12.1); Callirhoe's beauty is *periboēton* (1.14.8); the servant-women assert that their own mistress is *periboētos* (2.2.3); Dionysius is *diaboētos* for his civility (2.5.4) and *periboētos* for his self-restraint (2.6.3); Callirhoe, once seen, would become *periboētos* for her beauty (2.7.1); Callirhoe and Chaereas' marriage is *periboētos* (2.9.4); the Syracusans are a people which is *periboētos* for its civility (3.4.9); Callirhoe's beauty is again *periboēton* (4.6.4); the beautiful Rhodogune is a big deal in Persia and *periboēton* (5.3.4), etc.

[39] *Tox.* 17.

[40] On tropes of allusivity in Roman poetry, see Hinds 1998, 1–16.

[41] See Nimis (2003, 260–1), and particularly the rich discussion in Tilg 2010, 240–70 and forthcoming.

By rewriting an episode from *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in the journalistic style and avowedly 'factual' framework of *Toxaris*, Lucian exposes the melodramatic nature of Charitonian realism.[42] In the novel, the crimes of adultery and murder are neutralized by the facts (which the reader knows, or soon learns) that Callirhoe is *not* cheating on her husband; she is actually carrying his child, a token of her marital fidelity and the intensity of their mutual desire,[43] and her death is merely a *Scheintod*, a coma from which she will soon awake. Furthermore, Chaereas is publicly exonerated for his crime of passion, the narrative's none-too-subtle attempt to assuage the reader's malaise concerning its hero.[44] Lucian's tale, however, moves from this bourgeois comfort into grittier reality, where the whorish Charicleia feigns pregnancy to provoke her lover to desperation (*Tox.* 15). Her marital infidelity is just one in a series of venal affairs (we even see her move on to her next lover, a rich Cretan youth, after Deinias loses his wealth), and her husband, far from being cuckolded, may even be her accomplice. Lucian's story ends, not with one pseudo-death, as in Chariton, but two brutally real murders – for which there are consequences. Deinias, as adulterer, is made to feel the full punitive weight of the Roman empire's legal machine: arrested on the following morning by soldiers, he is brought first before the local governor, who sends him to the emperor in Rome, where he is sentenced to lifelong exile on the island of Gyaros (*Tox.* 17). In contrast with the Greek novel, which tends to ignore, elide or disguise the presence of the Roman empire, Lucian actively integrates it into his story-world, even if he narrates the *realia* of imperial administration in archaizing Greek terms, for example describing the Roman emperor as 'the great king' and the governor of Asia (and later at *Tox.* 32 the governor of Egypt) as a 'harmost' instead of using the contemporary Greek term *eparchos*.[45] Lucian evokes the world of the Greek novel in broad brush-strokes, but also allows a certain amount of 'real-life' to infiltrate its idealized cosiness, as if

[42] On the interplay between the reading-frames proper to history and epic within Chariton's novel, see Hunter 1994. My reading here complements that of Whitmarsh (2011, 162), who reads the Charicles/Clinias *novella* in Achilles Tatius' novel as a tragic tale which exposes the melodrama of the central couple's story.

[43] *C&C* 2.8.4.

[44] It looks as if the murder was a crime of passion; at *C&C* 1.4.10, Chaereas 'rushed into the house with the intention of killing the *adulterer* in the act' (εἰσέδραμεν ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ τὸν μοιχὸν ἀναιρήσων). However, on the doubtful legality of the murder of an adulterer caught in the act – not to mention a wife – see Hunter 1994, 1080–2. Demonax, the husband in Lucian's story, orders Deinias' arrest, threatens him with 'fire and lash', and draws his sword against him 'as an adulterer' (*Tox.* 17), suggesting an intention to preserve him for torture, but to kill him should he resist or try to escape.

[45] See Mason 1974, 138–40. For discussion of references to Roman institutions in the Greek novels, see Schwartz 2003. Alvares (2001–2) discusses the traction between Chariton's novel and the politics and ideologies of its contemporary context.

to say: life doesn't work out like it does in novels. Tellingly, there are no outbursts of love, marriage and happy endings – only sordid manipulation, disillusionment, betrayal, violence, poverty and death – a plot in which the idealist suffers long, and ultimately alone. At the same time, through its tendentious intertextuality with Chariton, Lucian invites us to read the novel's central love-plot through a narrative about male friendship, which the novel hints at but does not develop. Having read *Toxaris*, it is difficult to read *Chaereas and Callirhoe* without feeling its improbable storyishness, or without imaginatively supplementing the embedded narrative of Chaereas and Polycharmus with a story of their own.

A sea-storm (*Tox.* 19–21)

In his second story Mnesippus relates how Euthydicus risked his life by diving into storm-ravaged waters to rescue his ailing friend Damon, who had fallen overboard. Euthydicus and Damon are the same age, but whilst Euthydicus is healthy and strong, Damon is weak after a prolonged illness.[46] At first Damon manages, with difficulty, to keep above water, but he quickly tires; by the time Euthydicus finds him, he is already flagging. Euthydicus *swims alongside him* and *buoys him up*. This scenario and the very language which Lucian uses to describe it echo a passage in Xenophon's novel *An Ephesian tale* (3.2), where Hippothous tells the hero Habrocomes a similar story about himself and his lover Hyperanthes. On their fugitive voyage from Perinthus to Asia, in the waters off Lesbos (a geographical location with significant homoerotic associations), they were hit by a sudden storm which capsized their ship, casting everyone overboard.

> And *I swam alongside* Hyperanthes, supporting him, and *I buoyed him up* in his effort to swim – but when night fell, the boy, unable to sustain it any longer, became exhausted from swimming, and died . . . [47]

Despite Hippothous' valiant efforts in the novel, however, Hyperanthes drowned.

This episode has been interpreted as a dramatization of the asymmetricality of their homoerotic relationship.[48] Like Euthydicus and Damon

[46] *Tox.* 19.

[47] *Eph.* 3.2.12: Κἀγὼ μὲν τῷ Ὑπεράνθῃ <u>συνενηχόμην</u> ὑπιὼν αὐτῷ καὶ <u>κουφοτέραν τὴν νῆξιν ἐποιούμην</u>· νυκτὸς δὲ γενομένης οὐκέτι ἐνεγκὸν τὸ μειράκιον παρείθη τῷ κολύμβῳ καὶ ἀποθνῄσκει. Lucian echoes the underlined verbs in Xenophon's passage in *Tox.* 20: συμπαρανήχεσθαι καὶ συγκουφίζειν.

[48] Morgan 1996, 175; for further discussion, see Konstan 1994, 26–30 and Watanabe 2003, 4–15.

in *Toxaris*, both youths appear to be of similar age,[49] but are unequal in terms of power. Hippothous is clearly the pursuing partner (the lover, or *erastēs*), and Hyperanthes the acquiescent 'beloved' or *erōmenos*, whose passivity is emphasized when he is handed over by his father to Aristomachus (under the pretext of gaining instruction from him, but in fact to become his sexual plaything), who keeps him a house-prisoner, and subsequently removes him to Byzantium (*Eph.* 3.2.8). Hyperanthes relies completely on Hippothous to kill Aristomachus and rescue him (*Eph.* 3.2.8–10), and to save him in the stormy seas off Lesbos – which Hippothous fails to do. This tragic outcome for the *erōmenos* is a regular pattern elsewhere in the Greek novels too, which serves both to reinforce the Greek novel's sanctioning of the hetero-erotic as normative and also, simultaneously, to expose the conventionality of this very strategy. Tim Whitmarsh argues that this is particularly clear in this very story in Xenophon's novel, where the doomed *erōmenos* Hyper*anthes* has been given a name which marks his role as a competitor with the heroine *Anthia*, who will, in contrast, be given a happy ending:

> This [*novella*] shares many features with that of Habrocomes and Anthia: it tells of two beautiful young lovers, of approximately equal age, who fall in love and meet at a festival; they remain true to each other despite love rivals and maritime misfortunes. The name 'Hyperanthes', what is more, looks like an attempt to outdo 'Anthia'. This story, it is true, is condensed into a single paragraph of the romance, an act of epitomisation that illustrates the heterosexist priorities of the central narrative; but at the same time, the lack of proportionality points to the arbitrariness of the narratorial choice to privilege the marriage plot. *With a different narrator, Hippothous and Hyperanthes might have been the primary narrative, with Anthia and Habrocomes as the subplot.*[50]

In this case, Mnesippus *is* that 'different narrator'. By evoking this particular *novella*, therefore, Lucian reinforces the tendentious nature of the relationship between *Toxaris* and the Greek novels in a particularly pointed manner, and one that was already implicit within Xenophon's narrative itself. In *his* version, as we shall see, the unlucky *erōmenos* will survive and the gay lovers will live happily ever after *practising philosophy in Athens*.[51] In this context, the couple's *Nachleben* of philosophical bliss in Athens hints euphemistically at their thriving relationship, for in the 'comic eroticization' of 'the philosophy of chastity' in the dialogue *Amores*, which is

[49] See *Eph.* 3.2.4: 'the fact that we shared the same age removed suspicion' (τὸ τῆς ἡλικίας [ἀλλήλοις] ἀνύποπτον ἦν).

[50] Whitmarsh 2011, 161, with my italics.

[51] *Tox.* 21.

attributed to Lucian, the practice of philosophy is used scathingly by the Corinthian Theomnestus as a by-word for the homoerotic impulses which the *Athenian* speaker Lycinus advocates.[52]

But in this story Lucian also evokes a broader matrix of sea-storm stories which, like the homoerotic *novellae*, constitute another disruptive narrative force in the Greek novels.[53] Mnesippus presents his story as a *précis* of the more lavish and elaborate sea-storm narratives we find in the Greek novels. Two fine examples survive: on a papyrus-fragment from Antonius Diogenes' *The incredible things beyond Thule*,[54] and Achilles Tatius' melodrama in *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.1–5, a magnificent passage which Lucian possibly knows.[55] Both of these novelistic storm-narratives emphasize the visual conditions which prevailed during the storm: Antonius Diogenes reports the Sun's sudden concealment in misty cloud so that it becomes impossible to tell whether it is actually night, or just a nocturnally black day; neither land nor sky is discernible in the engulfing gloom.[56] In Clitophon's story, the sudden onset of fog obliterates even the noontime daylight so that it is like sailing by moonlight.[57] Descriptions of the meteorological turbulence intensify the excitement: storm-winds rend the sea into vertiginous chasms and towering waves.[58] The whole universe resounds in a cacophony of thunder, crashing sea and howling gale.[59] Both novelistic narratives decribe the rigging of the ship against the storm: Clitophon reports that the captain ordered the sailors to turn the yard-arm and reel in the sail, whilst in the Antonius Diogenes fragment, futile attempts are made to manipulate the yard-arm so as to steer the ship's course in the strong east wind.[60] Finally, there is description of the psychological plight of the victims who, in despair of safety, welcome the prospect of a quick death at least.[61]

Lucian's storm-narrative in *Toxaris*, albeit more economical, shares sufficient detail with these versions, especially that of Achilles Tatius, to suggest

[52] See especially *Amores* 19–28, with Goldhill (1995, 102–9), who reads the *Amores* as a para-novelistic exploration of sexual desires, esp. p. 102: 'If in Achilles Tatius we see an ironization of the philosophy of chastity, in the Lucianic *Erotes* we see its constant comic eroticization.'

[53] See Whitmarsh 2011, 217.

[54] P. Dubl. C3, Col. II; for text and commentary, see Stephens and Winkler 1995, 164–72.

[55] Schwartz (1976) presents further evidence for links between Achilles Tatius and Lucian, favouring the view that the novelist drew on Lucian.

[56] P. Dubl. C3, Col. II, ll. 17–18, 49–50 and 52–3.

[57] *L&C* 3.1.1 and 3.2.2.

[58] P. Dubl. C3, Col. II, ll. 39–41; *L&C* 3.2.2 and 3.2.5–7.

[59] P. Dubl. C3, Col. II, ll. 45–46; *L&C* 3.2.2–3, with exhilarating onomatopoeia, and including human cries at 3.2.8.

[60] *L&C* 3.1.1–2; P. Dubl. C3, Col. II, ll. 24–32.

[61] P. Dubl. C3, Col. II, ll. 34–37; *L&C* 3.2.4 and 3.4.4–5.

that Lucian was thoroughly familiar with the pattern and detail of such novelistic episodes, and that he expected his audience to be too. His attention to technicalities and evocation of more lavish rhetorical possibilities distinguishes Mnesippus' tale from brief novelistic shipwrecks such as Hippothous' or Habrocomes' one-line shipwreck at the mouth of the Nile (*Eph.* 3.12.1). Mnesippus reports that the ship's yard-arm was bare, and that it was dragging hawsers to steady the keel against the storm's fury (*Tox.* 19). Damon's accident happened during the storm at about midnight, although conveniently, there was sufficient moonlight to illuminate what was going on in the water (*Tox.* 20), giving us actual night and actual moonlight for the novels' virtual night, and in particular, for Clitophon's virtual moonlight in *Leucippe and Clitophon*.[62] There are further similarities with Achilles Tatius: for example, when their chances of survival are remote, the victims in both stories direct their desire towards death in unison with their beloved instead.[63] Unlike the Xenophontic tale, but exactly similar to Achilles Tatius, both characters survive the storm: like Clitophon and Leucippe, Euthydicus and Damon swim to safety aboard some floating jetsam,[64] and both narrators use the story to comment on the nature of friendship, albeit in opposite directions. For Mnesippus, the storm provides Euthydicus with the opportunity to prove his unflinching devotion to Damon: 'Now consider, by the gods, what surer proof of goodwill could one show a friend who has fallen in the night into such a savage sea than to share his death?'[65] Clitophon's narrative, however, dramatizes precisely the reverse of such altruism, as passengers violently sabotage each other in their desperation to save themselves, leading Clitophon to conclude that in times of great crises, the ideals of friendship evaporate, and it is a case of 'each man for himself': 'For there was no longer any bedrock of friendship or respect – but each person, looking to his own safety, disregarded any thoughts of kindness towards others. In this way great dangers dissolve even the laws of friendship.'[66] Although he has sworn to forego any of the typically Greek literary flourishes which might unfairly give his narratives the rhetorical edge over those of his Scythian rival, and

[62] *L&C* 3.2.2, cited earlier. [63] *L&C* 3.5.4; *Tox.* 20.

[64] *Tox.* 21; *L&C* 3.5. We do not know the outcome of the shipwreck from the Antonius Diogenes fragment. As Stephens and Winkler note (1995, *ad loc.*), the appearance of St. Elmo's fire (P. Dubl. C3, Col. II, ll. 55–60) hints at salvation, but further details are missing.

[65] *Tox.* 20: Ἐννόησον τοίνυν πρὸς θεῶν ἥντινα ἄν τις ἄλλην ἐπίδειξιν ἐπιδείξαιτο εὐνοίας βεβαιοτέραν πρὸς ἄνδρα φίλον ἐν νυκτὶ ἐκπεσόντα ἐς πέλαγος οὕτως ἠγριωμένον ἢ κοινωνήσας τοῦ θανάτου;

[66] *L&C* 3.3.5: φιλίας γὰρ ἢ αἰδοῦς οὐκ ἔτι θεσμὸς ἦν, ἀλλὰ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἕκαστος σκοπῶν ἀσφαλὲς τὸ πρὸς τοὺς ἑτέρους εὔγνωμον οὐκ ἐλογίζετο. οὕτως οἱ μεγάλοι κίνδυνοι καὶ τοὺς τῆς φιλίας λύουσι νόμους.

raise suspicion about his adherence to the 'facts', nevertheless Mnesippus cannot resist offering Toxaris a glimpse of the richness of detail that he *might* have exploited. He twice presents his story as a *compression* of the detail which is usually given more generous latitude in sea-storm narratives which are designed for a less sceptical audience:[67] 'And as for the many details, why recount them: triple waves and whirlwinds and hailstones and all the other evils of a storm?'[68] Notably, among the 'usual evils of a storm' which he mentions here, the gargantuan triple waves (*trikumiai*) and savage sea (*pelagos ēgriōmenon*) precisely echo the 'triple waves' (*trikumiai*) and 'savagery of the waves' (*to agrion tou kumatos*) of Clitophon's narrative.[69] Later, for closural effect, Mnesippus invites Toxaris once again to picture 'the towering waves, the roar of the water breaking, the boiling foam, the darkness, and the despair.'[70] In this case, Mnesippus' explicit appeal to the *visual*, asking Toxaris to bring the scene 'before his eyes', offers us a further clue to the story's intertextual matrix. It appears to have been common for shipwreck-survivors not only to offer votive dedications at the sanctuary of whatever deity they believed had guaranteed their safety, but also to have lingered there, offering to tell the tale of their adventure to any visitors to the shrine willing to listen, probably in return for alms.[71] By this means, the survivor both repaid his obligation to the gods and could earn a little money – as many would be reduced to destitution, having lost all their belongings at sea. In his essay *On hired scholars*, Lucian claims to have heard such survivor-stories firsthand; he compares the stories about figurative 'shipwrecks of fortune' that are often repeated by occupants of

[67] Cf. *Tox.* 42, where Toxaris does the opposite, *amplifying* his own narrative of 'the bare facts' with rhetorical and emotive flourishes to represent a more florid Greek version of his Scythian tale: 'And yet I narrated the bare facts; but if *you* were telling this sort of story, I know well the quantities of luxuries you would have blended with your account – how Dandamis made his supplication and how he was blinded, and what he said and how he returned and how the Scythians welcomed him, singing his praises – and all the other sorts of devices you Greeks contrive to appeal to your audience.' καίτοι ἐγὼ μέν σοι γυμνὸν τὸ ἔργον διηγησάμην· εἰ δὲ σύ τινα τοιοῦτον ἔλεγες, εὖ οἶδα, ὁπόσα ἂν κομψὰ ἐγκατέμιξας τῷ λόγῳ, οἷα ἱκέτευεν ὁ Δάνδαμις καὶ ὡς ἐτυφλοῦτο καὶ ἃ εἶπεν καὶ ὡς ἐπανῆκεν καὶ ὡς ὑπεδέξαντο αὐτὸν ἐπευφημοῦντες οἱ Σκύθαι καὶ ἄλλα ὁποῖα ὑμεῖς μηχανᾶσθαι εἰώθατε πρὸς τὴν ἀκρόασιν. Ironically, Toxaris' catalogue of the Greek narrative 'devices' he so scornfully eschews demonstrates how capably he himself can play the Greeks' game.

[68] *Tox.* 19: καὶ τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τί ἂν τις λέγοι, τρικυμίας τινὰς καὶ στροβίλους καὶ χαλάζας καὶ ἄλλα ὅσα χειμῶνος κακά;

[69] *Tox.* 19; *L&C* 3.2.5 and 3.5.5.

[70] *Tox.* 20: καί μοι ἐπ᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν λαβὲ τὴν ἐπανάστασιν τῶν κυμάτων, τὸν ἦχον τοῦ ὕδατος ἐπικλωμένου, τὸν ἀφρὸν περιζέοντα, τὴν νύκτα καὶ τὴν ἀπόγνωσιν·

[71] Cicero (*On the nature of the gods* 3. 89) refers to the practice among survivors of sea-storms and shipwrecks of leaving votive offerings and paintings (*tabulae pictae*) at sanctuaries to give thanks for their safety, and the *Palatine Anthology* contains three epigrams associated with such dedications (6. 164, 166 and 245), one of which (164) is attributed to Lucian himself.

the disastrous position of hired scholar, with the real-life (and equally cliché-ridden) stories told by shipwreck-survivors:

> So I listened to them, with concentrated and careful attention, as they told stories about their virtual shipwreck and their unexpected rescue – just like those with shaved heads who cluster together in throngs near sanctuaries, recounting their tales of triple waves and squalls and headlands and jetsam and masts breaking and rudders snapping, and above all epiphanies of the Dioscuri (who are of course right at home in this sort of melodrama) or some other *deus ex machina* perched on the sail or standing by the rudder and steering the ship gently to some shore, where, once come to land, it is destined to fall apart at a calm and leisurely pace, whilst they themselves disembark safely, by the grace and good will of the god.[72]

Other sources reveal that, as well as narrating, it was common practice to leave a *painting* of the shipwreck in the temple, both as a votive offering of thanks and as a permanent reminder of the individual's story.[73] Mnesippus' appeal to Toxaris to *visualize* the scene – the foam, the waves, the expressions of despair – could suggest that Lucian has such shipwreck paintings in mind here too. Lucian also tells us that these survivors in the temple sanctuaries had a tendency to exaggerate the facts to curry favour with their paying audience – the more dramatic and miraculous the rescue, the more alms deserved by the recipient of such grave misfortune and divine favour (*Merc. co.* 1).[74] Clearly, then, there was a 'market' here for more exciting narratives – which is another reason why Mnesippus in *Toxaris*, with an eye to the believability of his tale, suppresses anything that smacks of embellishment – and it is precisely the more miraculous aspects typical of the genre, such as divine intervention (present in the fragment from *The incredible things beyond Thule*), that he omits. This is also surely the reason for Mnesippus' scrupulous recasting of his narrative's structure: in contrast to each of its relatives examined here (Hippothous' tale in the *Ephēsiaka*, the shipwreck tales from *The incredible things beyond*

[72] *Merc. cond.* 1: οὐ παρέργως οὖν οὐδὲ ἀμελῶς ἐπήκουον αὐτῶν καθάπερ ναυαγίαν τινὰ καὶ σωτηρίαν αὑτῶν παράλογον διηγουμένων, οἷοί εἰσιν οἱ πρὸς τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἐξυρημένοι τὰς κεφαλὰς συνάμα πολλοὶ τὰς τρικυμίας καὶ ζάλας καὶ ἀκρωτήρια καὶ ἐκβολὰς καὶ ἱστοῦ κλάσεις καὶ πηδαλίων ἀποκαυλίσεις διεξιόντες, ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ τοὺς Διοσκούρους ἐπιφαινομένους, – οἰκεῖοι γὰρ τῆς τοιαύτης τραγῳδίας οὗτοί γε – ἤ τιν' ἄλλον ἐκ μηχανῆς θεὸν ἐπὶ τῷ καρχησίῳ καθεζόμενον ἢ πρὸς τοῖς πηδαλίοις ἑστῶτα καὶ πρός τινα ᾐόνα μαλακὴν ἀπευθύνοντα τὴν ναῦν, οἷ προσενεχθεῖσα ἔμελλεν αὐτὴ μὲν ἠρέμα καὶ κατὰ σχολὴν διαλυθήσεσθαι, αὐτοὶ δὲ ἀσφαλῶς ἀποβήσεσθαι χάριτι καὶ εὐμενείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

[73] See Horace, *Od.* 1.5.13, with Nisbet and Hubbard *ad loc.*

[74] The loquacity of such survivors was legend; Martial, for example, refers scathingly to the *naufragus loquax* (12.57.12). For discussion with further references, see Winkler (1985, 238–42), who explores temple-confessions as the narrative context behind Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

Thule and *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and the survivors' stories reported in Lucian's own essay *On hired scholars*), the tale of Euthydicus and Damon is *not* an ego-narrative; Mnesippus in fact goes to great lengths to account for the sources of the story, and to justify the authority of his respective witnesses: the sea-captain Simylus, who swears to tell the truth (*Tox.* 19), is responsible only for the sequence of events he could plausibly have witnessed from the boat that night, when the bright moonlight enhanced visibility (*Tox.* 20); what happened to the friends after they swam out of view is told as an epilogue, gleaned from 'Euthydicus and his friends' (*Tox.* 21). By restructuring his narrative in this way and framing it with staccato allusions to these more luxurious (and implicitly, more fabulous) versions of shipwreck tales, Lucian evokes the high-octane melodrama of novelistic adventure, whilst highlighting the terser, journalistic style of Mnesippus' narrative in *Toxaris*.

Chariton again: Antiphilus' and Demetrius' Egyptian adventure

Mnesippus' fifth story (*Tox.* 27–34) is set entirely in Egypt, where Demetrius and Antiphilus have travelled to continue their studies in philosophy and medicine respectively; whilst there, Demetrius embarks on a six-month Nile cruise to see the pyramids and hear the oracle of Memnon (*Tox.* 27). In his absence, disaster strikes: one of the household slaves becomes an accomplice in the robbery of an Anubis-temple. When the stolen goods are discovered under a bed in the house, Antiphilus is arrested and thrown without trial into jail, where the punitive hardship and squalor precipitate a rapid physical and mental decline:

> As a consequence, he became ill and was already in a bad way, as would be expected for a man sleeping on the ground and at night not even able to stretch out his legs because they are shackled in stocks . . . Moreover, the stench of the room and the stifling heat, with numerous prisoners crammed into a confined space and scarcely able to breathe, and the clatter of iron and shortage of sleep – all of these conditions were harsh and unbearable for a man who was unaccustomed to those circumstances, who had no experience of such a brutal way of life.[75]

[75] *Tox.* 29: ὑπενόσει τοιγαροῦν ἤδη καὶ πονηρῶς εἶχεν οἷον εἰκὸς χαμαὶ καθεύδοντα καὶ τῆς νυκτὸς οὐδὲ ἀποτείνειν τὰ σκέλη δυνάμενον ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ κατακεκλειμένα· τῆς μὲν γὰρ ἡμέρας ὁ κλοιὸς ἤρκει καὶ ἡ ἑτέρα χεὶρ πεπεδημένη, εἰς δὲ τὴν νύκτα ἔδει ὅλον καταδεδέσθαι. καὶ μὴν καὶ τοῦ οἰκήματος ἡ δυσοσμία καὶ τὸ πνῖγος, ἐν ταὐτῷ πολλῶν δεδεμένων καὶ ἐστενοχωρημένων καὶ μόλις ἀναπνεόντων, καὶ τοῦ σιδήρου ὁ ψόφος καὶ ὕπνος ὀλίγος – ταῦτα πάντα χαλεπὰ ἦν καὶ ἀφόρητα οἵῳ ἀνδρὶ ἐκείνων ἀήθει καὶ ἀμελετήτῳ πρὸς οὕτω σκληρὰν τὴν δίαιταν.

Hovering in the background of Mnesippus' tale is the chain-gang episode from Chariton's novel where Chaereas and Polycharmus are reduced to servitude in Caria. Like Antiphilus, the noble Chaereas is unaccustomed to the overcrowded slave-accommodation ('they were sixteen in number, confined in a dark hut')[76] and to the hard labour, and begins to fail:

> His body wasted rapidly from digging, for many hardships pressed him: beating, neglect, the chains, and more than these, love . . . And so Polycharmus, his friend and fellow-captive, seeing that Chaereas was unable to work, but was being beaten and insulted shamefully . . . like the manly youth that he was by nature, and not enslaved to that harsh master Love, he undertook practically the two shares of work all by himself, gladly taking the greater share of the labour, so that he might preserve his friend.[77]

Like Polycharmus in Chariton's novel, Demetrius in Lucian's dialogue leaps into action to support his friend by earning money from manual labour as a dockyard worker.[78] When Demetrius is no longer allowed to make day-visits to Antiphilus in jail, he falsely incriminates himself, so that he might share his friend's incarceration – requesting only that they be shackled together (*Tox.* 32). Self-condemnation is familiar from the novels, especially in the trial scenes;[79] as is also the case in the shipwreck narratives, when all else is lost, solidarity becomes the primary objective. In Chariton's novel, similarly, when Polycharmus and Chaereas realize that slavery is inevitable, they request that they at least be sold to the same master, and then when all of the slaves are condemned to death by crucifixion, Polycharmus requests only that his cross be positioned next to Chaereas.[80]

Both Lucian's and Chariton's stories of incarceration in a foreign land also contain a jail-break in which the friends themselves refuse to participate, but which unexpectedly precipitates their vindication and restoration

[76] ἑξκαίδεκα . . . ἦσαν τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐν οἰκίσκῳ σκοτεινῷ καθειργμένοι, *C&C* 4.2.5.

[77] *C&C* 4.2.1–3: σκάπτων δὲ τὸ σῶμα ταχέως ἐξετρυχώθη· πολλὰ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐβάρει, κόπος, ἀμέλεια, τὰ δεσμά, καὶ τούτων μᾶλλον ὁ ἔρως . . . Πολύχαρμος οὖν, ὁ συναλοὺς αὐτῷ φίλος, βλέπων Χαιρέαν ἐργάζεσθαι μὴ δυνάμενον, ἀλλὰ πληγὰς λαμβάνοντα καὶ προπηλακιζόμενον αἰσχρῶς . . . οἷα δὴ νεανίας ἀνδρικὸς τὴν φύσιν καὶ μὴ δουλεύων ἔρωτι, χαλεπῷ τυράννῳ, τὰς δύο μοίρας αὐτὸς σχεδὸν εἰργάζετο μόνος, πλεονεκτῶν ἐν τοῖς πόνοις ἡδέως, ἵνα περισώσῃ τὸν φίλον.

[78] *Tox.* 31. The same motif occurs in Mnesippus' first story, where Agathocles labours as a purple-fisher on Gyaros to support his ailing friend Deinias (*Tox.* 18). There is also another comparable episode from the novels in Xen. *Eph.* 5.8.1–4 (a passage which itself echoes Chariton's chain-gang episode) where Habrocomes takes a job working in the stone quarries at Nuceria in Italy and suffers under the harsh conditions – whilst Anthia works in a brothel in Tarentum.

[79] See Schwartz 2000–1, 105–7. For parallels in the declamatory tradition, see Russell 1983, 35–7.

[80] *C&C* 3.7.3 and 4.3.5. The voluntary mutual blinding of Dandamis and Amizoces in Toxaris' first story is a variation on this motif (*Tox.* 41).

to freedom. In Chariton's novel, some of the workers chained with Chaereas attempt a nocturnal escape, cutting through their chains and slaughtering the overseer – but the guard-dogs give them away, and they are quickly recaptured. Although Chaereas and Polycharmus do not attempt to run, their overlord Mithridates condemns all the prisoners to death as a stern example to others.[81] Chaereas is too depressed to protest, but Polycharmus speaks out, an act which leads to their recognition and liberation. In *Toxaris*, similarly, several prisoners attempt to break free, using a file to sever their chains, and killing several prison-guards in the process. Demetrius and Antiphilus, however, refuse to run, and in recognition of their honesty, the prefect of Egypt grants them release.[82] Not satisfied, Demetrius demands an inquiry into their case. The truth about their unjust imprisonment is at last revealed, and both men are restored to honour with generous financial recompense (*Tox.* 33).[83] Mnesippus alludes in passing to Demetrius' impassioned courtroom oratory:

> *That*, Toxaris, is what Greek friends are like. And if you had not accused us of inflated pride in rhetoric, I would also have narrated to you the speeches themselves, the many fine ones Demetrius delivered in the court, saying nothing in his own defence, but defending Antiphilus with tears and even supplications, taking the whole blame upon himself, until the Syrian acquitted them under the lash.[84]

Just as he did in the story of Euthydicus and Damon, Mnesippus manages to evoke the oratorical pyrotechnics and intense emotional drama which characterize 'courtroom' narrative (not least the great trial at Babylon in Chariton's novel), whilst reminding Toxaris of his restraint as a narrator by abstaining from such ample opportunities for embellishment and display.[85]

Zenothemis and Cydimache: a grotesque romance?

Mnesippus' fourth narrative concerns the friendship of Zenothemis and Menecrates (*Tox.* 24–26) and involves a marital plot. It has been described as a 'nearly perfect foil' to the idealistic romances of the Greek novels.[86] Its central feature is the marriage of Zenothemis, who, as a young, tall, handsome and wealthy man, has all the credentials of a novel-hero, and

[81] *C&C* 4.2.5–7. [82] See Pervo 1997: 171, n. 48 for parallels from the New Testament.
[83] Cf. Xenophon, *Eph.* 4.4. [84] *Tox.* 34.
[85] Arbitration scenes, some with lengthy speeches, were a common novelistic motif; Schwartz (2000–1, 94 n. 4) identifies 13 trial scenes in the five extant Greek novels; for discussion, see Schwartz 2000–1 (with the focus on Achilles Tatius) and 2003 (on the Greek novels more generally).
[86] Pervo 1997, 170.

Cydimache, a woman who, as we shall see, is very much the generic anti-type. There is a hint at the novelistic motif of travel (admittedly very reduced), for the story is set entirely in the west, mainly in the couple's native Massalia (which is itself a radical reorientation of romance, far from the more usual, and more glamorous, *milieu* of the Greek novels in the Ionian world or the exotic lands of Egypt and the east), but Mnesippus claims to have seen Zenothemis and Cydimache travelling together in Italy (*Tox.* 24). Their story also features prominently the friendship between Zenothemis and Menecrates, Cydimache's father, who is himself (as usual in the novels) an important local political figure.

Lucian is clearly having fun with the conventional ideals of the Greek romances here, for he includes several strikingly anti-novelistic features in the story as well. Cydimache, notably, is a heroine of surpassing ugliness, described as 'a completely deformed thing, and an unapproachable monster' (*pallōbēton ti kai aprositon mormolukeion*): the right half of her body is palsied, she is missing one eye, and to make matters worse, she is epileptic ('she was said to fall down at the waxing of the Moon').[87] This unfortunate set of circumstances makes her the grotesque antithesis of the novelistic heroines with their statuesque and awe-inspiring beauty; even the narrator's anatomical description of her is antithetical to the ineffable luminescence which enfolds the novelistic beauties and shields them from the reader's dissecting view. Cydimache's horrifying physique, in contrast, is exposed in a sort of narrative exhibitionism which mirrors her husband's unaccountable desire to show her off. A repulsive spectacle for eyes that would surely wish to avert their gaze, hers is the unapproachability not of the goddess, but of the pariah.

Zenothemis' and Cydimache's relationship is distinctly unnovelistic as well; it involves, as one critic notes, no *coups de foudre*;[88] instead, Zenothemis' decision to marry the girl is portrayed as a gesture of self-sacrifice to help the bankrupt Menecrates by taking his hopelessly unmarriageable daughter off his hands without a dowry.[89] Their nuptials are perfunctory: Zenothemis declares his intentions *inter pocula*, promptly deflowers Cydimache in an adjacent room, and returns to the banquet.[90] This business-like transaction is very far removed from the lavish public

[87] *Tox.* 24. In Xenophon's novel, Anthia feigns epilepsy to put off potential customers in a brothel (*Eph* 5.7).

[88] Pervo 1997, 170.

[89] Pervo (1997, 169–70) sums up the plot as 'marriage of the moneyless' and adds: 'I suspect that cultivated aristocrats would have found this story in poor taste.'

[90] *Tox.* 25.

spectacle of novelistic weddings.[91] Yet the deeply unpromising couple is thereafter inseparable – in which respect too they are unlike the lovers in most novels who spend much of their time apart. Zenothemis proudly displays his monstrous wife in public and brings her everywhere with him so that she is habitually seen,[92] unlike the exquisitely rare public appearances of some of the novelistic heroines which have about them an aura of divine epiphany. Zenothemis' pride, for instance, contrasts starkly with Dionysius in Chariton's novel, who jealously conceals his wife's beauty from others.[93]

Ugly women are not absent from the novels, which also contain subplots featuring similarly mismatched couples. Kyno, wife of Araxus, is described in the *Ephēsiaka* as 'offensive to the eye and much worse to the ear, a woman exceeding all bounds of moderation'.[94] Kyno, whose name reflects her shameless sexual behaviour, lusts after Habrocomes as soon as he is brought into her home; determined to slake her passion, she propositions him, then murders her husband, expecting Habrocomes to take his place. When Habrocomes refuses to comply with this 'vile murderer', Kyno falsely incriminates him with the murder instead, and he is arrested.[95] In *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Charicles, Clinias' pretty lover-boy, bewails the fact that his father has arranged a marriage for him: bad enough that he must marry at all, but to double his misery, the bride is an unattractive girl, and Charicles is 'being sold' for money.[96] Although the plot is cut short by Charicles' fatal riding accident, the kernel remains of an unidealized tale of marriage between a reluctant boy and an ugly girl, embedded within a subplot in the romance of Clitophon and Leucippe. The story of Zenothemis and Cydimache in *Toxaris* differs because their union is unexpectedly successful; not only are the couple themselves happy, and Zenothemis proud of his wife, but they are blessed by fortune with a son, whose babyish charm

[91] Chaereas' and Callirhoe's wedding is attended *en masse* by the entire population of Syracuse, and is compared to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (*C&C* 1.1); Habrocomes and Anthia's nuptials are celebrated throughout the city of Ephesus, with a lengthy description of their lovemaking on their wedding night (*Eph.* 1.7–9); Iamblichus, *Bab.* fr. 84 (Stephens and Winkler 1995, 218) contains details of extravagant nuptial arrangements; Daphnis and Chloe's pastoral-themed wedding stands at the climax of the narrative (*D&C* 4. 37–40); Charicleia and Theagenes have a royal wedding in the presence of the nation of Ethiopia (*Eth.* 10. 40–1).

[92] *Tox.* 26.

[93] *C&C* 5.2.7–9. Pervo (1997, 170 n. 38) finds this behaviour distasteful: 'Modern readers are likely to squirm at Zenothemis's flaunting of his disfigured spouse. She is a mere object. This . . . set[s] up a dissonance with the romanticism of the plot.'

[94] *Eph.* 3.12.3: Οὗτος ὁ Ἄραξος εἶχε γυναῖκα ὀφθῆναι μιαράν, ἀκουσθῆναι πολὺ χείρω, ἅπασαν ἀκρασίαν ὑπερβεβλημένην, Κυνὼ τὸ ὄνομα.

[95] *Eph.* 3.12.3–6. In another less-than-ideal marriage (*Eph.* 5.9.1), Hippothous is constrained, through poverty, to marry an elderly woman for her money; fortunately, she does not live long.

[96] *L&C* 1.7.4–5.

restores his grandfather to honour in the Senate (*Tox.* 26). This could not be farther removed from the demonized, husband-murdering Kyno, or Charicles' marriage, which is doomed to failure before it even takes place. An irrepressibly buoyant tale of mismatched marriage and domicility, the 'romance' of Zenothemis and Cydimache rescripts the *telos* of novelistic narrative – static, wedded bliss – in favour of Love's most unpromising couple, irreverently rewriting the Greek novels with their ineffable beauties and melodramatic plots.

Arsacomas and Mazaea: a Scythian romance (*Tox.* 44–55)

It is widely acknowledged that Toxaris' third narrative is rooted in the novelistic tradition. The story is the longest and most complex in the dialogue, involving a trio of Scythians, Arsacomas, Lonchates and Macentes, who are sworn friends, in accordance with the Scythian custom. Arsacomas falls in love with the beautiful and virginal Mazaea, daughter of Leucanor, King of Bosporus, and sues for her hand in marriage, fully aware that he has no material wealth to match his rival suitors, but confident in the greater value of his devoutly loyal friends. Leucanor rejects his suit, however, and betroths the princess to Adyrmachus, the wealthy ruler of Machlyene, instead. Arsacomas returns home, aggrieved at the personal slight and the implied insult to his friends, and the narrative follows their efforts to restore honour. While Arsacomas levies an armed force of Scythians (including Toxaris himself) in preparation for war, Lonchates goes on a retributive quest to slay Leucanor, and Macentes on a mission to kidnap the princess. After a fierce battle in which all three friends are wounded (and Macentes apparently killed), Arsacomas gets his girl, the Scythians triumph, and peace and honour are restored.

Many of the story's ingredients are recognizably novelistic: an aristocratic and beautiful girl who is, we are assured, 'still a virgin' (*Tox.* 52), love at first sight, erotic rivals, obstacles towards marriage, including separation of the lovers, and devoted friendship. But there are distinct differences too – notably the narrative's lack of interest in its 'heroine' (she barely merits the term), for Mazaea's role is utterly passive: she is not even reported to speak, and there is no positive evidence about her feelings concerning Arsacomas beyond the fact that there is no report of any resistance on her part against Macentes' intervention to kidnap her. Her attenuated role as love-object and *causa belli* is emphasized by the fact that we are never even informed that Arsacomas married her after the war; we must presume he did, as there is no reason to think otherwise, but Mazaea is quite literally

written out of the narrative the moment she passes from Macentes' hands to Arsacomas. The erotic plot is reduced to the backdrop for a splendid triple plot of friendship, as Toxaris accommodates novelistic narrative to his present purpose.

The story is set entirely outside the Greek world among the Scythians; the only Greeks to feature are the unnamed soldiers in the Greek contingent in the army of Eubiotus, King of Bosporus. Toxaris' narrative technique includes a high density of aetiological digressions, for example the Bosporan custom of suing for marriage (*Tox.* 44); why Scythians do not pour libations (*Tox.* 45); explanation of the Scythian custom of raising forces 'on the hide' (*Tox.* 48); the customary clothing and hairstyles of the Scythians and Alans (*Tox.* 51). This both heightens the exotic 'otherness' of the Scythian world, and 'translates' it to a Greek audience in a manner that is reminiscent of the digressive tendencies which are particularly clear in the contemporary novels by Achilles Tatius (*Leucippe and Clitophon*) and Iamblichus (*Babyloniaka*). These novels are themselves the most resistant to Hellenism in the extant novelistic *corpus*, especially Iamblichus' novel, which is set entirely outside the Greek world and excludes Greeks from its cast of characters altogether.[97]

It has long been speculated that Toxaris' story may be related to a fragmentary Greek novel from the second century CE, known as *Calligone*.[98] The similarities are superficially tempting, as both texts share the same geographical location on the northern coast of the Black Sea, and both contain a male figure of authority called Eubiotus. In *Toxaris*, Eubiotus is Leucanor's illegitimate brother and Mazaea's uncle, a Greek who takes over the kingship of Bosporus after Leucanor's demise and is ultimately quashed in battle with the Scythians, along with his ally Adyrmachus.[99] In the Cairo fragment of *Calligone*, Eubiotus appears as a commander-figure who adopts a protective attitude towards the Greek heroine, ordering

[97] On digressive tendencies in the Greek novel, see Whitmarsh 2011, 235–42 (contextualizing it with ancient miscellanies and encyclopaedic literature) and 242–6 (on Achilles Tatius' digressivism).

[98] The text survives in two papyri: the Cairo papyrus *PSI* 981, which is dated to the second century CE (for text and commentary, see Stephens and Winkler 1995, 267–76), and an Oxyrhynchus papyrus, *POxy* inv. 112/130 (a), the publication of which is eagerly anticipated. I am very grateful to Peter Parsons for sharing his thoughts about the reconstruction of this fragment in advance of publication.

[99] David Braund (*pers. comm.*) makes the intriguing suggestion that the fictional Bosporan kings Leucanor and Eubiotus may be meant to recall the names of the historical Bosporan kings Leucon and Eumelos. This is consistent with the narrative's carefully crafted patina of historicity, e.g. the reference to the Sindian revolt (*Tox.* 55) and the very contemporary reference to the Alans (*Tox.* 51 and 54), a tribe which invaded the Roman empire in 166 CE, and which, as Dowden notes, appear only in literature of the imperial period and – in another overlap between the two texts – are mentioned also in Iamblichus' novel *The Babylonian tales* 21: see Dowden forthcoming b and (on the significance of the Alans in imperial culture more generally) Ramelli 2001, 451–3.

the evacuation of the tent under false pretences so that she may have privacy to vent her anguish, and concealing her dagger to prevent her from suicide. There is some verbal similarity also between the Amazon queen Themisto's reaction to Calligone in the Oxyrhynchyus papyrus: 'upon seeing Calligone, she admired her for her almost superhuman beauty and stature' (*idousa de tēn [Kalligo]nēn ethaumasen [tou kallou]s kai tou megethous [hōs hype]r anthrōpōn*), and Arsacomas' reaction to Mazaea in *Toxaris*: 'upon seeing Mazaea, a tall and beautiful girl, he fell in love' (*idōn tēn Mazaian megalēn kai kalēn parthenon ēra*, *Tox.* 44),[100] but, though novelistic in air, there is not enough in this phraseology to suggest a specific genealogical link between *Calligone* and *Toxaris*.[101] Other alleged resonances between the texts are more tenuous.[102] On present evidence, therefore, I find the argument that Lucian is alluding to *Calligone* unconvincing;[103] it is far more likely that he is drawing, in a more general way, from the well of a novelistic tradition which was based in the Black Sea area.[104]

Nevertheless, the idea that Lucian is alluding to *some* particular novel, now lost, persists with extraordinary tenacity, not least because of the peculiar accumulation of inconcinnities in the narrative, which tend to be construed as evidence that Lucian's tale is an abridgement or epitome of a longer work.[105] There are several instances of ellipsis or omission of detail in Toxaris' narrative: we are never informed about the fate of the single horseman who accompanied Macentes and Mazaea on the journey to Bosporus (*Tox.* 52), for example, or about how Macentes managed to evade him when kidnapping the princess (we must assume he simply evaded him

[100] Noted at Stephens and Winkler 1995, 268, n. 3.

[101] The first, awe-inspiring vision of other novelistic heroines is described in similar terms. For example, Callirhoe is introduced as 'an astonishing specimen of girlhood . . . for hers was no human beauty, but divine' (θαυμαστόν τι χρῆμα παρθένου . . . ἦν γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ θεῖον, *C&C* 1.1.1–2). Anthia's beauty is 'wondrous, and far exceeding the other girls' (Ἦν δὲ τὸ κάλλος τῆς Ἀνθίας οἷον θαυμάσαι καὶ πολὺ τὰς ἄλλας ὑπερεβάλλετο παρθένους. *Eph.* 1.2.5). Clitophon similarly describes falling in love with Leucippe at first sight: 'I praised her stature, I was awestruck by her beauty' (ἐπῄνουν τὸ μέγεθος, ἐκπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος, *L&C* 1.4.5).

[102] *Calligone* also featured a military expedition which is planned in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus, and is probably the backdrop against which the tent-scene in the Cairo fragment plays out, but again the motif is generic. Rostovtzeff's argument (1931, 33) for structural similarity between the scene of Leucanor's murder in the seclusion of the Temple of Ares (*Tox.* 50) and Eubiotus' encounter with Calligone in the seclusion of the tent is justly deemed to be 'of doubtful significance' by Stephens and Winkler (1995, 269).

[103] See also Zimmermann 1935; Stephens and Winkler 1995, 269.

[104] On these Black Sea romances, see Braund 2005.

[105] Rostovtzeff speculated about the existence of a Scythian–Bosporan novelistic tradition, a lost representative of which Lucian had used as a basis for his tale (summary in Zimmermann 1935, who refutes this argument). In his Loeb translation, Harmon notes several places where 'abridgement' may be suspected.

during the night, and saw no more of him after that). The horseman himself is an oddity in the narrative; Toxaris seems to remember him only as an after-thought, and then makes no further use of him. It is unclear why he should include this figure at all, unless (so the epitome-theory goes) he is rather awkwardly adhering to a longer version of the story where the horseman played a more substantive role. Toxaris also makes more troubling omissions, such as failing to inform us about Macentes' fate. The other two members of the trio, Arsacomas and Lonchates, are present at the conclusion of the story, but not Macentes. We may reasonably infer that he died from his more traumatic war-wounds (*Tox.* 55), but the narrator's silence is peculiar – especially given that this is the *only* narrative in the dialogue which leaves us so unclear about a friend's fate. There are also instances where Toxaris appears to supply *too much* information. Late in the narrative, for example, he refers to the Sindians' revolt against the Scythians, an apparently long-standing affair (*ek pollou*, *Tox.* 55), but one which we have not heard about before. The epitome-theory argues that the Sindian revolt was a significant detail in the source-text, which Toxaris initially suppressed, but then forgot he had done so, hence his surprising allusion to it here. And this illustrates the major objection to the epitome-theory: that it requires us to invent plots and details in a hypothesized source-text for whose very existence we have no evidence whatsoever.

One difficulty with this approach to the text is that it imposes onto Toxaris' narrative linear patterns of textual transmission which are useful for making sense of the diachronic transmission of texts through time, whereas *Toxaris* presents us with the oral improvisation and lateral transmission of narrative in antiquity itself.[106] Toxaris is a participant in the dissemination of novelistic narrative, which existed not only in different versions in a relatively fluid and mutable narrative tradition, but adapted itself, chameleon-like, to other forms such as mime and visual art as well.[107] There is, therefore, a, more economical model for interpreting Toxaris' peculiar narrative technique, which dispenses with the need to invent hypothetical 'source'-texts. Narrative inconcinnities, such as anachronism, omission or surfeit of detail, were recognized in ancient rhetorical handbooks as indications that the speaker was *lying*, making a story up as (s)he

[106] See also Kim (2013, 300–3), who views this narrative in *Toxaris* as a model for the processes of oral transmission of novelistic narrative in antiquity, in particular 'the way non-Greek narrative traditions made their way into Greek culture' (302).

[107] Webb 2013 discusses points of contact between the novels and mime. On the lateral dissemination of novel texts in antiquity, see Selden 2010 and Henrichs 2011 (esp. on infiltrations between Lollianus' *Phoenician tales* and the ass-novel).

went along.[108] The 'fault-lines' in Toxaris' story need not be a sign that he was epitomizing a lost Scythian novel – but that he was composing a narrative *ex tempore*. This can be confirmed by internal evidence from within the story: the 'unexplained' detail in Macentes' speech about Eubiotus' good will towards the Scythians and hostility towards the Alans implies, the epitome-theory argues, a more detailed background story which has been elided in the act of narrative condensation. But the point here is that Macentes is *lying* in order to deceive Adyrmachus into travelling to Bosporus and entrusting him with his bride-to-be. The cluster of detail about the Alans and Masteira, Mazaea's mother (*Tox.* 51), need not be viewed as the vestige of a larger novel, but as Macentes' skilful aggregation of 'facts' in order to persuade his audience that he is speaking the truth. 'Superfluous' detail like this enhances the narrative's appearance of veracity or the 'reality effect' by fleshing out the narrated world beyond the bare requirements (the 'world-creating' effect).[109] Likewise, Lonchates' elaborate preamble to Leucanor about the Scythians' requests concerning the depredations of Bosporan herdsmen on their lands (and so on, *Tox.* 49) does not demand the existence of a source-novel which contained lengthy episodes about brigandage; it is a ruse to gain access to the king, and part of Lonchates' deception. And through its embedded narratives of deception, Toxaris' tale hints also at its *own* fictionality. Indeed, the plot, which hinges on the successful playing-out of two speeches of deception and Lonchates and Macentes' adoption of fictional roles to deceive their enemies, flags mendacity as an important theme: this is the dialogue's most overtly metafictional tale. The propensity of the Scythian characters within the story to lie, act duplicitously, and even swear false oaths, casts a subversive light on Toxaris' claims about Scythian candour and simplicity – and crucially, on his own oaths concerning the truth of his stories,[110] and colludes with the reader that this Scythian should *not* be read at face value. Ironically, Toxaris, a self-styled taciturn barbarian, outperforms the Greek Mnesippus with the dialogue's most complicated plot and most conspicuously novelistic tale.

The alternative interpretation which I have argued for here casts Toxaris as a sophisticated novelistic connoisseur and a talented improvisor of narrative instead of a less-than-perfect epitomizer. *Toxaris* presents us with live,

108 Quint. 4.2.89–91; *Rhet. ad Her.* 1.9.16.

109 'Everything essential for the lie is open to suspicion, but when it comes to non-essential details the audience cannot see any sense in these having been made up nor can they credit another human being with so much criminal energy' (Fehling 1989, 120). On the reality effect, see Barthes 1989, 141–8.

110 See also Pervo 1997, 178.

improvisatory narrative-in-performance, a self-staging which is imagined in the novels themselves too, e.g. the dialogue-frame of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, dialogic storytelling exchanges embedded within the novels such as Xenophon's *Ephēsiaka* and the contemporary novels *Leucippe and Cleitophon* and *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, the latter a work with a distinctively dialogic prologue. Actually, the novels insistently fantasize about their own genesis and dissemination within dialogue-situations which are closely mirrored by Mnesippus and Toxaris' exchange in Lucian's work.

Toxaris' *penchant* for novelistic narrative is one of several surprises in the dialogue, as Toxaris rescripts what it means to be 'Scythian' from inside the Greek ethnographic *imaginaire*. The Scythians occupied an ambivalent position in Greek cultural thought, from Anacharsis (who was one of the seven sages of antiquity) and the noble savages of hard primitivism, to the brute thugs who were the butt of Greek derision.[111] Lucian's work shows a fascination with them: in *Scythian*, Lucian explicitly aligns himself, *qua* itinerant intellectual, with Anacharsis, and in *Anacharsis* he reflects on Greek culture from the perspective of the eponymous philhellenic Scythian.[112] Generally, they were famous for their rude speech and taciturnity – they are men of action, not words – the model to which Toxaris claims to conform in his opening conversation with Mnesippus.[113] Throughout this dialogue, Toxaris shows that he is familiar with Greek (largely Herodotean) ideas about Scythians through his pronouncements on 'what Scythians are like'[114] – a masterful gesture of self-assimilation to a cultural stereotype which is undermined, however, by his evident Greek literary

[111] See further Hartog 1988, 2–206.

[112] Branham 1989, 82–104; Whitmarsh 2001, 124–7; Goldhill 2001, 2–4; Hunter 2012, 12–13 (with focus on the role played by Platonic allusion in the cultural games of *Anacharsis*).

[113] *Tox.* 9–10, and also *Tox.* 35: 'But I will begin now without any of your fancy preamble, for that is not the Scythian way, especially when the deeds speak louder than the words.' ἄρξομαί γε ἤδη, μηδὲν ὥσπερ σὺ καλλιλογησάμενος· οὐ γὰρ Σκυθικὸν τοῦτο, καὶ μάλιστα ἐπειδὰν τὰ ἔργα ὑπερφθέγγηται τοὺς λόγους. For Scythian taciturnity, see Herodotus 4.127; Diogenes Laertius 1.101. Aristophanes' Scythian archer (*Thesm.* 1001 ff.) exploits the comic potential of the type.

[114] Herodotus pervades the Scythian *realia* of *Toxaris*. At *Tox.* 8 Mnesippus attributes to the Scythians the custom of eating dead relatives which Herodotus ascribes to the Massagetae (Hdt. 1.216) and the Issedones (Hdt. 4.26). Toxaris' description of the ritual of Scythian blood-friendship (*Tox.* 37) reworks Herodotus 4.70, on the Scythian oath-making ritual. Dandamis' forfeit of his eyes to ransom Amizoces (*Tox.* 40) is probably inspired by Herodotus 4.2, on the Scythian custom of blinding captives. Toxaris' oath to tell the truth by his native gods 'Wind' and 'Dagger' (*akinakēs*, *Tox.* 38; cf. also *Iup.Trag.* 42; *Scytha* 4) reflects Herodotus 4.62 on Scythian sword-worship, where the *akinakēs* represents the war-god; Toxaris' forfeit of his right hand in the event of defeat (*Tox.* 10, 62) evokes the Scythian custom of amputating the right arms and hands of the human sacrifices to these totemic swords, and also stands in symbolic polarity with the Greek Mnesippus' promise to forfeit his *tongue*.

connoisseurship and rhetorical flair. The Greek novel, which insistently challenges Hellenocentric perspectives, is ideally suited to this rewriting of Greek perceptions of Scythians. The location of this novelistic narrative in the wild interior of Scythia is significant in several ways. The Scythian heartland, an ill-defined, liminal space at the frontier between the civilized and the barbarian (even as the Scythian river Tanais marks the boundary between Europe and the East), intensifies Toxaris' obfuscation of tidy and reductive cultural categories. This is a culturally liminal space, where the novelistic Calligone is provoked into a defensive assertion of her Greek identity; where the hardened citizens of Olbia, a Greek city on the Black Sea, defiantly proclaim their Hellenism through recitations of Homeric poetry in ill-pronounced Greek.[115] But it is also liminal in terms of truth and lies – an exotic story-world whose geographical remoteness and isolation places it outside the boundaries of verifiable fact. This is partly what Mnesippus means when he protests that Toxaris has taken advantage of his good-will with a narrative that is 'very melodramatic and like fiction' and runs all over Scythia, Machlyene, and the Bosporus,[116] and why Toxaris, at the end of the following story, pointedly reminds him that this one was set in a *city*, with plenty of witnesses to corroborate his account: 'This, Mnesippus, did not take place among the Machlyans or the Alans, so as to be without witnesses and susceptible of disbelief; on the contrary, there are many Amastrians who remember Sisinnes' fight.'[117]

Toxaris the novelistic hero? (*Tox.* 57–60)

Toxaris' fourth Scythian tale is an ego-narrative in which he relates his own adventures while travelling from Scythia to Greece with his friend Sisinnes. When they break their journey at the Greek city of Amastris on the Black Sea, they become the victims of theft, and lose all their belongings. Toxaris, taking on the mantle of novelistic hero, succumbs to a Chaereas-like bout of suicidal despair (*Tox.* 58), preferring a quick death to the potential dishonour that poverty may constrain them to endure. He is comforted by Sisinnes, who provides him with material support through manual labour in a manner which is now familiar from the novels; he subsequently competes for prize-money in a gladiatorial combat

[115] Dio, *Oratio* 36.9, with Russell 1992 *ad loc.* for references to the cult of Achilles there; also Goldhill 2001, 158–9. On Dio's presentation of Olbia in this speech, see Jones 1978, 61–3.

[116] *Tox.* 56: 'for as it is, what with running up and down all over Scythia and Machlyene, and heading off to Bosporus, then coming back again, you have taken liberal advantage of my silence' . . . ὡς νῦν γε, ἄνω καὶ κάτω τὴν Σκυθίαν καὶ τὴν Μαχλυανὴν διαθέων καὶ εἰς τὸν Βόσπορον ἀπιών, εἶτ' ἐπανιών, πάνυ μου κατεχρήσω τῇ σιωπῇ. Cf. n. 124.

[117] *Tox.* 60.

which nearly costs him his life. Sisinnes' closural marriage to Toxaris' sister seals their friendship, and mirrors Chaereas' offer of his sister as wife to Polycharmus in recognition of his loyalty at the end of Chariton's novel.[118]

Toxaris' technique as autodiegetic narrator (narrator of his *own* story – a story *about himself*) makes for more vivid narrative, but it is also an ambivalent authenticating-strategy: on the one hand, Toxaris himself can testify to the truth of his story (he personally witnessed and experienced these events), but this was notoriously unreliable in antiquity, going right back to Odysseus' precedent in the court of the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* 9–12, and could raise audience suspicions about the story's believability. Mnesippus, with an anxious eye to the verisimilitude of his narrative technique, studiously avoids autodiegesis, and even homodiegesis (narratives of events in which the narrator was a participant). Toxaris, in contrast, frequently insinuates himself into his own narratives: he explicitly states his participation in the Scythian affairs of his third narrative (*Tox.* 54), and in his first story, his repeated use of the first-person plural, 'we' and 'us', when referring to the Scythians implies his involvement too. Cumulatively, this colours Toxaris as a story-like character, one who has stepped fresh out of the world of *ta Skythika*. In the tale of his adventures with Sisinnes, Toxaris, strikingly, becomes the star of a plot which smacks of the novel with its prominent motifs of travel, friendship and loyalty through adversity. His highly romanticized narrative has been described as 'a swashbuckling story of courage and loyalty that verges on parody',[119] especially because of the details of the gladiatorial combat where Sisinnes raises the emotional temperature with affective imprecations to 'bury me and go home to Scythia!' (*Tox.* 59), brashly declines to use a helmet, and finally sinks, in a half-swoon, on top of the crumpled body of his opponent (*Tox.* 60) – details which imbue the episode with the 'air of burlesque exaggeration'.[120] The story's heightened *pathos* colludes with the experienced reader's belief that Toxaris is imagining his experiences through the prism of literature by presenting himself as the lead character in a novelish tale.

Conclusion: reading novelistic fiction with Mnesippus and Toxaris

So is *Toxaris* a dialogue about friendship, or about fiction? The answer, I think, is both, for the theme of friendship is itself entwined with the dynamics of fiction in the dialogue. In Lucian's work, fiction is almost invariably enjoyed under the pretext of doing or talking about something else, and *Toxaris* is no exception: it is a dialogue about novelistic narrative,

118 *Tox.* 60; *C&C* 8.8.12. 119 Coleman 2000, 491. 120 Coleman 2000, 491.

masquerading as a dialogue about friendship. Tellingly, as the dialogue reaches its close and the speakers realize that they forgot to appoint an umpire to decide the winner after all, their 'competition' is finally exposed for what it always was – a pretext for taking pleasure in fictions about friends.

I have argued that Lucian's *Toxaris* stages the improvisatory performance of recognizably novelistic narrative, in the form of a dialogue between a Greek and a Scythian. Mnesippus and Toxaris' storytelling competition, where each of the respective 'authors' must take an oath to tell the truth, as insurance against the potential for pure fabrication, also dramatizes the *reading* of novelistic narrative. As each character listens to the other's stories, he becomes a reader, who actively comments on the narratives, with particular emphasis on their believability – often objecting that he would be sorely tempted into *dis*belief, were it not for the author's oath, which constrains him to accept the stories at face value. This means that *Toxaris* provides us with insight into ancient readers' ideas about the fictionality of novelistic narrative. It dramatizes the contract of fiction in the two speakers' mutual oaths, which constitute a binding (albeit breakable) agreement between each as the author and reader respectively of one another's tales.

It is Toxaris – the speaker who takes far greater liberty with the 'truth' in his stories – who explains the necessity of taking an oath:

> You speak first, but only after taking an oath that you will tell the truth; for otherwise, it's not very difficult to make up this sort of story, and there's no clear proof. But if you were to swear, it would not be right to disbelieve you.[121]

Not only does the oath constrain the author; it compels the *reader* into acquiescence that the story he is listening to is true, establishing a contract where the 'reader' agrees to accept the truth-value of the stories, which the 'author' guarantees.

Mnesippus, obligingly, swears to relate only what he can vouch for by autopsy, or scrupulous research from other witnesses:

> I therefore call to witness Zeus of Friendship that whatever I tell you shall be either based on my own knowledge, or what I learned from others with all possible accuracy, without any literary embellishment by myself.[122]

[121] *Tox.* 11: πρότερος δὲ λέγε, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπομοσάμενος ἦ μὴν ἀληθῆ ἐρεῖν· ἄλλως γὰρ ἀναπλάττειν τὰ τοιαῦτα οὐ πάνυ χαλεπὸν καὶ ὁ ἔλεγχος ἀφανής. εἰ δὲ ὀμόσειας, οὐχ ὅσιον ἀπιστεῖν.

[122] *Tox.* 12: Ἴστω τοίνυν ὁ Ζεὺς ὁ Φίλιος, ἦ μὴν ὁπόσα ἂν λέγω πρὸς σὲ ἢ αὐτὸς εἰδὼς ἢ παρ᾽ ἄλλων ὁπόσον οἷόν τε ἦν δι᾽ ἀκριβείας ἐκπυνθανόμενος ἐρεῖν, μηδὲν παρ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ ἐπιτραγῳδῶν. Mnesippus' oath resonates with Thucydides' manifesto of his historiographical method (1.22), in

True to his promise, he scrupulously accounts for his information in his stories, most conspicuously with witnesses in the tale of the sea-storm, where the sea-captain Simylus swears 'that he witnessed the deed himself' (*epōmasamenos hēmin autos heōrakenai to ergon*, *Tox.* 19), and in the tale of Zenothemis and Cydimache, which he sourced from an 'accurately informed' (*akribōs eidōs*) native of Massalia whom he encountered in Italy when he was ambassador there (*Tox.* 24).

In his turn, Toxaris, more vaguely and disingenuously, swears 'not to tell any lies' (*pseudos*), which exonerates him from any intention to deceive his audience, but leaves open the possibility that his stories may not quite be a matter of fact. His evocation of obscure native gods, 'Wind' and 'Dagger', as his divine guarantors clouds his oath in further ambiguity, provoking from Mnesippus a sceptical response which intensifies Toxaris' ambivalence as a narrator:

TOX. I swear by Wind and Dagger that I shall not tell you any lie about Scythian friends, Mnesippus.

MNES. I didn't really need you to swear – but nevertheless, you did well not to swear by any of the gods![123]

It is clear from the start that Toxaris will push their polite contract to its limits – which will test Mnesippus' readerly compliance to breaking-point. In contrast with Mnesippus, Toxaris, as we have seen, readily insinuates himself as a character into his own stories, which he rarely attempts to verify, and it is he who produces the most complex and overtly novelistic story of the dialogue. This particular story provokes from Mnesippus a reiteration of his initial scepticism, as he chafes at the necessity, given that Toxaris is under oath, of ascribing credence to such egregiously fabulous stuff:

> Very melodramatic, Toxaris, and like fiction. And may Dagger and Wind, by whom you swore, be gracious – but one could hardly be blamed for doubting this![124]

a way that contrasts sharply with Toxaris' more ethnographically colourful and Herodotean oath at *Tox.* 38 (see following note).

[123] *Tox.* 38: ΤΟΞ.: οὐ μὰ γὰρ τὸν Ἄνεμον καὶ τὸν Ἀκινάκην, οὐδὲν πρὸς σέ, ὦ Μνήσιππε, ψεῦδος ἐρῶ περὶ τῶν φίλων τῶν Σκυθῶν. ΜΝΗΣ.: Ἐγὼ μὲν οὐ πάνυ σου ὀμνύντος ἐδεόμην· σὺ δὲ ὅμως εὖ ποιῶν οὐδένα θεῶν ἐπωμόσω.

[124] *Tox.* 56: Πάνυ τραγικά, ὦ Τόξαρι, καὶ μύθοις ὅμοια· καὶ ἵλεως μὲν ὁ Ἀκινάκης καὶ ὁ Ἄνεμος εἶεν, οὓς ὤμοσας· εἰ δ' οὖν τις ἀπιστοίη αὐτοῖς, οὐ πάνυ μεμπτὸς εἶναι δόξειεν ἄν. This is reminiscent of Toxaris' remark after Mnesippus' first story (*Tox.* 18): 'If only, Mnesippus, you had not been under oath when telling this story, so that I could disbelieve it!' Καὶ εἴθε γε, ὦ Μνήσιππε, ἀνώμοτος ὢν ταῦτα ἔλεγες, ἵνα καὶ ἀπιστεῖν ἂν ἐδυνάμην αὐτοῖς· Note also the close similarity to Clitophon's concession, in the opening scene of *Leucippe and Clitophon* (1.2.2), that 'my adventures are like fiction' (τὰ γὰρ ἐμὰ μύθοις ἔοικε).

Mnesippus' and Toxaris' repeated expressions of anxiety concerning 'disbelief' (*apistia*) in their stories emphasize the fact that, oaths notwithstanding, the truth-status of their narratives is constantly under suspicion.[125] Their avowed credence, which is on occasion most grudgingly granted only because it is one of the conditions of the game they are playing, dramatizes the complex oscillation between the poles of belief and disbelief that takes place constantly in the reader's mind when (s)he reads fiction. In fact, the combination of the theme of male friendship in the dialogue and the friends' own oscillation between emotional immersion in one another's stories and more dispassionate criticism maps beautifully onto the metafictional roles played by the male friends within the narratives of the novels themselves where, as Tim Whitmarsh has argued, they cue the reader's modulation between the poles of naivety and disengagement, as well as between conflicting syntagmatic and paradigmatic interpretive drives.[126] Read alongside the Greek novels, *Toxaris* appears therefore to dramatize, in a thoroughly metanovelistic manner, not only the novels' affective extremes, and not only the metafictional tendencies which are embodied within the novel-plots themselves, but also the fluidity of the genre itself in antiquity as well as the idea that novels were themselves the imaginative offspring of intercultural dialogues such as between a Scythian and a Greek.[127]

Toxaris demonstrates that Lucian read novels, with evidence to suggest that he was familiar with Chariton and Xenophon in particular, and probably Achilles Tatius too.[128] It so happens that this pattern is found in the *Babylonian tales* of Iamblichus as well, as Ken Dowden argues in a forthcoming article (though he finds the evidence for Iamblichus' familiarity with Achilles Tatis more tenuous). Now, Iamblichus and Lucian were not only direct contemporaries, but compatriots as well. The overlap between the two writers is distinctive enough to suggest that the Ionian novels had

[125] *Tox.* 18 (Toxaris wishes he could disbelieve Mnesippus); *Tox.* 19, 21, 24 (Mnesippus authorizes his stories by explaining his sources); *Tox.* 34 (Mnesippus avoids lengthy rhetoric for fear of incurring scepticism); *Tox.* 42 (Toxaris asserts that his narrative relates only the 'bare facts' – in contrast to the version Mnesippus would produce); *Tox.* 56 (Mnesippus is sceptical, and Toxaris explains his disbelief as jealousy); *Tox.* 60 (Toxaris claims that his story, which was set in a city with plenty of witnesses, cannot be subject to disbelief).

[126] Whitmarsh 2011, 206–10.

[127] This theme of cross-cultural influences between the narrative traditions of the Greek world and the East is explored in the essays in Whitmarsh and Thomson 2013.

[128] I am not convinced by Baumbach (2004), who presents a case for reading *True stories* as a parody of the Greek romance novels and Bernsdorff (1993), who argues that Lucian alludes to Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* at *VH* 2.5.

spread to Syria by the mid second century CE, where they were appropriated as the 'latest thing' by avid and inventive fiction-writers – a possibility which significantly enriches our evidence for ancient novel-culture.

Lucian clearly saw the novels as kindred narratives which embodied the novelty and generic and cultural hybridity that were so central to his own creativity as well. There are strong indications elsewhere in Lucian's work that he also knew Antonius Diogenes' *Incredible things beyond Thule*.[129] And if *Onos* was indeed by Lucian – a work which, like *Toxaris* but more brutally, strips the Greek romantic novel of its illusions, as Edith Hall has shown[130] – then he himself was an active participant in the novel-genre too. But – and this is crucial – it would be a mistake to view the narratives in *Toxaris* as some sort of *romans manqués*, or Lucian himself as an *exclusus amator* of the novel genre. Rather, *Toxaris*, whilst engaging intertextually with the Greek novels, forms a vibrant and unusual part of the landscape of ancient fiction itself, which is much broader and more eclectic than the novels. The unique and artfully wrought micro-fictions of this work must have appealed to a distinct set of readerly tastes in the ancient world – one which leaned more towards the analytical pole of the fictional experience than the immersive one and which, we may reasonably surmise, overlapped substantially with the readership of the Greek romances as well. Certainly, this form of framed microfiction appealed to Lucian as the vehicle for his theoretical dissection of how fiction works, and it is to this theme more explicitly that I now turn in an analysis of the microfictions of *Philopseudes*, Lucian's dialogue on lies.

[129] See Chapter 5, esp. pp. 183–5. [130] Hall 1995.

CHAPTER 3

Philopseudes

Philosophy of fiction, drama of reading

Toxaris provides an excellent introduction to the Lucianic use of microfiction as a vehicle for metafictional inquiry. In *Philopseudes*, we encounter this structure again, but this time Lucian homes in on his favourite zone of the *apiston*, that hazy territory of marvels that are incredible-but-true which fascinated both the popular audience and the *pepaideumenos*, and to which Lucian will return again in *Onos* and *True stories*. If Mnesippus and Toxaris can be viewed mainly as analytical readers of fiction, Tychiades and Philocles in *Philopseudes* are a far more equivocal pair, for in this dialogue, Lucian experiments more audaciously with fiction's gravitational pull, which threatens to overwhelm even the canny rationalist Tychiades and wreak havoc with his (and our) grip on reality. *Philopseudes* or *The lover of lies* teeters precariously right on the tipping-point between the credible and the fantastic, a boundary over which Lucian will topple with abandon in *Onos* and *True stories*.[1]

I will explore first the theoretical ramifications of the philosophical thrust which Lucian gives this, his most overtly metafictional dialogue, and then examine his dramatization of reading alongside similar reading-scenes from Chariton's novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and more briefly Petronius' *Satyrica*. What will emerge, I hope, is an unfolding sense of this work's uniquely significant status in the evolution of ancient fiction because of the emphasis which Lucian places here on the importance of the reader's psychology for understanding fiction, and on the role played by the material text in constructing the reader's imaginative experience.

[1] A word on the title of this work. The manuscripts transmit the title *Philopseudes ē Apistōn* meaning *The lover of lies, or The doubter*. Rothstein amended this to the nominative plural *Philopseudeis* (*Lovers of lies*) to reflect the opposition in the dialogue between the fantasists (plural) and Tychiades' isolated scepticism. However, I prefer to retain the manuscript reading, which more effectively encapsulates the equivocality of Tychiades' position as *both* sceptic *and* lover of lies, an ambiguity which is central to the dialogue's conceptualization of fiction.

A theory of fiction, not lies

The dialogue opens with the outraged Tychiades, who has just walked out on a discussion which was taking place at the house of the philosopher Eucrates. Tychiades had been driven out by his disgust for the unbridled appetite for lies he had witnessed among the intellectual visitors there as they debated the validity of different cures for Eucrates' gout-swollen feet.[2] Tychiades' outspoken scepticism about these methods had provoked the philosophers to try to convert him to belief by means of a volley of stories about paranormal phenomena and other events that are unbelievable-but-true which Tychiades now repeats in outrage (but also, it emerges, with some pleasure) for his friend Philocles.

Ostensibly, his purpose in retelling the stories is to illustrate the rank mendacity of the philosophers, although Tychiades later acknowledges that he seems to have been captivated by the enchantment of their lies in spite of himself. The unbelievable stories in the *Philopseudes* are framed, therefore, by Tychiades' hesitant fascination: he is an unwilling, resistant reader of *apista* who comes to experience the allure of these fantastic tales, even while remaining convinced that they are untrue. How, he wonders, can one *know*, with every fibre of one's intellect, that a story is utterly untrue, and yet take pleasure in listening to it and passing it on to others?

Tychiades' perplexed question establishes the theme of the dialogue: the paradoxical pleasure of the *pseudos*. From their subsequent discussion it becomes clear that Tychiades and Philocles are richly informed about philosophical, in particular Platonic, thinking about lies, but also that philosophy, up till now, has not furnished an adequate answer to Tychiades' question. One of the major contributions of the *Philopseudes* is its advancement of this philosophical debate, especially by recognizing the psychological factors which stimulate people to lie. Nor does the discussion remain at the level of pure theory only; as the dialogue proceeds and Tychiades repeats the philosophers' fantastical tales, both he and Philocles begin to experience for themselves the stories' contagious allure, and theorize the experience in a series of metaphors which describe the intoxicating effect. As Tychiades is manoeuvred – through actual experience – from

[2] Gout is itself a characteristically Lucianic theme; see Whitmarsh (2013, 182–5) for analysis of Lucian's 'gouty poetics' in his para-tragic work *Gout*, which Whitmarsh reads as 'an exploration of the incompatibility between high poetics and low satire . . . an allegory of Lucianic satire, an apologia for his disfigurement of lofty aesthetics' (p. 185). It may be the case that Eucrates' gouty feet in *Philopseudes* reflect the ridiculous combination of lofty philosophy and low superstition in both the man himself and the dialogue that contains him; cf. further, pp. 89–91.

a position of scepticism to a more accommodating understanding of the 'love of lies', so too the reader of the *Philopseudes* is converted, by reading the dialogue, into a lover of lies with a deeper understanding of the pleasurable – and troubling – experience of fiction.

The *Philopseudes* is full of echoes of Plato's work, especially the *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and (as I shall discuss in more detail in the next section) the *Phaedrus*.[3] The entire *mise en scène* is a travesty of Socrates' prison-cell from the *Phaedo*: Eucrates is the Socrates-surrogate in Lucian's dialogue;[4] his painful, gouty feet spark the philosophers' discussion of cures and the supernatural, just as in *Phaedo* the pain in Socrates' leg, which causes him to remark on the proximity of pleasure and pain, initiates the philosophical discussion on the nature of the soul.[5] In *Philopseudes* the philosopher-friends who are gathered around Eucrates' bed talk about less lofty aspects of the soul's immortality, namely ghosts and haunting.[6] The cast of the dialogue and their competitive storytelling is reminiscent of the pattern of speeches in Plato's *Symposium*: there is the doctor Antigonus (in place of Eryximachus) and the belated arrival of the Pythagorean sage Arignotus (for Plato's Alcibiades).[7] Several explicit and playful allusions to Plato encourage the reader to make these links, for example, Eucrates claims to have seen the ghost of Socrates in the underworld – but not Plato who, in a reworking of the joke about Plato's absence from the *Phaedo*, 'was not there'.[8] And, in an unmissable reference, Eucrates tells a story about a visitation which he had from his wife's ghost several days after her funeral when he had nodded off *whilst reading Plato's* Phaedo.[9]

Lucian evokes Plato as both model and foil to his own arguments, for the theorizing about lies in *Philopseudes* advances and improves directly upon Platonic ideas in several ways. Prior to the *Philopseudes*, discussions about lies tended to focus on the motivations which governed and, to various degrees, justified the liar, and tended to appraise the liar in rigidly polarized

[3] For brief discussion of Platonic parody in *Philops.*, see Ebner 2001a, 57–9, who examines parallels with the *Phaedo* and (very briefly) the *Symposium* only.

[4] This connection was first suggested by Helm 1906, 267. Ebner (2001, 57 n. 57) is sceptical, however.

[5] For the crural catalyst in each work, see *Phaedo* 60b and *Philops.* 6. The parallel was noticed by Anderson (1976, 128), who also considers Socrates' recommendation of a cure for Charmides' headache in the opening to Plato's *Charmides* (Plato, *Charmides* 155b) as a possible analogy.

[6] Anderson 1976, 165.

[7] On the typology of the literary banquet in post-Platonic literature, see Mossman 1997.

[8] *Philops.* 24: 'I did not recognize Plato there.' τὸν Πλάτωνα δὲ οὐκ ἐγνώρισα· cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 59b10: 'Plato, I think, was ill.' Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἠσθένει. Lucian is fond of this joke and recycles it at *Vit.auct.* 17 and *VH* 2.17; see. also von Möllendorff 2000, 352 and Chapter 6, pp. 242–3 with n. 113.

[9] *Philops.* 27; this scene is discussed further below, p. 91.

moral terms.[10] Tychiades is interested not only in those who *tell* lies, but also in the readerly appetite for them:

> Can you tell me, Philocles, what is it that attracts so many people to the desire to tell lies, making them revel in talking rubbish themselves and devote their attention above all to others who talk the same sort of nonsense?[11]

Dodging this troublesome question for the moment, Philocles asserts that 'there are . . . many circumstances which compel some people to lie with a view to what is expedient'.[12] The less radical thinker of the two, Philocles manoeuvres the question away from the ethically troublesome appetite for lies, to the more easily justifiable *necessity* of lying, a territory that was well-trodden since Plato. Tychiades, however, quickly clarifies that this sort of lying does not interest him:

> That's nothing to do with it, as they say, nor did my query pertain to those who lie for a useful purpose, for these people can be excused and some of them even deserve praise if they have deceived enemies or used a remedy of this sort as a safety-measure in times of crisis, as Odysseus often did in protecting his own life and the safe return of his companions. What I'm talking about is those who, without any useful purpose, privilege the lie far before the truth, taking pleasure in the act itself and revelling in it without any pretext of necessity. I want to know for what purpose these people do this.[13]

Taking his cue from Philocles, Tychiades alludes to Socrates' discussion of the usefulness of the calculated lie from Book 2 of Plato's *Republic*, where Socrates identifies two types of falsehood which are distinguished from one another by the degree of consciousness of the liar. The first type, to which Tychiades makes only an implicit allusion here, is the paradoxically named 'true falsehood' (*hōs alēthōs pseudos*) or 'falsehood in the soul', a form of genuine ignorance or misapprehension which is deeply embedded in the psyche and is therefore a grave condition which no-one would willingly

10 For discussion of lies and deception in the literature of classical Athens, see Hesk 2000.

11 *Philops.* 1: Ἔχεις μοι, ὦ Φιλόκλεις, εἰπεῖν τί ποτε ἄρα ἐστὶν ὃ πολλοὺς εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν τοῦ ψεύδεσθαι προάγεται, ὡς αὐτούς τε χαίρειν μηδὲν ὑγιὲς λέγοντας καὶ τοῖς τὰ τοιαῦτα διεξιοῦσιν μάλιστα προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν;

12 *Philops.* 1: πολλά . . . ἐστὶν ἃ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐνίους ἀναγκάζει τὰ ψευδῆ λέγειν εἰς τὸ χρήσιμον ἀποβλέποντας.

13 *Philops.* 1: Οὐδὲν πρὸς ἔπος ταῦτα, φασίν, οὐδὲ περὶ τούτων ἠρόμην ὁπόσοι τῆς χρείας ἕνεκα ψεύδονται· συγγνωστοὶ γὰρ οὗτοί γε, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐπαίνου τινὲς αὐτῶν ἄξιοι, ὁπόσοι ἢ πολεμίους ἐξηπάτησαν ἢ ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῷ τοιούτῳ φαρμάκῳ ἐχρήσαντο ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς, οἷα πολλὰ καὶ ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐποίει τήν τε αὑτοῦ ψυχὴν ἀρνύμενος καὶ τὸν νόστον τῶν ἑταίρων. ἀλλὰ περὶ ἐκείνων . . . φημὶ οἳ αὐτὸ ἄνευ τῆς χρείας τὸ ψεῦδος πρὸ πολλοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας τίθενται, ἡδόμενοι τῷ πράγματι καὶ ἐνδιατρίβοντες ἐπ᾽ οὐδεμιᾷ προφάσει ἀναγκαίᾳ. τούτους οὖν ἐθέλω εἰδέναι τίνος ἀγαθοῦ τοῦτο ποιοῦσιν.

accept.[14] As Christopher Gill points out, this concept is related to the very basic principle expounded in the *Republic* and elsewhere in Plato's work that no-one errs willingly (*oudeis hekōn hamartanei*).[15] Tychiades' knowing liars who 'take pleasure in the act' and actively prefer lies to the truth constitute, implicitly, a rejection of this category because unlike those whom Socrates has in mind, they are fully cognizant of their actions and understand the difference between truth and falsehood.

The second type of falsehood alluded to here is comparatively superficial: this is what Socrates calls 'falsehood in words' (*to en tois logois pseudos*), where the liar retains knowledge of the truth in his soul but knowingly distorts the truth in his words. Psychically, this is a less harmful form of falsehood. This category includes the justifiable lie as there are, Socrates concedes, certain circumstances under which it is necessary or even laudable to tell lies, provided always that the liar himself is not deceived in the process:

> As for falsehood in words, in what circumstances and for what purpose is it useful, so as not to warrant our repudiation? When it is deployed *against the enemy*, and when those whom we called friends attempt some crime through madness or stupidity, surely the lie becomes useful to ward off danger, *like a medicine*?[16]

There are verbal resonances (highlighted here by my italics) between this passage and Tychiades' speech, which I quoted earlier (p. 75), which suggest that Tychiades has this very passage from the *Republic* in mind. However, once again Plato's expedient modes of falsehood are merely a foil to Tychiades' more wanton species of liar who tells lies *without* the justification of necessity and in full knowledge of the truth. Philocles, still working within the Platonic framework that 'no-one errs willingly', concludes that such behaviour must be attributed to 'stupidity' or 'folly' (*anoia*), since it evinces an otherwise inexplicable preference for the worst course of action over the best.[17]

The discussion therefore is initially grounded in the familiar framework of debates in Greek literature about the nature and ethics of lying which

[14] *Rep.* 382a7–b9. [15] Gill 1993, 54.

[16] *Rep.* 382c5–d1: τὸ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ψεῦδος πότε καὶ τῷ χρήσιμον, ὥστε μὴ ἄξιον εἶναι μίσους; ἆρ' οὐ πρός τε τοὺς πολεμίους, καὶ τῶν καλουμένων φίλων ὅταν διὰ μανίαν ἤ τινα ἄνοιαν κακόν τι ἐπιχειρῶσι πράττειν, τότε ἀποτροπῆς ἕνεκα ὡς φάρμακον χρήσιμον γίγνεται; For analysis of the ideology of deceit in Athenian military strategy, see Hesk 2000, 85–142 (esp. 108–11 for discussion of these ideas in Plato).

[17] *Philops.* 2.4–6: 'What, then, other than stupidity, should we say is the cause for their refusal to tell the truth, if they are choosing the worst path instead of the best?' τί δ' οὖν ἄλλο ἢ ἄνοιαν χρὴ αἰτίαν εἶναι αὐτοῖς φάναι τοῦ μὴ τἀληθῆ λέγειν, εἴ γε τὸ χείριστον ἀντὶ τοῦ βελτίστου προαιροῦνται;

focus on the relation between the liar's degree of knowledge, and the moral reprehensibility of the lie. The relation postulated is usually one of direct proportion: the more calculated the lie, the more culpable the liar. At *Rep.* 535 d9–e5, for example, Socrates reworks these earlier categories of 'falsehood in words' and 'falsehood in the soul' into a more straightforward polarity between 'the voluntary lie' (*to hekousion pseudos*), which is unequivocally loathsome (no concession this time to extenuating circumstances) and 'the involuntary lie' (*to akousion pseudos*) which, like the state of ignorance which is caused by 'falsehood in the soul', constitutes a serious psychic handicap but does not, it is implied, incur moral culpability.[18] In the context of historiography, Polybius similarly distinguishes between involuntary lies or 'errors' that are the result of ignorance (*kat' agnoian*) and may be amended, and the intentional lie-by-choice (*kata proairesin*), which is inexcusable.[19] The same dichotomy also underlies Plutarch's literary critical advice in *How to read poetry* where he urges students to distinguish between true and false elements in poetry; in Plutarch's opinion, all poets lie, but some lies are intentional, for the purpose of entertainment and pleasure, whilst others are erroneous, arising merely as a result of the poets' incorrect belief.[20] Clearly, this way of thinking about literature was deeply inculcated in students' minds.

There were, however, also exceptions to this way of thinking in antiquity: arguments which asserted, polemically, the moral and intellectual superiority of those who knowingly participate in falsehood, either as producers or consumers of the deception. Significantly, these texts include *literary* deception as an illustration of this superior mode of mendacity. When asked, for example, why he did not deceive the people of Thessaly as he had deceived the rest of the Greeks, the poet Simonides is said to have retorted that 'The Thessalians are too ignorant to be deceived.'[21] 'Deception' in this case does not denote the hoodwinking of ordinary lies but, rather, the peculiar illusion of poetry; and in this case, the person who is deceived is not ignorant of the deception but compliant with it; therefore, Simonides' comment implies, paradoxically, that a degree of intelligence

[18] 'And so with regard to the truth, shall we not consider handicapped in the same way the soul that hates the voluntary lie, refuses to endure it in itself, and becomes exceedingly angry at the lies of others, yet cheerfully accepts the involuntary lie and, trapped and unknowing, does not get angry but wallows blissfully in ignorance, like a swinish brute?'

Οὐκοῦν καὶ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν . . . ταὐτὸν τοῦτο ἀνάπηρον ψυχὴν θήσομεν, ἣ ἂν τὸ μὲν ἑκούσιον ψεῦδος μισῇ καὶ χαλεπῶς φέρῃ αὐτή τε καὶ ἑτέρων ψευδομένων ὑπεραγανακτῇ, τὸ δ᾽ ἀκούσιον εὐκόλως προσδέχηται καὶ ἀμαθαίνουσά που ἁλισκομένη μὴ ἀγανακτῇ, ἀλλ᾽ εὐχερῶς ὥσπερ θηρίον ὕειον ἐν ἀμαθίᾳ μολύνηται;

[19] Polybius 12.12.4–6. [20] Plutarch, *On how to read poetry* 16a–17d.

[21] Plutarch, *On how to read poetry* 15d.

is required in order to allow oneself to submit to this particular form of 'deception'.

Closely related to this sentiment is the celebrated statement by the sophist Gorgias that 'tragedy is a deception in which the deceiver is more honest than the non-deceiver and those who are deceived are wiser than those who are not'.[22] Like Simonides, Gorgias implies that it is the more sophisticated theatre-goer who participates actively in the game of make-believe that is integral to the experience of tragedy. In contrast, we are all familiar with the figure of fun who is the dupe of such literary deception rather than its accomplice, and who believes the illusion rather too literally: several ancient anecdotes record instances of such literal-minded belief which expose an inability to read or interpret art properly, from the birds who peck at the tantalizingly realistic grapes in Zeuxis' painting, to the funny interventions in tragedy by spectators who are outraged by the violence which is being portrayed on stage.[23] Art, poetry and tragedy are deceptive inasmuch as they provide illusions, but they do so without the intention to deceive; being deceived by art in the way one might be deceived by lies constitutes a misunderstanding of what art sets out to do. In this case, the skill lies, rather, in recognizing the deception and savouring the artifice with which these illusions are constructed.

The *Hippias Minor*, which is ascribed to Plato, is a philosophical dialogue devoted to the theme of lies, which is almost entirely overlooked in discussions of lies and fiction in antiquity.[24] In this dialogue, Socrates challenges the familiar equation between morality and intentionality in a debate about characterization in the Homeric poems. Hippias advances the argument that Homer's Achilles is good because he is 'true' and only deviates from the truth unwittingly, whereas Odysseus, in contrast, is bad because he is 'false' and tells lies deliberately. Socrates, however, demolishes this simplistic polarity (which is, ironically, the argument which he himself advances in the *Republic*) and asserts instead the moral and intellectual superiority of the deliberate liar Odysseus whose actions, albeit culpable, arise at least from a deep knowledge of both truth and untruth. This is difficult to accommodate to Socrates' doctrine in the *Republic* where, on

[22] DK 82 B 23 (=Plutarch, *On how to read literature* 15D); for discussion of the ramifications of this comment for fiction, see Morgan 1993, 181–1.

[23] Suetonius *Nero* 21. The actor Timotheus of Zacynthos was so famous for his realistic portrayal of Sophocles' Ajax that he became known as 'Slayer' (*Sphageus*, Schol. Soph. *Aj.* 864). For discussion of the subjectivity of ancient dramatic performance and the engagement of the audience's emotions, see Lada-Richards 2002, esp. 412–5 and 1997. On the fictionality of visual representation in painting, see Webb 2009, 168-9.

[24] It is mentioned briefly in Fuchs 1993, 11.

the principle that 'no-one errs willingly', as we have seen, the deliberate liar could only be accounted for in terms of necessity or intellectual deficiency. In *Hippias minor*, Socrates explores the more wayward possibility that lying could be a matter of free will *and* informed choice and – even more provocatively – that calculated lying of this sort was morally superior to accidental truthfulness.

If Socrates in the *Hippias Minor* scuppers the familiar equation between culpability and intentionality in lying, the Athenian stranger in the *Laws* (730c 4–6) elaborates it into a more nuanced triadic configuration which consists, at one extreme, of the trustworthy person (*pistos*) who adheres to the truth, and who is balanced at the opposite extreme by the stupid or witless person (*anous*) who tells lies because he is unaware of what he is doing. So far, this is familiar thinking. But now comes the innovation: mediating between these two extremes, the Athenian claims, is the more ambivalent *untrustworthy* person (*apistos*) who fully understands the difference between truth and lies, *yet deliberately chooses to lie*:

> Truth is the leader of all blessings for gods and for humanity. Anyone who is destined to be blessed with good fortune should partake in truth straight from the start, so that he may live truthfully for the longest time possible, for he is trustworthy (*pistos*). The untrustworthy man (*apistos*) is one who cherishes the intentional lie, and whoever cherishes the involuntary lie is a fool (*anous*). Neither one of these conditions is enviable.[25]

This passage from the *Laws* is an important intertext for the *Philopseudes*. The title of Lucian's dialogue itself, *The Lover of Lies or Untrustworthiness* (*Philopseudes ē Apistia*), encapsulates this third, new element in Plato's theory: 'the untrustworthy person (*apistos*) . . . to whom the intentional lie (*pseudos hekousion*) is dear (*philon*).' Through its intertextuality with Plato, Lucian's title stakes out an ambivalent position for the entire dialogue, which hovers between the poles of trustworthy adherence to truth and mindless deviation from it; this will be an ambivalent work of *knowing lies*. All three of these key terms from the *Laws* – *pistos*, *anous* and especially *apistos* – occur repeatedly throughout the *Philopseudes* in the cross-fire of accusations between speakers about others' inability or unwillingness to recognize the 'truth'. Those who are thought to be insensible of the foolishness of their own behaviour are charged with *anoia*. On the other

[25] *Laws* 730 c1–6: ἀλήθεια δὴ πάντων μὲν ἀγαθῶν θεοῖς ἡγεῖται, πάντων δὲ ἀνθρώποις· ἧς ὁ γενήσεσθαι μέλλων μακάριός τε καὶ εὐδαίμων ἐξ ἀρχῆς εὐθὺς μέτοχος εἴη, ἵνα ὡς πλεῖστον χρόνον ἀληθὴς ὢν διαβιοῖ. πιστὸς γάρ· ὁ δὲ ἄπιστος ᾧ φίλον ψεῦδος ἑκούσιον, ὅτῳ δὲ ἀκούσιον, ἄνους. ὧν οὐδέτερον ζηλωτόν.

hand, the philosophers who persist in lying even though they ought to know better are, in Tychiades' view, guilty of *apistia*. But Lucian's dialogue also develops a more plastic concept for the sort of wanton indulgence in lies which Tychiades witnessed at Eucrates' house. 'Untrustworthiness' (*apistia*), Tychiades suggests, does not in itself adequately account for why such people tell lies and tall tales. When intelligent people tell lies, he realizes, it is because they are psychologically motivated by pleasure in falsehood (*to philopseudes*), which, as the dialogue demonstrates, is highly contagious. People who tell lies in this way are not simply 'untrustworthy'; they are, more complexly, 'lovers of lies'. Moreover, as the dialogue demonstrates, this pleasure is a collective and contractual one which is marred by one individual's refusal to 'play along'; this is why the philosophers are so determined to convert Tychiades and why Tychiades realizes, eventually, that he must leave. By exploring the important psychological dimension of lying and the seductive pleasures of fantasy which so much of ancient moral philosophy ignored, *Philopseudes* opens up more sophisticated ways for understanding the human predilection for lies, fantasy and fiction.

Another crucial advance which Lucian makes in this dialogue is to manoeuvre the discussion of lies away from the purely moral-ethical sphere in which it had chiefly resided in the hands of philosophers, and into the overtly literary one. Early in the dialogue, Tychiades makes it clear that he is not concerned with the quotidian sorts of lies that might characterize transactions in the marketplace, but in falsehood which is exemplified in storytelling and literature. As evidence that rational, intelligent and self-conscious liars *do* exist, Tychiades cites not only the storytelling philosophers at Eucrates' house, but also any number of authors from the Greek literary tradition:

> I could point out to you many people who, albeit in other respects possessing intelligence and admirable judgement, are trapped in this disease and the pleasure of lying. It pains me that people like this, who are excellent in every way, revel in deceiving both themselves and those who encounter them. You must know those ancient predecessors of mine – Herodotus and Ctesias of Cnidos and before them the poets and Homer himself – famous men who used the written lie so that they deceived not only audiences in their own time, but their lies have also come down to us in succession, preserved in the finest words and rhythms . . . And yet the case of the poets is perhaps reasonable . . . [26]

[26] *Philops.* 2–3: πολλοὺς ἂν ἐγώ σοι δείξαιμι συνετοὺς τἄλλα καὶ τὴν γνώμην θαυμαστοὺς οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἑαλωκότας τούτῳ τῷ κακῷ καὶ φιλοψευδεῖς ὄντας, ὡς ἀνιᾶσθαί με, εἰ τοιοῦτοι ἄνδρες ἄριστοι τὰ πάντα ὅμως χαίρουσιν αὑτούς τε καὶ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας ἐξαπατῶντες. ἐκείνους

Initially, Tychiades consigns Homer, the poets and their prose-descendants into the same category as Eucrates' lying philosopher-friends.[27] The vital difference in this case is that these authors exploited the technology of writing to perpetrate a more enduring deception which affected not only their immediate audiences but countless subsequent generations of readers as well. But then Tychiades refines this idea further and exempts the poets from the classification of wanton liars; in spite of his embarrassment over their fabrications, he concedes that 'the case of the poets is perhaps reasonable' (*kaitoi ta men tōn poiētōn isōs metria*).[28] He does not explain why, but his punning use of the adjective *metrios* ('reasonable') implies some connection between the poets' licence with the truth and poetry's most obvious identifying characteristic, its metre. If metre is the principal justification for the poets' special licence, it is reasonable to infer that this is because metre denaturalizes the narrative, drawing attention to its artifice and therefore signalling that it may not be strictly 'truthful'. Poets may, as a consequence, lay claim to a different contract with the reader, one which we commonly call 'poetic licence', precisely because they advertise the potentially mendacious nature of their work, a species of 'honest lying' which Lucian explores more overtly in the preface to *True stories*. Clearly, however, the metrical argument cannot exempt writers of prose. By implication, therefore, prose-writers, whose work lacks the obvious 'lie-signals' with which poetry is equipped, play a more insidious game with the reader who is trying to determine the truth-value of the text – and one can't help thinking, none more so than the writer of the prose dialogue, a form which, more than any other, strives mimetically to create the illusion that the reader is overhearing a 'real' conversation, rather than reading an artificially constructed text. In the context of this dialogue on lies, Tychiades' comment is therefore exquisitely ironic: in the spectrum of literary liars, there is none more lubricious, none whose lies are more difficult to detect, than the author of a prose dialogue.

The thought flashes briefly before Tychiades moves on to contrast the justifiable lies of poets with the outrageous 'public and communal lying'

μὲν γὰρ τοὺς παλαιοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ σὲ χρὴ εἰδέναι, τὸν Ἡρόδοτον καὶ Κτησίαν τὸν Κνίδιον καὶ πρὸ τούτων τοὺς ποιητὰς καὶ τὸν Ὅμηρον αὐτόν, ἀοιδίμους ἄνδρας, ἐγγράφῳ τῷ ψεύσματι κεχρημένους, ὡς μὴ μόνους ἐξαπατᾶν τοὺς ἀκούοντας σφῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μέχρις ἡμῶν διικνεῖσθαι τὸ ψεῦδος ἐκ διαδοχῆς ἐν καλλίστοις ἔπεσι καὶ μέτροις φυλαττόμενον . . . καίτοι τὰ μὲν τῶν ποιητῶν ἴσως μέτρια . . .

[27] The list of authors here is very similar to the authors who are attacked for their mendacity in *VH* 1.3, where Lucian pinpoints the Homeric Odysseus (not Homer himself), and prose descendants including Ctesias, Iambulus and unnamed philosophers; at *VH* 2. 31, Ctesias and Herodotus are being punished on the Isle of the Damned for their mendacity; cf. Chapter 5, pp. 172–5.

[28] See also *Iup. trag.* 39.

of cities concerning their local mythology. Philocles at this stage tactfully points out that, just as poets need mythology to spice up their work, so too tour-guides need their stories in order to make a living. But all *other* categories of liars, he concedes, are plainly ridiculous. The category of wilful and intelligent lovers of falsehood is therefore defined at last: it includes the lying philosophers at Eucrates' house who, from their acquaintance with their Plato in particular, ought to know better and are yet still determined to lie. It also includes prose authors like Herodotus and Ctesias who, as historians, should not incorporate lies and mythological fabrications into their work (unlike the poets, who are in any case exonerated from any intention to deceive by the metrical form of their work).

Where, then, do Tychiades and his prose author Lucian fit within this newly defined framework? Tychiades' self-representation in the dialogue is profoundly ambivalent. Although he styles himself *prima facie* as a repudiator of lies, he actually installs himself within the genealogy of literary liars: the prose liars Herodotus and Ctesias stand in the same relation to Tychiades (*hoi palaioi pro emou* – those ancient authors *before me*) as Homer and the poets to Herodotus and Ctesias (*pro toutōn*). Tychiades, therefore, is at the end of a long pedigree of literary liars who, by Lucian's time, had acquired a reputation principally for mendacity.[29] Tychiades' self-alignment with these authors therefore exposes the irony of his pose as a repudiator of lies.[30]

Furthermore, what unites these lying predecessors and played a vital part in ensuring the deception of subsequent generations of readers is their exploitation of the *written* lie. As a fictional character in a dialogue, Tychiades' assimilation to a tradition of authors who use the *written* lie is incongruous; it is as if Odysseus in the *Odyssey* were suddenly to allude to Homer's poem. This creates a slippage between the fictive character Tychiades and the author of the dialogue Lucian, whose written lies constitute the very work we are reading, the *Philopseudes* itself. Beneath the fictional veneer of an oral dialogue lurks Lucian's text, which is part of a long tradition of written lies, stretching back as far as Homer.

This metalepsis or breach of narrative levels in turn destabilizes the reader's grasp on the contract of reading which governs the text: just when we thought Tychiades was allied staunchly to the truth, the elision of the boundary separating the truthful character from the lying author generates doubts about his trustworthiness and even hints that he may have invented

[29] By this time, Herodotus had acquired his reputation as 'the father of lies'; see, for example, Plutarch's essay *De Herodoti malignitate* (*Mor.* 854e–874c) and Hartog 1988, 295–309.

[30] See also von Möllendorff 2000, 435, n. 38.

the tales from Eucrates' house. By assimilating Tychiades to authors who deceived 'both themselves and those who *encounter* them', Lucian colludes with the reader that Tychiades' persona as a scorner of lies is itself a deception of those who 'encounter' or 'read' him (the Greek verb *entugkhanō* encompasses both meanings). At the same time, Lucian insinuates his own authorial presence into the dialogue through the character, implicating both himself and his work in the charge of mendacity which is shared by his own authorial predecessors Ctesias and Herodotus.[31] The trenchant critique of lying in the *Philopseudes* is, after all, no more than a pose to palliate the reader's guilt in the pleasurable abandon of this fictional text.

Eucrates' house and the world of the book

Lucian invites the reader to identify him or herself with Tychiades, 'Mr Read', whose name puns on the activity of *reading* (*entugkhanō*) and also stands as a blank for any ordinary person (*ho tukhōn*, 'whoever', 'so-and-so'). By confining the lying philosophers' tales to Eucrates' house within the world of his dialogue, Lucian also conceptualizes fiction itself as a separate, bounded world which must be entered and exited again by the reader who, like Tychiades, is a temporary visitor to that world.[32] The reader's transition into and out of the fiction of the *Philopseudes* itself is dramatized through Tychiades' physical transition in and out of Eucrates' house, the imagined space of the story-world and lies.

Tychiades' experience at Eucrates' house alters him psychically: he is avowedly not the same when he leaves the house as he was when he went in, but after listening to the philosophers' tales his mind is now full of ghostly visions and fears, and he is confused about what is true and what is not.[33] His experience in Eucrates' house was one of psychic dislocation and disorientation, the effects of which, however short-lived, remain with Tychiades even after he has left the house: he carries the contagion of lies with him, so that the fiction has a sort of afterlife beyond the place where it originated, and lives on through Tychiades' dialogue with Philocles and – even farther afield – through every reader's encounter with the text of *Philopseudes* itself. This hints that, although the fictional world may be

[31] See Jones 1986, 46 on the *Philops.* and *VH*: 'Aimed simultaneously at the deceivers and the deceived, much of their humour derives from the author's own entry into the game and his ability to surpass the fantasies of others.'

[32] Plato's self-imposed seclusion in his own micro-state on the Isle of the Blessed (*VH* 2.17) has been interpreted similarly as a reference to the fictional world which he has himself constructed in his dialogues; see Laird 2003 and cf. Chapter 6, pp. 242–3.

[33] *Philops.* 39.

contained physically within the parameters of the book, its effects seep out across those boundaries into the reader's real world, where they affect and can even alter reality or our perceptions of reality. The reader, like Tychiades, is a visitor to the fictional world of Lucian's dialogue, but (s)he too will carry the effects of reading the philosophers' lies back to the real world beyond the pages of the book, so to speak, after (s)he finishes reading the text.

As in *Toxaris*, the philosophers' tales which form the body of the work are framed at either end by the dialogue between Tychiades and Philocles. These two patches of dialogue represent, within the fiction, Lucian's sense that the edges of the text are dialogal spaces: places of interface between the real world and the story-world in a real, physical sense as well as the place where contracts are negotiated between the author and the implied reader. These spaces play a Janus-like role not only in facilitating the reader's transition from one world to the other, but also in orientating one world in relation to the other, and establishing a syntax between the two. The prologue, in particular, often indicates how 'real' the story-world is supposed to be (historical fiction? sheer fantasy?). It may also explain how it relates to the reader's real world chronologically (Is the story set in the remote past, a particular historical past, or a vague, unspecified present?) and geographically (it can make a vast difference to a Greek reader if the story is set in Sicily, India or, as in Lucian's *True stories*, beyond the Pillars of Heracles). Questions relating to the time and space in which the story unfolds are important for helping the reader determine what sort of attitude of belief (s)he should adopt in relation to the narrative, as are other literary and genre-related clues that occur particularly at the beginning of texts, too.[34] The end of the text, on the other hand, facilitates the reader's exit from the story-world and determines the extent to which the issues raised by events in the story have attained resolution or remain open to trouble the reader long after (s)he has returned to reality. The dialogic nature of the beginning and end of the text is dramatized in the *Philopseudes* by the fact that it is precisely here that the two characters Tychiades and Philocles engage in dialogue with one another about how to 'read' the philosophers' lying tales in between.

Tychiades tells Philocles at the start that he has just come from Eucrates' house where he had heard 'many incredible and fantastical tales', and that he was forced to leave the house by the exaggerated lying of the

[34] See Genette 1997, 196–236 on the functions of the prologue.

philosophers with their 'weird and monstrous stories'.[35] For the reader, Tychiades' comments about the philosophers' stories flag up the fictionality of Lucian's text as well. In a similar way, Clitophon's warning in the opening dialogue of *Leucippe and Clitophon* that his tales are 'much like fiction' (τὰ γὰρ ἐμὰ μύθοις ἔοικε)[36] prepares the reader for the novel's metafictional games.

The dialogue at the beginning of the *Philopseudes* explores, self-reflexively, the very experience of beginning to read a text, of first entering into the story-world. Tychiades starts with the question about the desire for lies that draws people in. It is difficult to imagine a more succinct description of fiction-readers than the one Tychiades gives in this speech (cited more fully on p. 75 above), i.e. those 'who needlessly prefer lies far before the truth, revelling in the thing . . . without any pretext of necessity'.[37] This could define readers of *Philopseudes* itself: those who deliberately *choose* Lucian's entertaining stories in preference to a more 'truthful' or factual discourse (such as historiography, say) and who freely devote their time to such reading for the sake of the pleasure it provides.

Philocles' responding question ('Have you ever noticed people like this, in whom this love for falsehood is innate?'[38]) hints slyly at *us*, because *we* the readers of the *Philopseudes* are the 'people like this' who – right this minute – are choosing to read a text full of lies without any compulsion to do so. The opening section of dialogue therefore talks implicitly about the reader's appetite and 'innate passion for lies', which makes fiction irresistible. The entire visit to Eucrates' house can, in fact, be read as an allegory for the reader's encounter with fiction in the text. In this connection, it is significant, as we shall see, that Tychiades, who is the initial in-text reader of the philosophers' lies, did not set out originally with the purpose of visiting Eucrates' house; rather, he ended up there because he was looking for someone else – a man called Leontichus – who, he learned, had gone to pay Eucrates a visit.[39] When he reaches the house, Tychiades shows

[35] *Philops.* 5: 'I've come to you from the house of Eucrates the great where I heard lots of incredible and fantastical tales. As they were still in the midst of telling these tales, I upped and left, unable to put up with the exaggeration of it all. They drove me out like Furies with their many weird and monstrous stories.' ἐγώ γέ τοι παρὰ Εὐκράτους ἥκω σοι τοῦ πάνυ, πολλὰ τὰ ἄπιστα καὶ μυθώδη ἀκούσας· μᾶλλον δὲ μεταξὺ λεγομένων ἀπιὼν ᾠχόμην οὐ φέρων τοῦ πράγματος τὴν ὑπερβολήν, ἀλλά με ὥσπερ αἱ Ἐρινύες ἐξήλασαν πολλὰ τεράστια καὶ ἀλλόκοτα διεξιόντες.

[36] *L&C* 1.2.2; cf. Chapter 2, n. 124.

[37] *Philops.* 1: οἳ αὐτὸ ἄνευ τῆς χρείας τὸ ψεῦδος πρὸ πολλοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας τίθενται, ἡδόμενοι τῷ πράγματι . . . ἐπ' οὐδεμιᾷ προφάσει ἀναγκαίᾳ.

[38] *Philops.* 2: Ἦ που κατανενόηκας ἤδη τινὰς τοιούτους, οἷς ἔμφυτος ὁ ἔρως οὗτος ἐστι πρὸς τὸ ψεῦδος;

[39] *Philops.* 6.

further signs of reluctance, particularly when Eucrates bids him sit down on the couch beside him: Tychiades says he took care to avoid touching his gout-ridden feet, lest the contagion spread to him.[40] The gouty swelling in Eucrates' feet is evidently the result of dietary overindulgence (the doctor Antigonus prescribes a less rich diet to help), but it is a by-product also of his appetite for lies which is described in gastronomic terms at the dialogue's close when the philosophers 'feast themselves' on lies after Tychiades' departure, and when Tychiades finds himself in need of an emetic after his over-indulgence in the strong wine of the philosophers' lies.[41] There was a connection between lies and tumescence in ancient philosophical thought: in Plato, for example, rhetoric, one of the false arts, causes an *unhealthy swelling* when it is employed in political life, and Maximus of Tyre compared those who take pleasure in empty rhetoric, failing to recognize its deceptiveness, with fevered patients who gorge themselves on food and drink against their physician's advice, just like Eucrates here.[42] Tychiades' fear of contamination from contact with Eucrates' gouty feet hints, therefore, at his fear of the contagion of love of lying. In Lucian's allegory, Tychiades is a hesitant reader who only enters the story-world under the pretext of looking for something else, who anticipates more high-brow, erudite conversation than he actually finds, who is sceptical about the lies he encounters and cautious even about physical contact with the material text itself, and who is ultimately disgusted by the entire reading experience.

This readerly micro-drama from the *Philopseudes* can be mapped with near precision onto the account of a similarly conflicted response by another reader of 'incredible tales', the *grammaticus* Aulus Gellius. In the ninth book of his *Attic nights*, Gellius tells a story about some books which he discovered in a bookstall at the port of Brundisium where he had landed *en route* back home to Italy from Greece:

> I headed eagerly for the books. All of the books there were Greek and full of miracles and fantastic tales: incredible, unheard of things by ancient writers of no little authority: Aristeas of Proconnesus, Isigonus of Nicaea, Ctesias, Onesicritus, Polystephanus and Hegesias. The rolls themselves, however, were filthy from long neglect, and foul both to the touch and to the eye. Nevertheless I approached and asked their price and, enticed by

[40] *Philops.* 6: And I, taking great care to avoid touching his feet . . . sat beside him. κἀγὼ μάλα πεφυλαγμένως, μὴ ψαύσαιμι τοῖν ποδοῖν αὐτοῦ . . . ἐκαθεζόμην πλησίον.

[41] *Philops.* 39. On associations between wine and lies, see n. 45 below.

[42] Plato, *Rep.* 518e–519a; Maximus, *Or.* 25. 5–7.

> how amazingly and unexpectedly cheap they were, I bought a lot of books for little money . . .[43]

Gellius then says that he read all of the books in two consecutive nights and excerpted from them certain facts of interest for his own readers. As he was writing these notes, however, he was 'gripped by disgust for the worthless writing which made no useful contribution to life, practical or aesthetic'.[44]

In this fascinating passage, Gellius records the range of different responses – intellectual, sensual and emotional – which he experienced in relation to Greek books of *paradoxa* and *apista.* First there is the initial excitement and fascination by their promised content, especially on the basis of the antiquity and authority of the authors contained within. This is followed by revulsion at the books' physical appearance; his comment that they are foul not just in appearance but also *to the touch* suggests that Gellius actually handled the texts as well as subjecting them to visual scrutiny, and is a crucial piece of evidence to support the idea that the reader's physical and sensory encounter with the material text was an important dimension of his or her reading experience. There is the elation of commercial success as he purchases lots of texts for a low price, followed by scholarly fervour in consuming them, and ultimately disgust and disillusionment when he realizes – only after he has gorged on their contents – how worthless the books actually are.

Tychiades in the *Philopseudes* acts out the reactions which Gellius documents here. First, there is the eager rush to Eucrates' house in the hope of finding Leontichus. There is the promise of edifying conversation given by impressive figures of intellectual authority: just as Gellius was excited by the ancient authors who filled the books in Brundisium, so too Tychiades initially expects great things when he sees that all of the philosophical schools are represented by the guests who are gathered around Eucrates' bed. Notably, one of the 'ancient authors' whom Gellius names, Ctesias, is precisely one of the lying 'writers of old' whom Tychiades also cites among his predecessors in the *Philopseudes*. Gellius' revulsion at the books' squalid condition is echoed in Tychiades' disgust at Eucrates' swollen feet. Like

[43] *NA* 9.4.2–5: *ego avide statim pergo ad libros. Erant autem isti omnes libri Graeci miraculorum fabularumque pleni, res inauditae, incredulae, scriptores veteres non parvae auctoritatis: Aristeas Proconnesius et Isigonus Nicaeensis et Ctesias et Onesicritus et Polystephanus et Hegesias; ipsa autem volumina ex diutino situ squalebant et habitu aspectuque taetro erant. Accessi tamen percontatusque pretium sum et adductus mira atque insperata vilitate libros plurimos aere pauco emo . . .*

[44] *NA* 9.4.12: *sed cum ea scriberemus, tenuit nos non idoneae scripturae taedium nihil ad ornandum iuvandumque usum vitae pertinentis.*

Gellius, Tychiades overcomes his revulsion and scepticism to listen to the philosophers' lies, which he excerpts for his own 'reader' Philocles. And like Gellius again, he too experiences afterwards a rush of disillusionment and disgust at the foolishness of the philosophers and all of the lies he has absorbed. Tychiades' psycho-drama of the scholarly reader's guilty pleasure about the allure of unedifying texts can also be related to Lucius' experiences in *Onos*, which is itself a story of the reader's encounter with the clandestine pleasures of fiction, as I shall argue in the following chapter.

After he has repeated the stories of the philosophers, Tychiades ponders the effects which the lies have had on him. What he describes initially is a sense of inebriation: he feels drunk, like those who drink potent new wine; he needs an emetic or – even better – a potion to induce forgetfulness (*lēthedanon*) which will purge his mind of the poisonous lies he has absorbed and prevent the lingering memory from harming his psyche any further.[45] Some damage has already been done, as he imagines he is seeing all sorts of demons and other spectres, which is a sign of madness.[46] In spite of his precautions, it seems that some of Eucrates' sickness has spread to him.

Philocles, who has been listening to the philosophers' lies second-hand through Tychiades, refines this idea with the more precise metaphor of rabies (*lutta*). Tychiades is evidently raving and filled with fear like a rabid victim, and by repeating the lies which infected him he has passed on the disease to Philocles just as the victim of a rabid dog-bite can then transmit the terrifying disease to others. Philocles himself is already beginning to see things that do not exist.[47] This rabies metaphor augments the familiar concept that the love of lies is a form of madness with the important new idea that it is also highly contagious: the person like Tychiades who listens, even against his will, to fabulous stories is inevitably later gripped by the desire to pass these lies on to someone else, and so the infection spreads. The antidote (*alexipharmakon*), Tychiades finally suggests, is truth and correct thinking.

In the Platonic atmosphere, this section of *Philopseudes* reverberates with echoes of imagery from the final speech in Plato's *Symposium* where Alcibiades reaches for various metaphors to describe the uniquely mesmeric

[45] It is difficult not to think here of Helen's *lēthedanon* (Homer, *Od.* 4.220–32), a tincture of Egyptian drugs which she adds to the wine as an antidote to her guests' melancholy; the medicated wine in that instance forms an analogy with Helen's own storytelling, which has a similar soothing, enchanting effect. See also Dio *Orat.* 11. 42–3 for an analogy between wine and poetry, which encourages people to listen to lies. In *True stories*, the beginning of the fantastic adventure is marked by the intoxicating encounter with the Vine-women (see Georgiadou and Larmour 1997, 206). Drunkenness is again used to describe the effects of reading at *Lexiphanes* 16.

[46] *Philops.* 39. [47] *Philops.* 40.

effect of Socrates' personality. In the *Symposium* Socrates the lover of truth is described as a wizard-like figure whose unprepossessing exterior conceals the pure gold within.[48] The words of this satyr-like being induce a form of mania in those who listen, as if one has been bitten by a snake, or a feeling of ecstatic transport as when one is overwhelmed by Corybantic music.[49] In a travesty of this imagery, Eucrates the lover of lies in *Philopseudes*, whose name is reminiscent of Socrates, is described as a duplicitous charlatan whose august outer appearance conceals his truly ludicrious nature: he is a debased Socrates, a monkey in lion's skin, a chest containing mere coals instead of treasure.[50] The effect of his *logoi* could not be farther removed from the mystical transport and inspired madness of Socrates: it is a poisonous contagion which leads to delusion instead of truth. The work's close reminds the real-world reader of the *Philopseudes* that, by the very act of reading Lucian's dialogue, (s)he too has now become infected with the same disease as well, for there is no stopping the infectious love of lies as it spreads outwards into the real world beyond the text.

Eucrates the living book

In the dramatization of fiction-reading in the *Philopseudes*, the philosopher Eucrates represents the material text itself. Before the stories begin, Tychiades sits beside him on the very couch which, it is later revealed, was also the site for another scene of reading, when Eucrates read Plato's *Phaedo* in the days following his wife's funeral.[51] Reading is dramatized first of all as physical proximity between the reader (Tychiades) and the text (Eucrates). As we have seen, Tychiades the reader is wary about contact with the text, lest it contaminate him in some way. Given his use of the metaphors of disease and infection later in the dialogue to describe the contagious appetite for fiction, Tychiades' caution about contact with Eucrates suggests that the physical book was felt somehow to embody its contents, so that even

[48] *Symp.* 215a4–b3 and 221d1–222a6.

[49] The imagery resonates throughout Alcibiades' speech, esp. 215b3–216a8 and 217e6–218b4.

[50] *Philops.* 5: 'As he was a charlatan . . . I hadn't realized for a such a long time that he was cloaking a ridiculous monkey under a lion's skin.' γόης ὢν . . . τοσοῦτον χρόνον ἐλελήθει με ὑπὸ τῇ λεοντῇ γελοῖόν τινα πίθηκον περιστέλλων. Lucian is fond of imagery associated with magic to describe such charlatan philosophers: see also *Icar.* 8 (*thaumatopoioi andres*); *Pisc.* 14 (*goētes*); at *Bis Acc.* 11 Pan complains about the way in which people are 'enchanted' (*kekēlēmenoi*) by these unscrupulous characters. Hahn (1989, 192–201) discusses popular awe of philosophers' otherworldly, sacro-magical charisma in the imperial period.

[51] *Philops.* 27.

touching the text itself could cause some of its lies to infiltrate the reader physically, as if by osmosis.[52]

In what ways, then, does Eucrates resemble the book? Tychiades makes some telling observations to Philocles:

> You don't know, my friend, what sort of things he said, or *how he authenticated these things* and took oaths on most of them while standing beside his sons, so that *as I looked at him* many different thoughts were in my mind: that he had gone mad and taken leave of his senses, or that he was some sort of wizard who had for such a long time concealed from me the fact that he was merely a *ridiculous ape in a lion's skin*. That's how strange his stories were.[53]

In the first place, there is his duplicity: the deceptive dissimilarity between Eucrates' exterior and his inner folly. It was a *topos* of reading, even in antiquity, that one should not 'judge the book by its cover', with many recorded instances of lavish book-exteriors which belied their worthless content.[54] In a similar way, those who encounter Eucrates with his lengthy philosopher's beard anticipate serious discourse and the pursuit of truth, but what they will encounter instead is his passion for *paradoxa* and his love of lies. Eucrates may even reflect the text of the *Philopseudes*, which is itself a work of fiction concealed beneath the more respectable veneer of Platonic debate. Eucrates exploits his august appearance (Philocles describes him as 'trustworthy' – *axiopistos*)[55] along with oaths in order to lend his fabulous stories an air of authority which makes them more difficult to disbelieve. As the 'living book', therefore, Eucrates dramatizes the common authentication strategies of fiction, the techniques which an author typically deploys in order to press the reader into compliance with the make-believe. Surprised and bewildered, Tychiades *looks at him* – as one might look at a book – and expresses for the first time his sense of deception by this book whose contents most certainly do not match its promise. Significantly, he

[52] Lucian ridicules this idea in his essay *On the ignorant book-collector* 4: if books could transfer their erudition by physical contact, then booksellers would be the most educated men in the world – but that is clearly not the case.

[53] *Philops.* 5: Οὐ γὰρ οἶσθα, ὦ ἑταῖρε, οἷα μὲν εἶπεν, ὅπως δὲ αὐτὰ ἐπιστώσατο, ὡς δὲ καὶ ἐπώμνυτο τοῖς πλείστοις, παραστησάμενος τὰ παιδία, ὥστε με ἀποβλέποντα εἰς αὐτὸν ποικίλα ἐννοεῖν, ἄρτι μὲν ὡς μεμήνοι καὶ ἔξω εἴη τοῦ καθεστηκότος, ἄρτι δὲ ὡς γόης ὢν ἄρα τοσοῦτον χρόνον ἐλελήθει με ὑπὸ τῇ λεοντῇ γελοῖόν τινα πίθηκον περιστέλλων· οὕτως ἄτοπα διηγεῖτο.

[54] In his essay *On ignorant book-collector*, Lucian pokes fun at the uneducated but wealthy man who fetishizes books as objects and possessions, though he derives no educational benefit from them (e.g. 16–17; 29). Catullus' poem 22 talks about the ridiculous poetaster Suffenus who uses only the finest materials for his unstoppable doggerel.

[55] *Philops.* 5.

describes the deception in terms of 'madness' and 'magic', two metaphors which are used in *Philopseudes* for the bewitching effects of lies.

The *Philopseudes* also contains one of the rare instances in ancient fiction where a character is depicted reading *a book*. Eucrates relates how, on the seventh day after his wife Demainete's death, 'I was lying here on the couch, just as I am now, consoling my sorrow. I was reading, at my leisure, Plato's book about the soul. In comes Demainete herself as I was reading and sits next to me, just like Eucratides here is sitting now . . . '[56] The other instance of book-reading in fiction is in the famous scene in *Leucippe and Clitophon* (which I shall examine later in the chapter) where Clitophon deploys a book in an act of sham reading, the purpose of which is actually to enable him to steal furtive glimpses of Leucippe, the girl he loves. The novel does not tell us the title of Clitophon's book, nor even offer a clue about its genre, but in *Philopseudes* we know precisely what Eucrates was reading: Plato's *Phaedo*. The self-reflexivity of the episode is obvious: not only are we presented with a Platonic dialogue (*Phaedo*) being read within a Platonic-style dialogue (*Philopseudes*) but the spatial configuration of this reading-scene precisely echoes the scene of figurative reading between Tychiades and Eucrates on the very same couch at the beginning of the dialogue. It is significant, too, that Demainete's ghost appears to Eucrates whilst he is reading, for in a similar way, Tychiades and Philocles' 'reading' of the philosophers' lies will cause them too, by the end of the dialogue, to see 'ghosts, demons and Hecates'.[57]

Reading in the haunted house

The discussion of supernatural phenomena in *Philopseudes* embroils the reader in the characters' conflicting attitudes of superstition and rationality, scepticism and credulity.[58] One of these stories – the tale of the haunted house – plays a particularly self-reflexive role in Lucian's drama of fiction. Arignotus the Pythagorean tells the story of the haunted house where he himself exorcised a terrifying ghost. In a flurry of authenticating detail, Arignotus recalls first the precise address (adjacent to the Cherry Tree Hill in Corinth) and the name of the doorman (Tibius), setting the story in a

[56] *Philops.* 27: ἑβδόμῃ δὲ μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν ἡμέρᾳ ἐγὼ μὲν ἐνταῦθα ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης ὥσπερ νῦν ἐκείμην παραμυθούμενος τὸ πένθος· ἀνεγίγνωσκον γὰρ τὸ περὶ ψυχῆς τοῦ Πλάτωνος βιβλίον ἐφ' ἡσυχίας· ἐπεισέρχεται δὲ μεταξὺ ἡ Δημαινέτη αὐτὴ ἐκείνη καὶ καθίζεται πλησίον ὥσπερ νῦν Εὐκρατίδης οὑτοσί . . .

[57] *Philops.* 39–40.

[58] See also Kim (2010, 200–1), who compares the *Philopseudes* to Philostratus' *Heroicus*, minus the motif of conversion in the latter work.

realistic, contemporary context.[59] He then relates how he spent the night reading alone in the dreaded house with equipoise, before vanquishing the spectre with his command of magic and putting an end to the haunting once and for all.

The haunted house story was well-known in antiquity. As studies by Deborah Felton and, more recently, Daniel Ogden have shown, its origins were probably oral and folkloric, but it surfaces in ancient literature first in Plautus' comedy *Mostellaria* (which was based on a Greek new comedy by Philemon called *Ghost*), then in a letter by the younger Pliny and here in Lucian's *Philopseudes*.[60]

There are particular affinities between the Lucianic and Plinian versions. Like Lucian, Pliny couches his narrative in a philosophical and speculative context. His letter is addressed to L. Licinius Sura, a prominent intellectual whose opinion Pliny wishes to solicit on the question of the existence of ghosts. The letter opens with a philosophical question:

> Leisure provides the opportunity for me to be student and you to be teacher. And so, I would dearly like to know if you think ghosts exist and have their own form and quasi-divine presence – or do you think they are empty, insubstantial things which take their shape out of our fear?[61]

Pliny has done his research. His opening question refers to the two major schools of thought on the subject of apparitions in antiquity: the materialist theory of the atomic philosophers which argued that apparitions are the effect of jumbled physical emanations which impinge on our sense-organs; and the physiological-psychological theory favoured by Aristotle and by Pliny himself, which sought an explanation for such experiences in the visionary's state of mental and physical health instead.[62] In addition to the tale of the haunted house, he also furnishes two other reported instances of ghostly occurrences in the letter for Sura's consideration and (we may

[59] *Philops.* 30. On the peculiar topographical detail of the 'Cherry Tree Hill' (*to Kraneion*), see Ogden (2007, 219) who identifies it as one of the Cynic notes in the story, as the location was associated with the Cynic Diogenes in antiquity. As Ogden observes, Corinth was also the setting for Apollonius' encounter with the *lamia* in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* 4.25. Ogden's suggestion that Philostratus alludes to Lucian's story here (the *lamia*'s intended victim is a Cynic philosopher named Menippus of Lycia, *Lykios*) is an attractive one.

[60] Plautus, *Most.* 476–505; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.27. For comparative studies of these three versions of the haunted house story in antiquity, see Felton (1999), Stramaglia 1999, 133–69. Ogden (2007, 205–24) compares a similar story in later Christianized sources. Felton and Ogden draw particular attention to the story's status as a 'migratory legend' (Felton) or traditional tale (Ogden).

[61] *Ep.* 7.27.1: *Et mihi discendi et tibi docendi facultatem otium praebet. Igitur perquam uelim scire, esse phantasmata et habere propriam figuram numenque aliquod putes an inania et uana ex metu nostro imaginem accipere*.

[62] For relevant bibliography, see Sherwin-White (1966, *ad loc.*).

surmise) entertainment: the story about the apparition of Africa which appeared to Curtius Rufus (*Ep.* 7.27.2–4) and the case of the mysterious vanishing barbers (12–14). Both Pliny and Licinius Sura are men of erudition, and Pliny's opening sentence clearly designates his letter as reading-material for their leisure-time (*otium*). This reading-context is reflected in fiction too, for similar questions about belief are the topic of Tychiades and Philocles' leisured conversation in *Philopseudes*,[63] and the inquisitive Lucius of the ass-novel (both *Onos* and *Metamorphoses*) spends his leisure time seeking verification of stories of the supernatural too. In a similar way, Lucian specifically addresses his *True stories*, an exercise in the game of narrative credibility, to scholarly readers who are at their leisure.[64] The evidence strongly suggests that such semi-philosophical inquiry and paradoxography was the recreational reading material for the educated elite.

There are in fact two versions of the haunted house story in Lucian's *Philopseudes*: one told by Arignotus the Pythagorean philosopher about his encounter with a shape-shifting spectre, and the other told by Tychiades himself about the philosopher Democritus' encounter with boys-dressed-as-ghosts as he studied inside a tomb.[65] Of all the stories in the dialogue, this pair merits special attention for the directly opposing ways in which it dramatizes the act of reading *apista*. The haunted house story, as Felton has demonstrated, always features an encounter between a scholarly individual (a philosopher in the Plinian narrative and in both Lucianic versions) and a ghost who appears to the scholar *whilst he is reading*:[66] Arignotus makes a special reference to the Egyptian books about ghosts which he had brought with him; it is nice to speculate, with Ogden, that these books had once belonged to the Egyptian sorcerer Pancrates, the star of Eucrates' next story, with whom Arignotus claims to have studied, reminding us perhaps of the all-powerful magical books of Paapis, the Egyptian sorcerer in Antonius Diogenes' novel.[67] In Arignotus' version of the tale, the haunting is real and quashed through the philosopher's use of magic. In Tychiades' version, however, the haunting is a mere waggish prank perpetrated by some boys in

[63] Felton (1999, 87) argues that Lucian's version of the story is possibly a parody of Pliny's.

[64] See Chapter 5, pp. 159–60. [65] See Ogden 2007, 225–30.

[66] As Felton (1999a, 125) argues, the reading scholar and the ghost is a *topos* in ancient ghost stories. The *topos* is also repeated in *Philopseudes* when the ghost of Eucrates' wife visits him whilst he is reading Plato. See Ogden (2007, 223 n. 48) for further references.

[67] *Philops.* 31; most likely, the books consisted of magical documents such as the formularies of the Greek and Demotic magical papyri (Ogden 2007, 221 n. 16). Powerful Egyptian magicians were also a feature of the genuinely Egyptian novelistic tradition, e.g. Setne Khamwas; Ogden (2007, 241–5) examines the Egyptian literary and magical-documentary hinterland to the most famous story in *Philopseudes*, the 'Sorcerer's Apprentice'. For cross-fertilization between Greek and Egyptian narrative traditions more generally, see the two essays by Rutherford 2013 and Stephens 2013.

ghostly disguise, and the rational philosopher Democritus, sitting calmly inside a tomb, refuses to be distracted from his research and continues writing and compiling.

The two versions of the haunted house tale in *Philopseudes* dramatize different readerly responses to the unbelievable: on the one hand there is the Arignotan commitment to belief which echoes the other philosophers' credulity as well; opposing this attitude, there is Democritean scepticism, which disdains the supernatural. Hovering between these two poles is the more ambivalent response of Tychiades, who (as he sheepishly admits at the end) realizes that the stories are not true, but enjoys them nevertheless. Both Lucian's and Pliny's texts, with their cast of educated men, suggest that these paradoxical tales are the sort of fiction which the learned enjoy, perhaps especially under the pretext of philosophical debate. The story about the philosopher's encounter with the ghost in the haunted house mirrors Tychiades' own experience as an educated man who encounters ghost(-stories) in Eucrates' horror-filled house. This in turn reflects the experience of the reader of Lucian's dialogue, who is reading a work about ghosts in Platonic guise. This triple staging of encounters between scholars and spooks reinforces the idea that *Philopseudes* is not an inert collection of incredible tales but an active scrutiny of *how we read* the paradoxical and incredible.

From paradoxography to urban legend[68]

I have placed much emphasis so far in this chapter on the way in which *Philopseudes* dramatizes the encounter between the reader and an actual text in the process of reading *paradoxa*. However, we should not ignore the fact that *Philopseudes* presents us primarily with the *oral* dissemination of ghost stories and other unbelievable tales, a folkloric tradition of *apista* which coexisted in antiquity with the textual one even as it does today. Whilst I have no doubt that Lucian was familiar with paradoxographical literature, the view that he drew solely on literary sources for *Philopseudes* is too restrictive;[69] Felton's study of the haunted house tale and Ogden's masterful exploration of the origins and analogues in oral traditions for all

[68] The ideas in this section were inspired by a paper which David Scourfield presented to the Classics Society at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth in 2001, in which he examined Trimalchio's tale of the unbreakable glass (Petronius, *Sat.* 51) as an urban legend. I would like to thank the author for his generosity in sharing the paper in advance of publication. Cf. n. 75.

[69] Ogden (2007, 271–3) emphasizes instead Lucian's creative synthesis especially of oral traditions, aretalogies, Christian literature, elements of Cynic philosophy and Egyptian narrative tradition; see also Ebner 2001b for discussion of parallel 'wonder-tales' from the New Testament.

the stories in the dialogue expand our understanding of Lucian's method in a way that allows for his use of written sources but also highlights his omnivoracious passion for subliterary narrative traditions as well.[70]

The fictional oral setting of the stories in *Philopseudes* has prompted Anderson to interpret them as examples of fairy-tale,[71] but Felton's idea of the haunted house story as a 'migratory legend' is closer to the mark. This is because, unlike fairy-tales, the stories here told *as if they are true*, are realistic, refer to recent times (not 'once upon a time') and involve real and ordinary people who are known to the narrator (rather than fairy-tale types). Many of them also contain the surprising story-pattern known as the 'twist in the tale'. All of these features are characteristic of the type of migratory legend which is now known commonly as the urban legend.[72] Although they are realistic, urban legends often feature elements of the supernatural or the macabre like the stories in *Philopseudes*; furthermore, the social context which is depicted in Lucian's dialogue – a gathering of friends where stories are shared, perhaps competitively – is typical of the setting in which urban legends circulate.[73] In such contexts, participants collectively suspend their disbelief to savour the *frisson* of horror. This is precisely the response we see in the horrified shudder (*phrikē*) of Eucrates himself as he narrates the hair-raising story of his encounter with the dreadful Hecate, and his fifteen-year-old son responds in the same way to the story about his mother's ghost.[74] The storytelling context in *Philopseudes* is one where the borders separating fact and fiction are blurred for the purpose of pleasure and mutual entertainment. These are the reading-protocols, not just of paradoxography but also of the vast oral tradition of ghost-stories, urban legend and other tales of the unexpected that must have lurked, iceberg-like, beneath the surface of such literary traditions. Lucian's dialogue is not an isolated witness to the tradition, either. Trimalchio's banquet in Petronius' *Satyrica* presents a similar occasion, and some of the freedmen's stories there fit the framework of the urban legend too, as David Scourfield

[70] Ogden 2007. The most famous story from the dialogue, the tale of the sorcerer's apprentice (*Philops.* 33–6), is another kaleidoscopic *mélange* of recognizable narrative elements, including the 'quest for wisdom' narrative and Egyptian influences from the Demotic fiction of Setne-Khamwas (see Ogden 2007, 231–70).

[71] Anderson (2000, 11).

[72] See Brunvand 1981, 16–17 and 22–3. For the ghost story as a species of urban legend, see Felton (1999, 1–4).

[73] Modern urban legends typically circulate in convivial situations shared by members of a coherent social group such as college students in university dormitories (in the North American context), or teenagers around a campfire; see Brunvand 1981.

[74] *Philops*. 22 and 27 respectively.

has persuasively argued.[75] Here too we find a gathering of members of a similar social niche. Petronius' setting also features a narrator Encolpius who, like Lucian's Tychiades, distances himself from the others and satirizes the scene with varying degrees of subtlety. The freedman Niceros tells the tale of his macabre encounter with a werewolf (*Sat.* 61–2) at the request of the host Trimalchio who asks him to 'tell us one of your usual stories'.[76] The story is therefore clearly one which Trimalchio, and possibly the others too, have heard before; it is part of Niceros' repertoire. He vividly narrates his experience of horror in the story ('My heart was in my mouth; I was standing as if dead'; 'At first I didn't know where I was'; 'I became a ghost, I almost gasped my last; the sweat was pouring down my crotch, my eyes were dead, I almost never got over it').[77] For this, he is rewarded by the terrified and delighted reaction in his audience, especially Trimalchio:

> Everyone was struck with amazement.
>
> 'I wouldn't disbelieve a word,' said Trimalchio. 'Honestly, the way my hair stood on end – because I know Niceros doesn't go in for jokes. He's really reliable and never exaggerates.'[78]

Experienced narrator though he is, however, Niceros expresses fear of derision by the more educated guests who are present ('I'm afraid those scholars will laugh at me'),[79] and he is defensive about the truth of his tale, emphasizing his seriousness ('Don't think I'm joking; I wouldn't tell a lie about this to make a fortune'),[80] and finishing with the disclaimer that 'Others will make up their own minds about this, but may I bring down your gods' wrath against me if I'm lying.'[81] This anxiety may be part of Niceros' act, a strategy to elicit sympathy from his audience and induce them to believe what he says, but there is a nod here too towards the scathing condescension which Petronius might expect from his novel's more educated readers who, like Tychiades in Lucian's *Philopseudes*, might openly profess disdain for such nonsense, but be spellbound by it nonetheless.

[75] J. H. D. Scourfield, 'Petronius and the poodle in the microwave: the tale of the unbreakable glass (*Sat.* 51)', as yet unpublished.

[76] *narra illud quod tibi usu venit* (*Sat.* 61).

[77] *Mihi anima in naso esse; stabam tanquam mortuus* (*Sat.* 62.4); *Ego primitus nesciebam ubi essem* (*Sat.* 62.8); *In larvam intravi, paene animam ebullivi, sudor mihi per bifurcum volabat, oculi mortui; vix unquam refectus sum* (*Sat.* 62.10).

[78] *Attonitis admiratione universis: "Salvo," inquit, "tuo sermone," Trimalchio, "si qua fides est, ut mihi pili inhorruerunt, quia scio Niceronem nihil nugarum narrare: immo certus est et minime linguosus"* (*Sat.* 63.1, trans. Sullivan). A similar combination of belief and wonder (*miramur nos et pariter credimus*) meets the story about witches which Trimalchio tells shortly after (*Sat.* 64.1).

[79] *timeo istos scolasticos ne me rideant* (*Sat.* 61.4).

[80] *Nolite me iocari putare; ut mentiar, nullius patrimonium tanti facio* (*Sat.* 62.6).

[81] *Viderint quid de hoc alii exopinissent; ego si mentior, genios vestros iratos habeam* (*Sat.* 62.14).

Philopseudes, therefore, reveals much about Lucian's ideas about fiction-reading, broadly understood and not just restricted to literary texts, but encompassing the oral tradition of narrative as well. Not only does it comprise a quasi-philosophical debate which stakes out a new conceptual framework for understanding *pseudos* as *fiction* rather than simply an error or a lie, but it also dramatizes, through the experiences of Tychiades (Mr Read), the effects which fiction has on its readers, the processes of readerly transition in and out again of the fictional story-world and the anxieties, particularly the fear of contagion, that surround the reader's encounter with the text itself. As the dialogue re-enacts Tychiades' encounter with fiction in a self-reflexive manner for its own readers, that contamination which Tychiades feared breaks out from the world of the book into our world, and we too are left to ponder the complexities of our own enjoyment of the philosophers' apparently worthless lies. In this way, *Philopseudes* challenges us to think about the physical, psychological and epistemological dimensions of our own reading experience, about *why* we read fiction, and about the strange journey we make from one world to another every time we pick up a book.

Chariton on novel-reading: Dionysius and Callirhoe's letter

On the day of Chaereas' and Callirhoe's reunion, which marks the *dénouement* of the plot, there is a tumult of emotional activity which includes the business of writing letters to families at home and to the Persian king.[82] This flurry of letter-writing near the end of the novel has a double closural effect: within the story-world the letters tie up loose narrative ends and reconcile characters to each other and to their fate; but they also serving as a vivid reminder to the reader of the writtenness of the text as the end of the narrative draws near, and of the process of writing which enabled the story to evolve into the novel in the first place.[83]

First, Chaereas writes to the Persian King Artaxerxes, presenting himself (and Callirhoe) as magnanimous in victory, announcing the return of Queen Stateira unharmed, and bidding the king make peace with the

[82] 8.4.1: 'Who could describe the number, the variety of activities of that day: prayers, farewells, celebrations, commiserations, giving orders to one another, writing to those at home?' Τίς ἂν φράσῃ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην πόσας ἔσχε πράξεις, πῶς ἀλλήλαις διαφόρους – εὐχομένων, συντασσομένων, χαιρόντων, λυπουμένων, ἀλλήλοις ἐντολὰς διδόντων, τοῖς οἴκοι γραφόντων;

[83] On letters in the ancient novel, see Rosenmeyer 2001, 133–68; Létoublon 2003 and Robiano 2007 (on Chariton); Hock (1988, 141–2) explores parallels for the letter-reading scene in Chariton in the New Testament as well as the other novels. On ancient epistolary narratives more broadly, see Hodkinson et al. 2013.

Egyptians.[84] The king later reads Chaereas' letter in the privacy of his royal quarters, with only the Queen and the eunuch present. As he reads he is filled with conflicting emotions: anger at the capture of his nearest and dearest, but regret that his own actions had forced the rebellion in the first place; gratitude to Chaereas for removing Callirhoe, the object of his infatuation, from his sight, but also jealousy of Chaereas' greater fortune.[85] The emphasis here on reading as a secluded activity and an emotional experience will soon be repeated.

After Chaereas writes his letter, it occurs to Callirhoe, out of a sense of justice and gratitude, to write to Dionysius, her second husband, whom she has left to return to the partner of her first marriage. This act, we are told, is the only deed which she conceals from Chaereas, knowing all too well her first husband's innately jealous nature.[86] Her act of writing is described in detail and the letter itself is quoted in full:

> Taking a little tablet, she inscribed it as follows: 'Callirhoe sends greetings to Dionysius her benefactor – for you are the one who rescued me from piracy and slavery. I beg you, do not be angry in any way, for I am with you in my heart through the son we share, whom I entrust to you for upbringing and education in the manner that befits us. Let him not have experience of a step-mother. You have not only a son, but a daughter as well: two children are enough for you. Join them in marriage when he becomes a man, and send him to Syracuse so that he may also see his grandfather. Plangon, I send you my love. I have written this to you with my very own hand. Farewell, noble Dionysius, and remember your Callirhoe.'[87]

The attention to detail regarding the instruments and the act of writing itself is notable. First, there is the material text which Callirhoe employs for the purpose, a 'little wax-tablet' (*grammatidion*) onto which she inscribes (*ekharaxen*) her text. In her letter she emphasizes that the text is an autograph: 'I have written this to you with my very own hand'; indeed, Dionysius subsequently recognizes the writing as distinctively Callirhoe's own. In the final line, Callirhoe implies that the letter will serve as a remembrance-token of its author; her writing monumentalizes her memory, so that,

[84] The full text of this overtly closural letter is cited at 8.4.2–3. [85] 8.5.8.

[86] 8.4.4: ἔδοξε δὲ καὶ Καλλιρόῃ δίκαιον εἶναι καὶ εὐχάριστον Διονυσίῳ γράψαι. τοῦτο μόνον ἐποίησε δίχα Χαιρέου· εἰδυῖα γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὴν ἔμφυτον ζηλοτυπίαν ἐσπούδαζε λαθεῖν.

[87] 8.4.4–6: λαβοῦσα δὲ γραμματίδιον ἐχάραξεν οὕτως· Καλλιρόη Διονυσίῳ εὐεργέτῃ χαίρειν· σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὁ καὶ λῃστείας καὶ δουλείας με ἀπαλλάξας. δέομαί σου, μηδὲν ὀργισθῇς· εἰμὶ γὰρ τῇ ψυχῇ μετὰ σοῦ διὰ τὸν κοινὸν υἱόν, ὃν παρακατατίθημί σοι ἐκτρέφειν τε καὶ παιδεύειν ἀξίως ἡμῶν. μὴ λάβῃ δὲ πεῖραν μητρυιᾶς· ἔχεις οὐ μόνον υἱόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ θυγατέρα· ἀρκεῖ σοι δύο τέκνα. ὧν γάμον ζεῦξον, ὅταν ἀνὴρ γένηται, καὶ πέμψον αὐτὸν εἰς Συρακούσας, ἵνα καὶ τὸν πάππον θεάσηται. ἀσπάζομαί σε, Πλαγγών. ταῦτά σοι γέγραφα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί. ἔρρωσο, ἀγαθὲ Διονύσιε, καὶ Καλλιρόης μνημόνευε τῆς σῆς.

through her letter, Dionysius will be able to recall her even in her absence. Once she has finished writing, she seals the letter and conceals it in her bosom (*sphragisasa de tēn epistolēn anekrupsen en tois kolpois*), only later delivering it, blushing and in secret, to Queen Stateira, who will in turn ensure that it reaches its addressee.[88]

Chariton describes the letter's reception with the same attentive detail. Queen Stateira passes the letter discreetly to Dionysius as he is leaving the palace, but he does not open the letter until he has returned to the privacy of his own quarters:

> He returned home and locked himself in. Recognizing Callirhoe's writing, he kissed the letter first, then he opened it and pressed it to his breast as if it were she in the flesh, and he held it thus for a long time, unable to read on account of his tears. After he had cried himself out he began – with difficulty – to read, and first he kissed Callirhoe's name. When he came to the phrase '*to Dionysius my benefactor*' he cried out 'Alas! She no longer writes 'to my husband'. '*You are my benefactor.*' 'What worthy deed did I ever do for you?' He took pleasure in the letter's explanation and he read over the same words many times, for they suggested that she had left him against her will. Such a capricious thing is love; it easily convinces us of the reciprocation of our affections.[89]

Chariton describes in detail Dionysius' reaction not just to the contents of the letter, but to the physical text itself, including the very handwriting of his beloved. The writing and the text represent Callirhoe, and he lavishes kisses on her written name and embraces the tablets which, when opened, seem to enfold him as the woman herself might have done. As he cries out in response to the words of the letter, he enacts an emotive dialogue with the text, which cannot answer back. Callirhoe can never be his in the flesh again; she is only represented for him in the form of her text and in the images of her in which he seeks consolation. As the recipient of her letter and admirer of her portraits, Dionysius quite literally becomes a reader and consumer of Callirhoe (of *Callirhoe*?) as a text. His conversion from participant in the story to reader of a text mirrors the reader's parallel trajectory from immersion in the fiction to reawakening to the reality of

[88] *C&C* 8.4.9.

[89] 8.5.13–14: Ὑποστρέψας δὲ καὶ κατακλείσας ἑαυτόν, γνωρίσας τὰ Καλλιρόης γράμματα πρῶτον τὴν ἐπιστολὴν κατεφίλησεν, εἶτα ἀνοίξας τῷ στήθει προσεπτύξατο ὡς ἐκείνην παροῦσαν, καὶ ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον κατεῖχεν, ἀναγινώσκειν μὴ δυνάμενος διὰ τὰ δάκρυα. Ἀποκλαύσας δὲ μόλις ἀναγινώσκειν ἤρξατο καὶ πρωτόν γε Καλλιρόης τοὔνομα κατεφίλησεν. Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ 'Διονυσίῳ εὐεργέτῃ', 'Οἴμοι', φησίν, 'οὐκέτ' "ἀνδρί"· "Σὺ γὰρ εὐεργέτης ἐμός"· τί γὰρ ἄξιον ἐποίησά σοι;' ἥσθη δὲ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ πολλάκις ἀνεγίνωσκε τὰ αὐτὰ· ὑπεδήλου γὰρ ὡς ἄκουσα αὐτὸν καταλίποι. Οὕτω κοῦφόν ἐστιν ὁ Ἔρως καὶ ἀναπείθει ῥᾳδίως ἀντερᾶσθαι.

the material text, as Callirhoe becomes – in the final words of the novel – *Callirhoe*. The presence of Callirhoe's text and image near the end of Chariton's text signifies her monumentalization as a work of art through the novel. Dionysius' pang of loss as he embraces her letter glosses, perhaps, the reader's poignant sorrow as the narrative reaches its close. All readers are ultimately abandoned by the characters with whom they have emotionally engaged; these characters leave in their wake only the trace of writing in the text, which, for consolation's sake, the reader may read and re-read, like Dionysius with his letter.

The novel therefore contains two scenes of reading which involve withdrawal from the world in order to enjoy private communion with the text: that of Artaxerxes (with Chaereas' letter) and that of Dionysius (with the letter from Callirhoe). In the case of Callirhoe's letter, the material text itself participates in an act of reading which is a quasi-erotic encounter. With both readers we witness the exercise of emotions, both painful and pleasurable; in Dionysius' case, reading ultimately brings about feelings of consolation and pleasure, as he is reconciled to his fate. There are obvious resonances between these embedded letters and the novel itself. In a famous statement near the beginning of Book 8, when the narrator discusses the nature and function of the final book in relation to the other, earlier books of the novel, he draws attention to the manner in which the final book purges the reader's emotions, and how it will bring a sense of closure that will please and comfort the reader, in recompense for previous emotional suffering:

> I believe this final book will be the most pleasurable for readers, for it purges the gloom of the first books. No longer will there be piracy and slavery and a lawsuit and battle and endurance and war and capture – but in this book there will be just love and lawful marriages. For I shall tell how the god brought the truth to light and revealed those who had not been recognized by one another.[90]

The function of Chaereas' and Callirhoe's letters within the fiction directly mirrors the function of Chariton's final book: they resolve and clarify matters that had previously been obscure or confused; assert the 'just love and lawful marriage' of Chaereas and Callirhoe (which in turn restabilizes the marriage of King Artaxerxes and Queen Stateira); and 'cleanse' or

[90] 8.1.4–5: νομίζω δὲ καὶ τὸ τελευταῖον τοῦτο σύγγραμμα τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἥδιστον γενήσεσθαι· καθάρσιον γάρ ἐστι τῶν ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις σκυθρωπῶν. οὐκέτι λῃστεία καὶ δουλεία καὶ δίκη καὶ μάχη καὶ ἀποκαρτέρησις καὶ πόλεμος καὶ ἅλωσις, ἀλλὰ ἔρωτες δίκαιοι ἐν τούτῳ καὶ νόμιμοι γάμοι. πῶς οὖν ἡ θεὸς ἐφώτισε τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τοὺς ἀγνοουμένους ἔδειξεν ἀλλήλοις λέξω.

'purge' the reader's gloomy feelings as (s)he is reconciled to the new status quo. The heady mixture of emotions experienced by the two in-text readers, Artaxerxes (anger, regret, gratitude, jealousy) and, in a more streamlined process, Dionysius (from sorrow to consolation and pleasure), enacts within the fiction the cathartic emotional trajectory which Chariton envisages for the reader of his own text, from gloom (*skuthrōpa*) to pleasure (*hēdiston*). The revelation of the truth is, for readers of the letters and of the novel, expected to have a palliative and restorative effect.[91]

More controversially, it is possible that the secluded scenario envisaged for the reading of the letters within the fiction sheds light on the sort of reading-situation which Chariton might have imagined for his novel. Both Artaxerxes and, more emphatically, Dionysius read their letters in private to allow themselves the freedom to vent their emotions in response to the text; in Dionysius' case, his absolute seclusion allows him to re-read the text, to caress it and speak to it. Now a novel is distinct from a letter, and one would not necessarily read a letter from one's estranged wife with the same composure as one might read a novel, nor require the same degree of seclusion in order to indulge any emotions that arise as a result; nevertheless, given the self-reflexivity of the letters, Chariton's dramatization of reading in the story-world suggests a more intimate scenario for novel-reading in antiquity than is usually (if at all) imagined in modern scholarship. The same holds true for other scenes in ancient fiction which have been interpreted as paradigmatic of scenes of reading, whether real or imagined, such as the notorious episode of agalmatophilia in (pseudo?) Lucian's *Amores*, where a local youth is locked in a temple overnight with the sexy statue of Aphrodite,[92] or where Tarsia, trapped in the inner recesses of a brothel in the *History of King Apollonius of Tyre*, uses narrative to stave off sexual encounters with her male visitors, converting them from clients into readers;[93] or the voyeuristic episodes involving Encolpius and Quartilla in Petronius' *Satyrica*,[94] or the maid who spies on Philinnion and Machates in Phlegon of Tralles' horror,[95] or scenes of spying in Lucian's

[91] Longus anticipates a similar emotionally therapeutic effect for the reader of his novel in his preface.

[92] *Amores* 15–17: for discussion, see Hunter 2008, 269–70. The context in which the narrative is embedded points strongly to this metaliterary interpretation, for the *Amores* itself is an episode of erotic storytelling in honour of Heracles, which signals its affiliation with both Milesian tales (*Amores* 1) and the Greek novels (both the opening dialogue between Lycinus and Theomnestus, and the sailing and sightseeing scenario at *Amores* 8, for example, evoke the opening scene in *Leucippe and Clitophon*).

[93] *History of Apollonius King of Tyre* 34; for discussion, see Hunter 2008, 270 (citing further parallels).

[94] *Sat.* 26, 4–5 with brief mention at Hunter 2009, 61.

[95] Phlegon, *Mir.* fr. 1, with analysis of the nature of the story's fictionality in Morgan 2013. The text is in Stramaglia 2011; it is translated, with commentary, in Hansen 1996.

own *Onos*.[96] The significance of the *enclosed and private space* in which the male 'reader' gains access to the female in these scenes of reading has not, as far as I am aware, been recognized in analyses of these episodes. In the eighteenth century, when this private mode of reading became the norm, novel-reading was identified with withdrawal from the affairs of the world, and the reader typically sought seclusion in specially designated rooms or reading-nooks within the house.[97] In contrast, we know almost nothing about the physical circumstances in which novels were read in antiquity, which means we are missing a vital part of our understanding of the genre – given that contexts of reception play a key role in genre by shaping the reader's (or audience's) emotional contract with fiction, as Simon Goldhill has argued:[98]

> Molly Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses* curled up in bed with a box of chocolates, a novel and an active fantasy world of her own, is an iconic image of how novels are consumed in modernity. How novels are read (by women, with sentimental emotion, with dangerous fantasising . . .) has always been seen as part of the genre of the novel, and why the genre of the novel has been seen as worrying.[99]

The spatial configuration of all of the scenes of reading which I have explored in this section reinforces the atmosphere of transgressive intimacy that is advertised by the novels' titles and is now seen as integral to the reader's experience of these narratives.[100] When we consider the fact that the genre of the novel, more than any other, privileged the private and even interior life of its characters and that, in addition to the intimacy of this imaginative experience, it was the first ancient genre to be born into a world where the portable book-roll was the norm, then it becomes inevitable (albeit controversial, certainly), that this new genre also ushered in new and more intimate physical modes of reading in antiquity as well.[101]

[96] *Onos* 12; cf. Chapter 4, pp. 135–6.

[97] On this 'reading revolution' in the eighteenth century, see Chartier 2007, 112–15 with further bibliography.

[98] Goldhill 2008, 186–7.

[99] Goldhill 2008, 186.

[100] On the basis of patterns in novel-titles in antiquity, Whitmarsh (2005) argues that the novels 'stake their claim to radical innovation on the shocking fact of their narratives of the emotional, sexual, and psychological lives of young men and (most shockingly of all) young women, even παρθένοι' (606). Hunter (2009) examines how the novels themselves shape a reader who is inquisitive and voyeurisic (*polypragmōn*); see also Morales (2004, 86–7).

[101] For the special relationship between the novel and a more developed textual and literate culture, see Hunter 2008, esp. 261–2 and Whitmarsh 2009, 36: 'Unlike the Homeric poems after which their narratives are patterned, the Greek novels were designed to be circulated primarily in written form. It is quite possible, indeed, that the novel represents the first new literary genre to be born

Ménage à trois: Clitophon, Leucippe and the book (*L&C* 1.6.6)

Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* is unique among the extant novels for containing an episode in which the protagonist, Clitophon, reads a book. After a restless night thinking obsessively about Leucippe, Clitophon finally drifts into sleep as the day breaks. But even then, he has no respite:

> For all my dreams were of Leucippe: I conversed with her, joked with her, dined with her, touched her; I enjoyed greater benefits than during the day, for I also kissed her, and the kiss was real. So when a servant woke me I reprimanded him for his clumsy timing which ruined such a sweet dream.[102]

In an inversion of reality and fantasy, Clitophon declares his oneiric kiss as 'real' and more gratifying than the actual physical contact he has had with Leucippe during the day. His annoyance upon waking up is the reaction of a fantasist who would prefer to continue dreaming and defer the possibility of real contact with Leucippe in favour of dreams which are, to him, infinitely more pleasurable and (paradoxically) more 'real' than his real-life experiences so far. To reinforce the point, Clitophon's first impulse on waking is to reach for a book.

> So I got up and strode purposefully into the house in front of the girl, wielding a book in my hand, and I began to read, hunched over it. However, I would furtively glance up whenever I neared her door, and having paced several full circuits and drawn a deep draught of love from gazing at her, I went away, my mind in turmoil. And this febrile condition continued over three days.[103]

Instead of approaching Leucippe herself directly, Clitophon uses reading as a strategy which allows him to linger in her presence whilst pretending to be otherwise engaged, to steal surreptitious glances at her, and to inflame his desire still further.

into a world in which the book, rather than oral performance, constituted the primary medium for transmitting large-scale narrative.' However no-one, to my knowledge, has extrapolated from these ideas about the novels' intimacy and portability of form, to the physical contexts of novel-reading itself.

[102] *L&C* 1.6.4–5: πάντα γὰρ ἦν μοι Λευκίππη τὰ ἐνύπνια· διελεγόμην αὐτῇ, συνέπαιζον, συνεδείπνουν, ἡπτόμην, πλείονα εἶχον ἀγαθὰ τῆς ἡμέρας· καὶ γὰρ κατεφίλησα, καὶ ἦν τὸ φίλημα ἀληθινόν· ὥστε ἐπειδή με ἤγειρεν ὁ οἰκέτης, ἐλοιδορούμην αὐτῷ τῆς ἀκαιρίας, ἀπολέσας ὄνειρον οὕτω γλυκύν.

[103] *L&C* 1.6.6: ἀναστὰς οὖν ἐβάδιζον ἐξεπίτηδες εἴσω τῆς οἰκίας κατὰ πρόσωπον τῆς κόρης, βιβλίον ἅμα κρατῶν, καὶ ἐγκεκυφὼς ἀνεγίνωσκον· τὸν δὲ ὀφθαλμόν, εἰ κατὰ τὰς θύρας γενοίμην, ὑπείλιττον κάτωθεν, καί τινας ἐμπεριτατήσας διαύλους καὶ ἐποχετευσάμενος ἐκ τῆς θέας ἔρωτα σαφῶς ἀπῄειν ἔχων τὴν ψυχὴν κακῶς. καὶ ταῦτά μοι τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἐπυρσεύετο.

As a unique instance of book-reading in the extant ancient novels, this scene has provoked much discussion, in particular speculation about the nature of Clitophon's book: in this most self-reflexive of novels, could Clitophon be reading a *logos erōtikos* to mirror the novel itself?[104] Ironically, however, (as is frequently noted) his act of reading is a *trompe l'oeil*: Clitophon the pseudo-reader is not remotely interested in the book *per se*, which he uses merely as a stage property, a decoy and an instrument in his strategy of flirtation. Helen Morales argues that '[r]eading is . . . portrayed as a fundamentally erotic activity; the book is a stratagem for seduction and perusing it a pretext for the release of sexual desire.'[105] Actually, Clitophon does not use reading as a *pretext* for the release of sexual desire, but as a *substitute* for it. The scene dramatizes reading itself as the act of a fantasist who uses the book as a means to stimulate and temporarily indulge erotic desires, whilst deferring the satisfaction of these desires through actual interaction with the desired object.[106] There is, therefore, a direct analogy between the book and Clitophon's dream, as both offer oblique access to Leucippe, and a vicarious intercourse which Clitophon may declare is more 'real' than reality, but which is nevertheless a displacement of the real physical intimacy he seeks. This game of deferral is particularly apposite in a novel whose characters explicitly theorize the pleasures of postponed satisfaction in their debate about the comparative pleasures of sex with boys and women on board the ship.[107] The novel itself exploits this teasing strategy of deferral in its own digressive narrative structure; the first two books, for example, teasingly postpone the onset of the travel-adventures, and for most of this time the reader, like Clitophon, observes and experiences Leucippe only obliquely, at a remove.[108] We cannot know if the book which Clitophon is reading is itself a novel, but the act of reading itself is certainly freighted with thematic self-reflexities of other sorts.

What I am driving at here is that this scene of dreaming followed by book-reading within the fiction dramatizes both the reality and fantasies of the extra-diegetic reader's interaction with Achilles Tatius' novel. Reading

[104] The scene's self-reflexivity is discussed by Goldhill 1995, 70–1; Whitmarsh 2003, 198–9; Morales 2004, 78–82.

[105] Morales 2004, 79.

[106] In light of the physician Theodorus Priscianus' recommendation of erotic reading material as a cure for sexual impotence in the fifth century CE (*Euporista* 2.11.34), Morales (2004, 79 n. 136) wonders whether Clitophon's strategy of reading to satisfy his sexual desires could mirror that of the author, Achilles Tatius.

[107] *L&C* 2.35–8.

[108] See esp. Whitmarsh (2010b, 334–9), who, in his analysis of the structure of Hippias' house as symbolic of the narrative structure of the novel, shows how the architectural retardation of access to Leucippe's bedroom mirrors the deferral of sexual satisfaction in the plot.

within this most digressive of novels is itself glossed as a digressive activity, a side-track;[109] the fact that it takes place in a garden, which is itself a site for visual distraction as well as erotic intrigue, reinforces these associations between reading and fantasy, desire and digression.[110] Clitophon's revelation of his voyeuristic intent hints at the reader's covert desires as well: Clitophon the reader-in-the-text, peeping at Leucippe over the edge of his book, acts out the transgressive desires of the novel-reader who similarly wishes to 'see' Leucippe through the text, and can similarly only achieve this through reading the novel. The material text therefore offers both Clitophon and the reader access to Leucippe, albeit in different ways: for Clitophon the pseudo-reader, the book is a *trompe l'oeil* which enables him to observe Leucippe from a distance; in contrast, for the extra-diegetic reader who, unlike Clitophon, really *is* intent on reading the text, the book constitutes the only means of visualizing Leucippe. The disparity between the two readers' situations underlines the difference between living an experience, and reading about it in a novel. Clitophon has access to Leucippe beyond the edges of his book, but for the reader of the novel, this access is constrained by the limits of the material text itself.

Conclusion: the importance of Lucian's lover of lies

Lucian's *Philopseudes* is a landmark text about lies which deserves to stand proudly alongside his *tour de force* of literary lying in *True stories*. In fact, in its concentration on, and quasi-theoretical discussion of, the dynamics of reading and storytelling, *Philopseudes* actually offers us a more richly complex resource of ideas about fiction-reading in the ancient world than *True stories* does, even though its contribution in this regard is much overlooked in scholarship both on Lucian and on ancient fiction more generally. But it is here that Lucian produces a theory of fiction which examines, in a quantum leap of sophistication in ancient thought, the paradoxical psychological pleasures of fiction and the *frisson* (*phrikē*) of horror which readers also strangely enjoy; and through his enactment of different responses to the philosophers' marvellous tales, he engages the reader in the drama of fiction itself. What has not been recognized at all

[109] This point is made by Morales (2004, 80): 'it may be that *logoi erotikoi* encourage desire, but it is also evident that desire disrupts reading . . . Thus the eclectic and digressive reading . . . mirrors the eclectic and digressive framing narrative.'

[110] On gardens in the novels as ekphrastic locations of desire and intrigue, see Bartsch 1989, esp. 50–5 (on Achilles Tatius); Zeitlin 1990 (on Longus) and Martin 2002. Whitmarsh (2010b, 341–3) focuses on the conspiratorial role of the location of Clitophon's book-reading in the *peripatos* of the garden, which is 'an environment rich with opportunities for intrigue, innuendo, and flirtation' (343).

is the way in which the encounter between Tychiades and Eucrates in the philosopher's other-worldly house dramatizes the reader's entry into the fictional world through his or her encounter with the text itself – an encounter which is fraught with the fear of physical as well as psychical contamination. This dialogue is uniquely and intensely interested in the role played by the physical text in the reader's experience: it includes in its cast no fewer than four readers: Tychiades (the figurative reader) and three others (Eucrates, Arignotus and Democritus) who explicitly read texts.

The fictional encounters with texts which I have explored in this chapter dramatize, self-reflexively, the fantasies as well as the realities of the fiction-reader in multiple ways. All the readers whom I have examined are educated and male. Dionysius and Clitophon are erotic readers: Dionysius reads avidly, for it is through reading that he feels once again consolatory contact with his beloved, and his reading is therapeutic. Clitophon, on the other hand, is the pornographic reader who had earlier declared that 'erotic stories are the fuel for desire'[111] and whose voyeuristic book-reading leaves him in a febrile state of passion and frustration, 'burning' for three days. Eucrates in Lucian's *Philopseudes*, on the other hand, is a philosophical reader, and the others (Tychiades, Democritus and Arignotus) are readers of *paradoxa*. Eucrates and Arignotus immerse themselves so fully in their texts that ghosts appear to them; in their preference for fantasy over reality they resemble the erotic fantasist Clitophon. Democritus in the tomb, on the other hand, reads to maintain a firm grip on reality, whereas Tychiades, the reluctant reader of *paradoxa*, has an altogether more equivocal experience.

In the complex interplay of fantasy and reality in each of these scenes, the presence of the book reminds us that fiction is an experience that is made possible by, but also circumscribed by, the physical reality of the material text, for in each episode the text is used to generate or control imaginative experiences in different ways. Tychiades alone expresses anxiety about fiction's power to breach the safe confinement of the material text and to contaminate reality – an idea which captivated Lucian, as we shall see again on a larger scale in *True stories*.[112] We will encounter also similar bookish games with narratives that are 'off the page' in Lucian's *Onos*, which will be discussed in the next chapter, where threshold spaces such

[111] *L&C* 1.5.6: τοῦτό μοι μᾶλλον ᾀσθὲν τὴν ψυχὴν ἐξέκαυσεν· ὑπέκκαυμα γὰρ ἐπιθυμίας λόγος ἐρωτικός.

[112] For reversals of the hierarchy between fiction and reality in *True stories*, see Chapter 6, pp. 216–32.

as doors and windows remind the reader vividly of the book's role as the portal to the story-world, and where Lucian uses the magical-realistic story of a man's transformation into an ass to explore the reader's epistemological metamorphosis as a result of the imaginative experience of other worlds in fiction.

CHAPTER 4

Semiotic fictions
Metamorphoses of the reader from The incredible things beyond Thule *to* The name of the rose

A text is meant to be an experience of transformation for its reader.[1]

In *Toxaris* and *Philopseudes*, as we have seen, Lucian insists on the contractual nature of fiction, as a game between two knowing and complicit participants, an author and a reader. Both dialogues also present their embedded readers' struggle to balance the conflicting desire to remain aloof as critical readers, with the desire to succumb to the illusion and believe. Despite their best efforts to resist, the readers in both dialogues fall gradually underneath their own fictions' spell, and as the dialogues close they acknowledge the subtle transformation which their storytelling has wrought upon them. With this metafictional psychodrama, Lucian gives his own reader the instruments with which to analyse his or her own reading experience, and invites the reader to reflect on what sort of transformation (s)he has experienced too.

In one sense, metamorphosis is integral to all fiction, for fiction offers the experience of transformation, if merely by offering the reader the opportunity to inhabit, temporarily, alternative personalities and viewpoints, and to experience, imaginatively, an alternative plot to one's own life-story. But to what extent did fiction-writers in antiquity, like Lucian, use fiction *actively* for the purpose of shaping and transforming the reader? And what are the theoretical ramifications of this use of fiction as a means for achieving cognitive conversion and epistemological metamorphosis?

In exploring various transformations of the reader in this chapter I follow Umberto Eco's model of reading as a response to the text's 'double-coding'. According to Eco, all texts appeal to the first-level or 'semantic' reader whose primary goal is to discover '*what* happens' in the narrative, and also to the more detached second-level 'semiotic' or 'aesthetic' reader who asks not just 'what happens', but also '*how* what happens *is narrated*' as well – or

[1] Eco 1994a, 53.

to put it differently, asks what sort of reader the text requires him or her to be.[2] For Eco, this double-coding is present implicitly in *all* texts – even the most mundane, such as the road-sign or the railway timetable – but the interplay is especially pointed in 'all great works that have come down to us in multiple manuscripts and printed editions on the wave of a success that has affected more than an elite readership'.[3] In Eco's view, those works which appeal to readers on more than one level are the transcendent works of literature (what he has in mind here is what he describes as the 'quality bestseller', works of fiction like his own phenomenally successful novel *The name of the rose*, which appeal equally to the mass-market as well as to more recherché readerly appetites).

In his recent study of the Greek novels, Whitmarsh explores the romance in similar terms as a site of conflict between paradigmatic and syntagmatic readerly desires – or, more simply put, the reader's desire for immersion in the experience of the story (syntagmatic), which struggles against the desire to read with a more detached overview of the tendencies of the genre (paradigmatic).[4] Related to these two impulses are the conflicting desires to read for the goal (which is linked to the overview-oriented, paradigmatic drive) and to lose oneself in narrative distractions along the way – digressions, subplots and blind alleys (which is linked to syntagmatic immersion): 'In the romances . . . we can choose either to follow the teleological thrust of the normative narrative, or choose to explore the microecologies of desire that are narrated en route. Readers of romance are given both the ineluctable teleology of marital ideology and the toolkit for deconstructing it.'[5] As an analogy for this readerly conflict, Whitmarsh uses the Freudian metaphors of the *superego* and the *id*: whilst the *superego* drives towards restoration of convention and closure, the *id* resists this with its desire for chaos, deviation and disruption: 'the romance ego is the site of an ongoing conflict between *superego* and *id*.'[6]

It is, I think, fairly self-evident how Whitmarsh's intertwining of paradigmatic and syntagmatic drives can be mapped onto Eco's ideas about the interplay between semantic and semiotic reading. My own preference for Eco's model here is because it enables us not only to understand how different desires play out in a text (as Whitmarsh does), but also for understanding how one way of reading can, in certain types of fiction, intersect with the other , so that the cognitive experiences of the characters become entangled with those of the reader, even to the extent that the reader may

[2] Eco 2006, esp. 222–5. [3] Eco 2006, 217, and more generally 222–7.
[4] Whitmarsh 2011, 168–76. [5] Whitmarsh 2011, 168.
[6] Whitmarsh 2011, 185; the Freudian analogy is discussed at pp. 20, 184–5 and 257–8.

find him- or herself in competition with the characters for semiotic control of interpreting the plot. I will use the modern term 'semiotic fiction' to denote these fictions, which are interested, centrally, in how meaning is created through reading. They also play, to a greater or lesser extent, with disparities between appearances and reality in ways that deceive and/or transform the reader and provoke us into thinking about the nature of fiction-reading itself, especially about *why* we read, the processes by which we interpret the plot, and how we are transformed by it. Classically, this takes the form of the detective novel, where the reader and characters compete to discover the answers to a mystery in the plot.[7] Winkler uses the model of the detective story for his analysis of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* – and this analogy underlies my intertextual reading of the ass-novel and Eco's postmodern detective novel *The name of the rose* later in this chapter as well. But the semiotic plot in ancient literature more commonly takes the form of the voyage of discovery, as in the case of Antonius Diogenes' *Incredible things beyond Thule* and Lucian's *True stories*. There are obvious similarities between the detective novel and the voyage of discovery; both types of plot usually involve a protagonist who is motivated by intellectual curiosity and who must strive to make sense of the events, people and interactions around him (and in fact, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* combines elements of both, as Winkler shows).[8]

In the first section of this chapter I will explore Antonius Diogenes' novel *The incredible things beyond Thule* as a semiotic fiction which performs a semiotic shift on its reader, transforming him or her from naif to sceptic – or better, from a primarily semantic to a predominantly semiotic reader, in a way that plays out the narrative's central preoccupation with belief and disbelief through the theme of *apistia*.[9] To broaden the context for Diogenes' fiction, I will then consider the similar semiotic games played by Lucian in *True stories* and Ptolemy Chennus in his *Novel history*.

In the second section of the chapter, I will turn to an intertextual reading of the ancient ass-novel (both Greek and Latin) and Eco's novel *The name of the rose*, to explore how intertextuality itself can transform the reader. In this plot of metamorphosis, the reader's semiotic transformation is also precisely thematic, as the protagonist's asinine metamorphosis tropes the reader's cognitive transformation through reading the fiction. The processes of semiosis and intertextuality are themselves themes which the

[7] See Holquist 1983. [8] Winkler 1985, 251–75, esp. 268–70.
[9] On the 'cunning fictionality' of *apista*, see Whitmarsh 2011, 228, with n. 88.

ancient ass-novel shares with Eco's modern semiotic classics, *The name of the rose*.

Isidora and Faustinus: theorizing the reader in *The incredible things beyond Thule*

Hypocrite lecteur, mon sembable, mon frère!

Baudelaire, *Au lecteur*

The major challenge facing the reader of *The incredible things beyond Thule* is to decide what type of text this is – and therefore what type of reader to be. As I shall argue in the next chapter, this is a text which uniquely makes it its business to disorientate and muddle its reader's expectations, but what I wish to focus on here is its explicit and programmatic interplay of two readerly models in the prologue.

With the exception of some fragments, Diogenes' text does not survive, but a fairly detailed account of it is preserved mainly in an epitome by the Byzantine Patriarch Photius from the tenth century CE.[10] Like Eco's *The name of the rose*, it is a pseudo-documentary novel which presents itself as a version of the ancient text of the Arcadian discoverer Deinias.[11] On the basis of Photius' account, it looks as if the novel was packaged within a peritext which – however precisely it was configured – seems to have incorporated two letters: a dedicatory letter to Isidora which offered a richly complex fantasy of the rediscovered book, and another letter to Faustinus, which exposed this fantasy as an antiquarian ruse. It is usually thought that both letters must have been joined together in a prologue. Photius states clearly that the dedicatory Isidora-letter prefaced the novel, for he tells us it was located 'at the beginning of the book';[12] however, he is not explicit about the location of the letter to Faustinus, leaving latitude for speculation about whether it too was located in the preface, which would mean that the novel had a double epistolary preface (as I said, this is the prevailing opinion) – or alternatively whether it was positioned at the end of the novel, meaning that the novel was framed at either end by a prologal and an epilogal letter. It is an important question, not least because the

[10] Photius *Bibl. cod.* 166, the Greek text of which can be found in the Budé edition (Henry 1960) and also in Fusillo 1990. The papyrus fragments are: PSI 1177; *POxy* 3012 (also possibly P. Mich. inv. 5 and P. Dubl. C3 the 'Herpyllis' fragment): text and commentary in Stephen and Winkler 1995; and *POxy* 4760 and 4761: text and commentary in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 70 (2006), 8–29. Other *testimonia* are printed and discussed in both Stephens and Winkler 1995 and Fusillo 1990.

[11] See ní Mheallaigh 2008 and Morgan 2009.

[12] κατ' ἀρχὰς τοῦ βιβλίου (*Bibl.* 111a 41–2).

position of the Faustinus-letter determines precisely the moment when the text pulls the wool from its reader's eyes. And as even some of the most recent scholars to discuss Diogenes' work express continuing doubt about the matter,[13] I will explore both possibilities here.

The main reason for supposing that the Faustinus-letter occurred at the end of the novel, as a coda or epilogue to the fiction, is because this is where it occurs in Photius' epitome. Photius traces the sequence of Deinias' narrative through to the end of Book 24 (the return to Tyre after the adventures beyond Thule), and closes with a return to the primal scene of narration, where Deinias completes his story to Cymbas and orders the Athenian scribe Erasinides to write it down on tablets of cypress-wood, and then to make two copies of the written text – one for Cymbas to take home to Arcadia, and the other to be buried with Deinias when he dies.[14] This closing scene is then followed immediately by the following report:

> In any case Diogenes, who is also called Antonius, even though he presented Deinias telling all these fantastical tales to Cymbas, nevertheless writes to Faustinus that he is composing about the incredible things beyond Thule, and that he is dedicating the fiction to his sister Isidora, who is of a knowledge-loving disposition. And he says that he is himself a poet of an ancient comedy and that, even if he is fabricating stories that are incredible and untrue, nevertheless for most of his stories he has the testimony of older sources out of which he collated this material with much hard work. And he prefaces each book with the names of the men who had made these sorts of claims before him, so that the incredible things should not appear to lack testimony.[15]

On a superficial reading, the sequence of events in Photius' statement could suggest that the letter to Faustinus came *after* the final return to the novel's fictional *mise en scène* at the end of Book 24. Admittedly an epilogal letter is a rarity in ancient literature, and unparalleled elsewhere in ancient narrative texts. There is, as far as I am aware, only one other example to compare which is from the field of medical writing, which is itself, as

[13] Romm (1994, 107) treats the letter to Faustinus tentatively as an 'addendum . . . perhaps attached to the end of Book 24'. Bowie (2009, 118, n. 15) declares himself 'far from confident' about the usual placing of the letter in the preface.

[14] Photius, *Bibl.* 111a20–9.

[15] Photius, *Bibl.* 111a30–40: Ὁ γοῦν Διογένης, ὁ καὶ Ἀντώνιος, ταῦτα πάντα Δεινίαν εἰσαγαγὼν πρὸς Κύμβαν τερατευσάμενον, ὅμως γράφει Φαυστίνῳ ὅτι τε συντάττει περὶ τῶν ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἀπίστων, καὶ ὅτι τῇ ἀδελφῇ Ἰσιδώρᾳ φιλομαθῶς ἐχούσῃ τὰ δράματα προσφωνεῖ. Λέγει δὲ ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ποιητής ἐστι κωμῳδίας παλαιᾶς, καὶ ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἄπιστα καὶ ψευδῆ πλάττοι, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν ἔχει περὶ τῶν πλείστων αὐτῷ μυθολογηθέντων ἀρχαιοτέρων μαρτυρίας, ἐξ ὧν σὺν καμάτῳ ταῦτα συναθροίσειε· προτάττει δὲ καὶ ἑκάστου βιβλίου τοὺς ἄνδρας οἳ τὰ τοιαῦτα προαπεφήναντο, ὡς μὴ δοκεῖν μαρτυρίας χηρεύειν τὰ ἄπιστα.

I shall discuss in the next chapter, of some relevance to Diogenes' text: this is the *Compounds* of Scribonius Largus, a medical treatise which dates to the mid-first century CE, which makes it contemporary or just earlier than Diogenes (Scribonius was active during the reign of Claudius). Scribonius' work consists entirely of prescriptions of remedies for all manner of physical ailments. Like Diogenes' novel, it is framed with an elaborate peritextual apparatus: it is prefaced by a lengthy dedicatory letter to Caius Iulus Callistus, after which follows a detailed table of contents (Diogenes' novel seems also to have incorporated a similar feature), and at the very end of the work, Scribonius resumes his peritextual address to Callistus to reiterate his assertion about the efficacy and authenticity of his prescriptions.[16] Given that Diogenes freely adopted other elements of the apparatus of scholarly texts (such as the prologue and source-references), we cannot rule out the possibility that the Faustinus-letter was epilogal. If it was, it would have presented a shock to the reader, radically altering his or her understanding of the entire preceding fiction, and transforming it at the very end from a quest for knowledge into a literary *jeu d'esprit*. The closest analogy for such a paradigm-shift is the eleventh book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which operates in precisely the opposite direction, changing the entire preceding narrative from prurient fiction into an ostensibly autobiographical tale of religious conversion.

Attractive as this idea may be, however, there are reasons to doubt this reconstruction. One difficulty is how to square the letter's epilogal position with Photius' apparent suggestion that Diogenes used the letter to '*preface* each book' (*protattei . . . hekastou bibliou*) with the list of sources he used. If Photius is referring to a 'table of contents' here, akin to the *summarium* of Pliny's *Natural history*, then an epilogal letter is an eccentric home for it.[17] Morgan, however, observing that this part of Photius' statement is in direct speech, in contrast with the rest of the passage, argues that this could simply be Photius' own observation about the arrangement in a particular text which he was using rather than a paraphrase of Diogenes' original letter,[18] which removes one of the objections to the letter's epilogal position. But this is not the only problem: how do we explain why, in Photius' summary, his paraphrase of the Faustinus-letter is immediately followed by his paraphrase of the letter to Isidora?[19] If the sequence in

[16] For fuller discussion of Scribonius' possible influence on the Diogenean peritext, see Chapter 5. Aelian's treatise *On the nature of animals* (late second/early third century CE) is also framed by a prologue and epilogue, but these are not epistolary in form.

[17] On the form which this 'table of contents' must have taken in Diogenes' text, see Stephens and Winkler 1995, 102 n. 2 and Chapter 5, pp. 166–7.

[18] Morgan 2009, 135 n. 30.

[19] *Bibl.* 111a41–11b31.

the epitome is a clue to the relative positions of the letters in Diogenes' original text, then Photius' epitome implies that the Isidora-letter came *after* the letter to Faustinus; but Photius, as we have seen, is explicit that the letter to Isidora was located 'at the start of the book'. On balance, the double-epistolary preface matches more easily with Photius' summary – and this is the reconstruction with which I will work – though the evidence remains, in my view, inconclusive and we should retain an open mind on the question, especially in light of the fact that Diogenes was experimenting with the peritext. Wherever the revelatory letter was located, it is clear that Diogenes was playing games with his reader's interpretive desires, either by a strategy of prefatory muddling, or else a twist at the end. Diogenes' double-preface therefore presented the reader *at the outset* not just with two different authenticating strategies for his novel,[20] but with two conflicting protocols for reading it as well, which strongly suggests that Diogenes conceived of reading as an open, pluralistic process.[21]

What sort of model readers, then, does Diogenes envisage for his novel? Isidora is paradigmatic of a reader who is characterized by intellectual curiosity and the desire to learn (*philomathōs ekhousa*), much (presumably) like Phila, to whom Balagrus wrote to relay the wondrous story of the text's discovery, and like the narrator Deinias too, whose extensive travels were motivated by the spirit of intellectual inquiry.[22] The closer proximity of Isidora's letter to Deinias' narrative reflects this affinity between the two. This is the reader who is 'readier to engage with the fictional world as an imaginative reality',[23] and it to this reader that the pseudo-documentary fiction is addressed.

Faustinus represents a different sort of reader: one who is aware of the Isidoran reading strategy for the text (as Diogenes explains to him that he has dedicated the novel with its fiction of book-discovery to Isidora), but favours instead a more detached appreciation of the artistry and erudition with which the fiction has been constructed. The greater physical distance between the Faustinus-letter and Deinias' text reflects this more detached perspective.

The interplay between the two letters dramatizes the dialectic of reading that is always present in fiction: between the desire to read immersively

[20] Stephens and Winkler 1995, 102; also Morgan 2009, 127.

[21] Morgan 2009, 128. Fusillo (1990, 26–8) explores the polyphony of narrators in *The incredible things beyond Thule* in terms of the novel's status as an 'open work'; its multiplicity of authors, which is highlighted in its complex fiction of textual 'transmission' (see Morgan 2009), enriches the work's indeterminacy even further.

[22] κατὰ ζήτησιν ἱστορίας (Photius, *Bibl.* 109a13).

[23] Morgan 2009, 128 n. 5.

and the desire to read with critical detachment. Rather than favour one position to the exclusion of the other, however, the co-presence of both readers in Diogenes' preface suggests that the ultimate pleasure of *The incredible things beyond Thule* lies in the combination of both. Crucially, the real, extra-diegetic reader encounters *both* model readers in Diogenes' text. For the real reader, therefore, the question is not so much whether to ally him- or herself with one of the two model readers but, rather, to try to embody the desires of both.[24]

Diogenes' polarizing of these two reading protocols in terms of gender suggests that he conceptualized the experience of fiction itself as an erotic fusion of apparently opposing readerly desires. This finds expression in the unusual hybrid plot of the novel where, by grafting an erotic story onto a narrative of travel and research, Diogenes fuses the reader's immersive and hermeneutic desires thematically as well. His gendered theorization of the reader also explains the repetition of male–female pairs at every level of the structure of this intensely metafictional novel: for Faustinus, there is Isidora; for Balagrus, there is Phila; for Deinias, Derkyllis, and the fact that the novel is filtered repeatedly through these pairs intimates to the external reader that *any* reading of the novel should combine these opposing drives.

This interplay of reading levels is implicit in the prologues of other novels as well, though nowhere as artfully or as explicitly elaborated as it is here. In Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, it is dramatized in the preliminary interaction between the (Isidoran) anonymous stranger who describes himself as having an 'erotic disposition' (*erōtikōs ekhōn*) and immerses himself in the painting of Zeus and Europa as well as Clitophon's tale, and Clitophon himself, who has finally attained the perspicacity of the Faustinian reader, so that he can extrapolate from the painting to his own experiences and recognize, with some detachment, that his adventures are 'like fiction'.[25] This double-coding of the text is played out too in the interaction between the more experienced, 'novelized' Cleinias and his more naive and emotionally involved Clitophon, as Whitmarsh has shown.[26] A similarly layered readerly response is implied also in the prologue to Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* (which I shall discuss in the next chapter) where the

[24] Romm 1994, 103: 'By mediating between the two poles . . . at times inviting his audience to believe and at other times warning it not to, Diogenes demonstrates that neither is in and of itself an adequate approach to prose fiction.' My argument here refines that in ní Mheallaigh 2008, where I argued that Diogenes' preface ironized both modes of reading, generating a crisis of interpretation. I hold with the view that Diogenes' prologue highlights the pleasure of the epistemological openness and indeterminacy of pseudo-documentary fiction, but I no longer believe that the preface is aporetic.

[25] *L&C* 1.2.2. [26] Whitmarsh 2003 and 2011, 204–11.

narrator initially seeks to understand what the beautiful paintings in the grove represent, then subsequently prays for more Faustinian self-control and detachment (*sōphrosunē*) as he narrates the love-affairs of others.[27] Although the slippery narratological structure of Longus' narrative discourages the reader from empathizing entirely either with his narrator or the super-naive characters, nevertheless these characters' gradual acculturation and growth in understanding tracks the reader's deepening perception of the unforeseen profundities which underlie the novel's apparently trivial 'shepherds' games'.[28] Apuleius, as we have seen, plays a longer game in his *Metamorphoses*, where Lucius' sudden religious conversion in the eleventh book dramatizes not only the novel's own metamorphosis from a concatenation of saucy tales into a providence-driven, coherent plot, but the reader's conversion from Isidoran to Faustinian mode as well.[29]

The text that comes closest to Diogenes in its explicit play with these two readerly strategies, however, is Lucian's *True stories*. In his prologue, Lucian promises that his reader will enjoy not only the novelty and charm of the plot (semantic level), but also the plausible manner in which he frames his lies, as well as his witty allusions to the works of other authors (semiotic level).[30] Like *The incredible things beyond Thule*, therefore, *True stories* appeals up front to scholarly readers and demands to be read at *more* than one level. Subversively, however, Lucian challenges readers *not* to immerse themselves in a fictional world which, he warns, could never be true. And Lucian's text (like Apuleius') has a final surprise in store for its sophisticated reader too, for when the narrative breaks off with a promise of future texts that will never be fulfilled, the reader who feels cheated discovers that (s)he has been converted from the detached, Faustinian *Quellenforscher* at the start into a fully immersed reader in spite of him/herself. In *True stories*, therefore, Lucian reverses the trajectory of *Leucippe and Clitophon*, *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Metamorphoses* to expose the Isidoran tendencies that lurk always just beneath the surface of even the most coolly dispassionate reader.

The quail-trap: Ptolemy Chennus and the perilous quest for *polymathiē*

One author who plays a particularly high-stakes version of this game – one which still divides his readers today – is Ptolemy Chennus ('the Quail'),

[27] Longus *praef.* 4: Ἡμῖν δ' ὁ θεὸς παράσχοι σωφρονοῦσι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων γράφειν. For discussion of Longus' prologue, see Chapter 5, pp. 185–94.
[28] For fuller discussion of the tricky narrative games in both Achilles Tatius and Longus, see the excellent discussion in Whitmarsh 2011, 69–107.
[29] On the hermeneutic transformations which are enacted in Apuleius' plot, see Winkler 1985, 123–32.
[30] *VH* 1.2.

who was probably a contemporary of Antonius Diogenes in the late first century.[31] Ptolemy is an intriguing figure who was associated with Alexandria and was writing right at the heart of the imperial period's complex of literary traditions. He is accredited with two works which do not survive at all: a work known as *Sphinx* which is described in the *Suda* as a *historikon drama*, possibly indicating novelistic fiction, and also *Anthomēros*, 'Anti-Homer', a work whose title and twenty-four-book structure suggests that it was a revisionist version of the Homeric poems, not unlike Diogenes' novel with its twenty-four books and *Odyssean* plot.[32] However, the only work of Ptolemy which we know about substantially is a bizarre collection of pseudo-facts which he claims (again, like Diogenes) to have excerpted from a plethora of authors. He presents these 'facts' in the form of a learned compilation called the *Novel history* (*Kainē historia*, sometimes also referred to as the *Paradoxos historia*).

Ptolemy's *Novel history* does not survive, but is known to us mainly through Photius' epitome.[33] Photius summarizes six books in which there are some signs of thematic clustering of material, though there is also much in Photius' epitome that appears random and unconnected. The work has obvious affinities with miscellanies such as Gellius' *Attic nights* and Aelian's *Miscellaneous history* (more about this presently),[34] but the prominence of the adjectives *kainos* or *paradoxos* in Ptolemy's title is a strong indicator of its affinity with paradoxography and fantastic fiction, bringing it into the orbit of the *Incredible things beyond Thule* and *True stories*, as recent studies have also emphasized.[35] What I wish to explore here, however, is the epistemological adventure on which the *Novel history* takes its reader, which finds clear analogues in the semtiotic fictions which I have explored so far in this chapter, and to explore further the traction which Ptolemy's pseudo-scholarly games would have had within the context of imperial reading culture.

We can reconstruct from Photius that, like *The incredible things beyond Thule*, the *Novel history* was originally furnished with a full scholarly

[31] A reference in the *Novel history* (*Photius* 149b32) to the exhibition of a painting in the Temple of Peace under Vespasian gives us a *terminus post quem* of 75–9 CE. Dowden (2009) argues plausibly for a date in the last decade of the first century, making Ptolemy contemporary with both the Greek Dictys and Antonius Diogenes. Bowersock's prosopographical arguments to connect Ptolemy with Martial (1994, 26–7) and with Antonius Diogenes (1994, 37–8), though speculative in themselves, support the view that all three were active in the same literary culture.

[32] *Suda s.v.* Ptolemaios, π 3037 Adler; Dowden's article on Ptolemy in *BNJ* 56F1b (s.v. Antipater of Acanthus) provides substantial discussion of, and a very helpful introduction to, the author and his context, and to relevant scholarship.

[33] Photius *Bibl.*, cod. 190.

[34] Goldhill (2008, 199) notes the affinity between the paradoxes, which Achilles Tatius loves, and the academic discourse of Plutarch or Aelian, which reaches 'outrageous' extremes in Ptolemy's work.

[35] Hose 2008; Dowden 2009.

peritext (a feature which I will discuss more fully in Chapter 5): a prologue, a dedication (also – like Antonius Diogenes' novel – to a woman),[36] a set of references to the sources from which Ptolemy claimed to have excerpted his bizarre information, and even (possibly) an *explicit*.[37] Ptolemy clearly calculated an incongruous clash between the playful weirdness of the *Novel history*'s contents, which defy the reader's belief, and its peritextual infrastructure, which presents it as a vehicle for serious scholarship. An examination of the detail of the prologue will give a clearer sense of the nature of the work. Photius summarizes as follows:

> Read: the six books of Ptolemy son of Hephaestion's *Novel history of general knowledge*. The book is genuinely useful (*khrēsimon*) for those who have embarked on the laborious pursuit of wide-ranging factual information (*historikē polymathia*) for it can provide knowledge, in a brief space of time, of a collection of facts which it would take a lifetime of labour to gather from books piecemeal. But it contains many poorly contrived and sensational claims (*polla kai teratōdē kai kakoplasta*) – and what's even more absurd is its attempt to account for why some of the stories survived. Of course, the compiler (*sunagōgeus*) of these stories is trivial (*hypokenos*), an enthusiastic charlatan (*pros alazoneian eptoēmenos*) who lacks sophistication in style. But he dedicates his composition (*prosphōnei to syntagma*) to a certain Tertulla whom he addresses as mistress (*despoina*) and he attributes (*epiphēmizei*) both love of literature and great erudition (*to philologon kai polumathes*) to her. And he criticizes some of his predecessors who did not tackle this project successfully. Still, most of his research – at least, whatever is uncorrupted by unreliable and incredible claims (*hosa tou apithanou kai apistou kathareuei*) – provides an extraordinary range of learning which it is not ungratifying to know (*ouk akhari eidenai*).[38]

Although we must reckon with a mixture of paraphrase and Photius' own critical response here, we can glean a relatively clear sense of the shape

[36] Hose (2008, 181) makes the attractive suggestion that the dedication to Tertulla could be connected to the prominence of women, particularly female artists, in the *Novel history* itself.

[37] Photius (153b27–9): 'These are some of the topics of the chapters of the sixth book of Ptolemy son of Hephaestion's *Novel history of general knowledge*.' Ἐν οἷς καὶ τὰ τοῦ ζ′ τῆς Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Ἡφαιστίωνος εἰς πολυμαθίαν καινῆς ἱστορίας τὰ κεφάλαια.

[38] Photius *Bibl. cod.* 190, 146a–b: Ἀνεγνώσθη Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Ἡφαιστίωμος περὶ τῆς εἰς πολυμαθίαν καινῆς ἱστορίας λόγοι ς′. Χρήσιμον ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ βιβλίον τοῖς περὶ τὴν ἱστορικὴν πολυμαθίαν πονεῖν ὡρμημένοις· ἔχει γὰρ δοῦναι συνειλεγμένα βραχεῖ χρόνῳ εἰδέναι, ἃ σποράδην τις τῶν βιβλίων ἀναλέγειν πόνον δεδεγμένος μακρὸν κατατρίψει βίον. Ἔχει δὲ πολλὰ καὶ τερατώδη καὶ κακόπλαστα, καὶ τὸ ἀλογώτερον, ὅτι καὶ ἐνίων μυθαρίων αἰτίας, δι᾽ ἃς ὑπέστησαν, ἀποδιδόναι πειρᾶται. Ὁ μέντοι τούτων συναγωγεὺς ὑπόκενός τέ ἐστι καὶ πρὸς ἀλαζονείαν ἐπτοημένος, καὶ οὐδ᾽ ἀστεῖος τὴν λέξιν. Προσφωνεῖ δὲ τὸ σύνταγμα Τερτύλλᾳ τινί, ἣν καὶ δέσποιναν ἀνυμνεῖ καὶ τὸ φιλολόγον αὐτῇ καὶ πολυμαθὲς ἐπιφημίζει. Διαβάλλει δ᾽ ἐνίους καὶ τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ οὐχ ὑγιῶς ἐπιβαλόντας τῇ ὑποθέσει. Τά γε μὴν πλεῖστα τῶν ἱστορουμένων ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅσα τοῦ ἀπιθάνου καὶ ἀπίστου καθαρεύει, παρηλλαγμένην ὅμως καὶ οὐκ ἄχαρι εἰδέναι τὴν μάθησιν ἐμπαρέχει.

and detail of Ptolemy's original prologue. It evidently shares common ground with the prologues to mythographical or antiquarian and learned *compendia* such as ps.-Apollodorus' *Library*, Aulus Gellius' *Attic nights*, and Aelian's *Miscellaneous history*.[39] Photius' remark about his work's 'usefulness' probably paraphrases a claim which Ptolemy himself made in his original preface – for Photius' own feelings about the usefulness of the *Novel history* are equivocal, to say the least. Aulus Gellius and Pliny the Elder similarly emphasize the usefulness of their enterprise, but the utility they envisage is of a more profound, life-enhancing sort. In the preface to *Attic nights*, for example, Gellius explicitly contrasts his practice of excerption with that of his Greek predecessors, claiming that he privileges *quality* over quantity– for as Heraclitus wisely said, 'broad learning does not teach sense' (*polymathiē noon ou didaskei*).[40] Pliny similarly aspires that his encyclopaedic work should be a helpful resource for his readers more than a source of entertainment.[41] Gellius' compendium is designed, moreover, to equip the reader with the means to pursue the quest for knowledge independently.[42] Ptolemy, in contrast, has no such ambition for his readers. What the *Novel history* offers, in fact, is precisely that which Pliny and Gellius disdain: the superficial appearance of broad knowledge (*polymathia*) and vast quantities of information which is useless, but cleverly entertaining.

There are also intriguing resonances between Photius' comments on Ptolemy's prologue, and Lucian's prologue to *True stories*. Photius' use of the adjective *hypokenos* (ὑπόκενος), meaning 'insubstantial, hollow', to describe Ptolemy as a fabricator of lies resonates with Lucian's claim to have been motivated to lie by his own 'empty vanity' (*kenodoxia*).[43] Photius may even have been punning on Ptolemy's title: for *Kainē historia* we may perhaps also hear *Kenē historia*, 'empty' history, or a history of nonsense'.[44] Lucian also uses a proliferation of terms in his prologue which emphasize the originality and fictionality of his work, such as 'strange' (*xenos*), 'monstrous and fabulous' (*terastia kai muthōdē*) and 'novelties' (*kainotētai*). Photius' emphasis on the 'monstrosity' (*teratōdē*) of Ptolemy's claims, many of which are 'implausible and incredible' (*apithanos*, *apistos*), echoes this language. Moreover, Photius' criticism of Ptolemy's predilection for 'charlatanry' (*alazoneia*) chimes strikingly with the 'buffoonery' (*bōmolokhia*) which Lucian attributes to the arch-liar Odysseus. Both terms imply duplicity on the narrator or author's part and are particularly associated with Old

[39] Cameron 2004, 135; see also Dowden forthcoming a. [40] Aulus Gellius, *Praef.* 11–12.
[41] Pliny, *NH Praef.* 16. [42] Aulus Gellius, *Praef.* 17. [43] *VH* 1.2.
[44] This idea was suggested to me by Chrysostomos Chrysostomou.

Comedy.[45] Is it a coincidence that Antonius Diogenes, in his prologal letter to Faustinus, describes himself also as the author of 'an ancient comedy'? It may be the case that all three authors used the language of Old Comedy to cultivate duplicitous *personae* as ostensibly 'serious' scholars who were purveyors of pure fantasy.[46] Finally, Photius' assertion that the information which Ptolemy offers, albeit worthless, is '*nevertheless . . . not unpleasing to know*' (*homōs . . . ouk akhari eidenai*) strikes a chord with Lucian's prediction that his own readers will take pleasure in his lies, just as they enjoy Iambulus' work which, though recognized by everyone as a lie, was '*not unpleasing, nevertheless*' (*ouk aterpēs homōs*).[47] Even if it is not provable that Ptolemy's original prologue contained these Lucianic notes, these similarities at least suggest that, for Photius as reader of both texts, there were affinities between the two.

The truth-status of Ptolemy's text, then, was muddled by the conflict between its prologal allegiance to the serious genre of miscellany, and its fantastical contents, which ranged from etymological fun (e.g. Odysseus got his name because of his big ears, *ōta megala*, but he was *originally* called Outis, *Noman*)[48] to pedantic corrections and supplements of classical texts (e.g. the unnamed son of Croesus killed by Adrastus in Book 1 of Herodotus' *Histories* was called Agathon, and he was in fact killed in a quarrel – *over a quail*).[49] There are also numerous claims about plagiarism and forgery which hint subversively at the author's own mischievous practices of textual fabrication,[50] for we have no evidence, outside the *Novel history* itself, for many of the texts which Ptolemy cites to authenticate his ludicrous erudition – which led Hercher in 1855 to excoriate him as an out-and-out *Schwindelautor*. Since then, attempts have been made, most notably by

[45] MacDowell (1990, 289) defines the *alazōn* in Old Comedy as follows: 'a man who holds an official position or professes expertise which, he claims, makes him superior to other men; he exploits it, normally in speech, to obtain profit, power, or reputation; but what he says is actually false or useless.'

[46] James Brusuelas's monograph on the influence of Old Comedy on the literature of the imperial period is eagerly anticipated.

[47] *VH* 1.3. [48] Photius 147a10.

[49] Photius 146b35–8. Photius tells us explicitly that Ptolemy, in treating all these topics, *exposed the inaccuracies of his predecessors* (146b24–6). Could the contentious quail (*ortyx*) in this story be a sly reference, therefore, to Ptolemy himself, who is engaged in a tendentious intertextual struggle with Herodotus?

[50] For example, Hector's squire Dares wrote the *Iliad* before Homer (147a26–9); Plesirrhoos of Thessaly, Herodotus' lover, composed the famous *proem* to the *Histories*, not the author himself (148b10–16); Homer had an Egyptian scribe Phanites make a copy of a poem by Phantasia of Memphis, which he then published as the *Iliad* (151a37–151b5).

Chatzis,[51] to redeem Ptolemy's integrity, and roughly a century later, the debate about the authenticity of his sources still continues, most recently with Cameron, Hose and Horsfall arguing, in different ways, that to view the citations as either straightforwardly 'false' or 'genuine' misinterprets the more slippery fictional nature of Ptolemy's work,[52] whilst O'Hara believes his sources are genuine,[53] and Dowden cautions that, with so much of ancient literature lost, we ought to take them at face value, by and large, even if the information derived from them is not meant to be taken seriously at all.[54]

Although, as will become clear, I take the opposite view to Dowden regarding the existence of Ptolemy's texts, he (along with Hose) makes a persuasive and sophisticated case for reading Ptolemy alongside Antonius Diogenes and the author of the Greek version of Dictys' *Journal of the Trojan War* (a text which I shall discuss further in the next chapter), against the backdrop of what he calls the 'new mythology', a period covering the first centuries BCE and CE in which a new vogue for inventive, historicizing mythography flourished, a tradition which in turn nurtured the Homeric revisionist fictions of the imperial period (of which Dictys is an example).[55] In particular, he points to both authors' similar use of source-citations to lend authority to self-evidently fictional material. What matters here, he argues, is the *reality-effect*: 'Diktys and his kind . . . do not . . . believe in a truth to recover, but in a story which strikes a certain realistic poise and advertises the ingenuity of the interpreter. *What matters is realism, not reality*.'[56]

Dowden's warning against the sort of sweeping scepticism which characterized Hercher's approach is well-made. But bringing other texts to the table, such as Diogenes and Dictys, also opens up new cans of worms, for these texts are themselves in the business of inventing source-texts to authenticate their narratives. If Dictys, Dio and Diogenes are indeed analogies for the *Novel history* (and I believe Dowden is absolutely right that they

[51] Chatzis 1914.
[52] Cameron 2004, 134–59; Hose 2008; Horsfall 2008-9, 59. Tomberg 1968 argued that Ptolemy was serious in his intent, but uncritical in his treatment of his sources, with a tendency to embellish.
[53] O'Hara 1996, 198–200.
[54] Dowden 2009 and forthcoming a. Dowden 2009 provides an illuminating discussion of the changing reading-horizons for Ptolemy's work.
[55] Dowden 2009 and also forthcoming a. Dowden's ideas about the 'new mythography' need to be squared with Kim's analysis of the *Novel history* in the context of Homeric fiction of the imperial period (Kim 2010, 18–2, 178–9 and 207). Hose (2008) shares Dowden's views on Ptolemy's context, but he regards Ptolemy's source-citations as fictional.
[56] Dowden 2009, 160–1 (my emphasis).

are), then any comparison of citation practice must also take account of these texts' fictionalization of the sources on which they themselves claim to be based.[57]

Admittedly, there are clear differences, as I have argued elsewhere,[58] between the type of source-references which we find in Ptolemy (as well as in serious miscellanists) – and the type of texts that are cited in such pseudo-documentary ruses: exotic and ancient texts like Dictys' linden-wood tablets, Dio's Egyptian inscriptions and Deinias' tablets of cypress-wood are *transparently* fictional (or at least, they provoke the suspicion that they are) in a way that Ptolemy's 'Antipater of Acanthus' (to take the example which Dowden also uses) does not.[59] But that does not give us grounds to assume that Antipater of Acanthus is real; rather, Ptolemy has raised the stakes in the pseudo-documentary game by confronting the reader with texts that *really could* plausibly exist, along with sources that are more obviously fictional (Phantasia of Memphis, authoress of the *Iliad*, for example) and, just to complete the reader's disorientation, sources such as Homer, Herodotus and Lycophron that *are* known and real as well.[60] In this way, Ptolemy not only conjures an entire imaginary library into existence to prick the conscience of *pepaideumenoi* who are always anxious (like the modern academic) that the gaps in their reading will be exposed; he also challenges the reader with the questions: how *can* you tell if a reference is authentic? What is it that distinguishes the genuine source-citation from the fake?

Although Cameron argues that ancient readers would not have been as concerned as their modern counterparts to check the veracity of source-references, especially since they very often lacked the means to do so,[61] our evidence suggests that, by the imperial period, scholarly literature was becoming rife with fiction and forgery in a way that can be paralleled precisely in the literature of travel and exploration. What is remote (*ta porrhō*)

[57] Cameron (2004, 156–8) also compares Ptolemy to Philo of Byblos, author of the *Phoenician history* with its pseudo-documentary source Sanchuniathon. On Dictys' parody of scholarship, see Horsfall 2008–9.

[58] ní Mheallaigh 2013, 207–10.

[59] For Ptolemy's citation of Antipater, see Photius 147a23–32, with Dowden in *BNJ* 56F1b (s.v. 'Antipater'). For the different ways in which pseudo-documentary texts can collude with the reader about the fictionality of their source-texts, see ní Mheallaigh 2008.

[60] Horsfall (2008–9, 59 n. 99) warns that ancient texts cannot always be easily pigeon-holed into the category of 'fraudulent' or else 'serious': 'the antithesis in in practice often confused and obscure'.

[61] Cameron 2004, 126–7. In addition to the physical difficulties of gaining access to material, there was also the 'exclusionary' nature of reading culture in the imperial period, as emphasized by Johnson 2013.

and therefore difficult to verify is easy to lie about (*eukatapseuston*) as Strabo recognized;[62] and what is true for uncharted geographical locations holds true also for unread books, especially in an era when the universal library was growing in tandem with the expansion of the known, physical world. If writers could invent fictions about lands and peoples that did not exist under the guise of the travel-narrative, then they could also invent fictional sources under the guise of literary connoisseurship. We should not underestimate the appeal which the very fantasy of such untapped repositories of knowledge may, in itself, have held for readers whose access to literary resources was far more restricted than ours: the enigmatic Lobon of Argos (for example), who was probably a near contemporary of Callimachus in the Hellenistic period, appears to have constructed an entirely fictional bibliography in his work *On the poets*. In what may have been a parody of Callimachus' bibliographical method, Lobon fabricated texts and ascribed them to well-known authors of the classical period, substantiating his fictions with invented titles and even, in some cases, precise stichometry.[63] Who would this have appealed to, if not the antiquarian, bibliophile reader? When we consider the fascination of such imaginary libraries, we begin to get a better feel for the attraction, not only of fictions about long-lost texts such as Diogenes' *Incredible things* or Dictys' *Journal of the Trojan War*, but also of more bizarre pseudo-scholarly works which are full of references to otherwise unattested material such as the pseudo-Plutarchan treatise *On rivers* which is often associated with Ptolemy in discussions of *Schwindelliteratur*.

The problems with which Ptolemy, by artfully adopting the guise of the miscellanist, confronts the reader of the *Novel history* are similar to those with which both Lucian and Antonius Diogenes, by adopting the pose of the historiographer and scholar respectively, confront the readers of both *True stories* and *The incredible things beyond Thule*. The difference between them is that Lucian and Diogenes inform their readers that nothing is to be taken at face value, whereas Ptolemy does not seem to have included any such disclaimer in his work, and was therefore playing a more dangerous game, bringing the *Novel history* very close to the terrain of forgery, where the author seeks to deceive his reader completely.[64] At the same time,

[62] Strabo 1.2.19; for discussion, see Romm 1992, 96–8.

[63] On Lobon and his context, see Crusius 1924, updated with further bibliography by Dowden *BNJ* 34T1 (s.v. 'Abaris') who, however, downplays the fictive nature of his work.

[64] Speyer 1971, 94.

Ptolemy's absurdly comical erudition implicitly undercuts any seriousness of intent.

But what I am primarily interested in here is not the question of the authenticity of Ptolemy's sources in itself but, rather, the *dynamics* of Ptolemy's semiotic transformation of the reader: how he, like Lucian, Diogenes, Apuleius and others, lures one type of reader in, and converts him, through the process of engagement with the text, into a reader of another sort. There were parallels for this in the sharp practice of other ancient writers: Galen, for example, tells us about the practice of interpolating nonsense passages into the works of Hippocrates specifically in order to catch readers out and expose their ignorance, a practice which he links with Lucian's forgery of a Heraclitean treatise which he used to dupe a charlatan philosopher.[65] In this case, Heraclitus was a pointed choice for Lucian's forgery, not only because of his oracular writing-style, which made him notoriously difficult to understand, but also because Heraclitus himself (as Gellius reminds us) had cautioned against the perils of polymathy: 'broad learning does not teach sense' – a phrase which could well have been the moral lesson for Lucian's ruse. The literary games at elite symposia, which were probably the context envisaged by Ptolemy for his text,[66] would have provided him with an ideal platform for entrapment and display. Like Lucian, Ptolemy also lay a trap for readers who were lured by his work's promise of the 'get smart quick' approach to *paideia*: anyone who approached the *Novel history* with such cynical aims would quickly find him- or herself to be the victim of its most cunning ploy, for to read this 'miscellany' straight-facedly was to miss the point entirely. The ironic strategies of the text are therefore mobilized against the very reader it seeks to attract.

As Hose also argues, there is a fascinating analogue for Ptolemy's trap in Lucian's *Professor in public speaking*,[67] where the charlatan professor, like Ptolemy, offers pupils a short-cut to *paideia* in lieu of the more traditional and arduous route. Provocatively, he advises the young scholar *not* to study the classics (Demosthenes, Thucydides, etc.). Erudition, rather, is simply a game of bluff; it is therefore less important to have studied these models for pure Atticism, than to develop the ability to invent *ex tempore* obscure sources that will lend one the veneer of authority in the event of committing any embarrassing errors in speech:

[65] Strohmaier 1976; see also Macleod 1979 and Anderson 1989, 197.
[66] On the context, see Tomberg 1968; Horsfall 1987 and Hose 2008.
[67] See also Hose 2008, 189.

> 'If you commit a solecism or barbarism, make brazenness your one remedy and be ready at once with the name of a poet or historian who does not, nor ever did exist . . . '[68]

According to Quintilian, himself a real teacher in rhetoric, this scurrilous practice of source-fabrication was rife already in the first century CE, especially in works of literary scholarship (*grammaticorum commentarii*) and in fiction (*in fabulosis*) where, he says, made-up authorities were used to legitimate the most ludicrous claims. For Quintilian, given that there was so much fabrication going on, excessive zeal over sources was simply a waste of mental energies which could be more fruitfully employed; he actually considered it a mark in a scholar's favour to admit occasionally to *not* knowing something.[69] The practice which Quintilian deplores and Lucian satirizes is also the target of Ptolemy's text: *Novel history* may advertise for the *tiro* scholar, but those who are 'in' on the joke are those readers whose *paideia* is already sufficient to enable them to appreciate the playfulness of Ptolemy's pseudo-scholarship – and to savour the gullibility of those who fall for it.

What we are dealing with here is not fraud but, rather, the playful, pseudo-academic exploitation of scholarly apparatus such as we find again in the much later *Historia Augusta*, with its bogus references of marvellous precision, like the ancient 'linen books' (*lintei libri*) and the ivory volume which can be found on Shelf 6 in the Ulpian Library.[70] The fact that *some* of the sources which Ptolemy cites *are* genuine just raises the stakes higher: it is up to the reader to spot the fake references among the genuine in a game of literary connoisseurship which is predicated upon *real* academic practice in ancient texts like Gellius', Aelian's and Pliny's. To borrow Horsfall's happy phrase, this is 'paraphilological writing'.[71] It's no wonder, then, that Ptolemy still divides modern scholars on the question of the authenticity of the sources he cites; the game of *Echtheitskritik* challenges *our* reading-skills too, and strikes right at the foundations of classical scholarship. There

[68] Lucian, *Rhet. Praec.* 17: ἂν σολοικίσῃς δὲ ἢ βαρβαρίσῃς, ἓν ἔστω φάρμακον ἡ ἀναισχυντία, καὶ πρόχειρον εὐθὺς ὄνομα οὔτε ὄντος τινὸς οὔτε γενομένου ποτέ, ἢ ποιητοῦ ἢ συγγραφέως . . . This analogy is noted also by Hose 2008, 189.

[69] Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 1.8.18–21; also noted by Hose 2008, 188.

[70] *SHA* Tac. 8.1. For a comparison between Ptolemy Chennus and *HA*, see Cameron 2004, 155–6 and cf. Horsfall (2008–9, 59), whose comparison between Dictys and the *HA* is very *ad rem*: 'Both Dictys and *HA*, in their approach to the citing of sources, fall into the same pseudo-learned mode, parodic, comic-deceitful, and both accurate and impressive enough in their reproduction of the scholar's manner to bamboozle at least some readers, some of the time.'

[71] Horsfall 2008–9, 59.

is much at stake, for the modern reader as for the ancient, in disclosing how you read the *Novel history*. Then as now, these semiotic fictions have purchase in the real world.

Readers in search of a plot: *Onos*, *Metamorphoses* and *The name of the rose*

Umberto Eco's novel *The name of the rose* is a well-known example of a postmodern fiction which, like the ancient texts examined in this chapter, toys with the semiotic prowess of both its protagonists and its reader. Eco prompts us to think of the ancient ass-novel as an intertext for his fiction, for in the chapter called 'Terce' of the Second Day, when the Franciscan monk William of Baskerville and his young apprentice Adso visit the scriptorium of an abbey in northern Italy, they discover, among the papers of the murdered Greek translator Venantius, a surprising text:

> Another Greek book was open on the lectern, the work on which Venantius had been exercising his skill as translator in the past days. At that time I knew no Greek, but my master read the title and said this was by a certain Lucian and was the story of a man turned into an ass. I recalled then a similar fable by Apuleius, which, as a rule, novices were strongly advised against reading.[72]

The manner in which the ancient ass-novel is inscribed into Eco's narrative generates an aura of mystery about the text and evokes the *frisson* of illicit readerly pleasures. Even without knowledge of the text, Adso provides an impression of it which stimulates the prurient reader to find out more.[73] On the other hand, readers who already know the ass-novel, either in its Greek version attributed to Lucian (known as *Onos*, or *The ass*) or in Apuleius' longer Latin version (known variously as *Metamorphoses* or *The golden ass*) recognize immediately why this is emphatically *not* a text one might normally expect to find on a monk's desk.[74] Its presence therefore

[72] Eco 1998, 128. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of *The name of the rose* are from this edition of *The name of the rose*, translated by W. Weaver.

[73] The popular handbook *The key to 'The name of the rose'* describes the ass-novel as follows: 'Apuleius' most famous work . . . both a wonderful picaresque novel and a compelling spiritual autobiography. *The Golden Ass* is the story of Lucius of Thessaly, a young dabbler in magic who accidentally turns himself into an ass. After countless adventures, Lucius is finally restored to his human form by the Egyptian goddess Isis, whose priest he becomes. *The Golden Ass* resembles a short extant Greek work called *Lucius, or the Ass* by the Greek rhetorician and satirist Lucian of Samosata' (Haft et al. 1999, 43).

[74] The question of the authorship of *Onos* is fraught. Nesselrath (2014) presents a formidable list of linguistic arguments to demonstrate that the language of *Onos* is uncharacteristic of Lucian, but

provokes questions: first, why was a monk engaged to translate this racy narrative of sex, murder, magic and pagan religion?

William, the reader in the text, promptly addresses this question to the assistant-librarian Berengar, who explains, with evident embarrassment:

> 'The abbey was asked to do it by the lord of Milan, and the abbey will gain from it a preferential right to the wine production of some farms to the east of here.' Berengar pointed with his hand toward the distance. But he promptly added, 'Not that the abbey performs venal tasks for laymen. But the lord who has given us this commission went to great pains to have this precious Greek manuscript lent us by the Doge of Venice, who received it from the Emperor of Byzantium, and when Venantius had finished his work, we would have made two copies, one for the lord of Milan and one for our library.'
>
> 'Which therefore does not disdain to add pagan fables to its collection,' William said.
>
> 'The library is testimony to truth and to error,' a voice then said behind us. It was Jorge.[75]

This exchange highlights an ideological crisis within the abbey, which is embroiled in a 'schizophrenic battle between morality and logoerotic pleasure'.[76] The acquisition of books and knowledge is concomitant with the threat of moral contamination, both from the books' content ('pagan fables'), and from the manner of their acquisition ('venal tasks for laymen'). In its desire to augment its magnificent library, the abbey is prepared to barter its virtue, but it atones for its bibliophile lust by the rigorous – and ultimately murderous – policing of the texts which it so guiltily accumulates: *thanatos* for *erōs*. The library's purpose is therefore thwarted to conceal, rather than to disseminate, knowledge, so that it has become a virtual Hades or tomb for books, defended against readers as a citadel is

this is insufficient for ruling out Lucian's authorship for two reasons: first, because there is a world of difference between the plagiarizing student whom Nesselrath cites to illustrate the usefulness of style as a criterion of authorship, and Lucian who was a stylistic and linguistic chameleon (e.g. *On the Syrian goddess*, *Lexiphanes*, his Herclitean forgery). Secondly, and more seriously, this approach (perhaps even the entire question of authorship itself) is anachronistic for a text that is better understood as part of a 'text-network' (Selden 2010) than a single-authored text in the more traditional sense: 'a cellular organization rather than an incorporated company' (Whitmarsh 2013a, 76). It is clear that the text engages at a sophisticated level with questions about culture and identity which are demonstrable in the rest of Lucian's work (Hall 1995, Whitmarsh 2010b), and I argue here that the work's preoccupation with themes about fiction and the reader is also recognizably Lucianic, and comparable in particular to *Philopseudes*.

[75] Eco 1998, 128–9.

[76] The phrase is from Tim Whitmarsh, 'A Nabokov of the ancient world', *Times Literary Supplement* review of George Economou, *Ananios of Kleitor*, 24 July 2009.

fortified against an external foe. William expresses this idea more than once: 'This place of forbidden knowledge is guarded by many and most cunning devices. Knowledge is used to conceal, rather than to enlighten . . . A perverse mind presides over the holy defense of the library.'[77] And later: 'This library was perhaps born to save the books it houses, but now it lives to bury them.'[78] Adso also perceives that: '[f]or these men devoted to writing, the library was at once the celestial Jerusalem and *an underground world on the border between terra incognita and Hades*.'[79] Beyond metaphor, the library is in fact a quasi-underworld, accessed by *katabasis* through a subterranean *ossarium* which is strewn by the bones of long-buried monks dropped from the graveyard above. Believed to be haunted by evil spirits and the ghosts of dead librarians, the library is a dark, labyrinthine world, ruled by Jorge, keeper of books and biblioclast, who is identified with the Devil.[80]

The presence on the murdered monk's desk of this pagan pot-boiler about curiosity indulged and punished is therefore a tangible sign of this fault-line of pressures within the abbey. Lucius' metamorphosis in the ancient ass-novel as a result of his avowed meddlesomeness therefore becomes an analogue for the individual monks' fall into sin as a consequence of their intellectual curiosity in *The name of the rose*. The asinine protagonist's adventures mirror the more sinister story of murder for possession of a book, just as Adelmo's comical animal-images in *The name of the rose* distort and provoke deeper contemplation of the meaning of the texts they adorn.[81] This abandoned text-in-Eco's-text begins to acquire a more complex significance in dialogue with its embedding narrative, leading us to the second of our two questions: why, of all the texts in all the world, did Eco choose to leave the *Onos* open on the desk of the first victim of bibliomaniac murder?

The *Onos* presents the reader with an intertextual riddle within a novel whose detective-protagonist insists upon the need to interrogate books, not just accept what they say at face value; William's assertion that '[b]ooks are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry' is close, in fact, to the author Eco's assertion that a novel is 'a machine for generating

[77] Eco 1998, 176. [78] Eco 1998, 396. [79] Eco 1998, 184 (my emphasis).

[80] Eco 1998, 477 and 491. For the library as a 'deadend in the process of signification', see Stephens 1983, 57–9.

[81] William also defends the didactic value of Adelmo's comical, metamorphic illuminations in the debate in the scriptorium (pp. 76–82). Jorge's assertion that 'Laughter shakes the body, distorts the features of the face, makes man similar to the monkey' (p. 131) highlights the bestializing effect which comical texts have upon the reader.

interpretations'.[82] The presence of the ancient text assumes particular critical importance in a novel where intertextuality is itself a theme which is dramatized in the sinister *lungo e secolare susurro* that Adso fancies he hears among the books on his first visit to the library,[83] as well as being the motor for William's unravelling of Jorge's dire plot. As I will show here, all three novels (*The name of the rose*, *Onos* and *Metamorphoses*) are interconnected because all three are thematically concerned with the thrills and dangers of readerly desire, especially (in Apuleius and Eco) the desire to discover a plot, a teleological meaning for things. Each plot is therefore also a story about the semiotics of reading itself. To my knowledge, the significance of this intertextuality has gone entirely unnoticed in criticism on Eco's work. And whilst the claim about the metafictional sophistication of Apuleius' novel is not news – for the semiotic ludicities of this text have been explored extensively in scholarship, particularly by Winkler[84] – it *does* call for a new and more sophisticated reading for the Greek *Onos* which has, until recently, been critically underrated in contrast with Apuleius' work.[85] My intertextual analysis of these three novels (just one of the multitude of such intertextual conversations which *The name of the rose* stimulates its reader to ponder) will show how the ass-novel intensifies and complicates themes that are central to *The name of the rose*, and explore some of the new insights on the ancient ass-novel which are suggested by its reception in Eco's text.

Sex and the text: reading as erotic encounter

Eco's narrative is populated by acquisitive readers whose intellectual curiosity is the agent, directly or obliquely, of their deaths: Adelmo, Venantius, Berengar, Severinus, Malachi, and even Jorge, who knowingly consumes the poisoned book, rather than share it with the world. The emphatic entwining of sex and text, through incident and metaphor, reflects the narrow margin between intellectual and carnal desires. The librarians-and-lovers Malachi and Berengar exploit their privileged access to the library

[82] Eco (1998, 316) and Eco (1994a, 2) respectively.

[83] Eco 1980, 289. On intertextuality in *The name of the rose*, see Stephens 1983 and Capozzi 1989.

[84] Winkler's kaleidoscopic study explores the *Metamorphoses* as a detective novel of radical indeterminacy whose dénouement, instead of supplying 'the answers', involves the reader in perplexing questions about the narrative's meaning and seriousness – answers which the text refuses to answer. For Winkler, the reader's *aporia* constitutes the 'point' of the novel, which he describes as 'a philosophical comedy about religious knowledge' (Winkler 1985, 124).

[85] In a radical challenge to the view of the *Onos* as 'paraliterary fluff', Whitmarsh (2010b) examines the text's central engagement with questions of the stability of cultural, literary and personal identity, and makes a case for Lucianic authorship.

in return for sexual favours. Desire for Aristotle's book induces Adelmo to concede to Berengar's illicit sexual advances, and Jorge uses the taboo text to conjure a fatal sexual intrigue between Malachi, Berengar and Severinus. The bookish curiosity of the young monk Benno is highly eroticized; his narrative of Berengar and Adelmo's 'vile barter' reveals a bibliophilia which is a sublimation of conflicting feelings of fascination and revulsion towards sex, and characterizes him as a prurient reader.[86] His compulsion to follow Berengar and Adelmo on the night of the latter's death, 'driven by curiosity', conflates intellectual curiosity with sexual voyeurism – as is also possibly the case with Venantius, translator of the *Onos*, the first reader of Aristotle's forbidden book, and the other spy that night.[87] At one point, Benno asks William outright if there were not moments 'when you would also do shameful things to get your hands on a book you have been seeking for years?'[88] Even the final showdown between Jorge and William in the *finis Africae* becomes, through Adso's eyes, the *dénouement* of a terrifying intellectual seduction, contrasting in his mind with the more honest sexual techniques of those carnal lovers, Berengar and the nameless peasant girl.[89]

Both William and Adso expound the idea that the lust for knowledge is, for monks, a displacement of illicit sexual desires.[90] Recurrent metaphors construct the act of reading itself as a sexual encounter which involves physical penetration of the material text:

> Learning is not like a coin, which remains physically whole even through the most infamous transactions; it is, rather, like a very handsome dress, which is worn out through use and ostentation. Is not a book like that, in fact? Its pages crumble, its ink and gold turn dull, if too many hands touch it. I saw Pacificus of Tivoli, leafing through an ancient volume whose pages had become stuck together because of the humidity. He moistened his thumb and forefinger with his tongue to leaf through his book, and at every touch of his saliva those pages lost vigor; opening them meant folding them, exposing them to the harsh action of air and dust, which would erode the subtle wrinkles of the parchment, and would produce mildew where the saliva had softened but also weakened the corner of the page. As an excess of sweetness makes the warrior flaccid and inept, this excess of possessive

86 Eco 1998, 137–9. 87 Eco 1998, 138–9. 88 Eco 1998, 138. 89 Eco 1998, 472–3.

90 Adso acknowledges that 'what the temptation of adultery is for laymen and the yearning for riches is for secular ecclesiastics, the seduction of knowledge is for monks' (p. 183). William defines Benno's desire in sexual terms: 'Benno's is merely insatiable curiosity, intellectual pride, another way for a monk to transform and allay the desires of his loins . . . There is lust not only of the flesh . . . Benno's lust is for books. Like all lusts, including that of Onan, who spilled his seed on the ground, it is sterile' (pp. 395–6). The theory that epistemophilic desire is a sublimation of sexual curiosity is Freudian; for discussion of this nexus of desire and narrative, see Brooks 1993, 1–27 and 88–122.

and curious love would make the book vulnerable to the disease destined to kill it.[91]

The strongly feminizing metaphors here – the dress, the enervated warrior – reveal that the act of reading is fraught with guilt and anxiety for the bibliophile monk, as the desire is, paradoxically, deleterious to the object of desire. The monks' curiosity is described as an impulse to 'violate' the secrets of the library,[92] to feed their intellect on the wonders concealed in its 'vast womb',[93] constructing their epistemophiliac drive as an Oedipal desire to penetrate the mother. From the psychoanalytical perspective, the patriarchal Jorge's blindness, and Adso's transference of the image of the flaccid warrior to the text (in the passage quoted above), represent the fear of castration through congress with the text.[94] Only William, by avoiding direct physical contact with this book, survives the deadly textual encounter.

The Oedipal anxieties about reading in *The name of the rose* mean that reading is repeatedly constructed as a sexual liaison and a displacement of the monks' fleshy desires (reading as sex). Corresponding to this, in the ass-novel, the protagonist's intellectual curiosity is strongly eroticized, and Lucius' actual sexual encounters, which frame his metamorphosis in the narrative, function also as metaphors for the reader's encounter with the text (sex as reading). Just as in *The name of the rose*, Lucius' desire to know (specifically to *see*) is closely associated with sexual desire: his desire to witness feats of magic is expressed in erotic terms in both *Onos*: *erōs* ('passion') and *epithumia* ('desire') and *Metamorphoses*: *cruciabile desiderium* ('torturous yearning') and *cupido* ('desire').[95] This desire leads to sex with a slave-girl as a prelude to spying on his host's wife performing magic.

To conceal his desire to stay in Hypata to witness magic, Lucius lies to his host about his travel-plans:

'I will be off,' I said, 'to Larissa, but I think I will stay here for three or four days.' But this was a pretext; I sorely wanted to stay there and discover one of the women who know magic and get to see something extraordinary: a man flying or being turned to stone. And surrendering myself to the desire for this sight, I wandered around the city, helplessly lacking the starting-point for the quest, but I wandered around nevertheless.[96]

[91] Eco 1998, 284 (Adso). [92] Eco 1998, 184. [93] Eco 1998, 137.

[94] Freud theorizes the equation between castration and blindness in two essays: 'The Uncanny' (1919) and 'Medusa's head' (1922).

[95] *Onos* 4; *Met.* 2.2. The verbal echo with *cruciatus uoluptatis eximiae* ('the torment of intense pleasure', *Met.* 2.10) connects Lucius' desire to see magic with his sexual desire for Photis.

[96] *Onos* 3–4: Ἄπειμι μέν, ἔφην, εἰς Λάρισσαν, ἔοικα δὲ ἐνθάδε διατρίψειν τριῶν ἢ πέντε ἡμερῶν. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν ἦν σκῆψις. ἐπεθύμουν δὲ σφόδρα μείνας ἐνταῦθα ἐξευρεῖν τινα τῶν μαγεύειν

Lucius' deferred purpose and desire to stay in Hypata mirrors the reader's prurient desire to linger with a text which promises saucy fiction. Apuleius exploits this prurience in the prologue to his Latin ass-novel with its promise to charm the reader's ear with a whispered concatenation of wonder-stories about the transformation of men's forms and fortunes in the spicy Milesian mode, designed to amaze and astonish.[97] Here Lucius tantalizes the reader of the Greek *Onos* with the promise of a marvellous tale (*paradoxon*) in a similar way, but his obfuscation of his real purposes in this passage suggests that the pleasures of the *paradoxon* are mixed. His avowedly guilty duplicity resonates with the reactions of other, contemporary readers of *paradoxa* which I discussed in the previous chapter, such as Aulus Gellius' self-reproach after he spent two nights devoted to worthless paradoxographical texts, or Tychiades of Lucian's *Philopseudes* who both relishes and despises the philosophers' tales of magic and the supernatural, and marks *Onos* out as the sort of reading-material which an educated young man of letters would not openly declare – rather like Eco's young monks in *The Name of the Rose*, even if not entirely for the same reasons.[98] The narrative plays on the reader's prurience with the strategy of delay and deferral. First, Lucius' aimless wandering about the city in search of a *paradoxon* but at a loss about how to start his quest (*aporōn . . . tēs arkhēs tou zētēmatos*) reflects the reader's perplexity about how the narrative will begin. Then a little later, when the servant girl Palaistra offers him the opportunity to see her mistress perform magic after a delay of several days (*Onos* 11), Lucius thanks her for relieving him of this 'long-time desire'. In this way, the narrative acknowledges the patience of the reader, whose desire for the story of metamorphosis has also been prolonged over some ten chapters of preamble.

The story of Lucius' metamorphosis is framed by encounters with alluring and sexually voracious women who issue repeated warnings about the perils of sex. Far from putting him off, these lead him inexorably deeper into danger, a trajectory which is mirrored by his physical movement from public to increasingly private and illicit spaces: from the street to the house, to violating his host's bedroom. First, there is his street-encounter with Abroia, whose name is suggestive of luxury and decadence and who warns him about his hostess, a powerful sorceress and sexual predator who punishes reluctant lovers with bestial metamorphosis (*Onos* 4). His curiosity

ἐπισταμένων γυναικῶν καὶ θεάσασθαί τι παράδοξον, ἢ πετόμενον ἄνθρωπον ἢ λιθούμενον. καὶ τῷ ἔρωτι τῆς θέας ταύτης δοὺς ἐμαυτὸν περιῄειν τὴν πόλιν, ἀπορῶν μὲν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ ζητήματος, ὅμως δὲ περιῄειν·

[97] *Met.* 1.1.

[98] For discussion of Lucian's Tychiades (in *Philopseudes*) and Aulus Gellius as readers of *paradoxa*, see pp. 86–9.

inflamed, Lucius hurries back to the house to seduce Palaistra, who warns Lucius about the dangers of sex in a *tour de force* of salacious metaphor which teases even as it threatens: she promises she will burn and wound him and that he will suffer a pain that is, paradoxically, pleasurable and incurable, yet she will make him yearn for more. A self-confessed man-eater (literally a 'man-cook' or 'man-butcher'), she will slaughter, flay, roast, and eviscerate him.[99] The combination of Palaistra's violent language, Lucius' avowed enslavement, and the powers of bewitchment (*psychagōgia*) which he attributes to her[100] suggest the dangerously seductive and consumptive power of the desire for sexual pleasures, the subtext of which is the reader's desire for the pleasures of fiction. In a similar way, the reader's desire will enslave, bewitch and trap him or her in the text and like Lucius, the reader too will be transformed by the experience of the fiction.[101] In the quasi-sexual act of voyeurism (at night, through the chink in the bedroom-door) where Lucius finally witnesses the magical transformation he has so longed to see, he is himself transformed.[102] Instead of satisfaction, however, he finds his curiosity exacerbated more than ever (just as Palaistra had predicted), and now wants to experience metamorphosis for himself, as an experiment (*peira*, *Onos* 13) to see if, in another form, he will retain his human intellect.[103]

Read against Lucian's use of such magical transformations as shorthand for fiction elsewhere in his work (most notably in *Philopseudes*),[104] Lucius' metamorphosis in *Onos* can be interpreted as a *paradoxon* which tropes the experience of fiction within the narrative, dramatizing especially fiction's transformative powers and the two-mindedness which it requires of its reader. Lucius' dual identity as a human intellect contained within an ass's body encapsulates the strange schizophrenia of the fiction-reader who

99 *Onos* 5. 100 *Onos* 11.

101 Ancient critics regarded *desire* as an especially powerful factor for sustaining fictive illusion: see Feeney 1993, 235–6.

102 *Onos* 12. Laird (1993, 167–73) reads the corresponding episode in *Met.* 3.21–22 (Lucius' spying on Pamphile's transformation), especially Lucius' intoxication and confusion about the reality of what he was seen, as a conceptualization of fiction.

103 Whitmarsh (2010b, 76), with further references, reads it as 'an empirical experiment in the nature of identity'. There is nothing to compare to this element of literary-philosophical experiment in Apuleius' ass-novel. As Hunter (2012, 236–7) shows, it is related to a well-known Homeric problem about Circe's transformation of Odyssesus' men into the form of pigs (*Od.* 10.240). Hunter (2012, 235–9) explores *Onos* as a parody of the Platonic philosopher's progress.

104 *Philops.* 2 (animal-metamorphoses of Zeus, Leda and Callisto); *VH* 1.3 (metamorphosis of Odysseus' men into swine); in *Amber or Swans* Lucian ridicules his own gullible belief in stories about the transformation of Cycnus into a swan, and his mourning sisters into poplar trees. The idea of animal-metamorphosis lurks behind the common insult which Lucian uses to ridicule liars and charlatans, such as Eucrates who is 'a monkey in lion's skin' (*Philops.* 5).

must ascribe credence to a story which (s)he knows is not (literally) true, simultaneously believing and not-believing.[105] In this sense too, the ass-man, who is animal in body but human in critical faculties, represents the reader of fiction who, as we have seen, must carefully balance emotional immersion in the story with dispassionate knowledge of the genre's norms. Like Lucius too, readers of fiction desire vicarious, imaginative experience of other forms and other lives, whilst retaining the security of their own identity. This interplay of the desire for normative and deviant imaginative experience is central to the romance novels, as Tim Whitmarsh argues:

> Readerly desire is . . . not simply a function of base appetite, but also an acknowledgement of the magical power of narrative to confront the reader with another world . . . Identification with alternative desires is part of the experience of romance; and even if such identifications are ultimately repressed, they are not entirely neutralised.[106]

Inquisitive readers like Lucius indulge the hetero-normative readerly desires which are present but repressed in the Greek romance novels. The ass-novel, through the magical realism of its central metamorphic 'experiment', explores, self-reflexively, the dangerous allure of fiction, whilst posing some serious questions about whether it is possible to enjoy the vicarious experiences offered through fiction and to return from them unscathed.

Lucius' vigorous sex with Palaistra is the initiatory prelude to the scene of metamorphosis,[107] which also marks the reader's transition into the fiction of the ass-novel plot. The scene is mirrored by another episode at the end of the Greek narrative after Lucius has regained his human form – when he tries and fails to have sex with the woman who lusted after him when he possessed the sexual apparatus of the ass, but now rejects him in contempt.[108] Women, in fact, dominate the story-world of the ass-novel: from Abroea and Palaistra who police the access to the metamorphic plot, to Hipparchus' wife, the sorceress who literally holds the ass-novel's plot in the jar of magical unguent in her bedroom, to this nymphomaniac woman near the end of the plot who finally ejects Lucius from the story-world.[109] Lucius' sexual encounter with Palaistra dramatizes, within the fiction, the educated male reader's encounter with the ass-novel, a narrative which

105 Newsom 1988, 134–5. 106 Whitmarsh 2011, 176.

107 On the initiatory nature of Lucius' encounter with Photis in Apuleius' *Met.*, see Wlosok 1999, 151–3.

108 *Onos* 56.

109 Notwithstanding Hall (1995, esp. 56–7), who finds *Onos* 'totally monocular when it comes to issues of gender', there is room, I think, for a gynocritical interpretation of *Onos*. Dollins (2013) examines the role of women as receptacles of hidden narratives in *Onos* and the Greek novels more generally.

belonged to a fluid text-network of popular literature in antiquity and was probably subliterary for a long time before emerging into the literary record in both Latin and Greek. Recent papyrus discoveries show us that it may even have circulated in the form of a mime as well as in the more familiar novelistic format. The slave-woman Palaistra who is illiterate (early in the novel, she reveals to Lucius that she has 'never learned letters')[110] yet a mistress of language and metaphor, perfectly embodies the salacious, subliterary and protean nature of the ass-tradition itself with which Lucius – and the inquisitive reader – become so rashly embroiled.

L'âne en abyme: labyrinths, libraries and the witch's chest

If Lucius' encounter with Palaistra is a metaphor for the reader's encounter with the saucy tradition of the ass-fiction, then the secret room to which she leads the hero, where he will experience metamorphosis, becomes a metaphor for the novel itself. The spatial configuration of Lucius' journey into the story tells us not only about the reader's own imaginative journey into the fiction but also about the reader's physical and sensory encounter with the material text itself, and the author's conception of how this engagement with the physical text is entwined with the experience of fiction. The way that Lucius' inward trajectory into ever more private space (from street to house to the bedroom door) mirrors the reader's progress, physical as well as imaginative, deeper into the text and story is clear enough; but some of the finer details of Lucius' journey repay closer analysis.

Entry into the story-world of the ass-novel is by restricted access. As Lucius enters the house, he encounters Palaistra, the 'testing ground', who compels him to submit to vigorous testing of his sexual stamina and wit in a series of 'nocturnal contests' which make him forget his plans to move on:

> We crowned ourselves victors in our nocturnal contests, competing in such pleasures and wrestling foreplay, and there was much revelry in the times between, so that I entirely forgot about my journey to Larissa.[111]

There is a sense here in which Lucius (and the reader) are being tested in the erotic wrestling-ground (*palaistra*) of the text before being granted full

[110] *Onos* 11. Hall (1995, 51) reads Palaistra's illiteracy as a symptom of the narrative's attitude towards class and gender.

[111] *Onos* 11: Ἐν τοιαύταις ἡδοναῖς καὶ παιδιαῖς παλαισμάτων ἀγωνιζόμενοι νυκτερινοὺς ἀγῶνας ἐστεφανούμεθα, καὶ ἦν πολλὴ μὲν ἐν τούτῳ τρυφή· ὥστε τῆς εἰς τὴν Λάρισσαν ὁδοῦ παντάπασιν ἐπιλελήσμην.

access to the arcane and transformative experiences which the fiction has to offer. Lucius' diminishing concern with his plans to leave the city and move on to Larissa is a sign of the reader's increasing immersion in the world of the story at this point too, and the imperceptible letting-go of more pressing, external concerns as one slips under the fiction's spell. Finally, there is the epoptic revelation of magical transformation, which Lucius views illicitly, through a chink in the bedroom door.[112] The bedroom-door with its 'slender chink' marks both the final restriction of access to the secrets inside, but also the means to access those secrets: the door is a reminder of the book itself, the material text which, in the form of codex or scroll, both conceals and also opens or unfolds door-like to reveal a treasury of narrative riches within. The bedroom therefore dramatizes the reader's experience of fiction as a private, intimate encounter with the text, in a pattern that is enacted in other narratives such as Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Phlegon's narrative of Philinnion and Machates, and the pseudo-Lucianic *Amores*, as we have already seen.[113]

What Lucian sees is Hipparchus' wife performing her ritual of transformation, which consists of burning some seeds of incense in the lamp-flame, then selecting a jar of magical unguent:

> Then she opened (*anoixasa*) a large chest (*kibōtion*) which contained many jars (*pyxides*), one of which she selected and took out.[114]

The unguent which she applies transforms her into a bird, whereupon she flies away through the bedroom window (*dia tēs thuridos*) to have her own adventures. As Edith Hall brilliantly argues, *Onos* therefore actually contains within itself another novel, *Bird*, 'the most subversive ancient novel *never* written', the story of the metamorphosis of Hipparchus' wife,[115] which takes place 'off the page' and beyond the text, in the space beyond the bedroom window which we as readers cannot access, but which we are invited, nevertheless, to imagine. When Palaistra steals the jar of unguent for Lucius, however, it turns out to contain a different potion (since she is unable to read, she cannot distinguish one jar from another)

[112] *Onos* 12: 'And when it was evening, she took me and brought me to the door of the room where they slept, and she told me to draw close to a slender chink in the door and to look at the things that were happening inside.' κἀπειδὴ ἑσπέρα ἦν, ἄγει με λαβοῦσα πρὸς τὴν θύραν τοῦ δωματίου, ἔνθα ἐκεῖνοι ἐκάθευδον, καὶ κελεύει με προσάγειν ὀπῇ τινι τῆς θύρας λεπτῇ καὶ σκοπεῖν τὰ γινόμενα ἔνδον.

[113] See Dollins 2013, 91–105 and Hunter 2009. I discuss reading as a secluded activity at pp. 97–102.

[114] *Onos* 12: εἶτα κιβώτιον ἁδρὸν ἀνοίξασα, πάνυ πολλὰς ἔχον πυξίδας ἐν αὐτῷ, ἔνθεν ἀναιρεῖται καὶ προφέρει μίαν·

[115] Hall 1995, 57.

which transforms Lucius into an ass, and so the adventures of the ass-man begin.

Hipparchus' wife's chest of potions is a fascinating artefact. Each little pot or *pyxis* evidently contains an unguent which can transform one into a variety of different animals, and so each jar contains within itself a different plot or story-line. To distinguish one from the other requires the ability *to read*, which Palaistra the slave-girl lacks. Elizabeth Dollins argues for a connection between the chest or *kibōtion* which contains the sorceress' unguent-jars and the *kibōtion* (Latin *arcula*) in the tomb which contains Deinias' text in Antonius Diogenes' pseudo-documentary novel *The incredible things beyond Thule* and the *Journal of the Trojan War* soldier Dictys of Crete.[116] If we view *Onos* as an epitome of the lost *Metamorphoses* of 'Lucius of Patra', as Photius claims it was,[117] then the witch's chest can be read as a metaphor for that lost *Urtext* which was a veritable box of literary delights containing multiple metamorphic plots; by opening the chest, the author of the epitome offers us a tantalizing glimpse of the different plots (including *Bird*) which he could have told, but didn't. But if we abandon Photius' epitome theory and adopt the more sophisticated view that *Onos* was a fluid part of a text-network instead, the witch's chest becomes vividly suggestive of the plot's intertextual connection with other metamorphic variations of itself. In contrast with the pseudo-documentary texts imagined by Antonius Diogenes and the author of Dictys' *Journal of the Trojan War*, which are found sealed in splendid isolation within their sepulchral chests, the jar which contains the *Ass* plot jostles together with myriad other jars in the witch's chest in a live, competitive tradition of fiction which is in constant use.

The witch's chest, therefore, embodies within the novel the messy, metamorphic narrative tradition of which the *Ass* itself was a part. *Onos*, in other words, invites us to read it intertextually, in dialogue with other texts. There is an analogue for this in the labyrinthine library which is a symbol of intertextuality in *The name of the rose*. Access to Eco's library is jealously guarded through the machinations of the patriarchal and supremely literate Jorge, who attempts to halt forever the processes of interpretation ('There is no

[116] Dollins 2013, 252–4. For discussion of the text-in-the-tomb motif in pseudo-documentary fictions, see pp. 154–9.

[117] Photius *cod.* 129, 96b, 17–26. 'Lucius of Patra' was probably the ego-narrator (not the author) of the lost *Metamorphoses* to which Photius refers; it is possible that either the original or the epitome was by Lucian himself. If the lost *Metamorphoses* was by Lucian, it is easy to see why the epitome *Onos*, even if written by another author, became attributed to Lucian as well. However, it would not be uncharacteristic of Lucian himself to be drawn to apparently non-classical work such as the *Metamorphoses*.

progress, no revolution of ages, in the history of knowledge, but at most a continuous and sublime recapitulation').[118] Jorge's counterpart in the ass-novel is the sexy and illiterate slave-girl Palaistra/Photis, who represents, in contrast, the exuberant pleasures of access to the limitless transformations of intertextuality. . . .

William, Lucius and the metamorphoses of the reader

As reader-in-the-text, William in *The name of the rose* pursues a trajectory from confidence in an unfolding plot, to loss of faith in the connectedness of things; from semiotic confidence: 'the most joyful delight in unraveling a nice, complicated knot . . . because, at a time when as philosopher I doubt the world has an order, I am consoled to discover, if not an order, at least a series of connections in small areas of the world's affairs' – to *aporia*: 'There was no plot . . . and I discovered it by mistake . . . I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe.'[119] As William knows, his discovery is concomitant with a theological crisis which Adso, no longer quite so naive, dares to verbalize for the first time: 'Isn't affirming God's absolute omnipotence and His absolute freedom with regard to His own choices tantamount to demonstrating that God does not exist?'[120] William's answer is evasive: 'How could a learned man go on communicating his learning if he answered yes to your question?' But it prompts his young apprentice to see the dangerous implications, both philosophical and vocational, of this radical thought, before the collapse of the burning roof occludes their brief penetration into postmodern thought, and Adso concludes his narrative of the 'wondrous and terrible events' of the year 1327.

William's ultimate pessimism is not, however, a nihilistic resignation to the impossibility of determining *any* meaning or order in things. As Cannon argues:

> Despite William's pronouncements regarding the lack of order in the universe, finally he (and Eco) do not renounce ordering systems . . . Although Eco shares the poststructuralists' scorn for absolutes, he avoids the extreme philosophic skepticism that would deconstruct any discourse that purports to make sense. But it is echoed in Adso's loss of faith, many years later, in the meaning and destiny of the narrative of events which he has produced: 'I leave this manuscript, I do not know for whom; I no longer know what it is about.'[121]

[118] Eco 1998, 399.
[119] Eco 1998, 394 and 491–2 respectively, with Cannon 1989, 90 and 94.
[120] Eco 1998, 493.
[121] Eco 1998, 502.

What William and Adso both discover, belatedly, is not the absence of a plot – for there certainly *is* a plot – it is just no longer clear who created it: some author (Eco? Jorge? Divine providence?) or some reader (William, Adso, Jorge?). What William discovers instead is a false reasoning which got them to the answer but accidentally, by erroneous paths, and this discovery hints at the extra-diegetic reader's compliance (or even guilt) as well in co-authoring, with William, the very plot which (s)he thought (s)he was detecting.[122] This reversed order of things is thematized in the topsy-turvy images of fragmentation, chaos and obfuscation throughout Eco's novel: the labyrinthine library, invisible writing and cryptograms, distorting mirrors,[123] metamorphic illustrations; the Greek *liber acephalus* which is obscured among heteroglot texts in the forbidden book; Salvatore's Babelic language and monstrous hybridity;[124] Jorge's blindness;[125] Adso's reconstructed library of 'amputated stumps of books'; multiple authorial disavowals by Adso (in the epilogue) and Eco (in the preface) and the multiple layers of translation and fragmentary copies that obscure Adso's putative *Urtext*.[126] Even the novel's title, which employs the semiotically overloaded symbol of the rose, is calculated to perplex, rather than to enlighten, the reader; to prompt questions about meaning, rather than to provide answers.[127]

Lucius, the *lector in fabula* in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, progresses in the opposite direction to William: from fragmented, rudderless experience at the mercy of blind fortune, to belated recognition of Isis' divine providence.[128] This trajectory is mirrored in the progress from the imagery of darkness, mutilation and dismemberment in the first ten books of the novel, to the imagery of light and wholeness that characterizes the revelatory Book 11,[129] which is mirrored also in the progress from the confusion and enigma of the prologue (in particular, the indeterminate identity of

[122] In his reflections on the ending of the novel, Eco (1994a, 80–1) mentions the idea of a book 'in which the murderer is the reader. Moral: there exist obsessive ideas, they are never personal; books talk among themselves, and any true detection should prove that we are the guilty party.'

[123] On the Borgesian pedigree of these metaphors, see Stephens (1983, 54–5) and de Laihacar (2005).

[124] Salvatore is 'an organic representation of confusion and discord' (Stephens 1983, 56).

[125] On the theme of blindness, see Yeager 1985, 47.

[126] Stephens (1983, 63–4) interprets Adso's epilogal disavowal as a failure to locate himself as author in a project of infinite semiosis, and Eco's prefatorial fiction as an attempt to avoid asserting authorial control over the novel. Eco himself (1994a, 19–20 and 32–3) describes his encasement of narrative points of view as an act of concealment, a 'mask'.

[127] See Eco (1994a, 1–3, esp. 3) for discussion of the choice of title: 'A title must muddle the reader's ideas, not regiment them.' The title of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* also puzzles the reader; see Winkler 1985, 298–320, with a summary of various interpretations in Harrison 2000, 210 n. 1.

[128] Apuleius, *Met.* 11. 1–6 and 11. 15.

[129] König 2008, 135–6 and 142–4.

the prologal voice, and obfuscation of cultural and geographical origins),[130] to Isis' epiphany,[131] Lucius' journey to Rome,[132] and even the tantalizing glimpse of the author at 11.27.[133] Like Lucius, Apuleius' reader must re-evaluate his or her interpretation of the meaning, gravity and purpose of Books 1–10 in light of the revelations of Book 11: as Lucius proceeds towards enlightenment, however, the reader descends into *aporia* as a result of the recognition of connections in the episodes of the story where (s)he had previously believed there were none.

Both *The name of the rose* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* implicate within themselves a story of the reader's experience of the novel. Both are duplicitous narratives which draw their readers in on false pretences, and convert them, through the transformative experience of their plot, to readers of a radically different sort of narrative. The reader who approaches Eco's medieval murder-mystery seeking the consolation of the closed text (the classic detective novel) will discover it is in fact a novel which entirely deconstructs the sort of narrative (s)he was expecting.[134] Apuleius' prologue, similarly, lures its reader in with the promise of scurrilous *fabulae*, and belatedly springs upon him (or her) a profound teleology for Lucius' asinine adventures, as the novel undergoes (or appears to undergo) metamorphosis into a narrative of religious conversion.[135]

However, as is well-known, the *Metamorphoses* also ends on notes of indeterminacy.[136] Apuleius' text hints that Lucius, the naive reader who has repeatedly failed to recognize so many *fabulae de se*, may once again have fallen prey to confidence tricksters, and that the final book is not the end of his story. As Winkler notes, there is no evidence that the narrating 'I' in the present is still a devotee of Isis, which makes us wonder if Lucius sustained his newfound religious fervour; furthermore, his multiple initiations in Book 11 generate a series of false endings which problematize the possibility of closure and invite the reader to supplement his story with yet another postscript, of which no explicit account is given.[137] Read intertextually with

[130] For discussion of these questions, see essays in Kahane and Laird 2001.
[131] *Met.* 11.3–6. [132] *Met.* 11.26.
[133] For a useful summary of interpretations of this controversial passage, see Harrison 2000, 228–32.
[134] See Richter (1997, 258): 'the reader seems to be reading two novels at once: a classic detective story, and a detective story in quotation-marks – the latter a post-modern fiction which calls attention to is very fictionality.'
[135] Shumate (1996) argues that the novel's structure is designed to reflect the subjective experience of religious conversion. On the problems of interpreting Book 11, see Winkler 1985, 204–47 and Harrison 2000, 238–52.
[136] For discussion of the unresolved ambiguities at end of *Metmorphoses* which prompt new frames of interpretation, see Winkler 1985, 204–47, esp. 223–7.
[137] Winkler 1985, 221–2; Harrison 2000, 245–8.

The name of the rose, the Apuleian Lucius becomes a precursor to William: a reader who is yet to apprehend the error of his confident reasoning about the order of things. Lucius' 'insight' into the teleology and connectedness of his own adventures in Book 11 may, therefore, mark his ultimate failure as a reader: his final, consummate compliance in a narrative of self-delusion of which he is himself quite literally the author – for at 11.27, with the revelation that Lucius the reader is 'the man from Madaura' and Lucius' role as reader converges with that of Apuleius, it is no longer clear whether he is discovering a plot, or manufacturing one. This generates perplexities for the reader of Apuleius' text, who is embroiled in a struggle with the in-text reader Lucius for the key to making sense of the narrative, and is tempted to construct counter-narratives of his own that will account for the narrative's indeterminacies. Unlike Lucius, this reader is prompted on a journey towards doubt in grand narratives and epiphanic certainties. One story of the reader of Apuleius' novel is the story of metamorphosis from the pleasure-seeking and inquisitiveness of the semantic reader, reading to find out what happens, to the disquiet of the semiotic reader who is more sceptical about the connectedness of things and the meaningfulness of experience. At its heart, the *Metamorphoses*, like *The name of the rose*, offers a critique of the type of religious and readerly experience Lucius undergoes.

Conclusion: intertextual whispers

I have tried to show in this chapter that an intertextual reading of Lucian's *True stories*, Antonius Diogenes' *Incredible things beyond Thule* and Ptolemy Chennus' *Novel history* illuminates the semiotic games which all three texts were playing and shows how they dramatize – and satirize – desires that were central to their contemporary reading culture. Each of these texts is riddled with cunning traps which perform metamorphoses on their readers either collusively, by transforming them from dupe to accomplice – or mischievously, by transforming them from accomplice to dupe. These semiotic transformations are precisely related to the texts' thematic play with authority, truth and fiction, just as the semiotic games in the ass-novel are related to the theme of metamorphosis itself.

I have also argued that the *Onos*, and *Metamorphoses* which is explicitly associated with it in *The name of the rose*, quicken concerns which are central in Eco's novel, especially the themes of intellectual curiosity and the metamorphic power of the text – the startling way in which we, the readers, are transformed by the texts we choose to read, whether we like it, whether

we even realize it or not. Lucius' progress towards simple salvation in the Greek *Onos* and the religious conversions in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* lend poignancy to William's disillusionment and theological crisis in *The name of the rose*. Conversely, William and Adso's epilogal pessimism in Eco's novel ironizes Lucius' optimistic conviction at the end of the ass-novel, intensifying the ambiguity of the final book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* especially (though it is difficult, after all, to envisage a truly pessimistic aftermath to the laughter and relief that finally enfolds Lucius in *Onos* as he is 'rescued', at long last, from 'the curiosity of an ass').[138] Nevertheless, all three novels imply, in differing ways and in varying degrees of complexity, a story of the *reader* on his or her quest for knowledge, and how that quest changes one. Eco's concept of 'semiotic fiction' offers us a useful concept for understanding Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* in particular which, albeit within a different philosophical frame of reference, also explores the unstable relationship between appearance and reality (a duplicity in which the novel finally implicates itself), and like Eco's detective-novel, eventually dismantles the reading-codes which govern its own narrative.[139]

I hope I have shown convincingly some of the ways in which these texts are talking to each other. Perhaps, fancifully, we may even imagine an invitation to dialogue in the rose of Eco's enigmatic title, which seems to speak to the roses which are the object of Lucius' quest: could Eco's deliberately open title invite us to read this ancient novel (which, after all, it contains) as an ancient precursor to the semiotic adventures and transformations of William and Adso? As both Apuleius and Eco know, texts do indeed talk. Apuleius' book whispers about itself to the reader in the prologue:

> But I would join together a variety of tales for you in that Milesian mode, and I would enchant your kindly ears with a charming murmur . . . [140]

And Adso, alone in the menacing abbey library, perceives that books speak of books:

[138] *Onos* 56: ἐξ ὄνου περιεργίας . . . ἀνασωθείς. It is tempting to read the noun *onou* in this final line as an objective genitive which refers to the title *Onos*: 'saved from curiosity *about Ass*'. In this way, Lucius seals the narrative with a playful, quasi-*sphragistic* pun which unites his own asinine experiences with the reader's experiences of *Onos* itself. Compare the novelistic *sphragides* at Chariton 8.8.16 and Heliodorus 10.41.15, and the quasi-sphragistic ending of Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*.

[139] On appearance and reality in Apuleius' novel, see Penwill 1990, 226 with n. 82.

[140] *Met.* 1.1: *at ego tibi sermone isto Milesio uarias fabulas conseram auresque tuas beniuolas lepido susurro permulceam* . . . The identity of the speaker in the prologue is notoriously controversial; for discussion, see the essays in Kahane and Laird 2001. Harrison 1990 identifies the voice as that of the book.

> Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things, human or divine, that lie outside books. Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of other books: it is as if they spoke among themselves. In the light of this reflection, the library seemed all the more disturbing to me. It was then a place of a centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing . . . [141]

We may wish to augment Adso's insight by adding that books also *transform* other books through their intertextual conversations, and that all three texts prompt us towards intertextual pleasures. In the eternal murmur between the *lepidus susurrus* of the ass-novel and Eco's *lungo e secolare susurro*, old stories can be rediscovered and new ones born.

[141] Eco 1998, 286.

CHAPTER 5

Beyond Thule
Adventures at the edge of the text

The works which I have examined so far explore what it means for the reader to enter into and experience the world of the story and the book. In this chapter I examine the role which those borderlands of the text – the so-called 'peritext' – play in constructing and modulating the reader's transformative experiences of fiction. Lucian shares his fascination with the peritext with his predecessor Antonius Diogenes, but also with subsequent novel-writers Longus and Heliodorus too. In their artful play with their own textual structures, these authors have 'appropriated objects or practices that belonged to the written culture of their time', as Roger Chartier has shown for literary works from later periods:

> The authors of these works transformed the material realities of writing and publication into an aesthetic resource, which they used to achieve poetic, dramatic, or narrative effects. The processes that bestowed existence on writing in its various forms, public or private, ephemeral or durable, thus became the very ground of literary invention.[1]

This is a crucial dimension of the ancient theorization of the reading experience which has been very much less fully explored – in some cases entirely overlooked. It has important ramifications for understanding the contemporary culture of writing and the role of the book within that context. In the episodes I shall explore in this chapter, the real world of the reader imprints itself upon the world of the fiction – and the fictional world of the book absorbs and dramatizes the world of the reader. Through dramatization of their status as texts, these fictions reflect on the importance of how the narrative is physically embodied and explore what it means, within the context of the contemporary literary culture, to write, to read, *to be* a literary text.

[1] Chartier 2007, x–xi.

The novels are liberally populated with microtexts including letters, inscriptions, and even books,[2] which create a very bookish story-world which constantly draws the reader's eye towards the 'textual surface' of the narrative and the physicality of the book itself as the portal to imaginative experience.[3] There are also many instances of textual self-reflexivity in fiction of the imperial period. Space and architectural structures are used commonly as metaphors which not only embody themes which are central to the narrative, but which also reflect the narrative's structuring of the reader's cognitive experiences, just as architecture structures the experience of space. Hippias' house in *Leucippe and Clitophon* is a richly symbolic site for the contestation of partriarchal authority and gender role-play, which are themes in the narrative, and it also reflects the narrative's structural deferral of the reader's desires.[4] Dionysophanes' magnificently symmetrical garden-park in *Daphnis and Chloe* is a metaphor not just for the world of the narrative, where nature and culture are brought into harmonious perfection, but also for the material text itself, which is squarely arranged in four books.[5] The labyrinthine structure of Trimalchio's house mirrors the structure of the banquet-narrative in Petronius' *Satyrica*; in particular, Encolpius' passing though the house's recessive entrances and exits reflects the reader's progress through the concentric and symmetrical episodes of the *Cena*.[6] In Heliodorus' *Ethiopian tales*, maze-like structures mirror the labyrinthine novel itself.[7] The cave which is the *mise en scène* for the narration of the tale of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* mirrors the story's microcosmic function in the novel. But what I wish to focus on in this chapter is more specifically the *peritext*, which includes features such as the title and prologue which are typically described as 'outside the fiction' (though, as we shall see, this is by no means a given) but 'inside the book'. With some notable exceptions, remarkably little attention has been paid to the role of the peritext in ancient fiction. Recently, however, Tim

[2] On letters in the ancient novel, see Chapter 3, n. 83. On inscriptions in the novel, see Stoneman 1995; Sironen 2003; Slater 2009. More generally, see the collected essays in Paschalis, Panayotakis and Schmeling 2009 on readers and writers within the novels.

[3] See Rosenmeyer (2001, 168): 'the novel's enjoyment of the textuality of the letter is connected with the overall fascination with intertextuality and allusiveness, and its dialogues with other genres and time periods.'

[4] Whitmarsh 2010a.

[5] Zeitlin 1994; Martin 2002.

[6] Bodel (1994, 239) argues that Petronius exploits the connection between labyrinths, tombs and the underworld to suggest that Trimalchio's house is a world of the dead. Rimell (2007a) examines the structural significance of the multiple portals leading into the *triclinium* of Trimalchio's house.

[7] Morgan (1999, 281) interprets the labyrinthine locations (cave and reed-beds) as a 'cypher for the novel itself, whose multiple narrations are like concentric mazes.'

Whitmarsh has argued that geographical spaces such as the city of Alexandria, and geographical boundaries such as the river Euphrates, that great ancient dividing-line between the worlds of Europe and Asia, function self-referentially in the works of Chariton, Achilles Tatius and Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius*) to mirror these works' peritextuality, in particular their segmentation through book-divisions.[8] The characters' geographical trajectories within the fiction – crossing boundaries, wandering lost through the cityscape – trope the reader's negotiation of the architecture of both narrative and text. The work that *has* been done on these peritextual features – for example, studies on the prologue to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*[9] – suggest that there is much more to be said about the physical book, the peritext and their conspiratorial role in ancient fiction.

Lucian was fascinated with the medium, both oral and written, of his own work, and especially with the role played by the book in its evolution. In some of his texts he refers clearly to a primary context of oral delivery (e.g. *On the hall*, *The dream*, several of the *prolaliai*),[10] and he evokes theatrical performance or recital (e.g. *Fisherman*, *Timon, Zeus rants*, the minor dialogues and para-tragedy *Gout*);[11] other texts allude exclusively to their textual status and their readers (*True stories* 1.1–4; *In defence of Images* 8; *On a slip of the tongue* 1, 2, 7 and 19) or construct themselves ostensibly as letters (*On the death of Peregrinus*, *Nigrinus*, *The false Alexander*). Whilst these shifting self-presentations of the text are without doubt as heavily implicated in rhetorical strategies as the author's presentation of his own *persona*, and therefore not to be construed merely at face value, there is no reason, either, for wholesale scepticism about the possibility that many of Lucian's written works were indeed performed at some point during their

[8] Whitmarsh 2009. [9] See, for example, Kahane and Laird 2001.

[10] *Dipsads* 9; *Zeuxis* 12; *Amber* 6; *Herodotus* 7–8. In *Harmonides* 3–4, Lucian discusses his public performance, and the *prolalia Heracles* is entirely constructed around the power of the sophist's speech.

[11] Coenen (1977, cxl–cxli) describes *Zeus rants* as a form of 'one-man theatre' performed by Lucian at public recitations. On Lucian's para-tragedy *Gout*, see Karavas (2005, esp. 327 and 331), who argues that *Gout* was not destined for performance on stage but was, rather a salon-entertainment, following Bompaire's idea of 'un dialogue du salon' (Bompaire 1958, 566). Whitmarsh (2013a, 176–85) does not discuss the question of performance of *Gout*, but he is elsewhere sceptical about the performance of the para-tragic *Fisherman* (see Whitmarsh 2001, 264–5, with following note). I see no reason to doubt that *Gout* had a performance-life in the form of recital rather than full theatrical spectacle, as was the norm for contemporary tragic spectacle (see Karavas 2005, 219–28, with further bibliography). In fact, in recital *Gout* would have packed a heavier satiric punch by troping sophistic display as (bad, funny) tragedy. Lucian commonly draws on the language of tragedy to expose the bombastic posturing of contemporary intellectuals and philosophers (e.g *Fisherman* 31–3) – and *Gout* reifies the metaphor.

lifecycle.[12] Performance is entwined explicitly with writtenness in *Apology* 1–4, for example, where Lucian, prosospoietically through the voice of his friend and critic Sabinus, describes the evolution of his essay *Scholars for hire* from its initial oral delivery in public to its subsequent more private circulation as a text among a closer circle of *pepaideumenoi*:

> This essay (*sungramma*) of yours, my friend, has quite rightly been admired for a long time now, since its performance (*deikhthen*) before a large crowd (*en pollōi plēthei*) – as those who heard it (*akroasamenoi*) at the time told me – and also privately in educated circles (*idiai para tois pepaideumenois*), by those who want to use it (*homilein autōi*) and have it to hand (*dia kheiros ekhein*).[13]

In this passage we are invited to imagine the different levels of response to Lucian's diatribe as it passes through different contexts of reception, from the more motley crowd who first heard it performed and gave it rave reviews, to the more select numbers of educated readers who evidently want to own copies of the text and have frequent recourse to it – perhaps for the practical reasons which the essay itself advertises (Lucian styles it as a warning against the evils of life as a hired scholar),[14] or perhaps for the wry reflection on society which it provokes, and no doubt for its entertainment value as well.[15] In a similar way, in *Fisherman* 25–6, Lucian again invites us to envisage two types of performance: one which plays to the crowd, like a theatre-audience (specifically, the audience of Old Comedy which revels in satirical attack), and the other which is aimed at 'the best people', a more high-brow performance which requires advance preparation on the speaker's part and – significantly – the support of a written text (the 'fat book' in which the speaker has recorded his abusive

[12] Rohde (1960, 328 n. 1) argues for the oral performance of Lucian's dialogues; cf. also Bellinger (1928, 3: 'intended to be read aloud by the author, instead of acted') and Korenjak (2000, 24), but this only describes half of these works' lives *as texts*. At the other extreme, to describe Lucian's dialogues as 'armchair theatre' (Robinson 1979, 100) is to flatten out their lively engagement with the permutations of their own oral *and* textual evolution. Whitmarsh (2001, 264–5) is closer to the mark when he interprets the theatricality in dialogues such as the *Fisherman* as a deliberate strategy whereby Lucian 'ironically advertises his own complicity in the mimetic identity-crisis of his age', but to view this theatricality as 'figurative rather than literal' is too generalizing, and in some cases actually diminishes the satirical heft of Lucian's work (see previous note on *Gout*).

[13] *Apol.* 3: Πάλαι μέν, ὦ φιλότης, ὡς εἰκός, εὐδοκίμηταί σοι τουτὶ τὸ σύγγραμμα καὶ ἐν πολλῷ πλήθει δειχθέν, ὡς οἱ τότε ἀκροασάμενοι διηγοῦντο, καὶ ἰδίᾳ παρὰ τοῖς πεπαιδευμένοις ὁπόσοι ὁμιλεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ διὰ χειρὸς ἔχειν ἠξίωσαν.

[14] *Scholars for hire* 3–4.

[15] At *Scholars for hire* 33, for example, Lucian tells a 'very funny' (*panu geloion*) anecdote about the venerable philosopher Thesmopolis who was put in charge of his mistress' lapdog Myrrhina, and promptly peed on (33–4).

comments – an allusion here to Lucian's dialogue *Philosophers for sale*).[16] In both of these passages Lucian clearly implies that his work has a life and readership as a written text which differs qualitatively from its initial public performance. From the *Fisherman* passage we may infer that the text itself had a specific role to play in performances of a more carefully cultured nature – where the book doubled up as a stage prop to impress the gathered *pepaideumenoi*.[17] Many of Lucian's essays and dialogues therefore glide trickily between performance and text, no doubt shifting in tone and register to adapt to their changing contexts, in much the same way as a modern academic paper undergoes metamorphoses to meet the different demands of different performance-contexts (mixed audiences, specialists, different lengths of time-slot) and continues to evolve into the form of final, published article as well.[18] Related to this interest in the textuality of his own work is Lucian's fascination with the book as an artefact itself. In his essay *On an ignorant book-collector* he describes the bookish pretentions of an ignoramus who derives no intellectual benefit from reading but avidly buys and collects books which he then treats as fetishized possessions; Lucian describes him 'forever furling and unfurling them, gluing and trimming and anointing them with saffron and cedar oil and enfolding them in book-covers and inserting book-knobs into them'.[19]

Lucian also talks explicitly about particular features of the bookscape, especially the peritext. This ignoramus's preoccupation with the material book and its external appearance finds parallel with ambitious historians' preoccupation with the peritextual trappings of grandeur with which they adorn their works. In *On how to write history*, Lucian shows just how important the peritextual apparatus such as title and preface was to would-be writers of history, and displays his own knowledge of the rules of good

[16] On this passage, see also Hunter (2012, 20–1) who, however, reads it as a diachronic narrative about the changes in literary culture from the classical past, rather than a synopsis of different performance contexts in the present.

[17] In *Professor in public speaking* 15, Lucian advises the would-be *rhētor* always to brandish a book, along with the other accoutrements of the intellectual (brightly coloured clothing, appropriate footwear, a crowd of followers). Such flaunting of books comes under attack in other satirical works, for example the ridiculous hyper-Atticizing Lexiphanes wields a book which he himself had written (*Lexiphanes* 1), and in Lucian's diatribe *On the ignorant book-collector*. For fuller discussion, see Johnson 2010, 157–78.

[18] See Korenjak (2000, 25) on the proximity between the sophist's didactic and epideictic work, and the slenderer dividing line in antiquity between the academic and epideictic lecture as a result.

[19] *On an ignorant book-collector* 16: ἀνατυλίττεις ἀεὶ καὶ διακολλᾷς καὶ περικόπτεις καὶ ἀλείφεις τῷ κρόκῳ καὶ τῇ κέδρῳ καὶ διφθέρας περιβάλλεις καὶ ὀμφαλοὺς ἐντίθης, ὡς δή τι ἀπολαύσων αὐτῶν.

taste which ought to govern the construction of the peritext. In preface-writing, there must, above all, be a sense of proportion: the preface should be 'long or short, in proportion to the subject-matter';[20] just as it is a mistake to attach a colossal head to a dwarfish body, so too the preface should not outweigh the narrative. Lucian does not favour the preface-less history, either; even in cases where the subject needs no 'preliminary exposition', he advocates the use of an embedded 'virtual' preface, a passage which is prefatorial in function, even if it does not appear at the head of the text.[21] He stipulates that historiographical prefaces have two functions only: to point out to the reader what will be interesting and instructive, and to provide a helpful outline of the main events and the reasons for writing the history, just as Herodotus and Thucydides did. Historiographers should omit the *captatio benevolentiae* or bid to solicit the reader's good will, as this is a function proper to the preface in oratory only, and the primary goal of historiography should be to instruct, not to gratify or persuade.[22] The examples of Herodotus and Thucydides should be followed, but not slavishly; Lucian ridicules one fervent imitator of Thucydides who simply copied the historian's opening line verbatim, substituting names where necessary, and produced a ludicrously jarring perversion of the original: 'Crepereius Calpurnianus of Pomeiopolis wrote the history of the war between the Parthians and Romans, beginning right at the point where it started.'[23] Finally, the transition between the preface and the narrative proper should be 'smooth and easy' (*euaphēs kai euagōgos*).[24]

Lucian is also eloquent on titles, stipulating in particular that they should reflect the nature of the work to which they are attached. He ridicules, for example, the titological pretentions of a historian who wrote a bare-bones *commentarius*-style history but then gave to each book (*epegrapse*) a title of extravagant grandeur: '*The nth book of the Parthian Histories of Callimorphus, medic of the sixth brigade of spear-bearers*', with the book-number written underneath in a subtitle (*hypegegrapto*).[25] Callimorphus' preface was similarly risible, beginning with a grandiloquent apology for writing a history even though the author was a doctor by profession, and written in Ionic dialect, even though the rest of the work was composed in the common vernacular.[26] Other historians, Lucian says, pride themselves

[20] *Hist. co.* 55: ἀνάλογον τοῖς πράγμασιν ἢ μηκυνόμενον ἢ βραχυνόμενον.

[21] *Hist. co.* 23 and 52. [22] *Hist. co.* 53–4. [23] *Hist. co.* 15. [24] *Hist. co.* 55.

[25] *Hist. co.* 16: τοῦτο μόνον ᾐτιασάμην αὐτοῦ, ὅτι οὕτως ἐπέγραψε τὰ βιβλία τραγικώτερον ἢ κατὰ τὴν τῶν συγγραμμάτων τύχην – "Καλλιμόρφου ἰατροῦ τῆς τῶν κοντοφόρων ἕκτης ἱστοριῶν Παρθικῶν," καὶ ὑπεγέγραπτο ἑκάστῃ ὁ ἀριθμός.

[26] *Hist. co.* 16.

more on the number of their books and their titles than on the actual accuracy or usefulness of their histories, with pomposities such as *The Parthian Victories of So-and-So in so many books*, *Parthis I and II*, *Atthis* and *The Parthonikika of Demetrius of Sagalassus*, which Lucian says he himself had actually read.[27]

It should come as no surprise, then, to find that Lucian indulges his playful interest in the peritext in the fiction of *True stories*. As I shall argue in this chapter, he not only gives his work an ironic title (*Alēthē diēgēmata*); he also frames it with an ironic, anti-historiographical prologue and a false *explicit*, and plays with the motif of authorial attribution and onymity. Here more than any other work, Lucian explores the power of the peritext to befuddle the reader's expectations. But he was not the first or only author to exploit his peritext in this way. Before my analysis of *True stories*, therefore, I will turn to Lucian's predecessor in peritextual fiction, Antonius Diogenes who, in his novel *The incredible things beyond Thule*, conducted the most radical experiments with the peritext in ancient literature. It was Diogenes' creative bookscaping more than any other that revealed to Lucian the full potential for exploiting this threshold zone between the world of the reader and the book; with this in mind, I shall revisit the well-worn arguments about how these two works related to each other, to argue that Lucian consciously and purposefully shaped *True stories* as a sort of sequel to Diogenes' novel. After that, I will examine two other test-cases of authors of fiction who put their works' structure, and especially its peritext, to imaginative use in different ways: Longus and Heliodorus. Ultimately, the

[27] *Hist. co.* 32. Given that there are no references, outside Lucian's essay, to any of the historians whom he names in this treatise – Crepereius Calpunianus (15), the physician Callimorphus (16) and Demetrius of Sagalassus (32) – their existence is hotly contested. It has been pointed out that each name puns jokily on the writers' pretensions, for example 'Crepereius', which evokes the Latin adjective *creper* 'obscure', is an ironic name for a historian who aspires to Thuycdidean fame, and 'Demetrius of Sagalassus' may evoke 'Herodotus of Halicarnassus'. In Callimorphus' case, his status as a physician aligns him with Ctesias of Cnidos, one of Lucian's *bêtes noires* who was himself a physician at the Persian court, and the name 'Callimorphus', which connotes fine form and euphony, seems pointedly ironic for an author of such avowedly lumpen, banausic style. They are possibly pseudonyms, whose referents would have been recognized by Lucian's contemporary audience, but strenuous attempts have been made to substantiate these authors's actual existence (for example Baldwin 1978 on Crepereius and Callimorphus). Given Lucian's pseudo-documentary proclivities elsewhere, and – more importantly – given that the author's power to create virtual realities through his text is a theme in this very essay (see his joke about the relocation of Samosata in 24) – I am very much inclined to see these as phantoms of para-historiography, and a trick which Lucian plays on his reader to demonstrate these very world-creating powers of his own writing. As with Ptolemy Chennus, the fun is in the verisimilitude of Lucian's bogosity. For the most recent surveys of this question, and further bibliography, see von Möllendorff 2001 and the *Brill's New Jacoby* articles by Cottier on Crepereius Calpurnianus (208F1–4) and by Stronk on Demetrius (209T1, s.v. 'Demetrios of Sagalassos') and Callimorphus (210F1–3, s.v. 'Kallimorphos').

evidence for peritextual play in this chapter offers a challenge to the commonly held view that we cannot usefully talk of the peritext in ancient book-culture.

Beyond Thule: boundaries and the peritext in *The incredible things beyond Thule*

Diogenes's novel, *The incredible things beyond Thule*, reveals the author's fascination with edges, boundaries and liminality.[28] In travelling beyond Thule, Deinias breaches the northernmost frontier of the inhabited world, an *exōkeanismos* or voyage outside the world-encircling Ocean which takes him – literally – off the ancient map. Other characters' adventures carry them beyond existential boundaries to the world of the dead, for example in Derkyllis' encounter with her deceased maid Myrto, as well as in Derkyllis and Mantinias' strange half-life on Thule between the worlds of the living and the dead as a result of Paapis' curse. This obsession with existential and geographical boundaries within the fiction thematizes the novel's resolute marginality in a number of different senses. As James Romm has argued, Deinias' *exōkeanismos* is a metaphor for the novel's generic eccentricity as a hybrid of scientific and philosophical lore combined with novelistic narrative and paradoxography. Even as a novel, the work flouts various generic rules, for example by taking its characters on a trajectory into the frozen frontiers of the northern world rather than on the more conventional novelistic routes towards Egypt and the east.[29] As we shall see, this striking new trajectory in the fiction is significant in several different ways.

The novel's obsession with margins and edges is continued in its fascination with its own boundary-spaces, especially its structure of book-divisions and peritextual features including the title and preface. The journey beyond Thule, the northern margin of the world, is therefore a metaphor not only for the novel's transgression of its own generic boundaries but also for the fiction's playful foray beyond its own textual boundaries into the peritext which Diogenes uses to confuse, surprise and disorientate the reader.

[28] At the time of writing, I am aware of two research projects which are in progress and which promise vastly to enrich our understanding of Antonius Diogenes: a new edition with commentary by Helena Schmedt (*Antonios Diogenes – Neuedition, Kommentar und Interpretation der Fragmente und Testimonien*, Frankfurt/Main) and a literary study by Claire Jackson (*Falsehood, forgery, and the fantastical: the paradox of fiction in the ancient novel*, Cambridge).

[29] See Romm 1994, 105: 'Surely this willful *exôkeanismos* was intended by Diogenes as a demonstration of his freedom from generic constraints – just as his choice of title was meant as a response to the critical ethic that had ruled *apista* out-of-bounds.'

Diogenes was an experimental innovator of the peritext. His novel contains an early example of the epistolary preface in ancient literature,[30] and Diogenes produces not just one, but *three* letters in his peritext: the letter to Faustinus and the letter to Isidora, which contains in turn the embedded letter of Balagrus to his wife Phila. The epistolary form itself dramatizes the contractual nature of the preface as a dialogal space in the text where the author, often implicitly, addresses the reader and negotiates his or her degree of commitment to the truth-status of the narrative through a series of clues as well as more overt claims which are designed to inform the reader about the nature of the work in hand.[31] The letters also dramatize, with particular vividness, the (fictional) change of voice between the prologue, which is written in the authorial voice, and the narrative of the apocryphal author Deinias. The reader's imaginative transport into the fictional world is articulated by the recession of encased authors and their documents, from the real author Diogenes, through the semi-historical Balagrus, all the way back to the fictional Deinias. Through its emphatic epistolarity as well as its structure of embedded texts, therefore, the preface dramatizes its role as a contractual zone between author and reader, as well as the transitional space between the real and the fictional world.

Diogenes' title was also innovative. *Ta hyper Thoulēn apista* (*The incredible things beyond Thule*) was probably the author's original title for his work.[32] In terms of its thematic connection to the novel, it is a provocative *synekdochē,* as it privileges an episode which is structurally marginal to the work: the adventures beyond Thule to which it refers are narrated only very belatedly in the final, twenty-fourth book. This eccentricity provokes comment from Photius himself in his summary: 'And the twenty-third book of the so-called *Incredible things beyond Thule* is brought to a close by Antonius Diogenes, even though the text has, from the start, revealed little

[30] In light of parallels from other pseudo-documentary texts in antiquity, which I shall discuss later in this chapter (pseudo-Thessalus of Tralles, Dictys, *Kyranides*), Fusillo's assertion about the 'absolutely unusual' nature of Diogenes's peritextual letter (Fusillo 1990, 16) is over-emphatic.

[31] Several other novels dramatize the dialogicity of the prologue in similar ways, e.g. the conversation between Clitophon and the anonymous stranger in the preface to Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and also the dialogic mode of the prologue in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (as well as Lucian's *True stories*).

[32] The antiquity of the title is guaranteed by its citation in our earliest witness Porphyry (*Life of Pythagoras* 10.1) in the third century. It is probably the title which Diogenes himself assigned to the work, as according to Photius, Diogenes asserted in his letter to Faustinus that he had 'made a compilation of *the incredible things beyond Thule* which he dedicated to Isidora' (Photius, *Bibl.* 111a 30–4: Ὁ γοῦν Διογένης . . . γράφει Φαυστίνῳ ὅτι τε συντάττει περὶ τῶν ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἀπίστων, καὶ ὅτι τῇ ἀδελφῇ Ἰσιδώρᾳ φιλομαθῶς ἐχούσῃ τὰ δράματα προσφωνεῖ).

or nothing about Thule.'[33] Although provocatively metonymical titles like this are common in modern literary practice, they are rare in antiquity and as far as our evidence suggests, this one is entirely unparalleled in ancient novelistic literature.[34] Given, then, that its thematic connection with the narrative is so pointedly marginal, the title prompts the reader to ponder what other significance it might have. In fact, its title can be read in multiple different ways. '*The incredible things beyond Thule*' doubles as a 'rhematic' title to denote the genre of the narrative, marking it as *apista*-literature, affiliated with the terrain of *Wundererzählung* and paradoxography.[35] This was a bold move by Diogenes, as *apista*-literature was viewed with derision by educated readers in antiquity[36] – which may explain why Diogenes is at pains to point out in his letter to Faustinus the serious scholarship which he had invested in his paradoxographical narrative fantasy. The title also has a strong metaliterary force which highlights the narrative's nebulous truth-status, its 'incredibility beyond Thule' – in other words, beyond the normal parameters of narrative fiction.[37] The title therefore also reflects the novel's metafictionality, in other words, its central preoccupation with deconstructing its own fictionality (especially in its peritext), and experimenting with the ways in which the reader's belief can be manipulated.

From what we can glean from Photius' summary, it seems that the structure of the text was itself calculated to disorientate the reader by enfolding narrative endings into structural beginnings and vice versa, thereby converting the narrative into an *ouroboros* where 'beginnings' and 'endings' appear to swallow each other. First, the *narrative* begins at the end of the *story*, as it opens with the scene of narration between Deinias, decrepit in his old age

[33] Photius, *Bibl.* 110b16–19: Καὶ συμπληροῦται Ἀντωνίῳ Διογένει ὁ εἰκοστὸς τρίτος λόγος τῶν ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἐπιγραφομένων ἀπίστων, καίτοι μηδὲν ἢ βραχέα κατ᾽ ἀρχὰς περὶ Θούλης τῆς συγγραφῆς ὑποδηλωσάσης.

[34] See Genette (1997, 82) who notes, however, that some of the titles of Plautus' comedies fall into this category. On the titles of ancient novels, see Whitmarsh 2005.

[35] On rhematic, or 'objectal' titles, see Genette 1997: 88–8.

[36] See Chapter 3, pp. 85–9; Chapter 4, pp. 131–2.

[37] Fusillo (1990, 11): 'Intitolare un' opera *Le incredibili avventure . . . al di là di Tule* significava . . . esprimere un preciso programma poetico . . . di narrare una storia che superasse ogni limite realistico.' Romm (1992, 206): 'To venture beyond Thule, as both Vergil and Seneca had speculated in contemplating the westward march of empire, would constitute a final, climactic step in human social evolution . . . For a *novel* to venture beyond Thule, moreover, would break the cartographic scheme of literary criticism . . . : Diogenes seems to have promised his readers the ultimate *exōkeanismos*, a journey into as-yet uncharted realms of fictional invention.' For Stephens and Winkler (1995, 107), the titular reference to Thule evoked the travel-narrative of Pytheas of Massilia, and Diogenes was therefore promising his readers 'wonders surpassing those of Pytheas.' See also Romm 1994, 103–4.

and after all of his adventures, and Cymbas the Arcadian who has come to bring him home at last. This strategy of beginning at the end is by no means unparalleled, especially in novels where the act of narration itself forms part of the narrative: the narrative of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* also begins at the end with a scene of narration in precisely the same way,[38] and in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* the paintings in the prologue present the story as a *fait accompli*, locating the reader clearly at the 'end' of things just as the narrative begins. But Diogenes also employs a far more striking and unusual technique: he also *begins* a new cycle of story at the structural *end* of the narrative, for it is only in the final twenty-fourth book that Deinias and his crew finally strike out beyond Thule, a new departure which is reflected narratologically with the belated switch to a brand new narrator, Azoulis.[39] This eccentric structure means that it is only in the *final* book of the novel that the reader at last begins the adventures beyond Thule that were promised in the title from the start. This has an unbalancing and disorientating effect, as the novel's centre of gravity, in thematic terms, appears to be located in its margins, and most of the rest of it – its other twenty three books, in fact – are about other things entirely. Diogenes is playing some radical games with the structure of his novel here – and, as the following section will show, he was not alone in doing so.

Diogenes, Dictys and the text-in-the-tomb

There are striking similarities between the pseudo-documentary fiction of Diogenes' novel and that of the *Journal of the Trojan War* (*Ephemeris Belli Troiani*) which was ascribed in antiquity to 'Dictys of Crete', a Greek soldier who supposedly fought at Troy.[40] Both narratives deploy the common motif of the text-in-the-tomb as an authenticating strategy.[41] In Dictys' case, a fictionalized account of the journal's discovery and its subsequent transmission and transformation from the Phoenician *Urtext* through Greek and

[38] On the particular problems which this novel's beginning and end raise for the reader, see Repath 2005.

[39] Photius, *Bibl.* 110b20ff.

[40] Its most widely accessible form is a (probably) fourth-century Latin version of an earlier Greek text which was in circulation in the second century, as analysis of the most recent papyrus-discoveries (*POxy* 4943 and 4944) confirm. The date of this Latin text is uncertain; Merkle (1989, 263–91) argues persuasively for the fourth century, although a third century date is also possible. The complex story of the variants and textual transmission of the Dictys-text is explained with admirable lucidity in Gainsford 2012.

[41] For a thorough survey of this *topos* in ancient literature, see Speyer 1970, 43–124. Merkle (1989, 75–7) compares the *Fundbericht* of Dictys' *Journal* with the story of the discovery of Pythagorean writings in Numa's tomb (Plutarch *Numa* 22).

thence into Latin is related, with some divergence in detail, in two prefatory passages that are transmitted with the Latin text: a letter written by the Latin translator Septimius, and an anonymous prologue.[42] According to the Latin prologue (whose content is closer to the original second-century Greek text than the prefatory letter) Dictys recorded the events of the Trojan War in nine books on tablets of linden-wood in Phoenician writing.[43] When he returned to Crete in his old age, he requested that his journal should be buried with him in his tomb at Knossos, locked securely inside a metal chest. For centuries after, Dictys' tomb remained undisturbed until, in the thirteenth year of the Emperor Nero's reign (66 CE) an earthquake cracked it open, exposing its contents to passers-by. The precious text was then passed through several hands and ended up with Nero at Rome, who ordered scholars to decipher it and translate it into Greek, after which it was deposited in the Greek library at Rome, and Dictys' 'truer' account of the Trojan War became universally known.

The parallels between Diogenes' pseudo-documentary fiction and that of Dictys are well known: the ancient author's wish to have his text buried securely with him, the text's enclosure within a chest, the later discovery of the tomb in the aftermath of a violent event (earthquake or a military siege), and the important role which is played in both narratives by a celebrity historical figure (Alexander the Great in Diogenes' case; Nero for Dictys).[44] However, what has *not* been recognized is how in each case the text-in-the-tomb motif dramatizes the spatial configuration of the material text itself. Diogenes uses the text-in-the-tomb motif with particular imagination to tell a story about the text itself and the reader's encounter with it through the peritext.

In both cases, the text's encasement within a chest inside the tomb mirrors the encasement of the narrative within the particularly dense layers of peritext that are characteristic of pseudo-documentary fiction. Both Dictys' *Journal* and Deinias' narrative in *The incredible things beyond Thule* are prefaced by complex prologal narratives which produce for the reader fictions which explain the narrative's history as a document so far, especially its origin and transmission. Just as those who discover the text in the

[42] On the question of the priority between the prologue and letter, and the contradictions between the two, see Merkle 1989, 83–123; ní Mheallaigh (2012) explores the ramifications of the changing status of the imagined text.

[43] There is ambiguity about the language of Dictys' putative original: it was either Phoenician, or else Greek written using Phoenician script; for discussion, see Merkle 1989, 109–13 and ní Mheallaigh 2012.

[44] For an analysis of these authenticating strategies, see Hansen 2003 and ní Mheallaigh 2008, who explores their cultural ramifications beyond fictional authentication.

fictional *Fundbericht* (Balagrus and the other soldiers in Diogenes' text, or the passing shepherds in Dictys) had first to breach the tomb and then the chest in order to find the text, so too the reader, in order to access Dictys' or Deinias' narratives, must, in a similar way, first navigate these complicated preliminaries framing the text in the form of a prologue or multiple prefatorial letters. The encasement of the text in the fiction (inside the chest, inside the tomb) therefore mirrors the text's structure, specifically its peritextuality.

This is rendered with particular clarity in *The incredible things beyond Thule* where the fictional *Urtext*, which is inscribed on tablets of cypress-wood, is enclosed within a chest which is also made of cypress-wood and which bears the following inscription addressing a reader:

> Stranger, whoever you are, open this to learn about the things that are astonishing you.[45]

This double-encasement inside the inscribed wooden chest inside the tomb mirrors the double epistolary peritext of the novel which frames Deinias' narrative. The inscription on the chest which entices the tomb-visitor to 'open and read' mirrors the epistolary preface of the novel, which also addresses a model reader and excites that reader's curiosity about the 'enclosed' text in order to encourage further reading. Even the imperative of the inscription 'open!' (*anoixon*) can denote, by zeugma, both the action of the curious tomb-visitor who will *open the chest*, and the knowledge-hungry reader who will *open Diogenes' text*. There are also further resonances between the chest-inscription and the novel's preface. The legend on the chest addresses no ordinary greedy tomb-robber like the shepherds who plundered Dictys' tomb in the hope of treasure; it speaks to a more cultured visitor whose desire is to understand or learn about his astonishing surroundings. In a similar way Diogenes' novel, which is based on the global research-expedition of the scholarly Deinias, is addressed explicitly to the 'knowledge-loving' and erudite model readers, Isidora and Faustinus. Therefore the inscription on the chest, with its appeal to a reader with a desire for understanding the *marvellous* (literally 'the things which you are marvelling at', *ha thaumazeis*), reflects the fact that *The incredible things beyond Thule* is a paradoxographical novel which is pitched at a reader with a taste for recondite philosophical lore, magic, astronomy, botany and ethnography – to name just a few of the topics which the narrative encompasses in its encyclopaedic sweep.

[45] Ὦ ξένε, ὅστις εἶ, ἄνοιξον, ἵνα μάθῃς ἃ θαυμάζεις (Photius, *Bibl.* 111b21–2).

If the inscribed chest represents, within the fiction, the peritext of the novel, then it is also significant that it is said to be made out of cypress-wood, the same material as the tablets on which Deinias' narrative is itself inscribed. The chest is both separate from and identical to the text: separate, inasmuch as it is a distinct physical structure which encases the material text itself, but also identical inasmuch as it is fabricated out of the same raw material as that text. This mirrors the equivocal status of the peritext itself, which is narratologically distinct from the fiction which it frames, yet also integral to the text: both outside the fiction, and yet part of the book. Through the fiction of the text in the crypt, therefore, Diogenes dramatizes his reader's encounter with his novel through its uniquely complex peritext, and also calls attention to the equivocal truth-status of the peritext: if it is, like the chest, wrought from the same material as the rest of the text, then surely it shares the same potential for fiction.

Diogenes' use of the fiction of the text in the tomb therefore supports the view that he was thinking imaginatively about the meaning of his work's architecture not only in terms of plot structure, but also his bookscape, especially the role and nature of the peritext. *The incredible things beyond Thule* is the most densely peritextual of all the surviving ancient novels; indeed, its combined apparatus of double-epistolary preface, complex title and source-references constitutes the most complex and playfully deceptive peritext we know in ancient literature. Not for nothing, therefore, has Diogenes been identified as the Nabokov of the ancient world, though the fuller implications of that sobriquet have never been pursued.[46] Both are magicians of the peritext. It would be fascinating, for example, to explore more fully the disorientating authorial dodges in the prologue to *The incredible things* alongside Nabokov's puzzling peritext in the first edition of *Lolita*.[47] Or, for the startling reversal of the ordinary hierarchy between text and metatext which we find in *The incredible things*, we might compare Nabokov's *Pale fire*. In *The incredible things*, it is through the caprice of transmission that the original novel has been displaced almost completely by its metatexts (summaries of it by later authors), but this intensifies, uncannily, Diogenes' own scholarly fiction within the novel, which presents his reader with the author's putatively hypertextual

[46] Morgan (2009, 136) describes Diogenes' authenticating strategies as a game of 'Nabokovian complexity'.

[47] The sender (fictive) of the original preface to *Lolita* was 'John Ray', who attributed authorship of the novel to its narrator Humbert Humbert, and both of these masquerades were undermined by the presence of the real author Vladimir Nabokov's name on the cover and title page. On such conflicting paratextual elements, see Genette 1997, 182–3.

version of Deinias' narrative in lieu of the original itself. As a result, *The incredible things beyond Thule*, both fictionally and in actual fact, can only be reconstructed, imperfectly, through the metatexts of other authors. This struggle for semiotic control between text and metatext is dramatized vividly in the unsettling games of *Pale fire* where John Shade's poem, though scrupulously 'preserved', is also hijacked and effectively rewritten by Kinbote's commentary: 'for better or worse', as Nabokov's mad scholar observes, in the closing line of his foreword, 'it is the commentator who has the last word.' Furthermore, there are precise parallels in both authors' exploitation of the textual apparatus of scholarship in order to fudge the truth-status of the work itself: in *Pale fire*, Nabokov uses the commentary form, complete with footnotes, to create a novel which is fictionally a work of scholarship, just as, in *The incredible things*, Diogenes uses the prologue and the source-references which are characteristic of ancient encyclopaedic works and miscellanies, to generate the air of scholarship as well, as I shall explore later in this chapter. In the imaginative interplay between novels, Diogenean Thule itself speaks strangely to Nabokovian Zembla: both are icy northern worlds which balance tentatively on the borders of fantasy and reality (though the narrator in each novel claims to have been there), and their equivocal status, for the reader, seems to mirror the lost or unwritten texts which the scholars in each novel (Diogenes and Kinbote) so zealously strive to mediate to posterity; indeed, Nabokov's own version of Thule from the two fragments of his last (and incomplete) Russian novel, 'Ultima Thule' and 'Solus Rex', is itself an antecedent of Zembla in *Pale fire*, which makes the intertextual dialogue with Diogenes' ancient novel all the more inviting.[48]

Deinias' journey into the uncharted climes of the far north – regions which were associated in antiquity with fog, snow-thickened air, and the long darkness of polar nights – represents, within the fiction, the reader's trajectory from the certain familiarity of the real, known world into the crepuscular regions of the *apiston*, where incredibility is, paradoxically, an index of truth, facts are stranger than fiction, and things that appear incredible are true. The fictional journey to Thule and beyond therefore thematizes the reader's metafictional journey, especially as (s)he mentally navigates beyond the traditional boundaries of the fiction, out into the edges of the text in the new, uncharted and disorientating zones of Diogenes' peritext. Ultimately, the marginal 'incredible' space beyond Thule is a metaphor for the equivocal peritextual space in the novel which lies

[48] On *Solus Rex* as an antecedent of *Pale Fire*, see Boyd 1999, 268–9, n. 7.

beyond the boundaries of the fiction at the frontier between the real world and the world of the book, where the fiction converges with, and parades as, fact. Deinias' adventures in the climes beyond Thule thus dramatize Diogenes' unmatched authorial experiments in the peritext, a textual frontier zone which he expanded, innovated and exploited more richly than any other ancient author.

Tecnifiction: Diogenes, Lucian and the *mise en livre*

The prologue to *True stories* is, in the terms deployed by Genette in his taxonomy of the paratext, an original, authorial preface.[49] The primary function of such prefaces, according to Genette, is *monitory*: to ensure that the text is read, and read properly. To accomplish this, the author typically exploits a variety of strategies which can be categorized under the twin headings 'themes of the why' (authorial arguments to explain *why* one should read the book) and 'themes of the how' (details about the text's genesis, the choice of reader, contracts of fiction, statements of intent, and genre definitions). 'Themes of the why' include Lucian's espousal of the narrative's usefulness and pleasurability for scholars who require recreational reading material that is entertaining but also stimulating. 'Themes of the how' include his explicit warnings about the mendacity of the text and how it should be read ('The only truth I will tell is that I am lying . . . readers should in no way believe'), his justification for writing the text (as a monument to posterity) and his self-installation within the tradition of untrustworthy travel-narratives such as those of the Homeric Odysseus, Ctesias' *Indika* and Iambulus' wonder-tales. All of this is accomplished in a playfully subversive spirit. In particular, his assertion that everything he writes is a *lie* embroils the reader in an epistemological crisis from the start (is he lying right now?), and directly flouts the tradition of historiographical prefaces which, since Herodotus at least, had worked hard to assert the author's credentials and the reliability of the narrative. Instead of writing about things which he saw himself or learned from trustworthy sources, as historians Thucydides and (more controversially) Ctesias had claimed to do,[50] Lucian freely asserts that he is writing about things which he did *not* see, nor experience, nor hear from any reliable source; about things which, moreover, did not, nor ever could, exist. By doing so, Lucian aligns himself with Antonius Diogenes' narrator Deinias who, according to Photius, reported similar things that no-one had ever

[49] Genette 1997, 196–236. [50] *FGrH* 688 T 8.

seen, or heard of, or even imagined before.[51] Moreover, in a directly anti-Thucydidean note, Lucian predicts that his entirely fantastical text will be useful for the reader specifically insofar as it is entertaining *and* untrue. Lucian uses his prologue, therefore, to provide a striking advocacy for the value of fiction for the scholarly reader, and for the utility of pleasure.[52]

In terms of the history of the prologue, Lucian's assertion of the novelty of his plot is also striking. According to Genette, claims about novelty feature only in authorial prefaces since Rousseau, since authors of the classical age preferred to insist instead on the traditional nature of their subject, either explicitly (as in tragedy) or indirectly, by indicating their sources or precedents.[53] Lucian, however, has it both ways. He can cite a list of literary precedents stretching as far back as Homer, but he can also boast of the novelty of his work both in terms of the exuberance of his fantasy and his unapologetic explicitness about his 'honest lying'. Like Diogenes, therefore, Lucian is using his peritext in innovative and paradoxical ways.

Both authors are also connected through another, even more intriguing aspect of their peritextual practice which, as far as I am aware, has never been discussed: their exploitation of the peritextual apparatus which is specific to technical works, especially ancient medical treatises. Diogenes' novel is equipped with the full technical infrastructure of prologue, dedication, pseudo-documentary authenticating strategies and source-references (as well as, possibly, an epilogal letter), which had the effect of fictionalizing *the text itself*, by making it *look like a work of technical scholarship*. The original *mise en livre* of *The incredible things beyond Thule* was a hugely important dimension of Diogenes' fiction but, like the spectacular dimension of ancient drama, it is barely translated in Photius' epitome, and must be reconstructed imaginatively in order to try to recover a sense of the ancient reader's full fictional experience of this work. Lucian does not go quite as far as Diogenes in fictionalizing the very structure of his text, but there are some striking resonances between *True stories* and Galenic treatises which also imbue Lucian's pseudo-history with the air of a serious treatise in a more impressionistic manner.

Interpretation of the pseudo-documentary fiction which prefaces Diogenes' novel is by no means straightforward. The story about the remarkable book-discovery in the letter to Isidora may, to modern eyes, smack

[51] Photius, *Bib.* 111 a4–11. For further deliberate connections between the two texts, see pp. 183–5.

[52] Genette 1997, 200; von Möllendorff 2000, 34–61. In the preface to *Daphnis and Chloe*, Longus also asserts the usefulness of his erotic fiction, but because of its therapeutic and paideutic function.

[53] Genette 1997, 200.

straightforwardly of fiction, but for all the airy comparisons with modern pseudo-documentary novels like *The name of the rose*, there is actually nothing self-evident about such fictions at all. This is not only because, though many readers may realize intuitively that such tales are not literally true, there are always readers who believe these 'lost texts' really do exist (Eco himself attests to receiving numerous letters requesting information about the whereabouts of Adso's manuscript in the early days of *The name of the rose*);[54] in antiquity, even more so, the equivocality was exacerbated by the fact that claims about rediscovered texts were regularly used as an authenticating device in the prefaces not only of fictions, but of serious technical and scholarly treatises as well.

Although Winkler describes the 'quest for secret wisdom' motif in these texts in some detail in his discussion of analogies for the plot of Apuleius' novel,[55] it is worth revisiting some of the detail here in order to demonstrate how, precisely, these narratives from technical treatises map onto Diogenes' peritextual strategy in *The incredible things.* The treatise *On the virtues of plants* which is ascribed to Thessalus of Tralles provides an excellent example of this authentication-strategy used to package a serious didactic text. The text, a collection of herbal remedies complete with instructions about the appropriate times for harvesting the ingredients, comes down to us in two recensions: the 'Thessalus-text' which is ascribed to Thessalus, a wonder-healer of the first century CE, and the 'Hermes-text' which is ascribed to the god Hermes Trismegistus.[56] The Thessalus-text can be reconstructed out of the complex jigsaw of Latin and Greek manuscripts from both recensions.[57] The Greek treatise was framed by an introduction where 'Thessalus' set forth his credentials as a scholar and explained the provenance of the work. There was also an epilogue where Thessalus thanked the god Asklepios for his revelations and received instructions to keep the precious text a secret.

[54] Eco 2006, 218. [55] Winkler 1985, 257–73.

[56] The text is in Friedrich 1968. There is a helpful translation of the prologue, with some commentary, in Ogden 2009, 52–4 (note, however, that Ogden's translation is based primarily on the BH mansucripts of the Greek Hermes-text, which differs in some details from the Thessalus-text I refer to here). For discussion of the prologue's narrative, see Winkler 1985, 258–60 (with further bibliography) and Hansen 2003, 310–11.

[57] It is represented in Greek in only one surviving manuscript (T), which contains most of the introductory *Fundbericht*, but breaks off early in Book 1. This incomplete Greek text is supplemented by Latin manuscripts (M, V and P), two of which (M and P) also contain a slightly different *Fundbericht* from the Greek version in T. All three Latin manuscripts also preserve a return to this framing device in an epilogue which is not transmitted in the Greek Thessalus-text, but is found (again with some difference in detail) in the Greek manuscripts of the Hermes-text. For a fuller analysis of the complex manuscript tradition, see Friedrich 1968, 13–36.

The preface takes the form – significantly – of a *letter* written in the person of Thessalus to the Emperor Claudius or Nero.[58] In this letter Thessalus narrates his meteoric ascent to fame and fortune as the foremost physician in Rome, beginning with his success as a *Wunderkind* of 'grammatical science' in Asia, and followed by his equally triumphant conquest of the field of medicine in Alexandria. Once his studies were complete, before returning home to Rome, he went searching through libraries for texts which he could use in his future career, and discovered a book by the pharaoh Nechepso which contained twenty-four marvellous treatments.[59] Excited by the wonders promised by the book, Thessalus wrote to his parents, confidently announcing the authenticity of his discovery and his imminent return home. Disaster strikes, however, when all experiments to test the treatments' efficacy fail. Thessalus, repenting his greed-driven gullibility and feeling Nechepso's deception 'harsher than death', is forced to leave Alexandria in disgrace. In tones of melodrama, he relates how he was too ashamed to return to Rome, and wandered around Egypt as a tragic figure, 'driven by a gadfly of the soul', in a desperate quest to locate some genuine arcane medical knowledge with which to recuperate his ruined reputation and make good his boasting about the Nechepso book. Fortunately in Diospolis (Thebes), the most ancient city of Egypt, Thessalus encounters learned high priests who appear to possess the magic he desires. One old priest agrees to arrange a lecanomantic encounter with Asklepios, the god of medicine and healing. After three days of purification, Thessalus enters a room in a house which has been prepared for the magical epiphany. Without the old priest's knowledge, he cunningly smuggles in papyrus and ink, so that he can write down the god's words, and he requests to speak to Asklepios in private. Reluctantly, the priest agrees. When Asklepios appears, he assures Thessalus that he will win great success and even be worshipped as a god, then begins his learned exposition, which Thessalus records in two books. After the divine discourse, in an epilogue,[60] he records the god's instructions to keep the text a closely guarded secret

[58] The Greek text T actually reads: 'Harpokration to Caesar Augustus, greetings' (Ἁρποκρατίων Καίσαρι Αὐγούστῳ χαίρειν), but later in the preface Asklepios addresses Thessalus by name (prooem. 25), thus confirming Thessalus as the letter-writer. The name 'Harpokration' may have been imported from the prefatorial letter to the first books of the *Kyranides*, where 'Harpokration' plays a similar role to Thessalus as the discoverer of a wisdom-text.

[59] On the importance of novelty (novel strategies, cures, techniques etc.) for establishing one's reputation as a doctor, see Pliny *NH* 29.11.

[60] As explained earlier, the Greek Thessalus-text (T) breaks off in Book 1, so does not include the epilogue; I therefore follow the version in the Latin manuscript P, which is an extension of T.

because the information it contains is so powerful that, if it became common knowledge, it would eradicate the need for any other form of medicine and consequently all other branches of the discipline would decline into obsolescence. Thessalus' book, then, is the medical book to end all medical books. Like Diogenes' preface, the Thessalus-fiction also dramatizes, self-reflexively, the excitement – and interpretive pitfalls – which confront the reader of his medical treatise;[61] however, the primary purpose of this narrative frame is to vouch for the authenticity of the treatise and enhance the authority of the medical knowledge it contains.[62]

There is another, fascinating example of pseudo-documentary fiction put to serious use in the *Compounds* (*Cheirokmēta*), an astral-herbal treatise which was attributed in antiquity to Democritus, but was widely believed to be the work of Bolus of Mendes, an Egyptian physican of the second century BCE.[63] In antiquity pseudepigraphical works were commonly attached in this way to famous names such as Plato, Empedocles or Pythagoras, in order to enhance their authority.[64] For Bolus, Democritus' associations with philosophy, healing and sorcery made him an obvious choice for a treatise on medicine and magic. The text of Bolus' *Compounds* itself does not survive, but we have relatively detailed accounts of it from Columella and the elder Pliny. Columella refers to Bolus as a 'celebrated author of Egyptian race . . . whose notebooks, which have the Greek title χειρόκμητα (*Compounds*), are circulated under the pseudonym of Democritus'.[65] The fact that Columella is so unequivocal in his assertion of Bolus' authorship suggests that Bolus introduced himself in the introductory frame of *Compounds* as the editor of a pseudo-documentary Democritean treatise (which, in fact, he had himself composed). Evidently, this was then followed by a second preface which was integral to the Democritean treatise itself, where 'Democritus' explained the origins of his work in an elaborate

[61] The presence of the fraudulent Nechepso book especially intensifies the equivocal truth-status of the pseudo-documentary fiction; for discussion, see ní Mheallaigh 2014.

[62] It is also obviously contrived to swell Thessalus' prestige. Thessalus was famous for aggressive self-promotion of this nature: according to Pliny (*NH* 29.5.9), his statue on the Appian Way sported the inscription *Iatronikēs*, 'Doctor-Conqueror'.

[63] See Columella, *On Agriculture* 7.5.17. Pliny is aware of the controversy as well: at *NH* 24.160 he reports the *communis opinio* that *Compounds* is by Democritus, but contests the text's claims to Democritean authorship at 30.9–10. On Bolus, see Speyer 1970, 72–3; Winkler 1985, 260–2; Dickie 1999 and 2001, 119–22.

[64] In the pseudo-documentary preface to the *Oracles of Astrampsychos*, for example, the eponymous Astrampsychos claims he discovered the text in a temple in Egypt, and that its original author was the philosopher Pythagoras (text in Stewart 2001, with translation in Hansen 1998). Hansen (2003, 304–5) compares this work's pseudo-documentary authenticating strategy with those of Dictys and Antonius Diogenes.

[65] *On agriculture* 7.5.17.

account of his travels and research, in a manner that was similar to the preface of pseudo-Thessalus of Tralles' treatise. We know from Pliny that Democritus' narrative included an account of his travels and study with the *magoi* of Persia, Arabia and Egypt,[66] during which time he produced a commentary on the ancient works of Apollobex of Coptos and Dardanus of Phoenicia, having infiltrated Dardanus' tomb to find his books, and published his own work on the basis of the erudition which he garnered from these sepulchral texts.[67] In *Compounds*, therefore, we have a *double*-disavowal: Bolus presented himself as the editor of a work which (he claims) had been authored by Democritus, who in turn claimed to have based his treatise on the texts of more ancient authors. Bolus' extraordinary double pseudo-documentary frame is surpassed in complexity only by the double-preface of *The incredible things beyond Thule*; indeed, it is likely that Bolus' work directly influenced Diogenes' novel, which was itself full of learned excurses on topics which included magic, astronomy and botany.

Finally, there is the pseudo-documentary fiction prefacing the magico-medical treatise known as the *Kyranides*. This text circulated in a fluid state for centuries in antiquity. The arrangement of the cluster of texts which we now know as the *Kyranides* dates probably to the fourth century, although the origins of much of the contents were thought to be much earlier; some possibly dating to the first century.[68] The story of the text's origins was summarized in a prologue, two versions of which have been transmitted. The shorter version is attributed to the Persian king Kyranus, who claims that the text was a gift from God, delivered to mankind by Hermes Trismegistus, and that it was originally inscribed in Syrian letters on a column of iron which was submerged in a lake in Syria. A much more detailed *Fundbericht* is found in the version of the prologue which is attributed to Harpocration.[69] In a letter to his daughter, Harpokration described his travels around the territory of Babylon, where he was joined

[66] Pliny *NH* 30.8–10. Although, as Winkler (1985, 261–2) points out, Pliny does not actually name Bolus here, it is beyond reasonable doubt that Bolus is indeed his source: first, because Pliny's reference to Democritus is part of a catalogue of Greek authors who wrote treatises on *magic* (at *NH* 25.156 Pliny again mentions Democritus' travels in the context of scholarship on 'miraculous plants'); and second, because Pliny's claim that Democritus' authorship was widely disavowed also points to Bolus' *Compounds*.

[67] Pliny, *NH* 30, 9: *Democritus Apollobechen Coptitem et Dardanum e Phoenice inlustrauit, uoluminibus Dardani in sepulcrum eius petitis, suis uero ex disciplina eorum editis*. This behaviour was characteristic of Democritus, who is similarly believed to have assimilated a Babylonian text, an inscription on the pillar of Achiqar, into his own work on ethics (Clement, *Strom.*1.15.69). Lucian also refers to Democritus' sepulchral scholarship in Tychiades' mock 'haunted house' tale in *Philopseudes* 32.

[68] See Faraone 1999, 121. On the dating of the text, see Alpers 1984.

[69] The text is in Kaimakis 1976.

by an old Syrian who acted as his guide. Some distance from the city of Seleucia, they happened upon a remarkable *stēlē* of iron, which was inscribed in Syrian writing. His Syrian guide interprets the inscription for him, which turned out to be a wisdom-text which contained information about the healing powers of plants, animals and stones and how to use them. This is the text which Harpocration claims to have translated in his Greek treatise. Both the shorter and longer versions of the *Kyranides* prologue are mediated through an editor who remains anonymous but makes his or her presence clearly felt. In the longer version, for example, the editor intervenes at several points to abbreviate Harpocration's original text: Harpocration, it seems, had a tendency towards prolixity and his prologue had included detailed accounts of his tourist activities which the editor ruthlessly truncates.[70] Mirroring this, in his original prologue, Harpocration also claims to filter and modify his source, the old Syrian guide, for example by eliding the Syrian's lengthy account of the god's countless powers.[71] The prologue therefore presents the reader – like Bolus – with a *double* process of mediation: Harpocration's summary of what the old Syrian had told him, which is then further condensed in the hands of the anonymous editor.

Diogenes' complex prologue in *The incredible things beyond Thule* therefore had direct and precise parallels in the field of medico-magical *arcana*, and as perusal of these texts shows, his pseudo-documentary fiction would have invested the novel, for ancient readers, very clearly with the appearance of a 'scientific' technical treatise. This is no accident, for other elements in Diogenes' peritext also straddle the borders of technical literature and fiction in such as way as to exacerbate the indeterminacy of the narrative's truth-status even further, converting the novel into a strange amalgam which might best be described as 'tecnifiction'. The novel's structure of twenty-four books, which (complete with a trip to the world of the dead) evokes the *Odyssey*, may appear – superficially at least – to lend the novel the gloss of fiction, but the truth-value of Homer's geography was itself notoriously disputed and controversial in antiquity,[72] so this intertext is

[70] See *Kyranides* I *Prol.* (t) 33–5: 'We have no need to reproduce all the details about that city, as Harpocration has done at great length, so as not to be forever tarrying in prefatory material, but to return to the subject in hand . . . ' ἡμεῖς δὲ τὰ περὶ τῆς πόλεως ἐκείνης, ὡς ἐκεῖνος μακρῷ λόγῳ, οὐ χρείαν ἔχομεν ἀναγράφειν, ἵνα μὴ ἀεὶ ἐν τοῖς προοιμίοις ἐνασχολώμεθα, ὅπως ἐπὶ τὸ προκείμενον τοῦ σκοποῦ ἐπανέλθωμεν (translation from Ogden 2009).

[71] *Kyranides* I *Prol.*(t) 62–3: καὶ ἔλεγε μυρίας τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεις, ἃς οὐ χρὴ καταλέγειν. Iamblichus, the most resistant to Hellenism of all the novelists, cuts out this Greek intermediary entirely and presents *himself* as the Syrian/Babylonian source of wisdom for his *Babylonian Tales* directly.

[72] For discussion, see Romm 1992, 183–96 and Kim 2010, 47–84.

less straightforward than it might initially seem to be. Diogenes' scholarly list of sources further blurs the boundaries between fiction and scholarship. This list of sources is often described as a form of 'table of contents', with frequent comparisons to the *summarium* of Pliny's *Natural history*, a text which belongs to the earlier first century CE and may have influenced Diogenes directly.[73] However, as I have already mentioned, there is another possible model as well, from the field of medical literature: the medical treatise *Compounds* by Scribonius Largus, also in the first century CE. Like the *Natural history*, Scribonius' work contained a prologue *as well as* a substantial table of contents. Furthermore, Scribonius ended his treatise with a peritextual epilogue which may possibly have been mirrored in Diogenes' novel, if the letter to Faustinus was epilogal.[74] Either way, Diogenes' combination of pseudo-documentary prologue with a list of sources evokes an intertextual matrix from both real and pseudo-scientific literature.

Some caution is required in how we interpret Diogenes' source-references in light of the Plinian and Scribonian models. In spite of some overlap, these two peritextual devices were distinct in substance and purpose: Pliny's *summarium* (like Scribonius' table of contents) contains a list of the topics covered in each book of the work along with his source-references. It therefore had two functions, which Pliny explains in his preface: (1) to help the reader navigate the text;[75] and (2) to acknowledge the author's debts to scholarly predecessors and not simply steal from their work.[76] This combination of functions assimilates this peritextual element in Pliny's and Scribonius' work *both* to the modern table of contents or index, which are primarily reading-aids,[77] *and* to the modern footnote-reference or bibliography, which are – ostensibly, at least – devices of academic honesty and accountability (but whose purpose may be just as easily thwarted as any other authenticating strategy).[78] According to Photius, Diogenes' list contained merely the names of his sources, and was designed primarily as an authenticating strategy, not as a reading-aid (though presumably readers could also have used it as an index, had they so wished). This brings Diogenes' source-references closer to the footnote-function (or the latter

[73] Tentatively suggested by Bowie 2007, 128. Dowden (2009, 166) makes the connection explicitly: 'Like Pliny the Elder (who died of course in AD 79, the previous generation?), he cites his authorities book by book, but the ludic dimension has taken over.'

[74] For discussion, see Chapter 4, pp. 111–16.

[75] *NH pr.* 33.

[76] *NH pr.* 21–3.

[77] See Doody 2001.

[78] George MacDonald Fraser's *Flashman* books are a well-known illustration of the specious use of footnotes as an authenticating strategy, but perhaps the most systematic exploitation of scholarly apparatus in modern narrative fiction is Nabokov's *Pale fire*. For fuller discussion of Diogenes' Nabokovian tendencies, see pp. 157–8. On the spurious footnote in modern texts, see Lügner 2013.

of Pliny's two aims for his *summarium*). And *this* makes Diogenes' list our earliest analogue for the specious or playful use of a peritextual referencing apparatus, which has been appropriated from serious scholarship in order to authenticate claims which are explicitly fictitious.[79]

For the reader, Diogenes' extraordinary peritext offers a cacophony of conflicting messages which reflects the paradoxical nature of the text itself, which is neither unequivocally fact nor fiction, but a unique hybrid of research-trip plus romance: Deinias, after all, sets out for the purpose of exploratory research (*kata zētēsin historias*), and the narrative is punctuated all the way with learned excurses on subjects such as botany, astronomy, magic and philosophy.[80] Perhaps we should be wary of the desire to extricate 'fact' so distinctly from 'fiction' in this way, as ancient readers seem to have had a more flexible attitude to what constituted 'fact' – especially if we judge from genres such as paradoxography and, even more strikingly, the prefaces of the technical literature which I have explored here. If Bolus, the author of the Thessalus-text and other writers of technical treatises could use fiction to authenticate their scholarship, then Diogenes is either taking their strategy to the extreme by embellishing his scholarship with an elaborately fleshed-out plot – or else, if viewed from the opposite perspective, he is sprinkling his fiction with edifying excurses of fact. However we may choose to describe it, *The incredible things beyond Thule* is undeniably *both* fiction *and* fact, both erudition *and* entertainment, rolled up in one.

Although it has gone entirely unnoticed in scholarship (as far as I am aware), Lucian also plays a more modest version of Diogenes' game with the truth-status of his text in *True stories* by evoking the language and peritextual conventions of medical treatises in a way that muddles the truth-status of his fantasy. There is a striking similarity between Lucian's famous preface in *True stories* and a passage from the treatise *On the nature of semen* by his contemporary Galen:[81]

> It is better to listen to what Hippocrates says about the same matters in his treatise *On the nature of the child. For he will instruct us* with the *accuracy of his observation* and *entertain us* by combining his narrative with a style

[79] On Diogenes' playful scholarship or 'fictionalized facts', see Stephens and Winkler 1995, 102–9, esp. 108–9.

[80] Romm 1994, esp. 105–6 briefly discusses pseudo-scientific elements in the narrative; for more extensive discussion, see Rohde 1960, 259–67.

[81] von Möllendorff (2000, 330 n. 49) discusses the relative dating of the two authors. Famously, Galen is the only contemporary who refers to Lucian; for speculation about the possible relationship between the two authors, see Strohmaier 1976 and Macleod 1979.

> which *relieves the serious nature of the work briefly* and promises *refreshment* through its *combination of pleasure and useful benefit*, in order that we may be rejuvenated afterwards (ἑξῆς νεανικώτεροι γενόμενοι) and *exert ourselves with greater zeal for the rest of the work*. So then, let's listen to Hippocrates: '*I shall tell the story of how of how I observed a foetus six days old*...'[82]

I have italicized in the passage the places where Galen's language most strikingly resembles Lucian's in the preface to *True stories*: this is especially clear in the doctor's emphasis on the need for lighthearted but edifying respite from more serious scholarship, the positive effect of which is the sharpening of the scholar's zeal for subsequent study. Although this passage is embedded in the midst of Galen's treatise, it is quasi-prologal in function, given that its purpose is explicitly to introduce Galen's reader to an unusual narrative by Hippocrates, who then appears to take over the narrative by speaking *in propria persona*. The story is about a prostitute who successfully induces a miscarriage by following Hippocrates' instructions to jump up and down vigorously, kicking her buttocks until the foetus drops out. Galen's recommendation of the narrative's instructive value for his readers, which is based on the accuracy of Hippocrates' medical observation of the case, is clear enough, for the story contains precise details of the time-frame of the abortion, the nature of the girl's intervention, as well as a realistic description of the expelled embryo itself. It is rather more difficult, perhaps, to empathize equally with Galen's enthusiasm for the story's pleasurable qualities as 'entertainment' – but as Peter Bing and Regina Höschele show in their commentary on the epistolographer Aristaenetus, the story did indeed have a curious *Nachleben* in the erotic narrative tradition, as it resurfaces in Aristaenetus' erotic letters in the early sixth century CE,[83] and Galen himself refers to the story several times in his works.[84] This medical case-study is clearly, if (to modern tastes) bizarrely, a story which excited ancient readers' literary tastebuds, and Galen intends that

[82] Galen *On semen* 525 (vol. 4 p. 525 Kühn): ἄμεινον δὲ Ἱπποκράτους ἀκοῦσαι περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγοντος ἐν τῷ περὶ φύσεως παιδίου γράμματι· παιδεύσει τε γὰρ ἡμᾶς τῷ τῆς θεωρίας ἀκριβεῖ, καὶ τέρψει, κεράσας οἵᾳ δὴ λέξει τὴν διήγησιν, ὥστ' ἐπανιέναι τε βραχὺ τὸ σφοδρὸν τοῦ λόγου, καὶ διαναπαύεσθαι σὺν ὠφελείᾳ τερπόμενον, ἵν' ἑξῆς νεανικώτεροι γενόμενοι συντείνωμεν ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀκμαιότερον ἐπὶ τὸ κατάλοιπον τοῦ λόγου. καὶ τοίνυν ἤδη ἀκούσωμεν τοῦ Ἱπποκράτους. Ὡς δὲ εἶδον τὴν γονὴν ἑκταίην ἐοῦσαν, ἐγὼ διηγήσομαι... Hunter (2012, 22) notes the similar (albeit briefer) recommendation of Menander as refreshment for philosophers and scholars in the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* 854b–c.

[83] Aristaenetus 1.19.16–29; Bing and Höschele 2014.

[84] *On the formation of the foetus* pp. 653–5 Kühn; *On the natural faculties*, p. 86 Kühn; *Against Lycus*, p. 236 Kühn. I owe thanks to Peter Bing for these references, which were provided as part of his paper 'Grand larcenies: the poetics of allusion in the late antique epistolographer Aristaenetus' at a conference Rethinking Late Hellenistic Literature and the Second Sophistic at St Andrews University, 5–6 September 2013.

it shall divert medical scholars in much the same way as Lucian, in the preface to *True stories*, expects *his* fantastic narrative to entertain and edify scholars of literature.[85] The similarity with Galen imbues Lucian's prescription of the therapeutic value of his fiction with medical overtones which may have sounded more clearly to the ancient ear than for the modern reader.

The Galenic notes of the prologue are resumed in Lucian's *explicit* at the opposite end of the narrative, where Lucian ends, famously, with the (empty) promise of further books:

> These, therefore, are the things which happened to me in the sea as far as the Other Continent and during the voyage among the islands and in the air and after that in the whale and, when we emerged, among the heroes and the dreams and finally among the Bull-heads and the Ass-legs; *the things which happened on the Continent I shall narrate in the following books.*[86]

I shall discuss the fictionality of this *explicit* later in this chapter,[87] but for now I would like to draw attention to the precise intertextual frame of reference for Lucian's closural promise of 'further books'. It is sometimes thought that Lucian's anti-closural ending imitates the ending of Thucydides' *History* (8.109), which breaks off in mid-narrative in a similar way.[88] But this similarity is vague only; there are much more direct parallels, including close verbal echoes, in Galen's regular practice of ending his medical treatises with a reference to further discussions in forthcoming volumes. The closest, verbally, to Lucian's ending is the *explicit* to his treatise *On the dissection of the uterus*, where Galen refers to aspects of foetal membranes 'all of which will be discussed in the following book' (ἐν τῷ ἐφεξῆς λόγῳ πάντα εἰρήσεται), and to the vessels which feed the embryo which 'will also be discussed separately in another book, in the *Anatomy of the Embryo*' (καθ' αὑτὰ εἰρήσεται ἐν ἑτέρῳ λόγῳ, ἐν τῇ τοῦ Ἐμβρύου ἀνατομῇ).[89] Galen similarly ends his treatise *On maintaining good health* with the promise that another book will be written about parts of the

[85] This inevitably brings to mind the late antique physician Theodorus Priscianus' well-known recommendation of reading *erōtikoi logoi* to cure sexual impotence (*Euporista* 2.11.34). There seems to be a curious intersection between medical and erotic discourse in antiquity, which warrants closer inspection.

[86] *VH* 2.47: Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν τὰ μέχρι τῆς ἑτέρας γῆς συνενεχθέντα μοι ἐν τῇ θαλάττῃ καὶ παρὰ τὸν πλοῦν ἐν ταῖς νήσοις καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀέρι καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐν τῷ κήτει καὶ ἐπεὶ ἐξήλθομεν, παρά τε τοῖς ἥρωσι καὶ τοῖς ὀνείροις καὶ τὰ τελευταῖα παρὰ τοῖς Βουκεφάλοις καὶ ταῖς Ὀνοσκελέαις, τὰ δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν ταῖς ἑξῆς βίβλοις διηγήσομαι.

[87] See pp. 181–3.

[88] Whitmarsh (2011, 185), tentatively.

[89] Galen, *On the dissection of the uterus*, p. 908 Kühn.

body which have an uneven or irregular composition (ἕτερος ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς εἰρήσεται λόγος).[90] *On the diagnosis of the pulse* ends with the promise to deal with everything related to the twisted position of arteries, and all other details which he initiated in the present volume, 'in two treatises which are currently in progress' (ταῦτ᾽ ἐν ταῖς ἐχομέναις δύο πραγματείαις εἰρήσεται), one of which will be dedicated to the causes which are related to the pulse and the other to prognosis based on the pulse, which will be in four books.[91] *On the causes of disease*, similarly, ends with the declaration that 'it would be time now for me, having finished this work at this point, to discuss the difference of symptoms *in the following work*' (καιρὸς ἂν εἴη μοι καὶ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐνταυθοῖ καταπαύσαντι περὶ τῆς τῶν συμπτωμάτων διαφορᾶς ἐφεξῆς διελθεῖν).[92] The passages which I have emphasized here all closely resemble each other in expression. Even closer to the spirit of Lucian's *explicit* is the more non-committal ending of the treatise *On difficulties in respiration*, where Galen expresses the *hope* to pursue a topic further in future books, if he has the time:

> If ever I have more time, I shall add another, fourth book (ἄλλο τέταρτον προσθήσω βιβλίον) setting forth what Hippocrates said about difficulties in respiration in the remainder of his works. But for now, since other business is pressing, I will not pursue those matters.[93]

Both Lucian and Diogenes therefore adapt not only thematic material from the hinterland of serious scholarship (historiography, science and medicine as well as the more equivocal fields of exploration-narrative and *apista*), but they also appropriate some of the peritextual conventions which were the hallmark of such texts, producing audacious tecnifictions where even the bookscape itself was a part of the game. This demonstrates vividly the active role played by the *mise en livre* in constructing the reading experience – more than a millennium in advance of the printing press and the advent of the 'age of the book'.

[90] Galen, *On maintaining good health*, p. 452 Kühn.

[91] Galen, *On the diagnosis of the pulse*, p. 961 Kühn: ὅσα γὰρ ἢ περὶ τῆς διαστρόφου θέσεως τῶν ἀρτηριῶν, ἢ περί τινος ἄλλου τῶν κατὰ μέρος εἰς τόνδε τὸν λόγον ἀνεβαλλόμην, ταῦτ᾽ ἐν ταῖς ἐχομέναις δύο πραγματείαις εἰρήσεται, τῇ τε περὶ τῶν ἐν σφυγμοῖς αἰτίων κᾀν τῇ δι᾽ αὐτῶν προγνώσει, τεττάρων ἑκατέρᾳ βιβλίων ἐσομένῃ.

[92] Galen, *On the causes of disease*, p. 41 Kühn.

[93] Galen, *On difficulties in respiration*, p. 960 Kühn: ἐάν μοι σχολὴ γένηταί ποτε πλείων, ἄλλο τέταρτον προσθήσω βιβλίον, ἐξηγούμενον ἃ κατὰ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ἐπιγεγραμμένων Ἱπποκράτους εἴρηται περὶ δυσπνοίας. νυνὶ δ᾽ ἑτέρων κατεπειγόντων, οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἐκεῖνα μεταβήσομαι.

Dramatizing the peritext in Lucian's *True stories*

Several features of the fictional world of *True stories* invite the reader to ponder aspects of the material text in relation to the narrative's central problematization of truth and lies, reality and fiction. I shall examine here the ways in which Lucian dramatizes the role of the author's name, which is ordinarily a feature of the peritext, within *True stories*' narrative, how his inscription on the Isle of the Blessed subverts the authority of the peritext, and how the reader's negotiation of book-divisions become entwined with Lucian's fictional adventures in the narrative itself.

In his critical analysis of the paratext, Genette considers the various ways in which the presence of an author's name (onymity), or lack thereof (anonymity), impinges on our reading of the text:

> The author's name fulfils a contractual function whose importance varies greatly depending on genre: slight or nonexistent in fiction, it is much greater in all kinds of referential writing, where the credibility of the testimony, or of its transmission, rests largely on the identity of the witness or the person reporting it. Thus we see very few pseudonyms or anonyms among authors of historical or documentary works, and this is all the more true when the witness himself plays a part in his narrative.[94]

The author's name is a form of signature, a formal assertion of responsibility for the text, which guarantees that the work is his.[95] The more well-known the author becomes, the more meaning this assignation acquires: to claim that a particular work is by Homer, or Herodotus, or Plato then means something more than that Homer, Herodotus or Plato produced it; it assigns to these works a unique quality that can be understood only with reference to works by Homer, Herodotus, or Plato. This association becomes increasingly complex, the more texts are associated with any given author's name, as the author's name then designates each individual work as representative of a class or type.[96] The more well-known an author is, the more defined the expectations which the reader will have of the text. It follows, then, that any alteration to the authorial name will affect the reader's expectations as well. And if onymity can affect particular readerly expectations, then the citation of another author's name – a feature which I will call 'metonymity' – can be used to elicit different types of responses from the reader as well.

[94] Genette 1997, 41. For a general discussion of onymity, see Genette 1997, 37–41.
[95] Lejeune 1982, 196–200.
[96] On the classificatory function of the author's name, see Foucault 1979, 147.

Nothing illustrates the power of the author's name in antiquity more clearly than the lucrative business of forgery: a well-known author's name was hard currency, as texts bearing the name of a famous or popular author commanded cultural prestige as well as a higher price. Martial complains frequently about the plagiarism of his work in Rome in the first century CE.[97] According to Galen, the libraries' competitive demand for copies of rare books stimulated the forgery trade, and he even witnessed the circulation of forged treatises bearing his own name.[98] Lucian's own Heraclitean forgery demonstrates his sensitivity to the power and prestige of the author's name.[99] Across his own works he plays complex games with the name of his authorial persona, studiously avoiding use of his actual name *Loukianos* (except in a few significant cases, as we shall see) in favour of sobriquets such as *Parrhesiades* or *Lycinus* which hint strongly at Lucian's identity. *True stories*, with its fascination with the peritext, dramatizes the contractual power of the authorial name – both other authors' and Lucian's own – with particular energy, offering us insight into the role of onymity in ancient literature.

True stories fetishizes the authorial name. The prologal voice refuses to name the authors – ancient poets, historians and philosophers – to whom he alludes throughout the text, relying instead on his learned readers' ability to recognise these authors for themselves.[100] In a playful extension of this strategy, the narrator-author withholds his own name until late in the second book (2.28), where, as we shall see, it is revealed obliquely, in a verse inscription composed by the poet Homer, whose own name is revealed in the narrative to pun on the poet's period as a hostage (*homēreusas*) among the Greeks; his true name is 'Tigranes'.[101] Such onomastic riddling in *True stories* focuses the reader's attention more sharply on the occasions where authors *are* named – and in fact, shortly after the declaration of a policy of *not* recording names, three authors are identified as predecessors in the sort of truth-games on which Lucian bases his experimental fantasy.[102]

[97] *Ep.*1. 29; 1. 38; 1. 52; 1. 53; 1. 66; 1. 72; 2. 20; 10. 100; 10. 102; 11. 94; 12. 63.

[98] Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis commentarium* II, praef. 109. 5–9 (*CMG* vol. 9.1, p. 57) and *On his own books* 19. 8–9.

[99] On ancient literary forgeries in general, see Speyer 1971.

[100] *VH* 1.2: 'whom I would also have written in by name, if it were not the case that they would be obvious to you from reading'. οὓς καὶ ὀνομαστὶ ἂν ἔγραφον, εἰ μὴ καὶ αὐτῷ σοι ἐκ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως φανεῖσθαι ἔμελλον.

[101] *VH* 2.20. For discussion of Homer's name and nationality in *True stories*, see von Möllendorff 2000, 367–369; Nesselrath 2002; Matteuzzi 2002. For etymologies of the name Homer, which probably began in the fourth century BCE with Aristotle and Ephorus, see Graziosi 2002, 79–81.

[102] Editors postulate a *lacuna* in the text before the name *Ktēsias*. Suggested supplementary readings such as ὧν or οἷον (Bekker) render these authors exemplary or more generically representative of the works to which Lucian alludes throughout the *VH*.

Each of the names activates a different contractual understanding with the reader, in a sequence of diminishing authorial culpability for the text's mendacity: from the deceitful Indographer Ctesias who tried to conceal his lies under the pose of historiography and to deceive the reader by writing 'things which he had neither seen himself, nor heard from any truthful source',[103] to Iambulus who, in contrast, revelled transparently in his fabrication of oceanic wonders (*paradoxa*) and invited readers to join in the fun.[104] Homer, finally, is entirely exonerated from responsibility for the lies which his character Odysseus told; Odysseus' lies, moreover, have the power to delude only the most inexperienced and gullible readers such as the Phaeacians. Lucian is not interested in the empirical truth-value of these authors' works but, rather, in their relative transparency as liars. The three authorial names – Ctesias, Iambulus and Homer – trigger three different responses from the reader. Lucian in fact adopts aspects of each one's work to his own project: like Ctesias, he exploits the tropes of historiography to cloak his lies as fact, but – like Iambulus – he exposes the falsity of all his claims from the start. Like Homer, he too will create an *alter ego*, Lucian the narrator, who may lie with Odysseus-like abandon, whilst Lucian the author remains free from blame. Lucian uses metonymy again to define himself further as an author at two points in the narrative. Upon seeing the kingdom of Cloudcuckooland with his own eyes, he recalls the poet Aristophanes: 'And I remembered the poet Aristophanes, a wise and truthful man, and wrongly disbelieved on account of what he wrote.'[105] Later, during his brief tour of the Isle of the Wicked, he sees the authors Herodotus and Ctesias:

> And undergoing the harshest punishment of all were those who had falsified something during their life and those who had not written the truth, amongst whom was Ctesias of Cnidos and Herodotus and many others.

[103] *VH* 1.3: συνέγραψεν περὶ τῆς Ἰνδῶν χώρας καὶ τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς ἃ μήτε αὐτὸς εἶδεν μήτε ἄλλου ἀληθεύοντος ἤκουσεν. The text of Ctesias' *Indika*, an ethnographical work in one book, is lost; for our knowledge of it we rely on Photius' epitome (*Bibl. cod.* 72, p. 45a, 20 ff.) together with numerous scattered testimonia; see Bigwood 1989. Ctesias' works were notorious for their unreliability in antiquity; at *VH* 2.31 Ctesias appears with Herodotus as one of the arch-liars in the after-life; cf. also *Philops.* 2.

[104] *VH* 1.3: ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ Ἰαμβοῦλος περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ θαλάττῃ πολλὰ παράδοξα, γνώριμον μὲν ἅπασι τὸ ψεῦδος πλασάμενος, οὐκ ἀτερπῆ δὲ ὅμως συνθεὶς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν. In spite of Lucian's confidence that his lie was 'recognised by everyone', the question of how to read Iambulus was far from clear in antiquity: Diodorus, on whose *Universal history* (5.41.4; 5.42.4; 6.1.3–11) we rely for our knowledge of Iambulus' text, regarded him as a serious historical source. Some quality evidently distinguished Ctesias' *Indika* from Iambulus' work in Lucian's mind: possibly, it was the fact that Ctesias wrote in a Herodotean vein, appealing disingenuously to eye-witnesses and reliable sources, whereas Iambulus composed in a more openly equivocal mode of paradoxography.

[105] *VH* 1.29: καὶ ἐγὼ ἐμνήσθην Ἀριστοφάνους τοῦ ποιητοῦ, ἀνδρὸς σοφοῦ καὶ ἀληθοῦς καὶ μάτην ἐφ' οἷς ἔγραψεν ἀπιστουμένου.

> Seeing these people, then, I had good hopes for the future – for I had never, as far as I was aware, uttered a single lie.[106]

Lucian's corroboration of the truthfulness of Aristophanes' most fantastic writing is ironic in the light of the avowed mendacity of his own narrative, but by praising Aristophanes, Lucian aligns himself with the genre of Old Comedy, which – like *True stories* itself – derived comic value from its exposure of its own fictionality, and involved the audience actively in the poet's interplay of the fictional world of the characters and the 'real' world of the audience.[107] Like *True stories*, Old Comedy also – by political necessity – played name-games, relying on its audience's ability to recognize topical allusions or the targets of satirical attacks, often without the poet's explicit identification of these targets. The presence of Aristophanes' name here reinforces the reading protocol for Lucian's text which is outlined in the prologue: that it is full of riddling references to authors of the past, which Lucian expects his reader to identify from his or her own reading.[108] The brief episode involving the punishment of the great liars Herodotus and Ctesias on the Isle of the Wicked evokes Lucian's ironic self-positioning in the prologue in a similar way.

There is a similar act of self-definition through metonymy in the preamble to Lucian's dialogue on lovers of lies, *Philopseudes*, where Tychiades aligns himself with Herodotus, Ctesias, Homer and the poets.[109] Lucian's use of metonymy – specifically with the names Homer, Herodotus or Ctesias – in these two passages, as well as the prologue, invites the reader to cross-reference them intertextually. In this way Lucian raises the reader's awareness that he is the author of more than one work and invites connections between *True stories* and *Philopseudes*, which are both thematically concerned with lies and fiction. This in turn generates an authorial identity that exists at a supra-textual level:[110] in other words, Lucian exploits

[106] *VH* 2.31: καὶ μεγίστας ἁπασῶν τιμωρίας ὑπέμενον οἱ ψευσάμενοί τι παρὰ τὸν βίον καὶ οἱ μὴ τὰ ἀληθῆ συγγεγραφότες, ἐν οἷς καὶ Κτησίας ὁ Κνίδιος ἦν καὶ Ἡρόδοτος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί. τούτους οὖν ὁρῶν ἐγὼ χρηστὰς εἶχον εἰς τοὐπιὸν τὰς ἐλπίδας· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ ψεῦδος εἰπόντι συνηπιστάμην.

[107] This happens especially in the *parabasis*: see Dover 1972, 49–65; on meta-theatre in Greek comedy, see also Bain 1977, 208 ff. and Chapman 1983. On the comic audience's active participation in the play, in contrast to the greater passivity expected of tragic audiences, see Taplin 1996, 26–7.

[108] *VH* 1.2. Sidwell (2000, 139–40) argues that the language here 'connects with remarks in the comic scholarship about the way in which the comedy of invective was forced to abandon openness for enigma at a certain stage.' There is evidence to suggest that poets of Old Comedy were constrained by civic rulers to 'encode' their satirical personal attacks: see Sidwell 2000, 139–40, with n. 13; Halliwell 1991.

[109] *Philops*. 2-3; see Chapter 3, pp. 80–3.

[110] See Lejeune 1982, 200: 'Perhaps one really becomes an author only with one's second book, when the name written on the cover is the common denominator for at least two different texts, and

authorial names to construct a distinctive ideology that can be identified, even across distinct works, as characteristically 'Lucianic'. Through his use of metonymy in *Philopseudes* and *True stories*, Lucian is exploring, self-reflexively, the implications of the onymity of his own works too, and what his own authorial name 'Lucian' might mean to a reader when it is attached to a text.

The naming of characters in a narrative is also a matter of profound contractual significance. Names that are understood by the reader as 'real', in the sense that they denote actual extra-diegetic individuals in the 'real' world outside the text, pull the narrative towards the referential pole of the reading-spectrum which is occupied by genres such as historiography which are generally read as 'true' in their references to the extra-diegetic world shared by reader and author.[111] When there is onomastic identity between the narrator, protagonist and author of a work, it generates for the reader the autobiographical pact which is a subspecies of this referential contract, as Philippe Lejeune has shown.[112] The corollary of this principle dictates that *non*-identity between author, narrator and protagonist is a pre-requisite of the contract of fiction.[113] Along with various peritextual markers, the author's choice of names for his or her characters provides vital clues for the reader in the business of working out what the text's truth-value is, and whether it should be read referentially as history or (auto)biography, say, or as fiction.

Across his works, Lucian exploits a middle-ground between the poles of referential and fictional writing by attributing to his principal *personae* names that flaunt the possibility of identity with the author, but deny the certainty or completeness of this connection, for example 'Lykinos' whose name invites the reader to identify him with the author 'Loukianos', and yet frustrates the certainty that Lykinos = Loukianos. Lucian's onomastic games have been interpreted variously: as autofiction, a strategy whereby Lucian fictionalises himself;[114] as authorial slipperiness – a game with a Platonic pedigree – and Lucian's exploration of cultural identity;[115] and as a 'comedy of nihilism' which thematizes 'the recurrent failure of any

thus gives the idea of a person who is not reducible to any particular one of his texts, and who, being capable of producing others, goes beyond all of them.'

111 Lejeune (1986, 71–2): 'Un nom réel . . . a une sorte de force magnétique; il communique à tout ce qu'il touche une aura de vérité.'

112 Lejeune 1982 and 1986, esp. 37–73.

113 Lejeune 1982, 204.

114 Dubel 1994.

115 See Goldhill (2002) 66: 'It is part of his staking out a position on what it might mean to be a somebody in Empire culture.' On Lucian's name-games as a play on Plato's specious authorial absence from his work, see ní Mheallaigh 2005.

search for authoritative "true" utterances'.[116] My own view is that Lucian's name-games cannot be interpreted in isolation from his fascination with the peritext which includes the effects of the author's name *in or around the text*.

In *True stories*, as the author tells us in his candid prologue, there is *no* correlation in truth between the adventures which are ascribed to the narrator-protagonist and the real author's life. When the narrator-protagonist's name is finally revealed in the inscription at *VH* 2.28, therefore, it comes as something of a surprise to find, not 'Lykinos' or another of Lucian's customary pseudonyms, but the authorial name 'Loukianos' itself:

> Lucian, dear to the blessed gods, saw all these things,
> and went back again to his dear ancestral land.[117]

This explicit revelation that the narrator-protagonist is homonymous with the author is more profoundly disquieting than the wildest of Lucian's mendacities about lunar creatures or warfare inside a whale because this is an instance where, instead of making something up and insisting it is true, Lucian has taken something *real* – his own name – and installed it in the fictional world. At this point the fantasy is no longer limited to subordinate story-worlds which the reader knows are not real; it is seeping out to contaminate the real world beyond the edges of the text, which is inhabited by author and reader. By inscribing his name into the world of *True stories*, the author himself comes under erasure, for if the reader is to follow the contract of reading faithfully, (s)he must deny Lucian's existence along with that of all other beings and events in the narrative. This generates an epistemological crisis for the reader, because the author is always assumed to be a real entity with an autonomous existence outside the text.[118]

116 Whitmarsh 2001, 252.

117 Λουκιανὸς τάδε πάντα φίλος μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν
εἶδέ τε καὶ πάλιν ἦλθε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.

118 See Lejeune 1982, 199–200: 'it [i.e. the author's name] is the only mark in the text of an indubitable "outside-of-the-text", designating a real person . . . Of course, the reader is not going to go out and verify it, and he may very well not know who this person is, but his existence is beyond question; exceptions and fraud only serve to emphasize the general credence given to this variety of social contract.' See also Lejeune 1986, 71: 'Même si le pacte n'est pas referential, même si en dehors du livre je n'ai aucune connaissance d'une personne réelle portant ce nom, le nom de l'auteur employé dans le texte me paraîtra réel.' The surprise identification of the narrator-protagonist of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* as 'Madaurensis' – from Madaura, the same birthplace as the author Apuleius himself (*Met.* 11.27) – generates a similar crisis of interpretation for the reader; see Winkler 1985, 153–79 and 218–19.

A similar crux is generated in the pair of dialogues, *Portraits* and *In defence of Portraits*, where Lucian again fictionalizes the author, but this time by *refusing* to inscribe his own name where it is undeniable that he is talking about himself. There is a similar sort of onomastic riddling in *Portraits* as in *True stories*; here, the name of the woman who is the subject of the speakers' praise is withheld but hinted at by means of a literary allusion to the author Xenophon as, once again, Lucian expects his learned readers to identify names from their reading.[119] Both of the dialogues are concerned with real contemporary figures, the Emperor Lucius Verus, his consort Panthea (with whom Lucian, who was associated with the imperial circle in the east during the 160s CE, would have been acquainted)[120] as well as Lucian himself as the author of the two works.[121] In a reversal of the surprise of *True stories* where the reader might expect a pseudonym and gets instead the real authorial name, in *Portraits* the speaker who identifies himself explicitly as the author of the texts is *not* synonymous with him: he is called Lykinos. With a name of such tantalizing proximity to that of the author, Lucian is toying with his reader and compelling him or her to question the text's referentiality and, more specifically, to realise the importance of the authorial name in settling such questions:[122] can these texts be speaking about the *real* author if his name is not Loukianos but Lykinos? And yet, in spite of the name, it is hard to accept that the instinct to read referentially is, after all, wrong: the name 'Lykinos' becomes, by the simple adjustment of a few letters, 'Loukianos'. As in *True stories*, the name-game in the *Portraits* dialogues illustrates the gravitational pull of the real or fictionalized name, but it also uses the author's name to draw attention, in a very modernist way, to the unsettling power of individual letters – the very atoms of literature – to reconstruct entirely the way we read.[123]

In a fictional text, the author's name belongs in the peritext, where it can safely designate a real person who exists in the world outside the narrative. In fact, in *all* other extant examples of imperial prose fiction, with the

[119] *Im.* 10.

[120] Among Lucian's works, the *Hist.co.* and *De salt.* also reflect this period in his career: see Jones 1986, 59–77.

[121] *Pro Im.* 8, 12, 14, 15.

[122] For a re-appraisal of the tone of the praise in *Portraits* as subversive, see Sidwell 2002.

[123] The *Judgement of the vowels* – if it is by Lucian – is testament also to the author's interest in letters; the defamiliarization and animation of letters in this metalinguistic *tour de force* stimulates the reader to think about the world-creating power of writing in a manner that is suggestive of more radical metafictional meditations on 'reality' as a textual construct: see Waugh 1984, 48–61.

notable (possible) exception of Iamblichus' *Babylonian tales*,[124] the actual authorial name is consigned with absolute regularity to the peritext: in the prologue or *incipit* (Antonius Diogenes, Chariton), in the colophon which was composed perhaps by someone other than the author himself (Xenophon of Ephesus, Lollianus), or in an authorial *explicit* (Heliodorus). Not even Apuleius' similar self-reference in *Metamorphoses* 11.27 breaks the rule (though it comes close), as his name itself does not occur in the narrative, only the allusion to his hometown in the reference to 'a man from Madauros' (Madaurensis).

In carving his name on the Isle of the Blest, Lucian fulfils the desire which he expressed in the prologue to acquire fame and to leave behind a legacy for posterity. This connection between posterity and autography is confronted also in the concluding anecdote of *How to write history*, where the architect Sostratus of Cnidos who built the famous lighthouse at Pharos, paradoxically, effaces his name from the structure:

> After he had built the edifice, he inscribed his own name inside among the stones, then, smearing over a layer of plaster to cover it up, he inscribed over it the name of the man who was then king, knowing full well that in a very short while the legend would fall off along with the layer of plaster to reveal the words: 'Sostratos of Cnidon, son of Dexiphanes, dedicates this to the saviour gods on behalf of all those who sail.' And this is indeed what happened. So we can see that he had a view not to that particular moment in time or to the rest of the short life-span he had left, but to this day and for all time, for as long as the tower which he built stands and his art endures.[125]

[124] It is possible, though not provable, that Iamblichus incorporated his real authorial name within the narrative of *The Babylonian tales*. The novel was narrated in the third person, and according to Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 94, 75b) it included an excursus about the author in the first person 'as a digression' (ὡς ἐν παρεκβολῇ) within the narrative. It is often assumed (e.g. Whitmarsh 2011, 75) that this autobiographical excursus refers to the real author Iamblichus, and my own feeling is that this is right, as immediately prior to the excursus Photius tells us that '*Iamblichus* discusses the various categories of magic.' However, caution is required as it is possible (as noted by Millar 1993, 490 and Morgan 1998, 3328) that the passage characterized a fictionalized authorial *persona*, in which case the metaleptic effect of the name within the fiction would have been diminished. Our information about this authorial excursus is supplemented by a scholion on Photius' text which augments and corrects some of Photius' detail; for this text, see Habrich 1960, 2 (translation in Millar 1993, 491 and also Stephens and Winkler 1995, 181), with discussion in Millar 1993, 489–92 and Morgan 1998, 3327–9. In any case, I have reservations about discussing the matter of onymity in *The Babylonian tales* as we have no evidence that this passage, even if it did refer to Iamblichus, actually included his *name* (though it is entirely possible that it did, of course). More generally, however, it looks as if Iamblichus treated the structure of his text in an unusual manner, for we would normally expect to find this autobiographical information, which he included in a digression in the midst of his narrative, in the peritext instead – usually in the prologue, where the author (real or fictional) set out his or her credentials for writing the narrative.

[125] *How to write history* 62: οἰκοδομήσας οὖν τὸ ἔργον ἔνδοθεν μὲν κατὰ τῶν λίθων τὸ αὑτοῦ ὄνομα ἐπέγραψεν, ἐπιχρίσας δὲ τιτάνῳ καὶ ἐπικαλύψας ἐπέγραψε τοὔνομα τοῦ τότε βασιλεύοντος,

In its immediate context this anecdote reinforces Lucian's injunction to the would-be historiographer to follow Sostratus' example and write a work which will win enduring value for its author rather than ephemeral celebrity in the present. But more particularly, Sostratus' desire to attach his name to his structure also dramatizes the function of the peritext, which is where the author asserts his authorship of the text. Lucian's anecdote therefore also highlights the peritext's potential to deceive and, like Sostratus' cunningly layered stone, to present to the world one author's name, but conceal another.

Like Sostratus' inscription in *How to write history*, Lucian's inscription inside the fiction of *True stories* dramatizes the act of attaching the author's name to the text. In ancient texts, the author's name was often incorporated in the opening lines of their text (either in the preface or briefer *incipit*) as well as on the *sillybos*.[126] Examples include Hesiod in *Theogony* 22, Hecataeus in the opening to his *Genealogies* followed by Herodotus and Thucydides at the start of their respective histories, Plautus in the prologue of *Pseudolus*, and Chariton in the *incipit* to *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Alternatively, the author's name could be incorporated at the end of the text, in an *explicit* or *sphragis*, for example Virgil's name in the closing lines of *Georgics*, or Heliodorus' climactic *explicit* in the *Ethiopian tales*.[127] The marginal location of Lucian's inscription within the fiction of *True stories* therefore reflects the real, physical marginality of the author's peritextual naming, either at the text's vulnerable edges and/or on the *sillybos*, a fragile appendage to the book-roll and a text which was probably normally allographic (written by a hand other than that of the author), and whose function was to identify and classify the text in a collection.[128]

In this case, we may be in a position to pinpoint the specific peritextual element to which the fictional inscription corresponds: the epigram 'on his own book', which was attributed to Lucian in the manuscript tradition and by Photius:[129]

εἰδώς, ὅπερ καὶ ἐγένετο, πάνυ ὀλίγου χρόνου συνεκπεσούμενα μὲν τῷ χρίσματι τὰ γράμματα ἐκφανησόμενον δέ, "Σώστρατος Δεξιφάνους Κνίδιος θεοῖς σωτῆρσιν ὑπὲρ τῶν πλωϊζομένων." οὕτως οὐδ᾽ ἐκεῖνος ἐς τὸν τότε καιρὸν οὐδὲ τὸν αὐτοῦ βίον τὸν ὀλίγον ἑώρα, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς τὸν νῦν καὶ τὸν ἀεί, ἄχρι ἂν ἑστήκῃ ὁ πύργος καὶ μένῃ αὐτοῦ ἡ τέχνη.

[126] On *sillyboi*, see Dorandi 1984. [127] Genette 1997, 37–54.

[128] Dorandi 1984.

[129] Epigr. (IV, 85) 1. Photius refers to the epigram as 'on Lucian's book' (*cod.* 128, 96b7–11), and it appears in some of the manuscripts of Lucian's work.

I, Lucian, wrote these works, an expert in ancient stuff and nonsense,
for even the things that people think are clever are but nonsense.
There is not a single thought of note among mankind:
that which *you* admire is a joke to others.[130]

As Baldwin suggests, this epigram may have stood as an epigraph to a collection of Lucian's works.[131] It may have been modelled on the inscription on the Isle of the Blessed – but, as I will argue here, it is equally feasible to read the fictional inscription as a play on the peritextual one: both begin with the emphatic foregrounding of the author's name in the formula '*Loukianos tad*''. In the inscription this is followed by the claim, in the third person, that 'Lucian saw these things'. The epigram claims that 'I, Lucian, wrote these things', with some evidence supporting a third-person reading 'Lucian wrote'. The intertextual relationship between the character-focalized inscription and author-focalized epigram reflects the duality of the name 'Loukianos' which, in *True stories*, represents *both* character *and* author. The reader is therefore invited to connect Lucian's fictional act of self-inscription on the Isle of the Blest with his *actual* authorial self-inscription in his own book, as the act of writing an epigraph for a text is assimilated fictionally to the act of carving one's own name into a monument of precious stone in an attempt to mark one's presence in the canonical space. In this case, the peritextual space which would have been occupied by the epigram corresponds to the *limēn*, the harbour at the Isle of the Blest, where Lucian carved his inscription. In ancient literature, the edges of the text were often conceptualized as a shore or coastline. It is even possible to hear an echo of the Latin *limen* 'margin, threshhold' in Lucian's metatextual *limēn*, so that Lucian's fictional act of inscription *near the harbour* (πρὸς τῷ λιμένι) points humorously to the author's vainglorious peritextual self-inscription *in limine*, in the margins of the text. The liminal position of the *stēlē* – at the edge of the land and sea in the twilight zone of the Isle of the Blest – mirrors the liminal status of the peritext not just in physical terms but epistemologically as well, as it exists at the interface between the world of the reader and the world of the book, mediating the book to the reader through its various functions of naming

[130] Λουκιανὸς τάδ᾽ ἔφραψα παλαιά τε μωρά τε εἰδώς,
μωρὰ γὰρ ἀνθρώποις καὶ τὰ δοκοῦντα σοφά.
οὐδὲν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι διακριδόν ἐστι νόημα,
ἀλλ᾽ ὃ σὺ θαυμάζεις, τοῦθ᾽ ἑτέροισι γέλως.
There is a divergence in the manuscript readings of the verb in the first line: inferior manuscripts read the third person *egrapse*: 'Lucian wrote . . . '.

[131] Baldwin 1975, 319–20.

the work and its author and thereby (ostensibly, at least) guaranteeing its authenticity. To inscribe the peritext imaginatively into the heart of the fictional world, as Lucian does here, is a deeply subversive thing to do, as it renders the peritext susceptible to the same liar-paradox as the rest of the narrative confronting the reader provocatively with the potential mendacity of features such as the title, prologue and the author's name which are always assumed, by default, *to be true*. From the heart of Lucian's text, therefore, the *stēlē* issues a warning about how we read even the ostensibly truthful zone around the edges of the text. And by bringing the periphery into the centre of the text, Lucian also signals the central role which the margins of the text have to play in his subversive game with truth, lies and fiction in *True stories*.

Like his predecessor Antonius Diogenes, Lucian also plays with boundaries in *True stories*. The Pillars of Heracles, the geographical marker of the westernmost extreme of the inhabited world, constitute the starting point for Lucian's narrative and mark his fantasy as extreme: he will begin from the extremes of what is known, and launch from there. His motivation for travel is itself concerned with boundaries: his desire to know the nature of the 'end' of the Ocean and the people who live 'on the other side'.[132] For the reader, this goal is never attained; Book 2 ends with Lucian and his men shipwrecked and washed up on the shore of 'the other continent', and he promises to relay what he saw there 'in the following books' – which never materialize. For the reader, in other words, information about the end of the ocean and those who inhabit 'the other side' remains forever off-limits, beyond the real boundary of the text itself. It may even be the case that 'the other side' in Lucian's fictional world represents, for the reader, the right-hand extreme of the book-roll itself. As the reader him or herself arrives at the extreme edge (*peras*) of the second book, his or her adventures in reading merge finally with Lucian's geographical trajectory towards the edge of the other continent.

The great median divide in *True stories* is in the division between Books 1 and 2. Lucian's escape from the whale within the fiction interlocks with this book-division in such a way that Lucian's fictional transition between worlds in the narrative dramatizes the reader's transition between the book-units of the text. The two transitions do not, however, directly overlap. Lucian's escape from the whale does not coincide exactly with the ending of Book 1; instead, Book 1 ends with Lucian peering out through the barrier

[132] *VH* 1.5: τὸ βούλεσθαι μαθεῖν τί τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ καὶ τίνες οἱ πέραν κατοικοῦντες ἄνθρωποι.

of the whale's teeth at the Island-battle beyond, and Book 2 begins with his plan to escape. The terse final sentence of the first book 'This is what happened in the island-fight' strikes a Thucydidean note of infra-textual closure to seal the end of Book 1,[133] whilst the cliff-hanger in the plot encourages the reader to continue reading past the end of one book and into another, to see what will happen next. Lucian's desire to break through the barrier of teeth figures the reader's desire to cross the book-division, and the second book begins, appropriately, with the forward-looking phrase 'from this point on'.[134] In this way, the reader's transition between book-rolls is made to anticipate Lucian's fictional transition from the world in the whale to the ocean beyond.

In the final sentence of *True stories*, Lucian uses recapitulation to generate a fiction of infra-textual closure. It is *fictional* because, as we have already seen, the 'following books' which are explicitly promised here never materialize, which means that this sentence, which presents itself disingenuously as the seal for one unit within the work, is in fact the *explicit* for the work as a whole. Lucian's strategy differs markedly from the closural gestures in other works of prose fiction from the imperial era, such as Chariton's no-frills authorial *explicit* ('This is my story about Callirhoe.'[135]), or Longus' more delicately nuanced character-focalized *explicit*, which alludes to the novel's pastoral title ('Chloe then learned for the first time that the things that had happened at the woods' edge had been shepherds' games.'[136]). More elaborate still is the majestic *explicit* to Heliodorus' novel *The Ethiopian Tales* which combines the *sphragistic* function of naming the author and rehearsing the title of the novel along with a closural reference to the physical end (*peras*) of the text: 'Thus ends the account of the Ethiopian adventures of Theagenes and Charikleia, composed by a Phoenician man from Emesa, one of the clan of the descendants of Helios, Theodosius' son, Heliodorus.'[137] Lucian's *explicit* is explicitly anti-closural,[138] as it leaves the reader with the expectation that Books 1 and 2 constitute merely one section of a larger work whose remains are lost; in this way, Lucian creates the illusion that *True stories* itself is an incomplete, fragmentary text, and invites the reader to speculate what those 'lost books' might have said. Moreover, because it is ostensibly creating infra-textual closure only, Lucian

[133] *VH* 1.42: ταῦτα μὲν τὰ κατὰ τὴν νησομαχίαν γενόμενα.
[134] *VH* 2.1: Τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τούτου . . .
[135] *C&C* 8.8.16: τοσάδε περὶ Καλλιρόης συνέγραψα.
[136] *D&C* 4.40.3: καὶ τότε Χλόη ἔμαθεν ὅτι τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ὕλης γινόμενα ἦν ποιμένων παίγνια.
[137] Hld. 10.41.4: Τοιόνδε πέρας ἔσχε τὸ σύνταγμα τῶν περὶ Θειαγένην καὶ Χαρίκλειαν Αἰθιοπικῶν· ὃ συνέταξεν ἀνὴρ Φοῖνιξ Ἐμισηνός, τῶν ἀφ᾽ Ἡλίου γένος, Θεοδοσίου παῖς Ἡλιόδωρος.
[138] Whitmarsh 2011, 185–6.

omits any sphragistic reference to the title of the work or its author's name: *that* function has been displaced, instead, onto the inscription on the Isle of the Blest at 2.28. As a result, the peritextual seal, which usually occupies a liminal position inside the 'book' but outside the story, is radically rezoned and embedded deep within the world of Lucian's fiction where it is enfolded into the epistemological paradox of *True stories* itself. In this way, Lucian exposes once again the potential trickiness of the ostensibly truth-bearing borderlands of the text, and demonstrates a fact that Antonius Diogenes, his predecessor in peritextual mischief, also knew well: that the peritext is (or can be) as much a part of the fiction as any other part of the narrative.

From *Incredible things* to *True stories*: the Moon as intertext

Since Photius' claim that Diogenes' novel constituted the 'root and font' of Lucian's *True stories*, the debate about the precise nature of the relationship between these two texts has been a long and contentious one which, in its extremes, used Lucian's *True stories* as a mere palimpsest whose surface could be scraped away to reveal precious glimpses of Diogenes' lost fiction.[139] In a magisterial article, however, Morgan showed that to read *The incredible things beyond Thule* as the target of parody in Lucian's *True stories* constitutes a fundamental misreading of Diogenes' text; Diogenes should not be viewed as the 'straight man' to Lucian's comedy as he was already playing similar games with truth and fiction to Lucian himself.[140]

In fact, Photius' words never implied that Diogenes' work was the *target* for the later author's *attack*. Rather, the metaliterary metaphors of the 'root' and 'spring' were commonly used in antiquity to describe attributive literary influence of a more positive kind (*food* rather than *fodder*).[141] In my view we should, therefore, read this as a relationship of continuity and expansion. In particular, the presence of the lunar landscape in both fictions – near the end of Diogenes' narrative (Book 24) and near the beginning of Lucian's (*VH* 1.10–28) – creates a link between the texts: by locating his first major adventure on the Moon – to whose borders Diogenes' characters had approached but (probably) not actually crossed – Lucian signals that his work was taking off and going beyond the point

[139] Reyhl 1969.

[140] Morgan 1985 and Morgan 2009, 137: '*The Wonders beyond Thoule* looks increasingly as if it is playing in the same ball-park as Lucian's *True Histories*, if not quite according to the same game-plan.' This view is echoed in Futre Pinheiro 2009, 26–7.

[141] See the discussion of springs in Chapter 6, pp. 210–16.

where Diogenes had ended, not just beyond Thule this time, but to the Moon and farther still. Given the metaliterary significance of Diogenes' trajectory *beyond Thule*,[142] Lucian's journey beyond even the outermost extremes of Diogenes' novel gives the reader a clear signal about the more radical fictionality of his work.

There is much to be gained by reading *True stories* as a complement to *The incredible things*. There are marked similarities between the two works.[143] Both protagonists are motivated to travel by their intellectual curiosity and desire to learn.[144] Both breach the frontiers of the inhabited world. The *Odyssey* is a central hypotext for both works. Both texts are centrally interested in the interplay between fact and fiction, as signalled in their very titles. Both authors manipulate authenticating strategies in subversive ways, both are clearly interested in the Moon, philosophy and science, and they both share a fascination with the reader's journey through their texts, especially the peritext. As we have seen, like Diogenes with his pseudo-scholarly preface, Lucian lays claim here to quasi-medical status for his fiction. Both authors also identify their works as *comical* in relation to their use of sources: Diogenes reveals himself to Faustinus as the author of 'an ancient comedy' which he has conjured out of his vast research, and Lucian invites his readers to admire the 'not uncomical' manner in which he alludes to a range of predecessors.[145]

But again and again Lucian takes the baton from Diogenes and runs farther. Both texts explore the paradoxical pleasures of resisting their fictions' gravitational pull, but whereas Diogenes' prologue, in the letter to Faustinus, complicates his own pseudo-documentary fiction, Lucian's prologue subverts his fiction outright by explicitly instructing the reader *not* to believe a word he writes.[146] Diogenes identifies the sources for his narrative, but Lucian refuses to do so, challenging the reader instead to recognize these for him- or herself.[147] Diogenes deals with things that are in the hazier zone of the incredible-but-true (*apista*), but in Lucian's story-world there is no truth at all, and never could be (*VH* 1.4). Deinias starts his adventures in the known world and proceeds gradually outside the northernmost boundary of the earth, reaching nearly as far as the Moon in the twenty-fourth and final book of the novel, in a confluence between textual and geographical limits. In contrast, Lucian's adventure *begins* at the westernmost ends of the earth, at the Pillars of Heracles, and the Moon, rather than representing the outermost limits of the protagonist's travels, marks one of the earliest

142 See p. 151. 143 See also von Möllendorff 2000, 104–9.
144 Photius, *Bibl.* 109a; Lucian, *VH* 1.5. 145 Photius, *Bibl.* 111a; Lucian, *VH* 1.2.
146 *VH* 1.4. 147 Photius, *Bibl.* 111a; Lucian, *VH* 1.2–3.

stages in his journey. Lucian also plays higher stakes than Diogenes in the game of anticipation with his reader: whereas the reader of *The incredible things* only finally reaches his promised goal in the zone beyond Thule in the very final book, the reader of *True stories* never finds out about 'those who live on the other side' at all.

As Photius pointed out, the Moon in Diogenes' text represents the acme of unbelievability, the place for the most fantastical excesses of the fictive imagination.[148] Lucian's choice of the Moon as the site for the first extended adventure in his narrative did more than mark the excesses of his own fantasy; Lucian also used the Moon as an intertextual node to connect his work purposefully with that of Diogenes, and to mark *True stories* as part of the Diogenean tradition. This in turn suggests that Photius' judgement about the relationship between these two texts – that the one was the 'root and font' of the other – was not only correct, but a response to Lucian's deliberate hypertextual strategy. The lunar intertext reinforces the message of Lucian's prologue that he was going to take his reader – epistemologically as well as geographically – where no fiction-writer, not even the most intrepid traveller beyond Thule, had gone before.

Lucian and Antonius Diogenes were peritextual pioneers, but (and this is important) they were not working *in vacuo*. There are clear signs in the literary culture of the imperial period of a growing interest in the peritext and its truth-status, as well as how the bookscape itself could interact dynamically with the reader's encounter with the text. To illustrate this point, I will focus in the rest of this chapter on two test-cases: Longus, who plays with the connectedness of the peritext to his narrative, to raise questions about the nature of the peritext as a boundary or as a threshold in a way that is central to his novel's dramatization of the reading process; and Heliodorus, who implicates his peritext with the story of Charikleia in such a way that his plot's preoccupation with the heroine's genealogy becomes a story also of the nature and genealogy of the novel itself.

Structural engineering: *Daphnis and Chloe* and the artful bookscape

Longus' novel begins in a similar manner to the pseudo-documentary fictions of Dictys and Antonius Diogenes, whose prologues sought to

[148] 'And – most incredible of all – [he reports] that as they progressed northward, they came close to the Moon, which was like the barest of lands, and having been there they saw the sorts of things which are typically seen by someone in the business of fabricating this sort of exaggerated fiction.' (*Bibl.* 111a7–11).

ascribe to the text the status of a document of real-world authenticity.[149] Here, right from the start, the narrator speaks explicitly about his novel *qua* text, with its four books and the emphasis on its status as a *possession* (*ktēma*), which is not merely, as is often pointed out, a programmatic allusion to Thucydides' promotion of his history as a 'possession for all time' (*ktēma es aiei*),[150] but in this context also reinforces the sense of the novel *as an object* which, in contrast with the sacred paintings in the grove, can be carried away with the reader to be treasured, consulted and re-read many times.[151] Longus also adapts the pseudo-documentary trope to the numinous, pastoral atmosphere of his novel by presenting to the reader not the discovery of a text-in-a-tomb, but paintings in a sacred grove which, like buried texts, also require interpretation by an exegete and 'translation' by the author into the text of his narrative, from painting to book. In this respect, Longus' pseudo-documentarism is in fact closer to the authenticating strategy which, as we have seen, is found frequently in the prefaces of ancient scholarly treatises and works of recondite lore such as the astral-herbal treatise *On the virtues of plants* which was ascribed in antiquity to Thessalus of Tralles, or the magico-medical treatise of Bolus of Mendes and the *Kyranides*. By moving away from the text-in-the-tomb trope, Longus emphasizes not only the authenticity but also the sacral authority of the specialized erotic instruction which it contains, imbuing his novel about two teenagers' coming of age with the air of scholarship and reinforcing the prologue's assertion of the didactic value of his fiction. Like *The incredible things beyond Thule* (albeit to a more modest extent) *Daphnis and Chloe* self-consciously straddles the boundaries between novel and treatise.

There is, however, a crucial difference between Longus' pseudo-documentary prologue and those of Dictys and Antonius Diogenes. In these fictions, the prologues are rife with real-world details (references to real locations, historical *personae*, events, and even specific dates), which

149 See Bowie 1994 (briefly). As Morgan (2001, 152) notes, the novels by Chariton, Achilles Tatius and Longus all start with 'material as it were inside the book but outside the novel', as did Diogenes' *The incredible things beyond Thule* and Iamblichus' *Babylonian tales*, as well other, non-novelistic fictions by Dictys, Dares, Dio, Lucian, Philostratus and the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*.

150 Thuc. 1.22.4; see Morgan 2004, *ad loc.*; Hunter 1983, 48–9; Bowie 2013a, 193–5 on the purposefully incongruous interweaving of Thucydidean with Theocritean allusion in the prologue.

151 One of the prologues to the second book of the *Kyranides* contains a similar narrative about the secularization of sacred wisdom through a Greek text, where the reader is encouraged to cherish the book 'as a possession of greatest importance' (*hōs ktēma megiston*), and reminded again of its power as 'a great possession' (*ktēma mega*). Winkler (1985, 235) only briefly mentions the prologue of *Daphnis and Chloe* in his discussion of temple-narratives as a narrative context for Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

orientate the prologue clearly to the reader's world on *this* side of the threshold into the world of the fiction. In *Daphnis and Chloe*, however, the preface contains comparatively few *realia*; in fact, the only allusion to the reader's world is a single brief mention of Lesbos, which is the backdrop both for the events in the story as well as for the prologue itself. Of course, the autobiographical mode of the prologue, with all the circumstantial details about the grove and the narrator's chance discovery of it whilst on a hunting-trip, enhance the overall reality effect and have even stimulated the search for the *actual* grove on Lesbos.[152] But this effect is much attenuated in comparison with the more objective sense of reality which is generated by the accumulation of references to historical figures, dates and events in Dictys' and Diogenes' prologues.[153] Nothing in Longus' detail distinguishes the *mise en scène* of his preface from the rest of his story-world, and as a result, instead of robustly bounding the story-world of *Daphnis and Chloe*, Longus' peritext tends, rather, to merge with it, to become an extension of its fiction.[154] As Morgan notes, there is, therefore, a genuine ambiguity about this prologue which, on the one hand, serves to anchor the narrative effectively in the real world, but on the other, blurs the distinction between the two worlds:

> at another level, the prologue is already part of the fiction, not just, as it were, physically inside the cover of the book, but inside the frame of the novel as well, inside the fictional world created by Longus. The discovery of the painting is a fiction, and so is the grove in which it is fictionally located: a geographically and historically plausible fiction, but a fiction nonetheless. It follows that the person who discovered the fictitious painting is himself a fiction: it is convenient, but not wholly accurate, to call him 'Longus'.[155]

So, not only is there no clear differentiation between prologue and story, but the author himself is fictionalized in the person of the unnamed narrator who discovers the paintings in the grove and decides to write the novel.[156]

[152] As noted by Morgan 2001, 156, and, with further bibliography, Morgan 2003, 174.
[153] See Hansen 2003; ní Mheallaigh 2008.
[154] As Morgan (2004, 145–6) points out, there *is* a switch from documentary, first-person narration in the prologue to third-person narration in the rest of narrative, though the voice remains the same, 'but there is a continuity of subject-matter in that the entire novel is presented as equivalent to the painting presented in the prologue'. On the authenticating strategy of the prologue, see Morgan 2004, 146–7. In his analysis of the prologue, Hunter (1983, 38–52) emphasizes its roots in the ekphrastic and historiographical traditions, and compares the authenticating force of Achilles Tatius' opening gambit in *Leucippe and Clitophon*.
[155] Morgan 2003, 174.
[156] Morgan (2003) meticulously analyses this *persona* and his relation to the hidden author. Bowie (2013a) explores the paradoxical fictionality of the 'reality' of Longus' world, which is contructed (largely) through allusions to literary texts that are themselves presenting fiction.

We have no way to be sure about where the precise crossing-point lies between our world and the world of the fiction – or to put it more simply, where the fiction begins.[157]

This deliberate obfuscation of boundaries is thematized in the structure of the city of Mitylene, which casts its shadow over the entire narrative from its position at the very beginning of Book 1, immediately after the preface:

> Mitylene is a large and beautiful city of Lesbos. It is *divided* by *canals* where the sea *flows in*, and is decorated with *bridges* of polished white stone. You would think you were seeing not a city, but an *island*.[158]

The narrator's description of Mytilene thematizes edges, margins and the encroachment of boundaries in a way that reflects the hazy definition of the borders of his own text. In particular, his emphasis on the city's deceptive insularity – its *actual connectedness* to the Lesbian mainland, despite *appearing to be separate* – is a perfect reflection of the deceptive separateness of Longus' preface itself, for in spite of appearances, the preface is as much a part of the fictional world of the novel as Mytilene, the apparent island, is a part of Lesbos itself.[159] The sea which encroaches insidiously (*hypeisrheousa*) inwards onto the cityscape of Mitylene reflects the sneaking transgression of Longus' fiction into the reader's world beyond the edges of the narrative in the peritext, where fiction parades in pseudo-documentary fashion as fact and where, inversely, features of the real world like the author seem to become a part of the fiction. Longus' blurring of the structural boundaries of his narrative reflects his novel's paradoxical status as a 'history of love' (*historia erōtos*) which is both fictional *and* true, both entertaining *and* pragmatically useful.[160] Right from the novel's disorientating start, the reader enters the interpretive game of deciding how to reconcile these antiphonies.

157 There are similar doubts about the precise limit of the prologue in Apuleius' *Met.* (see Morgan 2001, 154) and, for different reasons to do with the liar paradox, Lucian's *VH*.

158 *D&C* 1.1: Πόλις ἐστὶ τῆς Λέσβου Μιτυλήνη, μεγάλη καὶ καλή· διείληπται γὰρ εὐρίποις ὑπεισρεούσης τῆς θαλάσσῆς, καὶ κεκόσμηται γεφύραις ξεστοῦ καὶ λευκοῦ λίθου. Νομίσαις οὐ πόλιν ὁρᾶν ἀλλὰ νῆσον. On the ancient cityscape of Mytilene, see Morgan 2004, 150–1.

159 See Saïd (1994, 229): 'What appeals to Longus and his sophisticated audience is the paradoxical character of a town that is an island, the more so if this town is itself located within an island.' Saïd notes that this feature of the Mytilenean cityscape was commented upon by several authors in antiquity (e.g. Strabo 13.2.2 and Diodorus 13.79.5–6) and was so famous that when Pausanias (8.30.20) described Megalopolis, an Arcadian town which was divided in two by a river, Mytilene was one of the cities with which he compared it. We may imagine that Mytilene's fame was similar to that of Venice today.

160 See Hunter (1983, 46–52) for a discussion of Longus' treatment of these antiphonies.

The novel's primary encroached boundary therefore encodes within its very architecture the delicate balancing act that will be required of its ideal reader between the now-familiar poles of immersion and detachment. This issue is raised in the preface where the narrator contrasts the erotic experiences of others (*ta tōn allōn*) with his own desire to maintain self-control (*sōphrosynē*) as he writes about them: 'For us, may the god grant us to retain self-control in writing the story of others.'[161] This prayer (which is the final sentiment in the preface) demonstrates how difficult it is to maintain distance between the two worlds in this novel, and its emphatic first-person plural pronoun *hēmin*, 'for *us*', includes the reader in the author's struggle and desire.[162] The preface therefore invites the reader to immerse him- or herself in the story-world by identifying – to a degree – with the love-struck characters whose experiences (the preface promises) will mirror his or her own, but also to identify with the narrator who strives to remain detached from the fictional world.[163] Through the use of the city as an unstable peritextual marker, the structure of the text itself thematizes the reader's struggle to resist the tidal pull of the story-world and remain, with the narrator, at the narrative surface.

Moreover, it is highly significant that Longus chooses images of the *city* to articulate major fault-lines within his novel's structure, for as is well-known, the city is thematically charged within the economy of his pastoral world.[164] The ramifications of the novel's complicated interplay between the city and countryside, with its corresponding dialectic between nature and culture, have been very thoroughly explored in the scholarship

[161] Ἡμῖν δὲ ὁ θεὸς παράσχοι σωφρονοῦσι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων γράφειν (*Praef.* 4, Morgan's translation, adapted).

[162] See also Morgan (2003, 177–8), who notes, crucially, that the narrator elsewhere speaks of himself in the singular. Morgan interprets the narrator's prayer as a bid to avoid a pornographic response to the erotic scenes in the paintings, and argues that the immediate commencement of the narrative after this prayer signals that the narrator feels his prayer has been answered: 'Equally, the mere fact that he felt the prayer necessary draws attention to the possibility of the "wrong" sort of reading, and almost challenges the reader included in that ἡμῖν to find the suggestive subtexts that the narrator is suppressing' (178). The implications of the text's titillating strategies are drawn out fully in Goldhill 1995, 1–45; see esp. pp. 29–30: 'Longus' elegant and amusing manipulation of the knowing reader's inability to share innocence provokes a series of responses from translators, commentators and readers, each of which testify . . . to the difficult question of *how far* to go in reading. Recent advances in literary theory and gender studies have taught us to be acutely conscious of the assumptions and manipulations of a reader's position *vis-à-vis* the erotic text in particular. It is a lesson that *Daphnis and Chloe* teaches with every reading.'

[163] The narrative's subtle ironies discourage the reader from identifying fully with either, however; see Morgan 2003.

[164] On the city in the Greek novel generally, see Said 1994 (on the *realia* of the cities in the Greek novels) and Said 1999 (on elite, urbanized perspectives in the Greek novels). See also following note and n. 171 below.

on *Daphnis and Chloe*,[165] but as far as I am aware, no connection has yet been made between this interplay and the novel's textual architecture as Longus' structural engineering of the reader's response.[166] Mitylene marks the starting-point of the narrative after the preface and the beginning of Book 1, one of the four great channels which divide the novel's bookscape.[167] After that, the city is used repeatedly as a peritextual marker, as references to Mytilene punctuate the beginning of three out of the novel's four books (Books 1, 3 and 4),[168] and more obliquely, predatorial agents such as pirates and wolves, which are associated in the novel with the city-world, also mark the *end* of two of the novel's books: Book 1 closes with an epigrammatic reference to 'the piracy of Love' (1.32: τὸ Ἔρωτος λῃστήριον), and the wolf is evoked towards the end of 2.39.[169] It is no accident that the city, which represents the real world's encroachment onto the numinous world of the fiction, dominates the edges of the text, for this is precisely where the fiction's gravitational force is weakest and the story is most at risk of losing its reader. This risk is greatest if the boundary of the book as a structural segment happens to coincide with the end of the physical book-roll, so that the reader is compelled – in a real, physical sense – temporarily to leave the story by finishing one scroll, before re-entering it by picking up another. But even if this is not the case (and book-units did not necessarily correspond to physical book-rolls in this way),[170] the fiction is still weakest

165 Morgan (1994) shows that the city has a central role in the sexual acculturation of the novel's protagonists, on which see also Winkler 1990 (on the interplay of nature and culture in Chloe's trajectory towards adulthood) and Hunter 1983, 38–52 (on the interrelated themes of art, nature and imitation in the prologue) with Teske 1991 (who explores the theme of art in *Daphnis and Chloe*). Morgan (2004, 14–16) offers a succinct overview of these ideas, with emphasis on the religious profundity of Longus' novel. The readings of Zeitlin (1990) and Goldhill (1995) are also crucial and closest to my own here; see following note.

166 Closest to my argument about the semiotics of Longus' textual structure is the reading of Zeitlin (1990), who focuses on the intertwining of aesthetics and erotics in Longus' garden-description in Book 4.2 and argues that the garden, as a poetic space, embodies not only the thematic dialectic between nature and culture which is central to the novel, but also the novel's textual structure in four books; Zeitlin does not, however, pursue the significance of the novel's structures further. Goldhill (1995, 1–45) is not interested in structural matters at all, but his analysis of the interplay between knowledge and innocence within the fiction meshes with my arguments here about Longus' structural dramatization of the reader's negotiation between immersion and detachment.

167 The author-narrator draws attention to the four-book structure of his novel in the preface (*Praef.* 3: τέτταρας βίβλους ἐξεπονησάμην) and also through the description of Dionysophanes' garden-park (4.2) which mirrors the novel with its geometric structure: see Zeitlin 1990 (with previous note).

168 See Morgan (2004, 150): 'It is surely no accident that three of L's four books open with references to Mitylene.'

169 As Morgan (2004, 175) observes, each of the books of the novel 'ends with an epigrammatic image that gives a feeling of closing and structure'.

170 This point is emphasized by Whitmarsh (2009, 37 n. 10). For bibliography on the book-unit in ancient texts, see Hägg 2004, 182 n. 44.

at the edges of the text because it is here that the reader feels most strongly the controlling hand of the author who has shaped the text into structural units and decided where books begin and end.[171]

There is an analogue for this metatextual urban planning in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, where Clitophon's meanderings around Alexandria at the beginning of Book 5, and especially the tension between rigidity and errancy in the structures of the cityscape itself, have been interpreted, in diverse ways, as a *mise en abyme* of the novel itself: as an erotic encounter, where Clitophon's lovestruck absorption with the city's delights tropes the reader's surfeit of pleasure in this most digressive and ocularcentric of novels;[172] as a 'hypostatisation of Alexandrian literary principles' and a metaphor for the Alexandrian author Achilles' own defamiliarization of the novel-genre,[173] and (most relevant for my present argument) as an allegory – at a precise crisis-point in the middle of the novel – for the author's conflicting desire to assert control over his narrative, or submit, overwhelmed, to the endless possibilities of the plot that lie ahead.[174] In his rich analysis of the episode, Whitmarsh argues that the intersection between open space and colonnades in Clitophon's description of Alexandria suggests 'a topographical analogy for the segmentation of the novel at this point . . . [the] language of bisection . . . lays itself open to self-referential interpretation: Clitophon and his readership are at the cross-roads of the narrative.'[175] Alexandria's layout, with its mixture of chaos and control, correlates to the tension between linearity and digressiveness which is built into the structure of Achilles' novel itself. As in *Daphnis and Chloe*, that structure clearly affects the reader's physical interaction with the text. In Achilles' case, Clitophon's trajectory through Alexandria, which is both controlled and aleatory, seems to mirror the choices which the novel offers its own reader too, for of all the extant Greek novels, *Leucippe and Clitophon* is the one which lends itself most clearly to both linear and rhizomatic readings.

In *Daphnis and Chloe*, the regular encroachment of the urban into the novel's rural space establishes a connection between the reader's negotiation between the real-world and story-world in the process of reading, and the

[171] It is not uncommon for texts to betray some anxiety about the encroachment of the real world at these critical fault-lines in the story-world. In *Daphnis and Chloe*, significantly, the fictionalized author is himself associated with the city (see Morgan 2003, 175), which reinforces his authorial role in imposing structure on the story.

[172] Morales 2004, 100–6.

[173] Whitmarsh 2009, 44–7.

[174] See Nimis (1997, 112), who interprets the 'new beginning' of Book 5, however, as a sign of the narrative's status 'under construction' literally.

[175] Whitmarsh 2009, 46. For a similar metatextual interpretation of Lucian's city on the Island of Dreams (*VH* 2.32–35), see Chapter 6, pp. 230–2.

thematic antiphonies which are central to the novel's plot. This novel, in other words, has an active architecture which will repeatedly confront its reader with structural threshholds (e.g. peritext/text; book-divisions) which mirror thematic divisions and encroachments such as the passing of the seasons and the interplay between city/country; culture/nature; art/instinct. By interlocking these themes with the novel's textual structure in this way, Longus invites the reader to consider the thematic implications of the very experience of reading the novel itself. Reading becomes an extension of the plot, as the reader must, like the narrator and like Daphnis and Chloe, find ways to achieve harmony between conflicting readerly impulses, and learn to accommodate his or her real-life erotic experiences to the paradigmatic lessons of the novel's plot. *Daphnis and Chloe*, therefore, is not only a novel about love, but also about the literary experience of love: about the protocols of reading romance as well as directly experiencing it. In reading love-stories, as in love, the novel suggests, it is necessary to find a harmonious balance between the detached *tekhnē* of the experienced reader and the instinct to immerse oneself emotionally in the story: only then does novel-reading reach its apex of perfection.

At the end of the novel, we return to the grove and paintings of the prologue, and here too we find a similar peritextual playfulness (this time, involving the title) that once again deliberately crosses the boundaries between worlds. These final chapters are heavily closural: not only does the wedding of Daphnis and Chloe and the long-awaited consummation of their love on their wedding-night (4.40) bring the plot to a satisfying sense of thematic fruition, but the mention in 4.39 of Daphnis and Chloe's paintings achieves closure through circularity by bringing the reader back to the grove and the paintings of the prologue where the novel began.[176] Several of the principal characters in the plot also make a farewell appearance in the last two chapters, either explicitly, as in the case of Pan, the Nymphs and Lycaenion, or else implicitly, for example, Pan's *pine-tree* (4.39) and the music of the *pan-pipes* in the wedding procession (4.40) evoke the presence of Chloe's mythical predecessors Pitys and Syrinx from the novel's embedded tales at the point when she too is about to lose her virginity, giving us the sense that Chloe is about to fulfil her destiny. These final chapters also reinforce the closurality of the last book by drawing the reader out of the story-world, back into reality and an awareness that the story might not be real but the product of literary artifice. The mention

[176] There is some doubt over whether the author-narrator closes this circuit along with the reader, or whether he is aware that the paintings in 4.39 are the same as those in the prologue: for discussion, see Morgan 2003, 181–2 and 2004, 17–20.

of the paintings in 4.39 jolts the reader out of the fiction with a sudden reminder of the novel's textuality and its origins in the paintings which were described in the prologue. It is a common feature of the ancient novels to remind the reader of the narrative's writtenness and its status as a text in this way as the narrative comes to a close.[177] Reinforcing this sense of closure within the story-world is the fact that the wedding-guests are left, along with the reader, standing by the doors of Daphnis and Chloe's marital chamber (*plēsion . . . tōn thurōn*). Doors are liminal markers which can indicate the starting-point of the plot and frame the reader's entry into the story-world (the most famous example is Gyges, peeping behind the door of the queen's bedroom in Herodotus Book 1, a scene which is re-enacted at the door of Pamphile's bedroom in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*).[178] They can also mark the reader's exit from the story-world (as happens in the Greek *Onos* when Lucius is unceremoniously ushered *out of the house* just as the narrative ends, taking the reader with him).[179] Here the gently closed doors of Daphnis and Chloe's bedroom draw a veil over their lovemaking within, but also mark the ultimate exclusion of the reader from the story-world. Once again, the events in the story and the reader's experience appear to be entwined.

In the closing words of the novel, the narrator says that 'Chloe then learned for the first time that the things that had happened at the woods' edge had been *shepherds' games*.'[180] Longus' *explicit* plays to both the character Chloe in the fiction and the reader of the novel in the real world, for the final word *paignia* means both 'games' in the straightforward sense in which Chloe understands it, as well 'literary *jeux*', a meaning which is available also to the reader. The latter meaning, as Morgan notes, connects the novel with the Alexandrian poetics of key figures such as Philetas and Theocritus, who either used the word *paignion* as a title for poems, or whose work was associated with the term by others.[181] This metaliterary sense of the *double-entendre* is reinforced by its sphragistic allusion to the

[177] The inscriptions at the end of Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* (5.15) perform a similar function, as do the inscriptions at the close of the *History of Apollonius* (recension b, ch. 51); for discussion of Xenophon, see König 2007, who notes that this motif of closural recapitulation goes back to Odysseus and Penelope's reunion at the close of *Odyssey* 23.

[178] Herodorus 1.10. Laird (1993) is an excellent discussion of the metafictional ramifications of the Apuleian scene.

[179] See Chapter 4, p. 134.

[180] 4.40.3: καὶ τότε Χλόη πρῶτον ἔμαθεν ὅτι τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς ὕλης γινόμενα ἦν ποιμένων παίγνια.

[181] Morgan 2004, 249. Hunter (1983, 50 with n. 106) connects this with the tradition of rhetorical *paignia*, particularly noting the similarity with the ending of Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*: βουλήθην γράψαι τὸν λόγον Ἑλένης μὲν ἐγκώμιον, ἐμὸν δὲ παίγνιον.

novel's title, which incorporated the term *Poimenika* or *Shepherds' tales*.[182] The final word of the novel evokes, for the reader, the novel's title, which reinforces the sense of circularity and closure. Chloe's ultimate recognition that all of her previous erotic experience had been mere (fore-)play is therefore made to coincide with the reader's closural recognition, as (s)he is about to leave the world of the fiction, that this story-world is the product of literary artifice, sealed now at last by the hand of its author. In this way, Chloe's transition from childhood innocence to adult sexuality mirrors, within the fiction, the reader's transition from immersion in the pastoral experience back into the real world outside the text. The effect, though playful, also strikes a poignant note, for with these closing words the characters who had been so vividly real suddenly recede before the reader's eyes back into the two-dimensional creations they always were: characters-in-a-book and figures-in-a-painting which the reader's and author's imagination had conspired to bring, temporarily, to life. Chloe's transformative realization that her former experiences were merely a childish prelude to the realities of adult sexuality dramatizes the reader's equally powerful realization that the story was not 'real' but fictional, and a prelude to his or her own reality as (s)he leaves the world of the book and re-joins the real world.[183]

In *Daphnis and Chloe*, therefore, Longus explores, self-reflexively, the role of the physical text itself in mediating the reader's access to the fictional world, and dramatizes the fluctuating force of the fiction's gravitational pull on the reader as (s)he navigates through the topography of text and peritext. His sophisticated accommodation of his novel's structure to its central themes means that his architectural artistry is no mere flourish: on the contrary, it is profoundly meaningful and transformative, converting the reading experience into an extension of the plot itself. Now the physical book becomes a dynamic point of interaction between the world of the fiction and the reader's world. The contrast with the scene in Achilles Tatius, where Clitophon uses the book as a mere decoy, and reading is presented as a fantasist's escape from real experience, could not be greater: for Longus, reading the book itself is an exercise of the novel's profoundly didactic and religious message.

[182] For discussion of Longus' title, see Hunter (1983, 1–2) and Whitmarsh (2005, 591) who argues that the ancient title was probably τὰ κατὰ | περὶ Χλόην [or Δάφνιν καὶ Χλόην] αἰπολικά | ποιμενικά | Λεσβιακά.

[183] See also Morgan (2004, 249) who strikes a similar note but connects the closural *sphragis* with the novel's profound erotic-aesthetic themes: 'As the heroines of the myths become music, Chloe becomes a book, authored, at the deepest level, by Eros himself . . . which achieves its closure with her penetration. Thereafter both are, as it were, loosed into the real world.'

Tales of the (peri-)text: Persinna's *tainia* in Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Tales*

When the Ethiopian queen Persinna abandoned her infant girl at birth, she left the child with rich recognition-tokens: a jewelled necklace and a band of cloth or *tainia* on which she had embroidered the story of the baby's royal origins and the strange circumstances which led to her exposure. The *tainia* is a textile autograph, embroidered by the very hand of the Ethiopian queen herself using the Ethiopian script; in this way the writing itself constitutes proof of the document's authorial and geographical origins, just as its message proves the royal parentage and Ethiopian ethnicity of the infant to whom the *tainia* is attached – a purpose for which it is repeatedly invoked in the novel.[184] The *tainia* is therefore a miniature text about Charikleia, embedded within Heliodorus' novel about Charikleia; this, plus the fact that it is embroidered 'in Ethiopian letters' (*grammasin Aithiopikois*), punning, perhaps, on the novel's title 'Ethiopian tales' (*Aithiopika*),[185] invites us to read the *tainia* as an internal mirror-text or *mise en abyme*; it is, in a sense, a miniature *Aithiopika* inscribed within the novel. Despite the affinities between the two texts, however, they are not a precise match. This, as Whitmarsh points out, means we cannot read the *tainia* as a 'simple metonym' for the larger narrative.[186] Instead, the two texts are in dialogue, in a way which highlights the similarities but also the differences between them: the *tainia*, for example, denaturalizes Heliodorus' text and provokes the reader to consider the diverse ways in which a novel differs from this textile document which is addressed primarily to a private reader. In several ways, therefore, the *tainia* highlights what is distinctive about the novel as a text, and its decipherment in the story-world tells a story about the reader's encounter with the *Ethiopian Tales* itself.

One emphatic difference between the two is their language and script. Persinna the Ethiopian queen uses the royal Ethiopian script. As a result

[184] In particular, see the words of the Ethiopian Sisimithres to King Hydaspes as he testifies to the authenticity of Charikleia's claim to be the daughter of the king and queen (Hld. 10, 14, 1): 'I recognize as well the band which is inscribed with the royal script of the Ethiopians, as you see, removing any doubt that it was composed elsewhere, and which you above all will recognize as the embroidery of Persinna's own hand' (Γνωρίζω καὶ τὴν ταινίαν τοῖς βασιλείοις Αἰθιόπων γράμμασιν ὡς ὁρᾷς κεχαραγμένην καὶ οὐ παρέχουσαν ἀμφιβολίαν ἀλλαχοῦ συντετάχθαι, Περσίννης δὲ αὐτοχειρίᾳ κατεστίχθαι παρὰ σοὶ μάλιστα γνωριζομένην). For the role of the *tainia* as an internal *Beglaubigungsstragie* or authenticating document, see also Hld. 2.31.2; 4.8–4.9.1; 4.11.3–4; 4.13.1; 10.12.4; 10.13.1–3.

[185] Hld. 4.8.1; for the idea that this is a pun, see Whitmarsh 1998, 119. Whitmarsh (1999, 27) also identifies a pun on the title in a passage that is unrelated to the *tainia* at 9.22.7 (*Aithiopika . . . ta semnologēmata*).

[186] Whitmarsh (1998, 118–22) is germane to the discussion in this section.

the *tainia* is an esoteric document which is unintelligible to the Greek characters in the novel, including Charikleia's adoptive father Charikles, and the very reader to whom it is primarily addressed, Charikleia herself.[187] As an infant, Charikleia is therefore accompanied, perhaps enfolded within, a *fabula de se* which she does not understand, but the secrets of which are eventually revealed to her when the Egyptian priest Kalasiris translates the *tainia* for her. Charikleia mirrors the reader of the *Ethiopian tales*, who is similarly plunged into the plot *in medias res* and experiences the narrative as a gradual revelation and decoding of a series of riddles.[188] As a text written and also translated by non-Greek characters (Persinna and Kalasiris) for a Greek reader (Charikleia), the *tainia* is therefore an instantiation of Heliodorus' enigmatic narrative technique, dramatizing within the fiction the protocols of reading the novel itself.

But here the differences between the texts become important. Ironically, Persinna's choice of her local language as the medium for communication excludes the principal reader for whom her text is designed. In many respects, the *tainia* is a failed text: like an undelivered letter, its message remains uncommunicated until the intervention, several years later, of the Egyptian priest Kalasiris. In contrast, *The Ethiopian tales* is a publicly circulating text, whose successful communication is directly linked to its status as a text which is copied (and is therefore implicitly *not* autographic), distributed and circulated among readers, unlike the *tainia*, which is a single copy of a private (or at least intimate) discourse that is launched into a world of readers who cannot interpret it, only to be locked away in a chest (*koitis*) where it cannot even be accessed.[189] Heliodorus, like Persinna, is not ethnically Greek; he identifies himself in the novel's final sentence as a Phoenician from Emesa.[190] However, Heliodorus' decision to write in Greek ensures that his text reaches a maximal readership, which includes Greeks as well as Hellenophone non-Greeks like himself and like many of the characters in his fiction.[191] The esoteric *tainia* therefore highlights,

[187] Hld. 4.11.3–4. [188] On Heliodorus' enigmatic narrative technique, see Morgan 1994.
[189] Hld. 4.11.3. [190] Hld. 10.41.4; see n. 137.
[191] Heliodorus's fiction presents the reader with an emphatically polyglot and multicultural world, albeit one where Greek is the dominant culture. At the Ethiopian court, the local language is the default medium for communication, but Greek is used when speakers wish to ensure they are intelligible to Greek visitors or, alternatively, unintelligible to the Ethiopian masses: for examples, see 9.1.5; 10.9.6. Notably, it is only the educated elite among the non-Greeks who can speak or understand Greek, such as Sisimithres, the Gymnosophists, the Ethiopian king and queen, and the Egyptian priest Kalasiris; Heliodorus emphasizes the language-barrier for the Ethiopian commoners (10.15.1; 10.35.2; 10.38.3; see Whitmarsh 1999). Elite non-Greeks can also understand each others' languages, for example the Egyptian Kalasiris can read the Ethiopian writing on the *tainia* (4.8.1). In contrast, Greeks – even educated Greeks like Charikles, Theagenes and Charikleia (who is Greek by acculturation) – are unable to read, speak or understand other languages such as Ethiopian; instead, these non-Greek cultures are 'translated' and interpreted for them.

by contrast, the *inclusive* nature of the novel as, within the economy of the novel's fictional world (where elite non-Greek characters are able to communicate proficiently in Greek as well as their own local languages, but Greeks read and understand only Greek), Heliodorus' use of Greek, as an outsider himself, must be construed as a conscious attempt to 'translate' the foreign worlds of the novel and disclose to his Greek readers a narrative that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

The presence, at the heart of the novel's plot, of a non-Greek text which requires decipherment and translation therefore reinforces the sense that Heliodorus' novel itself is an enigma which requires decoding. The fact that the key intra-diegetic readers of the *tainia*, Sisimithres and Kalasiris, are priestly mystico-religious figures (as well as non-Greeks) hints at the 'mysteriosophic' nature of Heliodorus' novel, and enhances this air of mystery further.[192] The reader's task of coming to grips with the plot of the novel – like Charkleia's discovery of the secrets of the *tainia* – is assimilated to the task of deciphering a foreign language.[193] However, at this point the linguistic difference between the *tainia* and the novel makes a subtle but important distinction between the two acts of reading, intra- and extra-diegetic. The fact that Heliodorus writes in *Greek* means that, although the reader is presented with non-Greek perspectives – by 'watching' Kalasiris decipher Persinna's text – (s)he is actually not required to adopt a non-Greek perspective him- or herself in order to access Heliodorus' narrative, any more than Charikleia has to try to understand the *tainia* without Kalasiris' help – something she has explicitly never tried to do.[194] Heliodorus, the Greek-speaking Phoenician, is, in effect, 'Kalasiris' to his reader's 'Charikleia', and does the work of translation for his reader by writing in Greek. As a consequence, although the presence of the *tainia* in the text flags the importance of non-Greek perspectives in the plot, and intensifies the exotic mystique of *The Ethiopian tales*, it does so – crucially – without alienating or discomfiting its Greek readers by requiring them to adopt any one of these heterocultural perspectives. Reading the *Ethiopian tales* is not, therefore, quite a process of acculturation or a transformative experience of cultural dislocation and 'becoming other', as has been suggested.[195] Instead, the narrative highlights the limited capacity of the Hellenocentric reader, in contrast with the non-Greek elites who, within the economy of the fiction

192 See Whitmarsh 1999.
193 See Whitmarsh (1998, 119): the *tainia* 'makes text into a reading-problem; in order to decipher the *tainia* (and by implication the *Aithiopika* itself?) – you have to read from a non-Greek perspective'.
194 Hld. 4.11.4.
195 See, for example, Whitmarsh (1998, 120): 'the crucial requirement for reading (in) the *Aithiopika* is . . . élite, non-Greek perspective'.

at least, have fuller access to the interpretable possibilities of the world. The *tainia* conspires to make Heliodorus' novel a *fantasy* of acculturation, whose narrative takes the reader, imaginatively, deep into the Ethiopian world, whilst all the time ensuring that the secrets, customs and the very texts of the Ethiopians are interpreted, translated and served up in the language that is most familiar to readers of the Greek world.

Another contrasting feature of the two texts is their materiality. The textile nature of the *tainia* is repeatedly emphasized: it is a woven cloth with embroidered letters of silken thread.[196] In its material form, the *tainia* possibly echoes the material configuration of Heliodorus' text, for if we are to imagine that the *tainia* was wrapped around the infant Charikleia when she was exposed[197] – which is certainly how Charikleia wears it later on, when she unwraps it from around her waist (Hld. 10.13.1) – then the *tainia* may replicate the physicality of the novel's form as a book-roll which the reader must similarly unwind in order to access Heliodorus' text. Against this idea, it may be objected that the fragment of Heliodorus that we have is actually a parchment *codex* from the sixth or seventh century, not a roll.[198] Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that the novel circulated originally or at an earlier period in the form of a book-roll, although by the earliest date postulated for Heliodorus in the late third century, the codex was establishing itself as the normal book format.[199] Even if Heliodorus composed his novel with the codex-format in mind, however, the history of reading-culture suggests that the more ancient book-roll would still have had purchase in the reader's imagination: after the introduction of the printing-press in the fifteenth century, for example, manuscript culture continued to thrive and even to compete with printed texts long into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[200] In our own era too we may note how the virtual simulation of older, obsolescent modes of reading is central to the market appeal of many new digital reading technologies such as e-readers and Kindle devices which seek to efface their digitality with screens which are designed to simulate the appearance of paper, the retention of print-type fonts and the simulation of the action of 'turning the page' – all of which are redundant in practical terms, but

[196] Hld. 2.31.2: 'a band woven out of silken thread, embroidered with local letters and a narrative of the circumstances relating to the child' (ταινία . . . ἀπὸ σηρικοῦ νήματος ἐξυφασμένη γράμμασιν ἐγχωρίοις καὶ διηγήματι τῶν κατὰ τὴν παῖδα κατάστικτος).

[197] Persinna uses the verb *eneileō* to describe her action (4.8.6): 'having enveloped you in this band, a pitiful narrative about you and me' (σε . . . ταινίᾳ τῇδε . . . ἐλεεινῷ διηγήματι τῷ σῷ τε κἀμαυτῆς ἐνειλήσασα).

[198] See Hunter 2008, 264, with Gronewald 1979.

[199] Cavallo 1999.

[200] See, for example, Love 1993 and Moureau 1993. Chartier (2007, 46–62) explores the dramatization of this fluctuation between handwritten newsletters and printed gazettes in Ben Jonson's work.

felt by many to be crucial to the imaginative and emotional recreation of older, more 'intimate' encounters with a personalized object, a book. With reading, it seems, old habits die hard, and the ghosts of older reading habits continue to haunt new developments in technology long after they have been replaced by more modern, efficient or user-friendly embodiments of the text. It just may be the case that Heliodorus' *Ethiopian tales*, which was itself born into a textual culture which was fluctuating between codex and scroll, straddled both by evoking, imaginatively, the experience of the book-roll at the heart of the story.

One way or another, Charikleia's revelatory act mirrors the reader's own manipulation of Heliodorus' book, dramatizing within the fiction the revelatory nature of the physical act of reading itself. Both texts are eminently portable: the peregrinations of the *tainia* in the fiction, from its origins in Ethiopia, to Egypt, to Greece and back again to Ethiopia, hint at the (no doubt hoped-for) dissemination of Heliodorus' novel throughout the Greek world. As Tim Whitmarsh has argued, the very fabric and material form of the *tainia* seem also to embody the diversity of cultural perspectives in Heliodorus' text: from its threads of oriental silk, its Ethiopian lettering and the Persian echoes of its author Persinna's name, to the Nilotic connotations of its serpentine form as a text which, like that great river, leads the reader deep into the mysterious sub-Saharan continent.[201]

The fabric of the *tainia* also contrasts with Heliodorus' text, which was (presumably) written in ink on the papyrus of a book-scroll or else on the papyrus or parchment of a *codex*. This difference between the two texts is not inert; it emphasizes, rather, the contrasting genderedness of both. Weaving, since the stories of Philomela, Arachne and Odysseus' wife Penelope, was an archetypally feminine method of expression and documentation; Persinna's woven cloth therefore intensifies its status as a female-authored text which is addressed, primarily, to a female reader in the text, her daughter Charikleia.[202] This in turn highlights the novel's contrasting status as a male-authored text which is embodied in the material form that marked it as a work of literature which was addressed to a more openly diverse readership. The novel's comparatively generic and inexpensive material (a copied text written in ink, on papyrus or parchment, as opposed to an autograph on precious cloth) fits it much better than

[201] Whitmarsh 1998; see also Elmer (2008) who argues that Heliodorus uses the Nile as a metaphor for the (futile) search for points of cultural origin for hybrid identities like Charikleia and the novel itself. The materials mentioned in the prologue to Apuleius' *Met.* imply similar cultural diversity for his text, see Gibson 2001, Clarke 2001 and Too 2001.

[202] Chartier 2007, 83–104.

Persinna's *tainia* for copying and wider dissemination. The uniqueness of the *tainia* makes it more fragile than the novel: Persinna's testimony is entirely embodied in its material form, so that, if the *tainia* is destroyed, her testimony will be obliterated with it, effectively severing Charikleia from her parental origins – hence the need to conceal and preserve the text in a closed chest, in a manner that may remind us of the common pseudo-documentary motif used in other fictions, such as *The incredible things beyond Thule*. In contrast, with Heliodorus' novel which exists (implicitly) in multiple copies, the loss or destruction of any single text, although by no means negligible (as in the pre-printing era something risks being lost even with damage to one manuscript), is not catastrophic in the same way: other copies would still exist to ensure the text's general survival.

However, the novel's superior mobility also generates paternal anxieties for Heliodorus which do not confront Persinna, author of the *tainia*, in the same way. As an object which is the work of Persinna's own hand, the *tainia* is a unique artefact whose very materiality identifies and guarantees its origins: its costly material, Ethiopian lettering and the signature style of the embroidery mark it recognizably as that of the queen. The *tainia* is uniquely Persinna's in a way that the novel cannot, from its very materiality, be identified as uniquely Heliodorus'. In this respect, the autographic *tainia* strongly contrasts with the novel.

In order to authenticate the novel as his own, Heliodorus adds a *sphragis* in the final sentence: 'Thus ends the account of the Ethiopian adventures of Theagenes and Charikleia, composed by a Phoenician man from Emesa, one of the clan of the descendants of Helios, Theodosius' son, Heliodorus.'[203] As a text which asserts the genealogy of Charikleia, the *tainia* corresponds to features of Heliodorus' peritext. Verbal echoes between the two underscore this correspondence. The beginning of Persinna's text evokes the author's name, *Helio-dorus*, as Persinna inscribes the *tainia* as 'the final *gift*' (*dōron*) to her daughter (4.8.1), followed by the assertion (twice) that she and her family are descended from the Sun-god *Helios*, first invoking as her witness the Sun-god Helios 'the ruler our clan' (*ho genearchēs hēmōn Hēlios*, 4.8.2), and then explaining that the ancestors of the Ethiopians included the gods Helios and Dionysus (as well as the heroes Perseus, Andromeda and Memnon).[204] As well as evoking Heliodorus' name, this mirrors Heliodorus' assertion, in the *sphragis*, that he himself is 'one of the descendants of Helios' (*tōn aph' Hēliou genos*, 10.41.4). Persinna

[203] Hld. 10.41.4.
[204] Hld. 4.8.3: Ἡμῖν πρόγονοι θεῶν μὲν Ἥλιός τε καὶ Διόνυσος ἡρώων δὲ Περσεύς τε καὶ Ἀνδρομέδα καὶ Μέμνων ἐπὶ τούτοις.

writes that she conceived in the *tenth year* of her marriage to Hydaspes (4.8.4) – hinting, perhaps, at the *ten books* of Heliodorus' novel. In her climactic trial-scene in Ethiopia, Charikleia unwinds the *tainia* from her waist to authenticate her claim to be the daughter of Persinna and Hydaspes.[205] In a similar way, Heliodorus' peritext is unfolded at the end in order to assert his authorship of the text. As Persinna realizes, the *tainia* will either serve as a token of identification, should her daughter survive, or else her epitaph, should she die – a statement that reflects the twin roles of Heliodorus' *sphragis*, the seal which both identifies and authenticates the novel, but which also, like a funerary inscription, marks the end (*peras*) of the narrative and its monumentalization as a text which will preserve its author's memory for posterity. Through the *tainia*, therefore, Heliodorus interweaves a metatextual story about the novel's origins with the fiction about Charikleia. The possibility that the novel could have been known in antiquity by the alternative title *Charikleia* (which seems to have been its title in the Byzantine period) would have abetted the reader in forming such connections between the central character and the text itself.[206]

This means that the anxieties relating to Charikleia's identity which come to the surface in the final book are significant in a metatextual sense as well. Although the king Hydaspes does not question the authenticity of the *tainia* itself, the great danger, in his view, is that it could all too easily have become detached from her true child and bestowed on another; the detachable *tainia* could then be used to authenticate an illegitimate child. At the metatextual level, Hydaspes' concerns hint at a latent anxiety in the novel about authorship and especially the peritext which, owing to its liminal status, could similarly be detached from its text, and its claim to authorship transferred to another. Quite unlike Persinna's *tainia*, peritextual features such as the *sphragis* could be falsified, a practice that was also known in antiquity: the philosopher Democritus, for example, was associated with forging *sphrageis*,[207] a practice which underlies Ptolemy Chennus' claim that the famous prologue to Herodotus' *Histories* was a

[205] Hld. 10.13.1: 'And while she was speaking, she produced the band that had been exposed with her which she was wearing about her waist and, unwinding it, brought it to Persinna' (Καὶ ἅμα λέγουσα τὴν συνεκτεθεῖσαν ἑαυτῇ ταινίαν ὑπὸ τῇ γαστρὶ φέρουσα προὔφερέ τε καὶ ἀνειλήσασα τῇ Περσίννῃ προσεκόμιζεν).

[206] For discussions of the title of Heliodorus' novel, see Whitmarsh 2005, 592–4.

[207] Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 1.15.69 and Vitruvius 9, *praef.* 14 (the text here, however, is problematic). The *sphragis* at Dictys *Eph.* 5.17 is fictional. For discussion, see Speyer 1971, 56–9.

forgery composed by Herodotus' lover Plesirhoos of Thessaly, a hymn-writer who grafted the sentence onto the beginning of Herodotus' text.[208] Underlying Ptolemy's joke was a real awareness of the precarious status of peritextual features like the prologue, which was founded on the material reality of the ancient book-form: the text nearest the extremes of the book-roll was the most susceptible to damage, and the fragile *sillybos*, the label on which the author's name was inscribed along with the title of the work, was itself also easily detachable from the book. This prompted authors at an early stage to start embedding their names more organically into their texts, for example in *akrosticha* and 'signature'-effects which were both less detachable from the text and less easy to forge, and which may therefore be seen as an attempt to convert the text into the author's quasi-autograph.[209] Persinna's *tainia* represents this autographic desire in *Ethiopian tales*, and can be read as one of the ways in which the novel anticipates the perils of its own textual transmission.[210]

Through the *tainia*, then, Heliodorus thematizes his own novel within the fiction, interweaving with the story of Charikleia questions which relate self-reflexively to the novel as a material text, the experience of reading, and the role of the peritext in asserting textual authenticity. It prompts the reader to ponder what is materially distinctive about a *novel*. The *tainia* also thematizes within the fiction the novel's own self-consciousness about authenticity and authorship; in particular, Hydaspes' paternal anxieties about the relationship between Charikleia and the *tainia* reflect anxieties in ancient literary culture about the integrity of peritextual features like the prologue, title and author's name. Through his fiction of a material text, therefore, Heliodorus (to paraphrase Chartier) converts objects and practices from his contemporary written culture, especially the material realities of the novel itself, into a theme and aesthetic resource in *Ethiopian tales*.[211]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for serious attention to be given to ancient fictional narratives' engagement with their own peritexts. These arguments have serious implications for book-culture in the Roman empire

[208] Ptolemy Chennus, *ap.* Photius *Bib.* 148b 10–16; see Chapter 4, pp. 116–26.
[209] Speyer 1971, 59.
[210] For the diverse ways in which the novels imagine oral and textual versions of their own narratives, see Hunter 2008, 267–9.
[211] Chartier 2007, x–xi.

as well as reading-cultures, as it implies that the ancient bookscape was becoming more standardized, especially in its distinction between text and peritext, and that readers, in tandem with these developments, were becoming increasingly sophisticated in their ability to appreciate the subtle semiotic inflections of different zones within the bookscape. I have also presented a case here for an insidious degree of cross-fertilization between scholarly and fictional text-formats, as subversive writers of fiction like Antonius Diogenes and Lucian appropriated the textual apparatus of technical treatises into their literary fantasies, to provide the reader with ever more authentic experiences of fiction – an idea to which I shall return, finally, in the conclusion to this book.

If I have pushed this experimental reading hard – even at the risk, sometimes, of collapsing into allegories of reading – it is because I wish to scotch, once and for all, the fallacious assumption that it is not legitimate or fruitful to talk of the peritext in the pre-modern period – as if, before the advent of the printing press, the peritext did not, or could not, exist.[212] In the introduction to his groundbreaking work on the paratext, Genette suggests first that this line of inquiry is anachronistic for pre-modern textual culture, a view which he then instantly qualifies:

> it is an acknowledged fact that our 'media' age has seen the proliferation of a type of discourse around texts that was unknown in the classical world and *a fortiori* in antiquity and the Middle Ages, when texts often circulated in an almost raw condition, in the form of manuscripts devoid of any formula of presentation. I say an *almost* raw condition because the sole fact of transcription . . . brings to the ideality of the text some degree of materialization, graphic or phonic, which, as we will see, may induce paratextual effects. In this sense, one may doubtless assert that a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed.[213]

For Genette the paratext (which is a broader category than the peritext) must have existed in antiquity for no other reason than because it probably always exists, but it is completely unclear what form it took, or what its effects were. In his subsequent analysis of individual paratextual components, Genette gives only the most cursory treatment to ancient texts – consigning them, along with all pre-modern literature, to the prehistory of the paratext. Out of the 132 pages of exhaustive analysis of the preface, for example, the entire 'prehistory' of the preface – from Homer to Rabelais (!) – is contained in a mere eight pages. Genette explains why:

212 Studies on the historical paratext go back as far as Renaissance texts, e.g. Smith and Wilson 2011.
213 Genette 1997, 3.

> By 'prehistory' I mean here the whole period that, for us, extends (let us say) from Homer to Rabelais, a period when for obvious material reasons the prefatorial function is taken on by the opening lines or pages of the text. What holds true for all the other paratextual elements holds true for the preface as well: its separation from the text by the presentational means familiar to us today . . . is tied to the existence of the book, that is, the printed text.[214]

However, he does concede that the matter of presentation does not rule out the existence of the peritext *de facto*, at least as far as the prefatorial function is concerned:

> But we cannot say of the preface, *as we can of other elements such as the title or the name of the author*, that this poverty of presentation . . . entirely stifled its use; what we can say, and more accurately, is that the poverty of presentation concealed its use by depriving it of the means of drawing attention to itself with an appearance *en exergue*. Thus the beginnings (and possibly the endings) of texts are where one must seek these statements in which the author presents, and sometimes comments on, his work.[215]

Genette's immensely valuable study is more enlightened about (and more interested in) ancient texts than most modern studies of the paratext, but this matter of presentation is problematic, as it deflects most critics from giving serious credence to the existence of the peritext in antiquity, despite the fact that ancient textual culture is the very birthplace of many of the components which are familiar in the paratext today. Most modern studies simply take the modern period as their starting point, ignoring entirely whatever went before, as if the peritext sprang up *ex nihilo* with the advent of printing. Even in the passage which I have quoted above, in the text which I have italicized, Genette is dismissive of the peritextual status of the title and the author's name in ancient texts – features which were indeed felt to have peritextual status in ancient fictions, as I hope this chapter has shown. The peritext cannot be defined purely by its *mise en livre*; rather, it exists when a certain passage of text is felt to have peritextual independence from the rest of the text: separate from it, but also relating *to* it, usually talking *about* it. The physical presentation of this separateness on the page is merely an expression of what is already felt to be there; the *mise en livre*, therefore, is an outcome of the peritext; it is not a prerequisite for defining it. The ancient peritext *did* exist, and it *did* matter – indeed, it played a directional role in the reading experience.

[214] Genette 1997, 163. [215] Genette 1997, 163–4, with my italics.

In its eclectic exploration of the role of the peritext in fictions of the imperial period (rather than exhaustive analysis of one individual peritextual element or another),[216] this chapter demonstrates that there was a vibrant sense of a peritextual culture in antiquity, by which I mean, a shared sense of *a way of reading the peritext*. Moreover, much of the peritextual sophistication which we tend, complacently, to associate with modern literature alone is already in full flight in ancient texts. This is an important dimension of the modernist 'feel' which, as I have argued, characterizes much of the literature of the imperial period, where literature generally shows signs not just of a remarkably imaginative engagement with its own textual culture, but a growing fascination with the book-form and the peritext itself as a resource for creating, authenticating – or subverting – the fictional world.

[216] Examples of studies of individual peritextual features include Janson 1964 on Latin prose prefaces; Kahane and Laird 2001 on the prologue to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*; Kranz 1961 on the *sphragis*; Nachmanson 1969 on titles in Greek literature; Vardi 1993 on titles of miscellanies and Whitmarsh 2005 on titles of the Greek novels.

CHAPTER 6

True stories

Travels in hyperreality

Lucian's famously subversive prologue to *True stories* (*VH* 1.1–4) encapsulates the *Zeitgeist* of the literary culture in the second century CE. It is upfront about its fictionality, its literary pedigree, its textuality and readership. Lucian addresses scholars who will appreciate the dense allusivity of his narrative, but also the novelty of the plot. The text appeals to those who will enjoy not just the experience of immersion in the fiction, but also scrutinizing the consummate artistry of the fake.

The prologue is saturated with a sense of posteriority – a sense of cultural belatedness. This can be felt not only in its strong sense of its own novelty in relation to the literature of the past, but also in its author's awareness of his own posterity and his desire to leave a worthwhile legacy to readers of the future. What Lucian says here can tell us much about the relationship between past, present and future in his contemporary culture:

> For this reason, I too was keen, prompted by vanity (*kenodoxia*), to leave something to posterity, so that I might not be the only one without a share in the freedom (*eleutheria*) to fabricate. But since I had nothing true (*alēthes*) to report – for I had never had a noteworthy (*axiologon*) experience – I resorted to lies which were much more honest than the lies of others.[1]

These terms speak, however jokingly, about the experience of shallowness, lack of prestige, inauthenticity and constriction in contemporary

[1] This is not the only time Lucian embroiders autobiographical details with fiction, though it is the most blatant example. In a brilliantly imaginative article, Billault (2006) examines the novelistic affinities of the narrative pattern of journeys, encounters with symbolic paintings and unexpected vicissitudes of fortune in Lucian's *prolaliai Hercules*, *Herodotus* and *Zeuxis*, arguing that these three essays can be read as 'fragments of an autobiographical novel' (Billault 2006, esp. 58–9). *Dream*, Lucian's most overtly autobiographical work, also smacks strongly of fiction: both Gera (1995) and Humble and Sidwell (2006) analyse Lucian's avowed failure to become a sculptor (*Dream* 1–4) in light of Socrates' reputed career-failure, and Romm (1990, 95–8) reads the sculptor-anecdote in light of the plastic metaphor in Lucian's essay *You are a literary Prometheus*. In these works, the question of where to draw the boundaries between his 'fictional' and 'autobiographical' becomes a hermeneutic challenge in itself that is comparable to the truth-games of *True stories*.

culture.[2] For Lucian, however, the antidote is not to try to repeat the past but, rather, to find liberation in the most audacious fiction possible, to recreate the literary past into something dynamically new, and to celebrate the fake, the hybrid and the mimetic more openly or 'honestly' (*poly . . . eugnōmonesteron*) than any other authors before him have done. *True stories* may be replete with the voices of ancient authors, but it is unapologetic in its lack of nostalgia; this is a text of explosive creative energy which speaks vividly and buoyantly to its present, as well as to its unknown readers in the future.

Lucian emphatically declares that his journey is entirely a *fake*. His reworking of Epimenides' 'Cretan liar paradox' signals in a programmatic way the importance throughout the work of the themes of truth and lies, and the paradoxical relation between the world of the book and the real world. The autobiographical mode of the work focuses these themes in a particularly problematic way, however, for instead of writing an autobiogaphy which reflects a real life in the world beyond the text, Lucian's text creates a fictional life which never happened at all. Many of the individual episodes of the narrative will challenge reality in a similar way, in some cases even threatening to erase or reshape what is real outside the text in disturbing reversals of the hierarchy between the real world and the fictional world of the book. The text's explicit mendacity and lack of connection with any real experience beyond itself – the fact that the worlds, beings and adventures to which it refers do not, nor ever could, exist – makes it a test-site for the interrelation between the world of reality and the world of the book. For the reader, the constant challenge is to discern between what is fictional and what is real, and *not* to be taken in by Lucian's 'plausible lies'.

As well as exposing his autobiographical travel-narrative as a fake, Lucian claims to have written it in imitation of other notoriously mendacious travel-narratives, such as the works of Herodotus, Ctesias, Iambulus and the tales of Homer's Odysseus whom he identifies as the 'pioneer and teacher of such nonsense' (*VH* 1.3). The narrative, he promises, is full of 'riddling references' (*ēiniktai*) to the work of such authors. By presenting his narrative as an *ainigma*, a riddle or a series of veiled references which hint at something else, Lucian invites the reader to interpret every detail in it as a sign which points towards *other* texts.[3] In this way, the fictional

[2] *VH* 1.4: διόπερ καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπὸ κενοδοξίας ἀπολιπεῖν τι σπουδάσας τοῖς μεθ' ἡμᾶς, ἵνα μὴ μόνος ἄμοιρος ὦ τῆς ἐν τῷ μυθολογεῖν ἐλευθερίας, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἀληθὲς ἱστορεῖν εἶχον – οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐπεπόνθειν ἀξιόλογον – ἐπὶ τὸ ψεῦδος ἐτραπόμην πολὺ τῶν ἄλλων εὐγνωμονέστερον·

[3] See von Möllendorff 2000, 44–5.

travel-narrative offers, for the scholarly reader (*entungknanōn*), an intellectual journey through the literature of the past. Throughout the *True stories* Lucian repeatedly exploits the double meaning of the verb *entungkhanō*, which means both 'I encounter' and 'I read', so that the series of fictional encounters in the narrative become an allegory of so many readerly encounters with the literature of the past: encounters with Homer, with Herodotus, with Plato, Ctesias and more. In this way, fiction itself – the complex mimetic relationship between the world of reality and the world of the book – becomes in *True stories* a way of thinking about the relationship between the literary past and present.

The chapter falls into six sections, which explore episodes in the narrative that are fundamentally *about* reading, the reader, *True stories* itself and the nature of postclassical literary culture.[4] I hope to illustrate how the fantasy of *True stories* not only tells us much about the nature of the reader's encounter with fiction in the imperial period, but also uses that encounter – reading fiction itself – as the medium in which to explore the crisis of authenticity in imperial literary culture, as well as the dynamic and creative energy which characterizes the relationship between imperial authors and the literature of the past, which has been described as the 'crisis of posteriority'.[5] In the second half of the chapter I will explore parallels between *True stories* and Umberto Eco's ideas in his essay 'Travels in hyperreality', in particular Lucian's repeated dramatization in his narrative of the competitive dynamic between fiction and reality, and his celebration through the fiction of *True stories* of how the illusion of authenticity can be achieved. *True stories* represents the ultimate victory of the world of the book over the world of reality, where fiction creates an alternative reality that is both avowedly fake *and* better than the 'real thing' – 'hyperreal'. Eco's ideas provide a useful framework not only for understanding Lucian's radical experiments with fiction, reality and *mimēsis* in this work, but also the literary cultural context itself which frustrated and inspired him in equal measure.

Close encounters: Vine-women, Ass-legs and monstrous *mimēsis*

Lucian's encounters with two species of monstrous hybrid females, the Vine-women and the Ass-legs, are his first and final adventures in the narrative of *True stories*. Through these two mirror-episodes, Lucian dramatizes the encounter between imperial literature and its origins, and explores the

[4] In this chapter I expand on ideas I first developed in ní Mheallaigh 2009.

[5] Whitmarsh 2001.

dangers of an aesthetic which unthinkingly privileges the 'original' over the epigonic.[6] By choosing to frame the narrative between these two episodes, Lucian also explores self-reflexively the mimeticism of the *True stories* itself.

In the first adventure of the narrative, Lucian and his crew, having been blown off course for some eighty days, make their first landfall. The scene of the first adventure is a mysterious island with a remarkable ecology: there is a river of pure wine (Lucian notes that it is most like Chian wine) which is populated by wine-fish, a peculiar species which, when cooked, is converted into a form of edible alcohol (*oinophagia*). Near this river, Lucian sees the first of several marvellous inscriptions:

> we saw a column made of bronze, inscribed with Greek letters, obscure and worn away, saying: 'Thus far Heracles and Dionysus came.' And there were two footprints nearby on the rock, one a hundred feet long, the other smaller; it seemed to me that the latter one, the smaller, belonged to Dionysus, and the other to Heracles.[7]

In this instance, the curious footprints in the rock verify the inscription's remarkable claim that 'Heracles and Dionysus were here'. This is a richly metaliterary landscape which bears the imprint – literally – of the past. Footprints and rivers are common metaphors for literary *mimēsis*, used in this sense by Lucian himself in other works. In his essay *A teacher of rhetoric*, for example, the instructor who offers to lead the *tiro* scholar on the steeply arduous path to *paideia* shows his student a glimpse of 'the footprints of Demosthenes and Plato and some others, in size exceeding those of today's writers, but obscure already and many of them unclear with time'.[8] To achieve true culture, the scholar must emulate classical authors literally by following in their footsteps. There are clear verbal echoes between this passage in *A teacher of rhetoric* and the inscription in *True stories* whose lettering is similarly worn with time; in both texts also, the footprints represent models – either of intrepid travellers or of gifted authors and

[6] The Vine-women episode in particular has been subjected to various interpretations. Larmour (1997) reads Lucian's encounters with the Vine-women and Ass-legs as an allegory for the reader's encounter with mendacious narrative itself. For von Möllendorff (2000, 92–4) the episode contains a warning to the reader about the dangers of submitting unthinkingly to the pleasure of the erotic-fantastic narrative.

[7] *VH* 1.7: ὁρῶμέν τινα στήλην χαλκοῦ πεποιημένην, Ἑλληνικοῖς γράμμασιν καταγεγραμμένην, ἀμυδροῖς δὲ καὶ ἐκτετριμμένοις, λέγουσαν Ἄχρι τούτων Ἡρακλῆς καὶ Διόνυσος ἀφίκοντο. ἦν δὲ καὶ ἴχνη δύο πλησίον ἐπὶ πέτρας, τὸ μὲν πλεθραῖον, τὸ δὲ ἔλαττον – ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν, τὸ μὲν τοῦ Διονύσου, τὸ μικρότερον, θάτερον δὲ Ἡρακλέους.

[8] *Rhet. Praec.* 9: τὰ Δημοσθένους ἴχνη καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν, μεγάλα μὲν καὶ ὑπὲρ τοὺς νῦν, ἀμαυρὰ δὲ ἤδη καὶ ἀσαφῆ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου . . .

orators – who are greater than their latter-day emulators.[9] In *True stories*, playfully, the footprints themselves constitute the substance of Lucian's mimetic gesture, because they are an allusion to Herodotus 4.82 where the historian describes the giant footprint of Heracles in Scythia, four cubits long – Scythia's only artificial tourist-attraction. Characteristically, Lucian has amplified his Herodotean model to fantastic proportions (Herodotus' four cubits become hundreds of feet), offering the reader a literary imitation which is, in a gesture of aggressive emulation, even bigger and more wondrous than its predecessor. As well as constituting an example of *mimēsis* in themselves, Lucian's mimetic footprints function as a metaphor which flags up the very act of *mimēsis* in this passage: as the fantastic adventures of the narrative begin, the reader is reminded, in a surreally literal way, that they are following in the footsteps of the literary giants of the past.

Like footprints, rivers are also a key metaphor for literary mimēsis, and Lucian's river of wine plays a pointed role in this connection. In literary terms, the poet Homer himself is the ultimate 'source' whence all subsequent literary traditions flow. Homer is frequently described in metaphorical terms as 'the great ocean', or the 'great spring': the author of the treatise *On the Sublime*, for example, uses this imagery explicitly in connection with the process of literary *mimēsis* when describing Plato as 'drawing to himself myriad channels from that Homeric spring'.[10]

The peculiar substance of Lucian's *wine*-river reinforces its associations with literary inspiration. Wine, as opposed to water, is traditionally the liquid associated with literary inspiration; in this case, Lucian's observation that the river bears resemblance specifically to *Chian* wine hints at Homer as the ultimate source of that inspiration, although there are more immediate models.[11] Here again, Lucian is imitating historiographical predecessors: the river of wine evokes the springs and rivers of marvellous substances which are described in paradoxographical works such as the *Indian wonders* of Ctesias, an author who is named, along with others, in Lucian's preface.[12]

[9] Heracles and Dionysus are also mentioned together just prior to this passage at *Rhet. Praec.* 7, where the formidable path to learning appears to the *tiro* to require the fortitude of Dionysus and Heracles to climb it. This strengthens the case for a metaliterary reading of the *True stories* passage.

[10] *On the Sublime* 13.3: ὁ Πλάτων ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὁμηρικοῦ κείνου νάματος εἰς αὑτὸν μυρίας ὅσας παρατροπὰς ἀποχευσάμενος. At 35.4, the human admiration for greatness is likened to our natural wonder at the world's mighty rivers, the Nile, Danube, Rhine, and the stream of Ocean; these rivers embody the same qualities of grandeur and 'divinity' as authors such as Plato (mentioned explicitly in this section), Homer and Demosthenes.

[11] von Möllendorff 2000, 88; see *VH* 1.3: ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας ὁ τοῦ Ὁμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς. 'Their leader and instructor in this sort of charlatanry is Homer's Odysseus'. Chios is first among the various birthplaces attributed to Homer at *VH* 2.20.

[12] For a survey of parallels, see von Möllendorff 2000, 83–4.

As with the footprints, the wine-river serves a double-function, both as an instance of literary *mimēsis* and as a self-reflexive metaphor for the act of *mimēsis* itself.

This first episode has profound self-reflexive significance, as Lucian's first action within the world of the fiction is to read a text (the inscription) which verifies the unbelievable (the marvellous topographical features of the island) in an overtly mimetic landscape of rivers and footprints which reify the various acts of literary *mimēsis* themselves. Lucian's detection of his predecessors in adventure, Heracles and Dionysus, through the text of the inscription mirrors within the world of the fiction the real-world reader's recognition of Lucian's literary predecessors in the text of *True stories*, especially Herodotus and Ctesias. The very first act of reading *in* the text therefore mirrors the metaliterary reading *of* the text, as Lucian's fiction mirrors his reader's reality.

Lucian's next action is to search for the source of the wine-river (*VH* 1.7–8). Given the river's rich literary significance, this episode dramatizes the reader's quest to find the literary origins of *True stories* itself – a challenge which was established in the preface. As the first adventure in the narrative, this discovery of sources says something important about the nature of literature's relationship with its origins, which is one of the principal themes in *True stories.*

First, upon retracing the river's course, instead of finding a single source, Lucian discovers multiple springs, a bevy of Vine-women, half-human, half-vine. In the context of the island's intensely metaliterary landscape, this is suggestive of several views at once which are now familiar tenets of post-modern thought: that the single, privileged point of origin is a phantom only; that 'truth' and authority are not naturally self-evident entities but constructs of artifice; and that the original is itself already a copy.[13] Lucian's river has many sources, not just one. And as he gains more information about these multiple sources, their originary status is diffused even further: instead of monoliths, these points of origin are themselves hybrid beings – half-vegetation, half-human – and they are multilingual, speaking a mixture of Lydian, Indian and Greek to Lucian and his men. This linguistic diversity appears to be the result of interaction with Heracles and Dionysus, the earlier visitors to the island, who both had adventures in the near and farther East, and brought these cultural influences to the island.[14] In metaliterary terms as well, these 'origins' are themselves copies, as the Vine-women are a literary reworking of the snake-women of Dio's

[13] See Whitmarsh 2001, 45. [14] Georgiadou and Larmour 1997, 207, with n. 6.

Libyan oration.[15] Paradoxically, therefore, the 'sources' of Lucian's literary wine-river are themselves conglomerate products of older cultural and literary encounters, which carry Lucian's reader on a metaliterary journey back to even earlier sources. The origin itself is already a copy.

The metaliterary symbolism of the wine-river invites us to read Lucian's encounter with the Vine-women who are the *sources* of the river as a dramatization of the relationship between Lucian's contemporary literary culture and its own origins in the archaic and classical past. In this context, the ability to manipulate this fiction of cultural authenticity with success could transport one to dizzying heights of wealth, celebrity and glamour, but the stakes were high; failure could mean derision and exclusion from the circles of the intellectual elite – expulsion from the world of fictions.[16] Lucian's preoccupation with his narrative's mimeticism, with how it relates to its origins, with its self-conscious fakery, tells a story about the values of Lucian's contemporary culture as well. The encounter with the Vine-women explores deep anxieties about the cultural privileging of the original above the mimetic.

> Then, having crossed the river . . . we discovered something marvellous about the vines: the part which comes from the earth, the trunk itself, was sappy and thick, but in the upper part they were women, with all the perfect features from the waist up – just like our paintings of Daphne turning into a tree on the point when Apollo is catching her . . . They greeted us as we came near and clasped our hands . . . And they kissed us on our mouths: once kissed, a man became drunk and lost his senses. They did not, however, allow us to harvest their fruit, but felt pain and cried out whenever someone plucked them. But they were eager to have sex with us – and when two of our comrades approached them, they could no longer be disentangled, but were bound by the genitals, fusing and rooting together, and already their fingers had grown into branches, and they were ensnared more densely than ever in tendrils, about to bear fruit themselves as well.[17]

[15] Georgiadou and Larmour 1997; as the authors note (p. 206), the predatory female hybrids from Lucian's *Dipsads* also suggest Lucian knew Dio's snake-women from *Orat.* 5.

[16] On the role of *paideia* as a 'strategy of self-making', see Whitmarsh 2001, 90–130.

[17] *VH* 1.8: τότε δὲ τὸν ποταμὸν διαπεράσαντες . . . εὕρομεν ἀμπέλων χρῆμα τεράστιον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, ὁ στέλεχος αὐτὸς εὐερνὴς καὶ παχύς, τὸ δὲ ἄνω γυναῖκες ἦσαν, ὅσον ἐκ τῶν λαγόνων ἅπαντα ἔχουσαι τέλεια – τοιαύτην παρ᾽ ἡμῖν τὴν Δάφνην γράφουσιν ἄρτι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καταλαμβάνοντος ἀποδενδρουμένην . . . προσελθόντας δὲ ἡμᾶς ἠσπάζοντό τε καὶ ἐδεξιοῦντο . . . καὶ ἐφίλουν δὲ ἡμᾶς τοῖς στόμασιν· ὁ δὲ φιληθεὶς αὐτίκα ἐμέθυεν καὶ παράφορος ἦν. δρέπεσθαι μέντοι οὐ παρεῖχον τοῦ καρποῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ἤλγουν καὶ ἐβόων ἀποσπωμένου. αἱ δὲ καὶ μίγνυσθαι ἡμῖν ἐπεθύμουν· καὶ δύο τινὲς τῶν ἑταίρων πλησιάσαντες αὐταῖς οὐκέτι ἀπελύοντο, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τῶν αἰδοίων ἐδέδεντο· συνεφύοντο γὰρ καὶ συνερριζοῦντο. καὶ ἤδη αὐτοῖς κλάδοι ἐπεφύκεσαν οἱ δάκτυλοι, καὶ ταῖς ἕλιξι περπλεκόμενοι ὅσον οὐδέπω καὶ αὐτοὶ καρποφορήσειν ἔμελλον.

The Vine-women who are the sources of the river represent the canonical texts of the Greek literary tradition, which are privileged, sought out, and imitated, while Lucian and his crew, who are newcomers to their island, represent contemporary literature, with its desire to contact and court the literary models of the past. The fact that the sources of the river are gendered *female* in Lucian's narrative repays consideration: their status as female, fruit-bearing vines emphasizes the generative, maternal aspects of the literary tradition they represent, in contrast with its prevailing conceptualization as masculine, phallic, patriarchal.[18] In a well-known passage from the earlier treatise *On the Sublime* attributed to Longinus, for example, the effect of drawing literary inspiration from Homer is illustrated by analogy with the Delphic priestess:

> For many are possessed by an alien spirit in the same manner as, according to tradition, the Pythia, upon approaching the tripod – where, they say, there is a chasm in the earth, exhaling divine fumes – is impregnated from that source by a divine power, and instantly produces oracles under inspiration. In this way, certain effluences pass, as if from sacred apertures, from the genius of the ancients into the souls of those emulators; once inspired by these, even those who are not particularly susceptible to possession rave with admiration for the greatness of others.[19]

As Tim Whitmarsh points out, this passage is Platonic, both in its use of imagery which associates prophetic with literary inspiration, and in its privileging of the original by constructing mimetic authors as passive receptacles of the genius of the great authors of the past: 'The paternal text dominates the imitator, inseminating him or her with an alien presence.'[20] This is *mimēsis* as an 'inspirational experience'.[21] The implications of this filial relationship between imitator and origin emerge more fully a little later in 13.4, where ps.-Longinus, in praising Plato for his attempts not just to emulate but to outdo Homer, presents *mimēsis* as an Oedipal combat with the father-text – an attempt to rival and surpass the original.[22] A third paradigm is envisaged, negatively, by ps.-Longinus' assertion of what

[18] See the excellent analysis of mimetic literature's filial relation to its ancient models in ps.-Longinus' *On the Sublime* in Whitmarsh 2001, 57–71. Whitmarsh's exposition of *mimēsis* as an Oedipal engagement with the "*father*-text" (Whitmarsh 2001, 61) is germane to my argument throughout this section.

[19] *On the Sublime* 13.2: πολλοὶ γὰρ ἀλλοτρίῳ θεοφοροῦνται πνεύματι τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὃν καὶ τὴν Πυθίαν λόγος ἔχει τρίποδι πλησιάζουσαν, ἔνθα ῥῆγμά ἐστι γῆς ἀναπνέον, ὥς φασιν, ἀτμὸν ἔνθεον, αὐτόθεν ἐγκύμονα τῆς δαιμονίου καθισταμένην δυνάμεως παραυτίκα χρησμῳδεῖν κατ' ἐπίπνοιαν. οὕτως ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀρχαίων μεγαλοφυΐας εἰς τὰς τῶν ζηλούντων ἐκείνους ψυχὰς ὡς ἀπὸ ἱερῶν στομίων ἀπόρροιαί τινες φέρονται, ὑφ' ὧν ἐπιπνεόμενοι καὶ οἱ μὴ λίαν φοιβαστικοὶ τῷ ἑτέρων συνενθουσιῶσι μεγέθει.

[20] Whitmarsh 2001, 59. [21] Too 1998, 210. [22] Whitmarsh 2001, 61.

mimēsis is *not*: a mechanical appropriation of earlier models by posterior literature, described as 'theft' (*klopē*).[23] *Mimēsis*, therefore, is conceptualized variously as inspiration and impregnation by a father-text, as combat with a father-text, and as theft from tradition (a model which is repudiated).

Lucian's narrative answers these paradigms in multiple ways. It is precisely this latter model of *mimēsis* as theft which is enacted by the men's attempts to harvest the Vine-women's fruit – δρέπεσθαι τοῦ καρποῦ – a phrase which contains a sexual metaphor,[24] and here hints at rape, as the pain with which the Vine-women react signifies the tradition's resistance to such violent appropriation.[25] Lucian's representation of the literary tradition as *maternal* inverts the patriarchal model, and adds the patina of incest to the men's desire to copulate with the Vine-women. Lucian therefore reconstructs the mimetic drive in contemporary literature as an Oedipal desire to empower the subject by union with the *mother*, instead of the Longinian concept of an eristic engagement with the father. However, Lucian's radical narrative also reverses the directionality of contemporary literary culture's copulative desires: the Vine-women's active desire for intercourse (*mignusthai*) with the men articulates – paradoxically – *tradition's* desire to hybridize posterior literature (the Greek verb *mignusthai* carries both meanings). Their aggressive sexuality manifests as narcissism – an assimilative desire to reproduce the self in another. Lucian's comparison of the Vine-women with paintings of Daphne undergoing dendro-metamorphosis is proleptic of the men's transformation into vines; however, the reversal of gender-roles (in Lucian's version, the *males* play the role of Daphne, and the Vine-women take on the role of the amorous Apollo) hints that something is awry with this mimetic programme. Significantly, the Daphne myth evokes Apollo, the Pythian god, in a context that is paradigmatic of *failed* impregnation, as the nymph's metamorphosis marks the moment when she *escapes* the god's lustful grasp.[26] Lucian therefore rewrites the Longinian model of *mimēsis*: instead of male pursuit and impregnation of female as a way to think about how literary models inspire their imitators, we have here a model of sexually voracious females luring, intoxicating and entrapping men in order to assimilate them to themselves. The inebriating effect of the Vine-women's kiss hints at a

[23] *On the Sublime* 13.4. [24] von Möllendorff 2000, 93, n. 33.

[25] At *Prom. es* 7, Lucian talks about his own imitation of classical literary models in terms of theft (*kleptikē*).

[26] Ovid, *Met.* 1.452–567. Georgiadou and Larmour (1997, 206) contrast Lucian's evocation of paintings of Daphne with Dio's assertion (*Orat.* 5.12) that the snake-women's beauty can't be captured in art; Lucian outdoes his predecessor Dio by identifying an appropriate analogue.

reversed insemination of the male by a transfer of intoxicating wine instead of seminal fluid – but instead of the transport of inspiration, the result is loss of identity through metamorphosis. Instead of impregnation, the men who seek union with the Vine-women find themselves emasculated, robbed of their autonomy to reproduce away from those origins – or in literary terms, to innovate tradition.[27] Continuity is maintained in the fruit which they immediately produce, but the potentially diversifying effects of cross-fertilization are reduced to the tradition's remorseless self-replication, as the men are compelled into biological conformity with their host.

The shocking consequences of full-scale intercourse with the Vine-women – *ampelomixia* (*VH* 1.9) – provide a salutary warning for Lucian's readers: taken to extremes, *mimēsis* may mean incorporation into an aggressively agglutinative tradition, without the possibility of escape.[28] The encounter with origins through *mimēsis* becomes, in Lucian's narrative, a *locus* for anxiety, expressed in terms of patriarchal anxiety about female sexuality, especially the fear of entrapment.[29] Significantly, Lucian himself, who presents himself in other works as well as the *VH* as a master of literary innovation,[30] *does* escape – and when confronted with a mirror-encounter with another group of seductive hybrid females in the final episode with the Ass-legs, uses his figurative phallus, his sword, with penetrating efficiency.[31]

Like the Vine-women, the Ass-legs who feature in the final adventure of the narrative are a hybrid female race who feed off unwitting strangers to their shores; their method is to seduce the men, and once they have intoxicated them with wine, to murder them in their beds.[32] The Ass-legs'

[27] On an author's ability to handle his or her literary models authoritatively as an expression of masculinity, see Macleod (1979, 370–1) on Horace *Ep.* 1.19.28.

[28] Achilles Tatius' roughly contemporary novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* also plays subversively with origins. The novel contains a myth about the origin of the vine in Tyre (*L&C* 2.2.1–6), which reverses the dominant Hellenocentric myth about the direction of cultural influence from Greece to Phoenicia. This message is reinforced by a dendro-erotic myth (*L&C* 1.17.3–5) about the grafting of date-palms (*phoinikeis*), a process which is described as a 'botanical marriage' (*phutou gamos*, Whitmarsh's happy translation) in which genders are reversed in a manner similar to Lucian's story about 'vine-sex' (*ampelomixia*).

[29] See Larmour (1997, 144): 'Reading is . . . depicted through the doublet of the Vinewomen and the Asslegs as a dangerous act of exploration, akin to the perils of the male encounter with female sexuality.' See also Georgiadou and Larmour (1997 esp. n. 10), where the authors note the connection between wine, poetry and lies. On literary *mimēsis* as the site for ongoing debates concerning the relation between past and present, see Whitmarsh 2001, 88–9.

[30] Lucian's work thematizes and celebrates its own mimeticism, and also its generic innovation and hybridity: see Romm 1990 and Whitmarsh 2001, 75–8.

[31] *VH* 2.46. On Lucian's sword as a substitute phallus, see Larmour (1997, 143), who reads these two episodes as a dramatization of the reader's developing ability to discern *truth* from *lies*; for a refutation of this argument, see von Möllendorff 2000, 94–5.

[32] For the multiple parallels between these episodes, see von Möllendorff 2000, 489–97.

cannibalism presents a more horrifying vision of the literary canon's murderous voracity. However, this time, Lucian binds and interrogates one of the Ass-legs, which suggests a greater autonomy and ability to manipulate tradition, the success of which is marked by the captive Ass-leg's responsiveness to his questions, in contrast to the Vine-women's earlier resistance to the men's attempts to pluck their fruit. When the captive Ass-leg mutates into a pool of water to escape, Lucian plunges his sword into the water, turning it to blood – which, as David Larmour argues, is suggestive of sexual penetration – but this time it is a liberating act, and all the crew escape.

The sexually aggressive Vine-women and Ass-legs dramatize a surreal reversal of *mimēsis* where source-texts encroach, parasitically, upon posterity; where female reproductivity no longer co-operates with male 'artificing', but turns on it and incorporates it.[33] These two encounters explore the nightmarish implications of unexamined submission to an aesthetic which privileges the original over the mimetic. The evolution from the Vine-women fantasy about the stultifying domination of tradition, to the Ass-legs episode, in which Lucian displays a more assertive manipulation of the tradition, dramatizes the author's developing self-awareness in negotiating a fruitful balance between past and present. This also marks the narrative, which is framed by the two adventures as an example of that success: *True stories* as a mimetic text which creatively engages with its origins, to forge something radically new which can compete with and even eclipse the literature of the past.

Fiction and reality: the worlds of the Moon, the whale and the Island of Dreams

The Moon as mirror-world

Lucian's Moon in *True stories* is a hyperbolic reflection of our own Earth which becomes the setting for a fascinating interplay between the real and the mimetic: between the real world and the world of the book. In this episode, Lucian exploits philosophical ideas about the Moon as an analogous Earth, and about the power of mirrors to falsify reality, to explore the relationship between 'reality' and fiction, and especially the surreal inversion of that relationship. As a space removed from but also connected to our world, the Moon offers the reader a unique and subversive perspective on 'reality', which appears, paradoxically, as a mere reflection

[33] Lucian's encounter therefore represents a nightmarish version even of the more nuanced gendered politics of the model of *mimēsis* which Whitmarsh 2013b argues for, where literary creativity is seen as 'a blend of female and male principles, of nature and art' (p. 286).

in the lunar mirror. Through this wondrous device, Lucian intensifies the Moon's status as an icon of hyperreality, a mirror-world which is both intensely preoccupied with its own mimeticism and which vies with the Earth in a game of ontological one-upmanship; furthermore, the act of katoptric viewing in the text becomes a trope for the act of reading *True stories* itself, which converts Lucian's exploration of how the lunar and terrestrial realities interlock into an examination of the reader's experience of how the fictional world(s) of the book relate to his or her own reality.

A long history of philosophical speculation that the Moon was a parallel but hyperbolic counterpart to our Earth meant that the Moon was a ready-made test-site for the interplay between the real and fictional. Our earliest Greek source for the idea is Anaxagoras (fifth century BCE), who postulated a mountainous lunar world of many cities and dwellings;[34] but it is the Pythagoreans, with their marvellous diversity of opinions about the Moon, who influenced Lucian's imagination most. Philolaus claimed the Moon was an Earth-like world inhabited by gigantic flora and fauna (specifically, fifteen times larger than earthly counterparts). These creatures were also stronger, more beautiful and purer than Earthlings, as Lunar beings produce no excrement.[35] Herodorus of Heraclea supplemented this theory with the proposition that Moon-women laid eggs, on the basis of which another Pythagorean, Neocles of Croton, argued that Helen of Troy was a Moon-woman: she was, after all, famed for her extraordinary beauty and according to myth, she had been born from an egg – fragments of which were still visible in Sparta in Pausanias' time.[36] The Pythagoreans believed that the Moon was a parallel world not only of superior beauty

[34] DK 59 A 77. Anaxagoras' ideas are recorded by Cicero *Academica* II. 39. 123, although he erroneously attributes them to Xenophanes: *Habitari ait Xenophanes in luna, eamque esse terram multarum urbium et montium*. 'Xenophanes [*sic*] claims that the Moon is inhabited, and that it is a land of many cities and mountains.' See also Diogenes Laertius 2.8: οὗτος ἔλεγε . . . τὴν . . . σελήνην οἰκήσεις ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ λόφους καὶ φάραγγας. 'This man [Anaxagoras] said . . . that there were dwellings on the Moon, but also hills and gorges.'

[35] Stobaeus, *Doxographi Graeci*, p. 361: τῶν Πυθαγορείων τινὲς μέν, ὧν ἐστι Φιλόλαος, τὸ γεωφανὲς αὐτῆς εἶναι διὰ τὸ περιοικεῖσθαι τὴν σελήνην καθάπερ τὴν παρ' ἡμῖν γῆν ζῴοις καὶ φυτοῖς μείζοσι καὶ καλλίοσιν· εἶναι γὰρ πεντεκαιδεκαπλάσια τὰ ἐπ' αὐτῆς ζῷα τῇ δυνάμει μηδὲν περιττωματικὸν ἀποκρίνοντα καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν τοσαύτην τῷ μήκει. 'Among the Pythagoreans there are those, including Philolaos, who attribute its [the Moon's] Earth-like appearance to the fact that it is inhabited all over just like our Earth by animals and plants that are larger and more beautiful – for creatures on the Moon are fifteen times greater in strength, and do not secrete any excremental matter, and the lunar day is the same in length [i.e. fifteen times longer than the terrestrial day].'

[36] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 2.57f.: οὐκ εὖ δὲ Νεοκλῆς ὁ Κροτωνιάτης ἔφη ἀπὸ τῆς σελήνης πεσεῖν τὸ ᾠὸν ἐξ οὗ τὴν Ἑλένην γεννηθῆναι· τὰς γὰρ σεληνίτιδας γυναῖκας ᾠοτοκεῖν καὶ τοὺς ἐκεῖ γεννωμένους πεντεκαιδεκαπλασίονας ἡμῶν εἶναι, ὡς Ἡρόδωρος ὁ Ἡρακλεώτης ἱστορεῖ. 'Neocles of Croton was incorrect when he claimed that the egg from which Helen was born fell from the Moon on the basis of Herodorus of Heraclea's report that Moon-women lay eggs and those who are born there are fifteen times larger than us.' For the fragments of Helen's egg, see Pausanias (3.16.1).

but also of greater purity than the Earth: the Moon-people produce no excrement, and their habit of egg-laying also hints at asexual reproduction and suggests a 'cleaner', less 'bodily' form of birth. Aristotle similarly regarded the Moon as a 'Counter-Earth' (*antichthōn*) which is purer than our world and which provides the habitat for a species of fire-beings, whose existence he hypothesized in order to complete the series of creatures which correspond to each of the elemental zones. These incorporeal lunar beings did not eat or drink, but lived an entirely contemplative life of the mind.[37]

Lucian was familiar with these ideas. In another one of his works, the *Icaromenippus*, which is an important partner-text to the *True stories* as it also contains a narrative about a trip to the Moon, the personified Moon herself complains to her terrestrial visitor Menippus about the philosophers' conflicting theories about her. In particular, she singles out their mirror-theory and their temerity in impugning the authenticity of her light:

> I despair, Menippus, having heard so many dreadful slanders from the philosophers who have nothing better to do than to fuss about my person: who I am, and what stuff I'm made of, and for what reason I become half-moon and gibbous. Some claim I am inhabited, while other say that I hang over the sea like a mirror, and others still attach to me whatever theory they think of. Lately they even claim my very light is stolen and forged, derived from the Sun my brother, with whom they never cease to make me clash and quarrel . . . [38]

This passage shows that Lucian was familiar, however superficially, with the cacophony of philosophical theories about the Moon. It is not surprising that Lucian should have encountered these ideas: Plutarch's lengthy essay

[37] Aristotle, *Gen. anim.* 761B 13–21: τὰ μὲν γὰρ φυτὰ θείη τις ἂν γῆς, ὕδατος δὲ τὰ ἔνυδρα, τὰ δὲ πεζὰ ἀέρος· . . . τὸ δὲ τέταρτον γένος οὐκ ἐπὶ τούτων τῶν τόπων δεῖ ζητεῖν· καίτοι βούλεταί γέ τι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πυρὸς εἶναι τάξιν· τοῦτο γὰρ τέταρτον ἀριθμεῖται τῶν σωμάτων . . . δεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτον γένος ζητεῖν ἐπὶ τῆς σελήνης· 'One could attribute vegetable life to the Earth, aquatic creatures to the water, and walking creatures to the air . . . As for the fourth species, one cannot search for it in these places. And yet something is required to correspond to the category of fire, for this is counted as the fourth of the elements . . . One must search for this type of species on the Moon.' In his commentary on Aristotle's treatise in the sixth century CE, Philoponus elaborated this description of the hypothetical lunar beings, further emphasizing their incorporeality with the claim that they do not eat or drink as we do, and live purely cerebral, contemplative lives (Philoponus, *Commentary on Aristotle's 'De generatione animalium'*, pp. 160, 16–20).

[38] *Icaromenippus* 20: ἀπείρηκα γὰρ ἤδη, Μένιππε, πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ παρὰ τῶν φιλοσόφων ἀκούουσα, οἷς οὐδὲν ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἔργον ἢ τἀμὰ πολυπραγμονεῖν, τίς εἰμι καὶ πηλίκη, καὶ δι' ἥντινα αἰτίαν διχότομος ἢ ἀμφίκυρτος γίγνομαι. καὶ οἱ μὲν κατοικεῖσθαί μέ φασιν, οἱ δὲ κατόπτρου δίκην ἐπικρέμασθαι τῇ θαλάττῃ, οἱ δὲ ὅ τι ἂν ἕκαστος ἐπινοήσῃ τοῦτό μοι προσάπτουσι. τὰ τελευταῖα δὲ καὶ τὸ φῶς αὐτὸ κλοπιμαῖόν τε καὶ νόθον εἶναί μοί φασιν ἄνωθεν ἧκον παρὰ τοῦ Ἡλίου, καὶ οὐ παύονται καὶ πρὸς τοῦτόν με ἀδελφὸν ὄντα συγκροῦσαι καὶ στασιάσαι προαιρούμενοι·

On the face which appears in the orb of the Moon, which is dramatized as a discussion among a group of Greek and Roman intellectuals, and the debate about Helen the Moon-woman which is recorded in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, suggest that philosophical lunar lore had a place in the more recondite conversational repertoire of scholars in the Roman empire, and among the circles of the intellectual elite in which Lucian himself moved. It is no surprise to find, then, that Lucian's lunar ethnography in *True stories* not only parodies the marvellous ethnographies found in authors such as Herodotus and Ctesias, but is also saturated with philosophical ideas that had ignited his imagination.[39]

Lucian's Moon is also a parallel Earth-like world, whose inhabitants are recognizably terrestrial, despite the uniquely strange configuration and proportion of their bodies. Lunar society, which is governed by the human Endymion, displays all-too-familiar Earthly preoccupations such as class-distinctions, imperialism and war;[40] on this other-Earth, even terrestrial history, such as the Peloponnesian war, is replayed, with the participants and circumstances adjusted, fantastically, to the lunar isotope.[41] Like the Pythagorean Moon, Lucian's lunar world is inhabited by enormously outsized fauna,[42] and his Moonmen are also cleaner and less corporeal than humans: they produce neither urine nor excrement, and their other bodily excretions are of culinary quality: they perspire milk which, combined with honey (the viscous substance filling lunar noses), is used to make cheese. They subsist on more rarefied food substances than Earthlings, such as the fumes of roasted Moon-frogs, with a dew-like liquid of compressed air to drink. In this purer world, notably, there are no women – they don't even have a word for 'woman' – but men reproduce together through an agreed

[39] Georgiadou and Larmour (1998, 122–45) trace Lucian's playful allusions to philosophical lunar theories case by case. For analysis of the more diverse range of sources underlying Lucian's lunar ethnography, see Rütten 1997, 54–60 and von Möllendorff 2000, 147–82.

[40] Class-distinctions: wealthy Treemen have prosthetic penises made of ivory, while the poor make do with wood (*VH* 1.22); wealthy Moonmen wear vestments of glass, but the poor clothe themselves in bronze, which is common on the Moon (*VH* 1.25); the rich have multiple sets of eyes, whereas the less wealthy must borrow from others if they lose their own (*VH* 1.25).

[41] Certain aspects of the war between the Sun and the Moon (*VH* 1. 12–20), especially its peace treaty, evoke Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian war: see Georgiadou and Larmour 1998, esp. 119 (s.v. 1.20) and Bartley 2003. Rütten (1997, 47–51) and von Möllendorff (2000, 134–46) canvas a broader range of influences in this episode, including mythological allegory and astronomy.

[42] The steeds of the lunar police force, the Vulture-riders, are enormous birds with individual feathers the size of ship-masts (*VH* 1.11); the lunar army includes giant birds called Cabbage-wings, archers who ride astride fleas the size of twelve elephants (*VH* 1.13), and spiders which are larger than the Cycladic Islands, whose webs span the distance between the Moon and the Morning Star (*VH* 1.15). The solar army includes ants over two hundred feet in size and giant mosquitoes (*VH* 1.16). The numbers in each army are huge, running to millions.

alternation of gender-roles, and in the absence of a uterus gestation takes place in the calf of the father's leg, whence the Moon-baby is delivered in due course by surgery – another nod, perhaps, towards the asexual reproduction suggested by Herodorus' egg-laying Moon-women. Finally, when they die, the Moonmen's subtle atomic matter dissolves into the air (*VH* 1.22–4).[43]

As well as general parallels between our world and the Moon, however, many philosophers speculated that the Moon (like the Sun) was actually formed after the Earth, and even that it was formed out of the Earth's very substance, making it entirely derivative of our world.[44] The widespread theory that the Moon's luminescence was merely a reflection or a distillation of the Sun's enhanced its status as a secondary, mimetic world.[45] For Anaxagoras, this meant the Moon was a 'star of false light' (*pseudophanēs astēr*),[46] a phrase which also associates the Moon with falsehood early in the Greek imagination. The metaphor of the mirror in this context is apt as, according to some philosophical theories, the Moon was quite literally a mirror-world, a remote reflection of the Earth. In attempts to account for the blotched appearance of the lunar surface as seen from the Earth, it was sometimes argued that the Moon was made of translucent substances such as glass or a hail-like compaction of air,[47] but Pythagoreans argued that the Moon was a 'mirror-like body' (*katoptroeides sōma*) suspended above the Earth, and that the blotches in the lunar 'face' were mirror-reflections of the Earth's Ocean – an idea which Lucian knew, as the *Icaromenippus* passage cited earlier shows.[48]

43 These ideas are present also in *Icaromenippus* 13–14 where the philosopher Empedocles, who now lives on the Moon, walks on air, feeds on dew, and eventually dissolves into smoke.

44 Those who speculated that the Moon was formed *after* the Earth include: Anaxagoras, who also possibly argued that the Moon was itself derived from the Earth's substance (DK 59 A 71); Democritus (DK 68 A 40 (4)) and the Stoic Chrysippus (*Stoicorum veterum frag.* II 309, fr. 1049).

45 Those who believed the Moon derived its light from the Sun include: Thales (*Doxographi Graeci* 358, 15); Anaximenes (DK 13 A 16); Anaxagoras (DK 46 A 42 (8)). In Plut. *de Fac.* 929e Empedocles is attributed with ideas about the relative weakness of moonlight in comparison with sunlight which are strongly suggestive of the principle of *mimēsis*, although that connection is not made explicit.

46 DK 59 A 77.

47 According to Ion of Chios, the Moon had a glassy, translucent surface (DK 36 A 7). In an astronomical poem *Phaenomena*, Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas (late third-early second century BCE) likened the Moon to shining glass and a fiery mirror (fragments 466 and 467 in Lloyd-Jones and Parsons' *Supplementum Hellenisticum*; cf. Plut. *de Fac.* 920e and 921b). Empedocles speculated that the Moon was 'a hail-like compaction of air' (Plut. *de Fac.* 922C; DK 31 A 30) which reflects sunlight, like a mirror (DK 31 A 30 and B 42–43). Empedocles's idea is probably reflected in Lucian's lunar hail-vines (*VH* 1.24; noted also by Georgiadou and Larmour 1998, 140) and in the dewy compressed air which the Moonmen drink (*VH* 1.23).

48 The citation is from ps.-Plut. *Plac. phil.* 891C. For the Moon as a mirror, see Plut. *Fac.* 920f–921b and 936d–937c.

It was this concept of the Earth as the original archetype, mirrored by the secondary, epigonic world of the Moon, which suggested the Moon as a test-site for the interrelation of original and copy as well as reality and fiction in Lucian's fantasy. In his description of the Moon, Lucian both emphasizes its status as an artificial mirror-world, and explores the Moon's relationship with terrestrial reality. The mimeticism of the lunar world is thematized primarily through the emphasis on the artificiality and hybridity of its inhabitants. For example, an artificially cultivated race of Tree-men, who hatch out of fleshy, phallic trees that grow from a Moonman's testicle after it is planted in the soil (*VH* 1.22), coexist with the 'natural' lunar inhabitants. Then there is the ubiquity of fake or replica body-parts, such as prosthetic penises and multiple sets of eyes (*VH* 1.22 and 25), and the exaggerated hybridity of the lunar creatures which are grotesquely outsized confections of animal and plant life, for example the Cabbage-wings and Sparrow-nuts; even the anthropoid Moonmen have cabbage-leaf tails and plane-leaf ears. Birth, as we have already seen, is a surgical procedure rather than a natural phenomenon, and in a world without natural sexual differentiation, gender is artificially determined by age: until the age of 25, Moonmen act the passive 'female' part in sexual relations, and thereafter the 'male' (*VH* 1. 22). The katoptric substance bronze, which is found in copious quantities on the Moon and used as clothing (*VH* 1.25),[49] reinforces the Moon's reflexive status as a mirror-world. Odd features of this 'reversed world', such as the fact that Moon-babies are born dead (*VH* 1.22), and the aesthetic preference for baldness rather than luxuriant hair (*VH* 1.23), are also consistent with well-known reversing power of mirrors.[50]

Above all, however, the Moon's mimetic nature in *True stories* is represented by the lunar mirror, which is the climactic feature in Lucian's description. This wondrous device reflects and magnifies the real world of the Earth below, and so provides for the viewer a point of connection between the Moon and the Earth:

> Furthermore, I beheld another marvel in the palace: an enormous mirror is placed above a well that is not very deep. Now if someone goes down into the well, he hears everything that is being said by our people on the Earth, and if someone looks into the mirror, he sees all the cities and all the

[49] Bronze was commonly used as the material for mirrors in antiquity; see McCarty 1989, 167 with references.

[50] It was well-known that mirrors inverted right to left; in Plato *Theaetetus* 193c–d, Socrates uses this idea to illustrate how false opinion (*to pseudē doxazein*) can arise. Apuleius (*Apol.* 16) lists this phenomenon among the many katoptric distortions that are properly the subject of philosophical inquiry.

> peoples, just as if he were standing over them. On that occasion I watched my family and my entire homeland, but I can no longer tell for sure if they could see me. Whoever does not believe that this is the way things were, if ever he reaches that place himself, he will know that I am telling the truth.[51]

The Moon elsewhere in Lucianic fiction represents a vantage-point of detachment from which to contemplate reality; for example, in *Icaromenippus* (15–19) Menippus attempts to describe his bewildering, ineffable vision of terrestrial life from the Moon. But whereas Menippus sees the infinity of human life directly with his own (albeit magically enhanced) eyes, in *True stories*, in contrast, the vision of earthly infinity is distilled through a *mirror*, which both mediates the sight and provokes self-reflexive contemplation on the process of viewing itself, as well as on the interrelation of reality and image.

Like the Moon, mirrors also had a long connection with the ideas of truth, falsehood and *mimēsis* in Greek thought. In the introduction to the critique of literature in the *Republic*, Plato established the mirror, with its paradoxical reflection of reality, as a metaphor for the mimetic art of the painter and subsequently the literary artist.[52] For Plato, there is a clear hierarchy between the reality of the phenomenal world and its inferior mirror-image; the mimetic literary artist, like the mirror, generates not real worlds, but inferior copies of reality which hold no truth, and so are philosophically useless. Mirrors are, however, problematic because, by instantiating the mimetic and the fake *as reality*, they create fake realities which can lead to the formation of 'false opinion'.[53] In the *Sophist*, Plato focuses on the ambiguity of the ontological status of the mirror-image which both 'is' and 'is not' and so constitutes 'an ambiguous mixture of being and non-being'.[54] Here again, the mirror-reflection is used as an analogy for the 'image' of reality, but Theaetetus' aporetic conclusion in the passage from the *Sophist* – 'I'm afraid it looks like the unreal and the real have become entangled in a sort of knot of this sort – it's very strange' – highlights the mirror's embodiment of one of the most fascinating and sinister aspects of literary *mimēsis*: its ability to make the mimetic seem real, and therefore to reduce reality to the status of the mimetic. The mirror,

[51] *VH* 1.26: καὶ μὴν καὶ ἄλλο θαῦμα ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἐθεασάμην· κάτοπτρον μέγιστον κεῖται ὑπὲρ φρέατος οὐ πάνυ βαθέος. ἂν μὲν οὖν εἰς τὸ φρέαρ καταβῇ τις, ἀκούει πάντων τῶν παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ γῇ λεγομένων, ἐὰν δὲ εἰς τὸ κάτοπτρον ἀποβλέψῃ, πάσας μὲν πόλεις, πάντα δὲ ἔθνη ὁρᾷ ὥσπερ ἐφεστὼς ἑκάστοις· τότε καὶ τοὺς οἰκείους ἐγὼ ἐθεασάμην καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν πατρίδα, εἰ δὲ κἀκεῖνοι ἐμὲ ἑώρων, οὐκέτι ἔχω τὸ ἀσφαλὲς εἰπεῖν. ὅστις δὲ ταῦτα μὴ πιστεύει οὕτως ἔχειν, ἄν ποτε καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκεῖσε ἀφίκηται, εἴσεται ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγω.

[52] *Rep.* 10. 596 d4–e4. [53] See Plato, *Theaet.* 193c–d, with Bartsch 2000.

[54] Plato *Sophist* 240a–c; see McCarty 1989, 162.

which in Plato's *Sophist* is an emblem for the confusion of ontological levels such as reality and virtual reality, is in Lucian's narrative a reification of the narrative phenomenon of 'metalepsis', where the boundaries separating different levels of narrative are broken down or blurred, such as between fictional characters and their readers in the real world, or in this case, between the fictional world of the Moon and Lucian's real homeland on Earth.

This katoptric inversion of reality and fiction in *True stories* is also embedded within a rich hinterland of quasi-philosophical contemplations of the mirror's problematic relation to reality in contemporary literature. In the ocularcentric culture of the imperial era, the mirror had become an object of peculiar scientific and philosophical fascination.[55] Hero of Alexandria's study of mirrors, the *Catoptrica*, is dated to the later first century CE, and Claudius Ptolemy, who devoted the last three books of his *Optics* to the subject or mirrors, was Lucian's contemporary in the latter second century CE.[56] Apuleius, another contemporary and a Platonic philosopher, explores at length the mirror's superior mimetic capabilities, which surpass those of the static plastic and visual arts, because 'that nimble creativity of the mirror and its artistic radiance' (*levitas illa speculi fabra et splendor opifex*) produces mobile reflections that more faithfully reflect the phenomenal world.[57] For Apuleius, the mirror is a device which implicitly competes with the real objects it reflects by manufacturing virtual realities.

The mirror's function as a falsifying utensil is exemplified more vividly by the salacious Hostius Quadra who, according to Seneca, used mirrors in his bedroom to intensify his sexual pleasure by magnifying his penis to gigantic proportions and replicating his sexual escapades kaleidoscopically about the room.[58] In this case, Hostius perverts the mirror's philosophical application as a tool for promoting self-knowledge; he is not interested in the mirror's relation to reality, but captivated instead by the pleasure of katoptric illusion itself: 'I shall surround myself with the sort of mirrors that produce reflections of unbelievable size. If it were possible, I would translate those reflections into reality; since it is not possible, I shall feast

[55] The bibliography on visuality in art and literature of the imperial period is vast; for a succinct introduction, which contains a useful digest of the bibliography, see Morales 2004, 8–35, esp. 13–15 on mirrors. Lucian elsewhere uses the mirror as a metaphor for artistic representation in historiography and pantomime in *How to write history* 51 and *On the dance* 81 (see Lada-Richards 2005).

[56] See Bartsch 2000, esp. 72–3, with further references.

[57] Apuleius, *Apol.* 14; cf. Too 1996, 143.

[58] Seneca, *QN* 1.15.7–8–16. According to Suetonius (*Life of Horace* 10), the poet Horace also used mirrors in his bedroom to heighten sexual pleasure.

on the falsehood.'[59] Philosophical mirrors also infiltrate erotic fiction in Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*, for example in a pseudo-scientific *sententia* used by the slick pederast Cleinias to explain the mechanics of the erotic gaze to his naive cousin Clitophon:

> You do not understand the value of the sight of the beloved: it yields more pleasure than the act itself. You see, when two pairs of eyes reflect in each other, they form images of each other's body, as in a mirror. The effluxion of beauty floods down through the eyes to the soul, and effects a kind of union without contact. It is a virtual bodily union – a new kind of bodily fusion.[60]

Later, the narrator Clitophon himself muses eruditely on the mirror-like nature of the soul, which absorbs the imprint of such erotic images (*L&C* 5.13–14).[61] All three authors – Seneca, and Lucian's contemporaries Apuleius and Achilles Tatius – contemplate the mirror as a device which, implicitly or explicitly, competes with reality by producing virtual or enhanced realities. In Seneca and Achilles Tatius' work these virtual realities, albeit false, nevertheless surpass the pleasure of the real: for Cleinias, erotic gazing constitutes virtual intercourse, which is better than sex; for Hostius Quadra, the bigger and better illusion of the mirror is a fiction more pleasurable than reality.

The lunar mirror in *True stories* embodies Lucian's problematization of the concepts of fiction and reality in the narrative. Above all, the mirror reflects Lucian's preoccupation with fiction's strange power to compel us to believe what we know is not actually real, even to the extent of believing the ghostly, distorted realm of the fake *over* reality, while we question what we know (or think we know) to be true. Through the lunar mirror, Lucian's Moon becomes a test-site for the epistemological crisis of fiction: how *do* we differentiate, as readers, between the 'real' world in which we exist, and copies of our world which we read about in fiction? By placing a panoptic vision of the reader's reality into the lunar mirror in *True stories*, Lucian provocatively inverts the Platonic hierarchy between reality and copy, so that the reader's reality is presented as a mere mirror-reflection.

[59] Seneca, *QN* 1.16.8–9: *Id genus speculorum circumponam mihi quod incredibilem magnitudinem imaginum reddat. Si liceret mihi, ad uerum ista perducerem; quia non licet, mendacio pascar*. See Bartsch 2000, 84.

[60] *L&C* 1.9.4–5 (translation by Whitmarsh, adapted): οὐκ οἶδας οἷόν ἐστιν ἐρωμένη βλεπομένη· μείζονα τῶν ἔργων ἔχει τὴν ἡδονήν. ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντανακλώμενοι ἀπομάττουσιν ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ τῶν σωμάτων τὰ εἴδωλα· ἡ δὲ τοῦ κάλλους ἀπορροή, δι᾽ αὐτῶν εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καταρρέουσα, ἔχει τινὰ μίξιν ἐν ἀποστάσει· καὶ ὀλίγον ἐστὶ τῆς τῶν σωμάτων μίξεως· καινὴ γάρ ἐστι σωμάτων συμπλοκή.

[61] On these passages and the mechanics of the erotic gaze in this novel, see Morales 2004, 130–5.

In *True stories*, therefore, our reality becomes a fake which is eclipsed by the artificial reality of the Moon. As the first point of interface in the narrative between the real and the imaginary world, the lunar mirror is the first example of Lucian's more widespread exploration in *True stories* of the surreal confusion which arises from metalepsis, when an author makes the boundaries segregating different narrative levels collapse, allowing one 'reality' to permeate another. The reader's viewing, through Lucian, of his or her own reality reflected in the lunar mirror – in the text (s)he is reading right now – radically equivocalizes not just the relative ontological statuses of the real world and the imaginary world of the Moon, but, by extension, the certainty of the logical divide separating the reader in the 'real' world from the fictional characters in the narrative.[62] We can see this in Lucian's speculation in the narrative about the possibility that the persons viewed in the mirror might be able, in turn, to see their remote voyeur on the Moon. What Lucian voices here is that curious consciousness, which mirrors in particular provoke, of watching a reflection *that is watching back*, in a phenomenon that Gandelman calls 'the dialectics of seeing, which always implies a being-seen relationship'.[63] In Lucian's narrative, the dialectics of seeing presented by the mirror also trope the *reader's* anxiety that the characters (s)he is observing might, surreally, be able to observe him (or her) in return: the *reader*, in other words, might become the *read*. Taken to its conclusion, this raises the disturbing idea that every reality may be a narrative construct, another diegesis in which *we* are the characters, being surveyed by some remote and unseen reader, perhaps right now.[64]

If Lucian's lunar mirror creates a continuum between the world of the reader and the world of the book, then Lucian's act of lunar telescopy represents, within the narrative, the reader's transition between the real and the fictional worlds in the encounter with *True stories* itself. The mirror on the Moon represents *True stories* itself in a *mise en abyme.* The mirror in this case is a metaphor not for the 'distorting satire' of Lucian's work, for Lucian does not emphasize its power to distort;[65] it embodies, rather, the

[62] Lucian's use of the mirror to *collapse* the conceptual boundaries separating different levels of reality is therefore in opposition to Apuleius' fascination with the mirror as a device which reaffirms these boundaries, as argued by Too 1996, esp. 143.

[63] Gandelman 1991, 43; cf. Morales (2004, 13), citing *Pal. Anth.* Epigram 56: Εἰς εἴσοπτρον, Ἂν μ' ἐσίδῃς, καὶ ἐγὼ σέ ('If you look into me, I also look into you').

[64] See also Briand (2005, 131): '[l]es *Histoires véritables* . . . montrent que tout discours, et le réel avec lui, est une construction.' This idea is not limited to *True stories*. In *How to write history* 24 and 38, Lucian explores the historiographer's power to create and rewrite historical realities (at least as far as the reader is concerned) and even to reconfigure geographical reality with the stroke of a pen.

[65] Fusillo 1999, 372: 'the inverse world of the Moon, amplified in a grotesque manner, is the deforming mirror through which the author gnaws away at the contemporary world.' Fusillo is refuted by

subversive hyperreality of *True stories* – the way in which Lucian's fiction competes with the authenticity of the real world, and strives to outdo, surpass and contain the real world within itself, rather than be contained by it.[66] The lunar mirror does not falsely represent the Earth; its function is both to magnify the Earth and to compress it, conveniently, into a single opsis for the viewer, to give the viewer a command over all reality in one single eyeshot. It is a playful calque on theories about the katoptric Moon,[67] but instead of presenting the Moon as a passive reflector of Earth's dim shadows, this mirror powerfully condenses the whole Earth, Aleph-like, into a single, panoptic vision.[68] It therefore offers neither a false nor yet an entirely innocent replica of reality, but a concentrated and magnified version which is even better than the 'real thing' because it allows the viewer to observe *all* of it, all at once – more than (s)he ever could in reality – and with the additional clarity of detachment. This is reality improved, compressed and confined within the fictional world of Lucian's narrative. The reader must wonder whether (s)he is him or herself contained within that remote specular image on the Moon, a minute mirror image of a reader and a book, within the very book (s)he is now holding.

Lucian's mirror does not reflect the viewer himself or its own lunar context; instead, it is an example of the 'encyclopaedic' mirror, a transcendental device that instantiates *inside* the text what lies beyond and outside the text. In this case it inscribes and encloses the real world inside the fictional realm of the narrative, an act that is powerfully symbolic of fiction's ability to encroach into reality, and to invent, fabricate and falsify beyond the limits of its own world.[69] The mirror in antiquity was 'a site for the play of binary oppositions' such as self and other, truth and falsehood, original and copy, authentic and fake.[70] That quality, along with its uncanny ability to

von Möllendorff 2000, 185–6. For the mirror as a metaphor for the literary text, see Too 1996, 143 n. 27. On the equivalence of the mirror and the *mise en abyme* as modern metaphors for textual self-replication, see Dällenbach 1989, 169–74.

[66] von Möllendorff (2000, 182–8, esp. 187–8) argues that the mirror, which is a metaphor for the truthfulness of mimetic literature, is a *mise en abyme* of *True stories*, whose truthfulness the author declared in the prologue.

[67] This is suggested by Reyhl 1969, 48–9; see also von Möllendorff 2000, 186–7.

[68] The 'Aleph' is the eponymous device in a short story by Borges, which condenses the entire universe into a single vision.

[69] See McCarty 1989, 170 with n. 21 and Grabes 1982, 42–3. Dällenbach (1989, 10–15) compares the transcendental power of the mirror in art with that of the *mise en abyme* in literature: both have the ability to actualize realities that lie 'outside' themselves. The most famous example in art is the role of the mirror in Velázquez's *Las Meninas*.

[70] Bartsch 2000, 73: 'Both as a physical object and as a metaphor, the ancient mirror was a site for the play of binary oppositions pointing to the benefit or the detriment of the one who consulted such a thing. Idealizing accounts of its use for self-improvement . . . jostle side by side with warnings

falsify reality, links the katoptric interplay between the Earth and Moon in *True stories* with deeper questions, such as the interrelation of original and copy through *mimēsis*, and the ambivalent nature of fiction itself, which is neither true nor yet exactly false. These issues are of fundamental importance not only for the reader of this work in particular, but also for Lucian's literary culture more broadly.

Rewriting Plato's cave-allegory: escape from the whale

The inner world of the whale correlates in *True stories* to the outer world of the Moon.[71] Here, through an intertextual rewriting of Plato's cave-allegory in the *Republic*, the story about Lucian's ingestion by the whale, imprisonment within the beast's belly, and subsequent escape becomes a story about the reader's pleasurable but ultimately claustrophobic absorption in the artificial world of Lucian's fiction. In this episode, the microcosm of the whale becomes, like the lunar mirror, a *mise en abyme* for *True stories* itself, and Lucian's transition between worlds in the narrative dramatizes the reader's navigation between the worlds of fiction and reality in the process of reading the text itself.

After Lucian and his crew have been ingested by the monstrous whale and their eyes have adjusted to the internal darkness, they discover an entire replica-world within its cavernous belly. There is a large island formed by mud which has been swallowed by the whale and which is covered in forest and under cultivation. Further inland, they find a temple dedicated to Poseidon, tombs, a spring of clear water, and a farmstead, complete with a garden tended by the old man Scinthaurus and his son Cinyras, and guarded by the family dog (*VH* 1.31–3). On this island inside the whale – a world within a world – Scinthaurus and his son have constructed an entirely artificial replica of a Greek frontier settlement, but their incarceration has been so long (twenty-seven years), and their estrangement from their familiar environs so complete, that they are no longer certain what is real and what is not, as the old man's initial questions reveal:

> Who are you then, strangers? Are you one of the sea-gods or unlucky men like us? For we, though men and reared on land, have now become marine

about the mirror's implication in vanity and self-delusion; metaphors that evoke it as an exemplar of truthful representation clash with others that associate it with an emphasis on surface over depth, or with distortion rather than accuracy.'

[71] Lucian's proleptic remark that he left the gifts which Endymion gave him on his departure from the Moon *inside the whale* (*VH* 1.27) creates a narrative link between the two episodes. On the numerous parallels between the Moon and the whale, see von Möllendorff 2000, 207–10.

> beings and we swim with this beast that contains us, not knowing exactly what is happening to us – for we *conjecture* that we are dead, but *trust* we are alive.[72]

As we shall see, Scinthaurus' poignant agnosticism concerning his own ontology after twenty-seven years inside the whale hints at the doubts that the whale-episode will generate also in the reader's mind. As von Möllendorff and others have argued, Lucian's incarceration inside the dimly lit replica-world of the whale replays Plato's allegory of the Cave from the *Republic*.[73] At the heart of the cave-allegory, like the metaphor of the mirror, is a meditation on imitative reflections of 'true' reality: just as the mirror shows only empty copies of reality, so too the shadows which play on the cave-wall are only images of reality. As long as they are trapped inside the cave (the realm of *false belief* or *opinion* – *doxa*) the prisoners mistake these shadows for reality itself, and only apprehend their error once they emerge from the prison into the sunlight and the realm of truth (*alētheia*). Plato's allegory therefore is a story about an epistemological journey from delusion towards apprehension of the truth.

Lucian's whale episode is also a story of an epistemological journey – but in the opposite direction. Instead of progressing from false opinion, which is associated with the gloom of the cave, towards truth, which is associated with the sunlight of the upper world, Lucian's narrative follows the characters first on the opposite trajectory, from the light of the outer world down into immersion in their cetaceous prison where their eyes adjust to the darkness of false belief, instead of the light of truth. In other words, Lucian's narrative dramatizes the reader's submission to the false belief of fiction, followed by the attempt to escape. Lucian and his companions remain inside the whale for a year and eight months, and the longer they stay, the more comfortably ensconced they become in their delusional imprisonment; as Lucian admits, once they have rid the island of their enemies, 'we were like men living lives of luxury and freedom in a great prison from which there was no escape.'[74] This enchanted entrapment, which smacks of Odysseus' encounter with the Lotus-Eaters,[75] reflects the consuming power of fiction; like Plato on the Isle of the Blessed who, we

[72] *VH* 1.33: Τίνες ὑμεῖς ἄρα ἐστέ, ὦ ξένοι; πότερον τῶν ἐναλίων δαιμόνων ἢ ἄνθρωποι δυστυχεῖς ἡμῖν παραπλήσιοι; καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἄνθρωποι ὄντες καὶ ἐν γῇ τραφέντες νῦν θαλάττιοι γεγόναμεν καὶ συννηχόμεθα τῷ περιέχοντι τούτῳ θηρίῳ, οὐδ' ὃ πάσχομεν ἀκριβῶς εἰδότες· τεθνάναι μὲν γὰρ εἰκάζομεν, ζῆν δὲ πιστεύομεν.

[73] *Rep.* 514a1–517c6. See von Möllendorff 2000, esp. 224–8 and Laird 2003.

[74] *VH* 1.39: ἐῴκειμεν τοῖς ἐν δεσμωτηρίῳ μεγάλῳ καὶ ἀφύκτῳ τρυφῶσι καὶ λελυμένοις.

[75] On the *Odyssey* as one of Lucian's hypotexts for this episode, see von Möllendorff 2000, 210–22; also Georgiadou and Larmour 1998, esp. 158–9.

will later discover, is secluded inside the 'city of words' which he created, Lucian's incarceration inside the whale is suggestive of his enclosure within the story-world of *True stories*, and hints at the danger in store for the reader who yields too readily to the pleasure of the fictional world, forgetting 'reality' outside. For Lucian and his men, the spell is finally broken by the irruption of the outer world, when they catch sight through the whale's mouth of a great battle-commotion in the sea outside, and creep between the monster's teeth to watch the Island-fighters. From that time on, Lucian tells us, he could no longer endure their life of comfortable delusion inside the whale, but was determined to break out (*VH* 2.1).

The escape from the whale dramatizes the epistemological process of distinguishing 'reality' from 'fiction' in a manner that is analogous to Plato's allegory – but with an ironic and aporetic twist: the putative 'real' world into which Lucian emerges turns out to be no more authentic than the fake replica-world from which he has escaped;[76] in fact, the fake world inside the whale, with its conspicuous tokens of human and Hellenic civilization (agriculture and irrigation, a temple, tombs, a domicile), is *closer* to the reader's 'reality' than the fantasy world outside. The paradox is highlighted by Lucian's admission that the sight of the Island-battle beyond the whale's mouth was the stuff of fantasy: 'I know I am about to relate things that seem incredible, but I will speak nevertheless.'[77] Lucian is therefore roused from soporific 'unreality' not by the piercing rays of alethetic sunlight, like Plato's prisoners, but by a sight that is *even more fictional* than the world they are already in, inverting the Platonic realms of *doxa* and *alētheia*, but also obfuscating any clear distinction between the two. What results is a troubling layering and interplay of fictional realities which generates an epistemological crisis for the reader: which world is real, and which is fake? And if the outer world, which the Platonic intertext encourages us to connect with the realm of truth, is in fact more fictional than the delusional prison of false opinion inside the whale, and we are therefore doomed to an infinite regress of fictions, instead of progressive ascent towards the truth, then how sure can we be about the authenticity of *our* world outside the book, which is always, by default, assumed to be more 'real'?

As if to reinforce these troubling questions, Lucian's escape from the whale interlocks with the division between Books 1 and 2 of *True stories*, as we have already seen,[78] in such a way that Lucian's fictional transition between worlds in the narrative dramatizes the reader's transition between

[76] von Möllendorff (2000, 227–8) argues that the outside world paradoxically represents both *alētheia* and *doxa*.

[77] *VH* 1.40: οἶδα μὲν οὖν ἀπίστοις ἐοικότα ἱστορήσων, λέξω δὲ ὅμως.

[78] See also pp. 181–2.

the book-units of the text. Significantly, however, Lucian's *escape* from the whale in the narrative coincides, not with the reader's 'escape' from Book 1 as we might expect, but with the reader's entry into further fictions at the beginning of Book 2. In this way, the *reader's* experience of immersion into further fictions ironizes the *character's* bid to break free from his prison of make-believe, and exposes the futility of any attempt to escape. But this is an irony at the reader's expense as well, for by ironizing the character's metaleptic urge to breach the boundaries of his diegetic world and emerge into the more authentic reality which is assumed to exist beyond, Lucian also undermines the reader's confident distinction between the fiction within the text and the real world outside. If the world beyond the whale is, in fact, even more incredible than the mimetic world within, then this raises the unsettling possibility that the real world outside Lucian's text could be just as fictional, if not more so, than the world inside the book. Sometimes fiction, as demonstrated by the artificial world in the whale, is more 'real' than reality itself.

The Island of Dreams and the topography of the text

The Island of Dreams (*VH* 2.32–5) is the site of another inversion between the real and the fictional worlds. During their stay, Lucian and his men are entertained by their familiar old dreams. The Dreams enable them to access their home-world oneirically, in a manner that is reminiscent of the mirror on the Moon:

> We recognized many of them whom we had seen a long time ago in our own world, and these approached us and welcomed us like familiar acquaintances. Taking us aside and putting us to sleep, they entertained us lavishly, providing an extravagant reception and promising to make us kings and satraps. Some led us away to our homelands and showed us our families and brought us back the same day.[79]

In this nebulous world where the para-reality of dreams is instantiated as real, the 'real' world is experienced, paradoxically, as a dream.[80] Underlying this inversion are Platonic theories which held dreams to be reflections of the phenomenal world, aligning dreams with mimetic images in terms of

[79] *VH* 2.34: πολλοὺς δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ ἐγνωρίσαμεν, πάλαι παρ' ἡμῖν ἑωρακότες, οἳ δὴ καὶ προσῄεσαν καὶ ἠσπάζοντο ὡς ἂν καὶ συνήθεις ὑπάρχοντες, καὶ παραλαβόντες ἡμᾶς καὶ κατακοιμίσαντες πάνυ λαμπρῶς καὶ δεξιῶς ἐξένιζον, τήν τε ἄλλην ὑποδοχὴν μεγαλοπρεπῆ παρασκευάσαντες καὶ ὑπισχνούμενοι βασιλέας τε ποιήσειν καὶ σατράπας. ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ ἀπῆγον ἡμᾶς εἰς τὰς πατρίδας καὶ τοὺς οἰκείους ἐπεδείκνυον καὶ αὐθημερὸν ἐπανῆγον.

[80] Rütten (1997, 81–5) explores the uncanny reification of the fantasy world in this episode.

their relation to the true reality of the Forms.[81] Lucian's inversion of 'reality' and fantasy on the Island of Dreams is therefore an extension of the text's privileging of lies over truth, and an oneiric analogue to the katoptric inversion between fiction and reality on the Moon.

There are numerous parallels between the Island of Dreams and *True stories* itself. The evanescent island, which constantly recedes from the sailors' approach, mirrors the text's evasive truth-status. In particular, the precise point at which the 'liar paradox' of the prologue comes into effect is unclear – does it begin with the start of the narrative at *VH* 1.5, or does it cast its shadow backwards over the entire prologue of 1.1–4 as well? Like the shifting, mist-bound island, the boundaries of the text's fictional world are not clearly fixed, but have the potential to slip backwards into the peritext and even beyond, as Lucian repeatedly problematizes the definition of the boundaries between fiction and reality.

Structurally, the emphatic boundedness of the city of dreams (it comprises an *agora* in the middle of the city which is surrounded by walls, which are surrounded by a wood, on an island surrounded by the sea) mirrors the numerous microcosmic worlds that are enclosed within the fictional diegesis of *True stories.* The symmetry of the cityscape with its central market-place, two springs and four gates, governed by two satraps, reflects the symmetrical structure of Lucian's narrative with its two books and series of narrative doublets.[82] The two springs at the heart of the *agora* – the spring of Deception (*Apatē*) and the spring of Truth (*Alētheia*) – mirror the co-presence of truth and mendacity in *True stories*,[83] and may evoke the title of the work itself *Alēthē diēgemata* within the fiction, whilst the presence of Antiphon the dream-interpreter, who presides over the city's innermost sanctum (*VH* 2.33), reflects the avowedly cryptic nature of Lucian's text, which contains numerous hidden reference that, like dreams, require decoding and interpretation.[84] Like *True stories*, the Island of Dreams is

[81] Morgan (2003, esp. 107–11) examines Plato's use of the dream as a model for our perceptions of reality and the practice of (Platonic) fiction in *Theaetetus*. For Platonic theory about the interrelationship of dreams and 'reality' more generally, see Gallop 1971. Laird 1993 explores Apuleius' quasi-philosophical use of the dream as a metaphor for the experience of fiction in *Metamorphoses*.

[82] Lucian's city therefore stands within the tradition of mextatextual cityscapes, such as Alexandria in *Leucippe and Clitophon* and Mytilene in *Daphnis and Chloe*, which I have already discussed (pp. 188–91).

[83] The gates of Truth and Falsehood through which dreams pass in *Odyssey* 19. 560–7 offer a parallel for Lucian's twin springs; their metapoetic signficiance is analysed by von Möllendorff (2000, 354–6) and Briand 2005.

[84] Lucian's use of the verb *ainittomai* at *VH* 1.2 evokes the type of allegorical reading which was required to 'decode' topical references in Old Comedy (see Sidwell 2000, 139–40) and also to interpret dreams and paintings; see von Möllendorff 2000, 44–5. Similarly, in the prologue to

itself a metaliterary world which also has its roots in Homer's *Odyssey* (19.560ff), a fact to which Lucian draws the reader's attention when he corrects his poetic predecessor by stating that the city has four gates instead of two.[85] Lucian's description of the city of dreams is therefore more accurate than Homer's – and once again, fiction appears to be an improvement on 'the real thing'.

So what do we make of these fictional worlds in Lucian's text? In spite of their avowed mimeticism and artificiality, the worlds of the Moon, the Whale and the Island of Dreams assert themselves in Lucian's fiction as more real than the reader's reality. This is particularly clear on the Moon, where reality is reduced to a mere mirror reflection, and on the Island of Dreams, in which the real world is but a dream, while the adventure in the Whale obfuscates any clear boundaries separating the two. This pattern of inversions and metalepses in *True stories* not only embroils the reader in recurrent epistemological crises, but also thematizes the value of fiction, the artificial and the mimetic, just as Lucian had asserted in his prologue. Ultimately, the interplay of worlds in Lucian's fiction is not just a story of the reader's transition between one world and another; it is a story which asserts the value of Lucian's cultural world – a world of *mimēsis*, fiction and artifice – in relation to its own past as well.

Homer in hyperreality

In his 1975 essay 'Travels in hyperreality', Umberto Eco records his experiences on a journey through North America where he travels through a series of mimetic worlds including Disneyland, wax museums and Las Vegas, where the original artefacts of European art and architecture are reproduced with varying degrees of skill. The purpose of these fakes, for example the wax replicas of da Vinci's famous *Last Supper*, the reconstructions of Pompeian villas, and copies of the Venus de Milo, is to recreate the original artefacts for an audience which is unable to experience the originals themselves directly in reality. However, instead of passively copying their original models, these reconstructions also strive to improve upon them. The colours of the waxen *Last Supper* are more vivid and closer to da Vinci's original painting than the flaked and faded original itself

Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, the narrator's need for an exegete to explain the paintings that are a *mise en abyme* of the novel hints at the cryptic nature of the text. For the identification with a historical Antiphon, author of a work of dream-interpretation called *On the judgement of dreams* (Περὶ κρίσεως ὀνείρων, DK 87 B 78–81a), see von Möllendorff 2000, 442 n. 15.

[85] *VH* 2.32 and 33.

now appears to be. The reconstructed Pompeian villas are more complete than their ruined counterparts on the Amalfi coast, and more faithfully replicate the buildings as they would have looked in their original state. In replicas of the Venus de Milo the statue has both arms, just as the original nude would have done. The cult of the absolute fake asserts itself as an improvement on reality and provides for the tourist or viewer an experience that aspires to be more authentic and more 'real' than the real thing: hyperreal. When compared with its hyperreal copy, the original itself appears as an incomplete, homely and less inspiring version of the fake.

In this way, mimetic art and culture raise disconcerting questions about the concepts of authenticity and the 'original'. Copies which are, on the one hand, obviously fake are, in another sense, more authentic than the ruined or faded models on which they are based. Ancient Romans did not inhabit the dilapidated buildings that are a common fantasy of the ancient Graeco-Roman world and, paradoxically, the arms of the reconstructed Venus de Milo, which identify her as a fake, are in fact a more authentic replica of the original statue than the armless nude which dominates our imagination. The criteria we use to discern what is 'fake' from what is 'authentic' are more complicated than they may at first seem, as modern fake replicas may, in certain senses, be more authentic than the ancient real thing.[86] The mimetic therefore entangles the viewer in a 'crisis of authenticity', troublesome conceptual loops concerning what is authentic and what is fake, concepts which are inextricably connected to ideas about truth and falsehood. It makes us uncomfortably aware that the object we identify as 'original' may already be a deteriorated replica of its own original self. What is at stake here is an entire system of cultural values, an interrogation of the aesthetic that privileges the supposedly original artefact over kitsch and 'inauthentic' recreations thereof.

In 'Travels in hyperreality' Eco connects the intense mimeticism of North American culture with its sense of belatedness in relation to the cultures of its various European homelands. This sense of posteriority is manifested in the obsessive attempt to recreate European art and architecture on the North American continent, in order to reinstantiate a version of old Europe on American soil. This is not naive mimicry, however: through these modern copies, the new world competes with the old, offering the visitor a cleaner, fuller and more pristine version of European art than Europe itself

[86] See Eco 1990, 191 on the 'uncanny' effect of the fake, which problematizes our notion of the authentic.

could offer. Now instead of travelling throughout Europe to see its cultural treasures, the visitor to the Getty museum in California (for example) can experience Pompeian villas, Etruscan vases and Michelangelo's statues, all reconstructed in greater detail than their original counterparts, and all assembled in one convenient space – culture in synopsis. And the visitor thrills not just to the wonder of the original, which is so perfectly evoked, but marvels also at the artistry with which the illusion of authenticity is achieved. Paradoxically, pilgrims to these shrines to authenticity are also con-celebrants in the cult of the fake.

Eco's essay offers an interesting framework for interpreting both Lucian's *True stories* and the mimetic literary culture of the imperial period. We have already seen how, through the episodes of the Vine-women and the Ass-legs, and the mimetic worlds of the Moon, the Whale and the Island of Dreams, the narrative explores, in different ways, the competitive interplay between the mimetic and the original, and between fiction and reality. These questions are not only pertinent to *True stories* itself, given that it is an avowed fiction written in imitation of the great literary predecessors of the past; they are also deeply important to Lucian's own cultural context. In *True stories* the journey through the world of fiction is a means to problematize and play with the reader's notions of what is true and what is authentic, and to explore what those values mean in the context of a culture that self-consciously and synthetically recreates its own origins from the classical past in the imperial present. But Lucian's fictional recreation of the literature of the past also competes with its predecessors by offering its readers *more*, in the plenitude of its fantasy, than the real world itself can possibly provide. For instance, Lucian avowedly imitates famous travel-narratives of Herodotus and Ctesias, but he also takes his reader into more audacious zones than real travel-narratives ever could, such as the worlds of the Moon, the afterlife and the land of dreams. Lucian's recreation of archaic and classical literature in the fiction of *True stories* offers readers a journey into hyperreality which is both avowedly fake and playfully better than the 'real thing'. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the lengthy episode on the Isle of the Blessed in Book 2, which I will explore explicitly within terms of Eco's ideas on hyperreality. On the hyperreal world of the Isle of the Blessed we will encounter a virtual wax museum of prestigious figures from the literary past, including a version of Homer who is *more authentic* than the old blind bard, and who outdoes the Homeric corpus by providing more epic poetry. Lucian will also compete with Homer by writing a sequel to the *Odyssey* himself.

During his stay on the Isle of the Blessed, Lucian takes the opportunity to interview Homer on several separate occasions, to question him about his poetic persona, his work and its critical reception:[87]

> Two or three days had not passed before I approached the poet Homer, since we were both at leisure, and amongst other things, I inquired of him where he was from, for this question above all was still a subject of controversy with us. He claimed he was not himself unaware that some people believed him to be from Chios, others from Smyrna, and many from Colophon – he, however, asserted that he was from Babylon, and that he was not called Homer by his fellow-citizens, but Tigranes; later on, having been a hostage (*homēros*) among the Greeks, he changed his name. I also questioned him about the athetized lines, if they were written by him – and he claimed that they were all his. As a result, I held the school of Zenodotus and Aristarchus guilty of pedantry in the first degree. When he had answered these questions satisfactorily, I asked him why he had started the *Iliad* from the wrath of Achilles – and he said that that was the way it had come to him, without any contrivance. I was also eager to know if he had written the *Odyssey* before the *Iliad*, as many people say – but he denied this. That he was not blind – something else they say about him – I understood immediately, for I saw it, and so did not need to ask.[88]

In contrast with the Phoenician's questions about Homer in Philostratus' later work *Heroicus*, where the Phoenician is preoccupied with ascertaining Homer's authority as a historical source,[89] the tenor of Lucian's questions is entirely rooted in the bio-critical tradition on the Homeric poems. Lucian is preoccupied with origins: Homer's provenance, which epic he composed first, the beginning of the *Iliad*, and the original nature of the texts and identity of the author prior to the distorting effects of literary-textual

[87] On this episode, see Jones 1986, 54–5; von Möllendorff 2000, 367–73; Zeitlin 2001, 246–55; Nesselrath 2002; Briand 2005; ní Mheallaigh 2009; Kim 2010, 156–74.

[88] *VH* 2.20: οὔπω δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς ἡμέραι διεληλύθεσαν, καὶ προσελθὼν ἐγὼ Ὁμήρῳ τῷ ποιητῇ, σχολῆς οὔσης ἀμφοῖν, τά τε ἄλλα ἐπυνθανόμην καὶ ὅθεν εἴη, λέγων τοῦτο μάλιστα παρ' ἡμῖν εἰσέτι νῦν ζητεῖσθαι. ὁ δὲ οὐδ' αὐτὸς μὲν ἀγνοεῖν ἔφασκεν ὡς οἱ μὲν Χῖον, οἱ δὲ Σμυρναῖον, πολλοὶ δὲ Κολοφώνιον αὐτὸν νομίζουσιν· εἶναι μέντοι γε ἔλεγεν Βαβυλώνιος, καὶ παρά γε τοῖς πολίταις οὐχ Ὅμηρος, ἀλλὰ Τιγράνης καλεῖσθαι· ὕστερον δὲ ὁμηρεύσας παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἀλλάξαι τὴν προσηγορίαν. ἔτι δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀθετουμένων στίχων ἐπηρώτων, εἰ ὑπ' ἐκείνου εἰσὶ γεγραμμένοι. καὶ ὃς ἔφασκε πάντας αὑτοῦ εἶναι. κατεγίνωσκον οὖν τῶν ἀμφὶ τὸν Ζηνόδοτον καὶ Ἀρίσταρχον γραμματικῶν πολλὴν τὴν ψυχρολογίαν. ἐπεὶ δὲ ταῦτα ἱκανῶς ἀπεκέκριτο, πάλιν αὐτὸν ἠρώτων τί δή ποτε ἀπὸ τῆς μήνιδος τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποιήσατο· καὶ ὃς εἶπεν οὕτως ἐπελθεῖν αὑτῷ μηδὲν ἐπιτηδεύσαντι. καὶ μὴν κἀκεῖνο ἐπεθύμουν εἰδέναι, εἰ προτέραν ἔγραψεν τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν τῆς Ἰλιάδος, ὡς οἱ πολλοί φασιν· ὁ δὲ ἠρνεῖτο. ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲ τυφλὸς ἦν, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγουσιν, αὐτίκα ἠπιστάμην· ἑώρα γάρ, ὥστε οὐδὲ πυνθάνεσθαι ἐδεόμην.

[89] Kim 2010, 206–11. As Kim observes (2010, 206–7), Lucian sidesteps the question of Homer's historical authority in *True stories*, but treats it jokingly in *The Cockerel* instead, where it is revealed that Homer was a Bactrian camel during the Trojan War.

criticism and competing biographical traditions. Even Lucian's very act of interrogating the poet in person, especially concerning the authenticity of his own text, is a surreal dramatization of the critical principle of 'elucidating Homer from Homer' (Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὁμήρου σαφηνίζειν), which is first attested in Porphyry, but generally believed to have originated with the Alexandrian critic Aristarchus – the very scholar whom Lucian criticizes in this passage.[90] In this way Lucian also enacts the desire to penetrate the centuries-thick accretions of criticism and interpretation, and commune with the author without mediation.[91] His questions, which aim to reconstruct the original, *authentic* poet and his work, are driven by the originary impulse of Greek literary culture in the Roman empire – the yearning for contact with literary origins, and more generally the past, which was generated by a sense of deracination from those origins.[92] There is also lurking here an anxiety concerning authenticity, which is endemic in any self-consciously epigonic literary-cultural tradition, and particularly acute in the case of Homer, *the* original, panhellenic poet.[93] Lucian encounters many poets and writers on the Isles of the Blessed and the Wicked, but only Homer is subjected to interrogation in this manner, because the Homeric poems were the touchstone of authenticity by which all subsequent Greek culture defined itself. For instance, mention of one's *polis* or people in the Homeric poems (especially the *Iliad*'s catalogue of ships) was a matter of civic prestige and grounds for political privileges in the Roman empire, and such claims oiled the mechanisms of inter-state diplomacy in the ancient world.[94] Knowledge of Homer constituted an 'assertion of Hellenic affiliation, however that slippery term might be defined',[95] and the poet, at

[90] Porphyry, *Quaest. Hom. ad Il.*, p. 297 16; for discussion, see Pfeiffer 1968, 225–7 (who, however, contends that the principle is not Aristarchan); Porter 1992. As Zeitlin (2001, 246) notes, Lucian's questions represent 'the stock in trade of grammarians and Alexandrian textual critics' which became 'commonplace themes among authors of epigrams and in the popular imagination'. See also Briand (2005, 131), and for further evidence of Lucian's playful engagement with philological scholarship on the Homeric poems in *True stories*, see Danek 2000.

[91] This desire is echoed in the satirist Timon of Phlius' injunction to his pupil Aratus to use only old, *un*corrected copies of the Homeric poems, if he wants to read the authentic Homer (Diogenes Laertius 9. 113).

[92] Zeitlin (2001, 246–55) explores both Lucian's interaction with Homer in *True stories* and Apollonius' interview with Achilles' ghost at Troy (Philostratus, *VA* 4.11–16) as examples of 'close encounters' with the past.

[93] See Too 1998, 134–9.

[94] For the use of mythology in competitive bids for privileges by cities in the Roman empire, see Jones 1999, 94–105 (on Ilium and Aphrodisias) and 106–21.

[95] Zeitlin 2001, 202. As Zeitlin (2001, 204) points out, even barbarians as remote as the peoples of India, who know next to nothing about Hellenic culture, recognize Homer's name (Dio *Or.* 53.6–8; cf. 47.5), and Homer is the only Greek author mentioned by name in the Talmud. The citizens

different periods, was held to be the source of all branches of knowledge from housekeeping to religion, science and all the arts.[96] In short, Homer and his poetry were hard currency in the Roman empire, in political and cultural terms.[97] With so much at stake, questions about the authenticity of the poet and his work were critical, and not just the subject of recondite scholarly debate.

Lucian's attack against the critical tradition on the Homeric poems in this episode raises questions about the nature of the relationship between origins and their derivatives, especially the hierarchy between the two. His privileging of the poet Homer over the metatextual critical tradition on his work, which is represented here by the textual critics Aristarchus and Zenodotus, reads as a privileging of the archaic over the postclassical, and it seems *prima facie* to be at odds with the repudiation of origins in favour of the epigonic which was implicit in the Vine-women episode. However, Lucian's Homer turns out to be a thoroughly surprising figure, designed, it seems, precisely to thwart readers' notions about '*the* original poet' of Greek literature. As we shall see, Lucian's revelations about Homer's 'true' identity in *True stories* merely substitute a newer fiction in place of the old. Lucian therefore not only undermines confidence in the knowability of the original but also, ironically, ends up privileging a fiction that is avowedly more authentic than the 'real' thing.

During the course of the interviews on the Isle of the Blessed, it is revealed that Homer's real name is in fact Tigranes of Babylon. 'Homer' – meaning 'hostage' in Greek – was merely an identity which the poet conjured up for the Greeks when he was their prisoner, in an attempt to assimilate himself to his captors' culture. Eventually, the fiction of 'Homer the hostage' entirely replaced the reality of Tigranes of Babylon, and Tigranes 'became' Homer. On the Isle of the Blessed Homer demonstrates to Lucian that he is fully aware of the debates about where he comes from when he cites variants in his own biographical tradition that identify him with different places in the Greek and Ionian world such as Chios, Smyrna and Colophon. His assertion of a Babylonian identity is therefore boldly polemical: the progenitor of Greek literature asserts himself as non-Greek. In *True stories* therefore Lucian offers his readers a glimpse of the 'authentic' Homer who,

of Olbia on the Black Sea defiantly affirmed their Hellenism by reciting Homer in their barbaric accents (Dio 36.9); see Goldhill 2001, 158–9.

[96] Zeitlin 2001, 205 with further references.

[97] See Zeitlin (2001, 202): 'In the cultural economy of the Empire, Homer circulated as a kind of common coinage, an acknowledged criterion of self-recognition for all those, even non-Greeks, who included themselves in "a proclaimed communality of *paideia*, a shared system of reference and expectation".'

contrary to received wisdom, is neither Greek nor blind – nor in fact even called Homer.

However, Lucian's joke at the expense of the Homeric critical tradition implicates him in a self-ironizing critical loop, for '[t]o articulate a critique of authority is always itself an authoritative gesture'.[98] With his triumphant revelation of the 'real' Homer, Lucian, ironically, enters into the very critical tradition that both he and the poet deride. In fact, 'Tigranes of Babylon' is just one of a number of 'exotic Homers' which began to populate the biographical imagination in the imperial period, as locations outside the parameters of the Greek world began to claim the poet was one of their own in competitive bids for a stake in the cultural capital of Hellenism.[99] Homer was repeatedly reconfigured in the image of his different inventors and their audiences in this way: an Egyptian wise man in Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Tales*, for example, claims the poet was an Egyptian, and Aristodemus of Nysa, a *grammatikos* of the first century BCE who tutored Pompey's sons in Rome argued, with some ingenuity, that Homer was a Roman. There were also Syrian and Chaldaean Homers – so why not a Babylonian as well?[100] It is easy to see how Lucian's Babylonian Homer, the naturalized Greek, might reflect Lucian's own status as an author whose claims to Hellenic identity were similarly the achievement of concentrated effort and self-invention.[101]

Lucian's Homer is a self-projection in other ways too. Ancient attempts to etymologize the poet's name show that 'Homer' was not necessarily believed to be a straightforward personal name in antiquity.[102] In *True stories*, the revelation that it is a sobriquet hints at a pseudonymous strategy designed to obfuscate the poet's true identity which, by virtue of its transparency, nevertheless invites readers to speculate that the name is fictional. In this respect as well, 'Homer' appears to be similar to Lucian himself, who rarely employed his own name in his work but used instead a cast of polyonymous authorial *personae* of varying degrees of transparency, especially the name 'Lykinos'. It can hardly be accidental that *True*

98 Biriotti 1993, 15. Goldhill 1993 discusses similar ironies in the modern practice of appropriating the authority of Classical literature through quotation.

99 For the commodification of Homer and his role in the construction of Greek cultural identity during this period, see Zeitlin 2001.

100 Hld. 3.12–15. On these 'exotic Homers' see Heath 1998 and Kim 2010.

101 Zeitlin (2001, 246) observes that Tigranes' Babylonian identity makes him a close neighbour of Lucian the Syrian; see also Nesselrath (2002, 155) and Matteuzzi (2002) who read Lucian's Babylonian Homer as a reflection of the reorientation of the centre of Greek culture in the imperial period.

102 Graziosi (2002, 54); for analysis of the diverse accounts of Homer's name and place of origin in antiquity, see Graziosi 2002, 51–89.

stories, where 'Homer' finally reveals his 'true' identity, is also the only work which features the author Lucian's true name 'Loukianos' within the narrative.[103] The fact that Lucian's Homer is fully sighted should not surprise us, either, for we would not expect a Homer for the age of books to be blind. When war breaks out on the Isle of the Blessed, Tigranes rapidly pens an epic to commemorate the event, and gifts it to Lucian in the form of books (*biblia*) for Lucian to bring back to the real world of the living. Naturally, Lucian loses the text on his homeward voyage, generating a kink in the text's transmission, which ensures that Homer's third epic never enters circulation, but he quotes the poem's first line from memory:

> Now tell me, Muse, of the battle of the dead heroes.[104]

This bland opening is a pastiche of the opening verses of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; even Homer, it seems, advertises his *paideia* by engaging in *mimēsis* of his own poems.[105] This all-seeing, all-writing version of Homer embodies all the qualities of the cultural elite of Lucian's era, especially Lucian himself.

As readers of the *True stories*, we know Tigranes is a fake because Lucian has warned us that everything he says is a lie, but this obvious fake nevertheless competes for greater authenticity than the time-honoured tradition of the old blind bard, and exposes the speciousness of other 'true' Homers, like Homer the Egyptian or Homer the Roman. He also challenges notions about the possibility of contact with the author more generally as well, because paradoxically Homer's self-disclosure does not make him more familiar to readers but, rather, displaces him to an even remoter degree: behind the mask of 'Homer' lies Tigranes, and however remote or specious 'Homer' was felt to be, Tigranes the Babylonian is even less recognizable and less believable. In this way, Lucian's interviews with Homer on the Isle of the Blessed dramatize the paradox of the attempt to recover origins through competitive, hyperreal reconstructions. Just as

[103] On Lucian's authorial name-games, see pp. 171–81.

[104] *VH* 2.24: Νῦν δέ μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, μάχην νεκύων ἡρώων.

[105] In a similar way, Homer's epigram at *VH* 2.28 is a 'trashy pastiche of the *Odyssey*'s opening' (Goldhill 2002, 65). Kim (2010, 213) reads Homer's epic in *VH* in anticipation of Achilles' poem in Philostratus' *Heroicus*: 'Lucian coyly alludes to new poems by Homer, whetting our curiosity with a couple of verses; Philostratus presents us with a complete poem *on* Homer composed by *Achilles* . . . If Lucian had depicted the heroes in a strictly bounded world in order to emphasize the self-contained fictional nature of Homeric poetry, Philostratus crosses those Homeric borders into the uncharted territories of heroic fiction.' In Philostratus' *Heroicus*, in an analogous move which diminishes 'Homer's' originary authority, the poet is relegated to a mere reporter of Odysseus' original (and partisan) account, rather than the source on the Trojan War himself: see Kim 2010, 206–11.

the obsessive endeavour to reconstruct originals generates an endless chain of fakes, so too the attempt to reconstruct the original author yields an infinite regression of fictions.

'Always the same crowd': canonical claustrophobia on the Isle of the Blessed

Having escaped the darkly hostile replica-world inside the fish, Lucian and his crew approach the aromatic shores of the Island of the Blessed. In this enchanted world, winds murmur musically in the trees, there is a city built entirely of gold with walls of solid emerald and paved with ivory, and temples constructed of beryl with altars built of slabs of amethyst, cinnamon-scented bath-houses, rivers of milk, and springs of honey and myrrh, of liquid laughter and pleasure to fuel the sympotic merriment that fills the endless twilit days. Time, it seems, has no effect on this utopian world, where it is never quite night or day, it is always spring, and the crops bear fruit in spontaneous super-fertility at least once every month (*VH* 2.12–13).[106] For the reader, this heady iridescence and perfume and song is pure literary intoxication, inducing a dream-like dislocation to a place where every sense is heightened, where every feature is of more concentrated brilliance, more precious and more luxuriously abundant than it is in the real world. The all-round sensory assault is intensified by the impossibly rarefied nature of the island's population: as Lawrence Kim remarks in his recent discussion of Lucian's island, this is not the afterlife for *hoi polloi* where one might hope to encounter family and friends, but an elite resort occupied exclusively by celebrity figures of the Greek literary-cultural tradition.[107]

Lucian's use of utopian timelessness in this episode reflects the closed determinism and canonicity of this literary world where 'real' history has been replaced by an endless replay of the great literature of the past. There is another contest between Homer and Hesiod to re-enact the *Certamen*, and another version of 'the funeral games for Patroclus' in the *Thanatousia* (*VH* 2.22); in a repeat of the prelude to the Trojan War, Helen is abducted, yet

[106] For a comprehensive analysis of Lucian's literary models in his description of the Isle of the Blessed, see von Möllendorff 2000, 286–308; for possible connections with ancient utopian literature, see Fauth 1979 and Nesselrath 1993; for resonances with Christian apocalyptic texts, see von Möllendorff 2005; Bernsdorff 1993 explores the possibility of bucolic sources. As Rütten (1997, 65) notes, Lucian's eclectic combination of source-elements generates a hyperbolic paradisiacal excess.

[107] Kim 2010, ch. 5 esp. 156–74, a brilliantly vivid discussion, with which I will engage throughout this section.

again, by one of the mortal visitors to the island (*VH* 2.25–6);[108] Socrates converses with Nestor and Palamedes just as he imagined he would in Plato's *Apology*; his love of boys is as infamous, and his irony and persistent questioning as irritating in the afterlife as they were in the days of classical Athens, so that he is threatened – once again – with exile unless he reforms his conduct (*VH* 2.17); he redeems himself in battle by outdoing his former display of military courage at Delium (*VH* 2.23). The island's legal system is also congested with reifications of the hypothetical disputes of *controversiae*: Who was Helen's legal husband, Theseus or Menelaus? Who was superior, Hannibal or Alexander? (*VH* 2.6–10). And if the island-dwellers are not re-enacting their own characterizations in unvarying reprises of literary events, they are constantly re-performing the songs that commemorate these events (especially the Homeric epics) in the revelry during the interludes. The islanders themselves reflect their world's timelessness in their strange incorporeality: they are purely visible forms (though capable of movement, thought and speech), and no-one grows old, but remains the same age and in the same physical condition as (s)he was on arrival.[109] Kim brilliantly interprets their time-frozen status as an instantiation of what it means to be a character in a canonical work of fiction:

> This static existence on the part of the inhabitants, resistant to change and growth, parallels their situation as characters in canonized texts, who remain the same every time the text is read, never aging, never developing. The whole point of canonization, after all, and what gives literary tradition its power and strength, is the idea that 'great' texts provide stability and that their characters remain essentially the same.[110]

The static nature of the Island-dwellers, combined with their ceaseless repetition of the literary past, is therefore a reification of 'book-time' – the out-of-time dislocation we experience every time we open a book and imaginatively enter a world where the same events are always taking place and characters never change; Lucian's Island of the Blessed is both 'a librarian's dream'[111] and a figurative book within the book – a compendium,

[108] On Lucian's hypertextual rewriting of Homer in the *Thanatousia* and Helen's adventure, see van Mal-Maeder 1992, 138–9 and 140–4 respectively, and von Möllendorff 2000, 384–91 and 403–11.

[109] This is noted also by Rütten (1997, 69 n. 29), who links it with the 'satirical' tendency in *True stories*, comparing the same motif in *Dialogues of the Dead* 6 and *Nekyomanteia*.

[110] Kim 2010, 161. Zeitlin (2001, 244–5) reads the souls' paradoxical incorporeality as an instantiation of the sense of the past as almost present in the contemporary *Zeitgeist*: 'The past lives on in this twilight state of being and non-being.' For the souls' assimilation to Platonic forms, see von Möllendorff (2000, 331–5) and Laird (2003, 122).

[111] 'un rêve de bibliothécaire', a phrase which Kim (2010, 162) uses to describe the Island of the Blessed, borrowing from Bompaire (1958, 672).

in fact, of all the books of the past to mirror the kaleidoscopic intertextuality of the text that contains it – a dramatization of our experience of reading Lucian's *True stories* right now.

But this dreamy book-world is also tinged with nightmare; luxurious and exclusive and securely familiar as life here is, its unvarying pattern is also stultifying, and some of the souls – notably (and significantly) Homeric characters – are keen to escape: Thersites takes legal action against Homer, Helen tries to escape with her young lover Cinyras, and Odysseus writes a letter expressing his longing to run away to another life with Calypso. For Kim, the Homeric characters' acts of rebellion constitute attempts to amend or alter life-stories which have become irrevocably fixed through their canonization in the Homeric epics. Because of the immense gravitational pull of Homer's fictional worlds, however, any attempt to gainsay, amend or escape the fictional status quo is doomed to atrophy and remain inchoate. The repeated failure of these characters' bids for autonomy and change therefore expresses the overwhelming power and authority of Homer's fiction in the imperial period:

> it seems as if Lucian is calling attention to the fixed nature of the Homeric poetic world, by depicting its characters, like Thersites and Helen, attempting to resist their representations and 'escape' the narratives that define them, either by physically leaving the Island, like Helen, or forcing the 'creator' of the story to change it via a lawsuit. The fact that they both fail suggests there is no easy way out of this closed literary world.[112]

If there is no escape for the characters on the Isle of the Blessed, then, it is because there is no escape from Homer, as Kim demonstrates. The argument can be pushed further, however, for within this strongly metafictional context, there are clear signs that it is not only *characters* but also *authors* who are trying to break free. One author has even managed an interim solution: Plato, we are told, was *not* there with all the others, but was enclosed in the city-state which he himself had constructed in his magisterial work, the *Republic*.[113] Plato's micro-state, contained within, but

[112] Kim 2010, 170. In contrast, the heroes in the ghost-world of Philostratus' *Heroicus* have the autonomy to break free of the roles prescribed to them by Homer, and even (in Achilles' case) to compose their own poetry about the poet himself; see Kim 2010, 212–15.

[113] *VH* 2.17: Πλάτων δὲ μόνος οὐ παρῆν, ἀλλ' ἐλέγετο αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ ἀναπλασθείσῃ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πόλει οἰκεῖν χρώμενος τῇ πολιτείᾳ καὶ τοῖς νόμοις οἷς συνέγραψεν. 'Only Plato was not present, but was said to be living in the city he had constructed, using the constitution and the laws which he had written.' The verb *anaplattō* 'I build, construct', which is suggestive of both physical construction and fictional authorship (*plasma* denotes a 'realistic' fiction) and contains a pun on the author's name (*Platōn*), intensifies the sense that Plato's city is a fictional construct resulting from his authorship; see also Laird 2003, 122–3. Plato's absence is also an instantiation of his pose

hermetically sealed from, the rest of the Isle of the Blessed, is a Homer-free zone – a realization, not only of his city-in-words, but also of the *Republic*'s polemical proposal to ban Homeric poetry from the ideal state; what Plato may have hoped to achieve ideally has been realized in the afterlife.[114]

Another author who displays symptoms of an anxiety of Homeric influence is, ironically, Homer himself. The verses he composes in *True stories* are banal in the extreme. The battle between the souls of the wicked and the souls of the blessed inspires him to compose a new epic – for which he clearly has ambitions (he delivers it to Lucian to ensure its circulation among the living) – but the opening line is a clumsy pastiche of the first lines of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The ultimate joke, then, is that even the father-poet, while attempting to generate new work, is reduced to ludicrous mimetic self-replication: not even Homer, it seems, can escape Homer.

It is therefore particularly apposite that Lucian should theorize his *own* authorial anxiety concerning Homer's influence here, especially given that the sojourn on the Isle of the Blessed is, of all the adventures in *True stories*, the episode most intensely saturated with (and preoccupied with) the authority of Homer. Lucian's visit to the Island is modelled primarily on *Odyssey* 11, the book where Odysseus meets the shades of the dead. *Odyssey* 11 is marked for the intensity with which it appears to reference poetic traditions outside the *Odyssey* itself, most conspicuously the *Iliad*, but also (probably) other poetic traditions about the homecomings of the Greek heroes. Behind the great hero's encounter with the shades of his past lies the *Odyssey*'s acknowledgement and competitive emulation of its poetic predecessors, and the audience's recognition of the poem's self-orientation (and self-promotion) within a poetic tradition. In *True stories*, the episode on the Isle of the Blessed similarly constitutes one of the most densely hypertextual, self-reflexive and metafictional sections of the entire work. Here Lucian engages with Homer, not only in the overall narrative arc which recreates Odysseus' *nekuia* and the minor narrative eddies within this arc that, as I have already demonstrated, recycle individual episodes from the Homeric poems, but also in his more literal continuation of the Homeric oeuvre: his production (putatively, at least) of a 'third' Homeric epic and new 'Homeric' verses, and his extension of the story of the *Odyssey* through Odysseus' letter to Calypso. Above all, this is where Lucian

of authorial absence from his works, declared famously (and problematically) at *Phaedo* 59b; see von Möllendorff 2000, 352 and ní Mheallaigh 2005.

114 Plato refers to the ideal state as 'the city consisting of words' in *Rep.* 9. 592 a10–b1 (see von Möllendorff 2000, 353). Socrates proposes to expunge Homeric poetry from the ideal state's educational programme in *Rep.* 10, esp. 606e–607a.

actually encounters Homer in person; their meetings and conversations dramatize the *True stories*' dialogue with the Homeric epics, especially the *Odyssey*.[115] It is particularly telling that Lucian's dialogue with the poet produces a *new* and radically unfamiliar 'Homer' – whose real identity, as we have already seen, is actually 'Tigranes of Babylon'; this destruction of conceptualizations of the poet which dominate the Greek *imaginaire* (such as the blind bard of Chios or Smyrna or Colophon) constitutes a playfully innovative attempt to escape Homer's influence – by erasing and recreating the poet himself. In light of Homer's apparent inability to escape his own poetic influence (as seen in the way he recycles his own work), this may even be construed as Homer's gesture of *self*-reinvention; in other words, Tigranes is the poet's pre-Homeric fiction of himself. By staging characters' attempts to escape Homer's authority on the Isle of the Blessed (including, ludicrously, attempts by Homer himself), Lucian explores the immense world-creating power of Homeric fiction, which is so overwhelming, in fact, that even the poet's 'true' identity has been occluded by fictions that have evolved from his own work, such as the basic assumption that he must be Greek. But Lucian is also theorizing his own tricky relationship with his primary literary forebear in precisely the place where this relationship is closest to the surface of the text.

Odysseus' letter, which is an embedded hypertext or 'rewriting' of the *Odyssey*, mirrors Lucian's own hypertextual relationship with Homer in *True stories*, a relationship which Lucian announced in the prologue by claiming Homer's Odysseus as his 'leader and instructor' in lies (*VH* 1.3). In particular, Odysseus' anxiety as author of the letter reflects Lucian's authorial anxiety about altering Homer's story-world. Lucian's fearful and illicit reading of the letter dramatizes the ambivalent pleasure the reader feels in response to his own playfully iconoclastic fiction, *True stories*. An atmosphere of heightened danger enshrouds the letter: its purpose is secretly to communicate Odysseus' covert plot to 'run away' from Penelope as soon as he can; Odysseus entrusts it to Lucian in a clandestine manner, and an unspoken fear prompts Lucian to break the letter's seal and read it (thereby making *us*, the readers of *True stories*, his accomplices). There are sound reasons, within the fiction-world, to account for the mutual fear of letter-writer and letter-bearer: Lucian's fear is founded on his knowledge of the fate that may await an unsuspecting *grammatophoros* who, like Bellerophon, could unwittingly be delivering his own death-warrant; in

[115] Although it is not used in this context, the Greek verb *entugchanō*, whose double meaning 'I meet' and 'I read' is exploited elsewhere in *True stories*, intensifies the metaliterary significance of this episode: Lucian's *meeting* with the poet reifies his status as a *reader* of Homer.

particular, Odysseus' role as the author of an epistolary forgery that sealed Palamedes' doom (in one of the most deliciously ironic murder-plots of Greek mythology: the inventor of writing killed by the pen) sharpens the immediate sense of danger.[116] Odysseus' fear, on the other hand, is obviously based on the need to conceal his plans from his wife, although given that Penelope's presence is never actually mentioned elsewhere, it looks rather more as if he is trying to avoid the ubiquitous Homer, an impression which is affirmed by the fact that this is the only occasion we see Odysseus both on his own and unaccompanied by the poet. This invites speculation about his anxiety within a metaliterary frame of reference: in these terms, Odysseus' furtive behaviour emphasizes what a transgressive business it is to tamper with the canonical stories of the Greek literary tradition, especially with the authority of Homer, the father of that tradition. Odysseus' letter is illicit because it proposes an extra-marital affair which at the same time constitutes an exogamous contamination of Homer's poem, an infiltration of Lucian's plot into the canonical story. At the point of reception, in turn, the sense of curiosity and fear that surrounds Lucian's act of reading is suggestive of the curiosity and the *frisson* of illicit pleasure experienced by the reader of any hypertextual fiction (such as *True stories* itself) that dares to innovate on Homer's monumental classics. As a self-styled 'second Odysseus', Lucian's own attempt to 'break free' of Homer's influence in *True stories* – by innovating, continuing, correcting the *Odyssey* and its poet – is dramatized in Odysseus' microtext. The fact that we never learn if Odysseus actually *does* manage to escape leaves the success of Lucian's literary bid for freedom in doubt.

Other analyses of *True stories* postulate a correlation between Lucian's Isle of the Blessed and Lucian's own cultural and social context. For Zeitlin,

> the general *congeries* reflects the thought-world of the Second Sophistic as if in microcosm, with its favourite roster of names, its ecumenical inclusion of the now-hallowed barbarian sages, and the jostling together of figures from myth and history, drawn from different ages and vocations, all keeping happy company together.[117]

Kim argues that the Island of the Blessed is more specifically 'an instantiation of the Greek *literary* tradition',[118] following Branham, for whom the chaos of the Isle of the Blessed represents 'the disconcerting babel of

[116] Rosenmeyer 2001, 133–4. The story of Bellerophon and the 'baneful signs' (*sēmata lugra*) he carried is related at *Iliad* 6.156–211. The story of how Odysseus framed Palamedes with a forged letter was told in Euripides' *Palamedes*; cf. scholium on Euripides' *Orestes* 432.

[117] Zeitlin 2001, 244. [118] Kim 2010, 162.

incompatible traditions that marks the postclassical form of Hellenic culture in the empire'.[119] These ideas are interconnected, as literature both reflects and shapes its contemporary thought-world, which is itself a projection of the values of the society. So far, I have presented a case for reading this episode as a more radical dramatization of literary anxieties than Kim proposes; but since literature does not exist in a vacuum, in the remainder of this section, I will pursue the implications of this interpretation beyond the literary domain into the more general contemporary thought-world. I will propose that the society of celebrity souls on the Isle of the Blessed reflects aspects of Lucian's culture and society in more concrete ways than Zeitlin suggests, specifically the competitive aspects of its performance culture, and the more paranoid extremes of its pervasive sense of literary-cultural posteriority. This will, finally, offer a way to connect Lucian's extravaganza of hyperreality on the Isle of the Blessed with some deeply entrenched anxieties in postclassical culture.

As well as depicting an enviable lifestyle, the Isle of the Blessed captures the *malaise* that characterizes a highly esoteric and agonistic culture of performance and display. This is an extraordinarily litigious world, presided over by the mythical judge Rhadamanthys, who is preoccupied with legal disputes and administering justice.[120] In particular, residential rights to the island are jealously guarded and rigorously policed: Ajax son of Telamon will be admitted only once Hippocrates has cured him of his suicidal tendencies (*VH* 2.6–7) and the philosopher Chrysippus must submit to a fourth dose of hellebore before he will be let in (*VH* 2.18); Lucian's own trial for transgressive curiosity is remitted until after his death and he is granted temporary residence on the island for no longer than seven months (*VH* 2.10), but the privilege is rescinded as punishment for Cinyras' offence with Helen (*VH* 2.27); Empedocles, still charred and smoking from his volcanic leap, is refused admission altogether (*VH* 2.21). Socrates, conversely, is threatened with expulsion for his offensive behaviour (*VH* 2.17). This atmosphere is redolent of the competitive cliquishness of Lucian's socio-cultural *milieu*, where access to the self-selecting intellectual elite, the *pepaideumenoi*, is tightly controlled, and the conduct of those 'inside' is subject to constant scrutiny; as Goldhill notes, 'the prestige of *Paideia* . . . makes it a charged site of contest, mockery and display, with all the attendant

[119] Branham 1989, 82.

[120] In addition to the several cases already mentioned, there is a dispute over the correct name for the multiply reincarnated soul of Pythagoras (*VH* 2.21), and punishments are decided both for Helen's abductor Cinyras and for the insurgents from the Isle of the Wicked (*VH* 2.26 and 2.24 respectively).

worries and boundary disputes.'[121] Lucian's own work is full of accounts about the exposure of intellectual frauds, and about the pathetic attempts at pseudo-erudition by those who aspire to gain entry to this world but lack the intellectual flair and education to realize their hopes (for example, the essay *Against an ignorant book-collector* about a wealthy man who buys books whose contents he is unable to understand; *Fisherman* exposes the venality of philosophers, *Lexiphanes* ridicules the hyper-Atticism of a would-be *pepaideumenos*). There are also accounts of the mortifying derision awaiting any individual who, through ignorance, misjudgement or lapse, fails to meet the standards governing the behaviour and speech of those 'in the club' (for example, *On a lapse in public speaking* which explores the dangers of misapplying a single idiom of speech).[122]

The sense of canonical claustrophobia and closedness on the Island, which is expressed in individual bids for freedom as we have already seen, is also more generally compounded by the thronged confusion of the Island's population: Helen and Achilles, Socrates and Homer, Aesop the jester and Diogenes the Cynic, the heroes of Troy and the sages of old (Anacharsis the Scythian, Zamolxis of Thrace, Numa the Italian and Lycurgus of Sparta), and more. Figures from all periods of time, mythical and historical, Greeks, Romans and barbarians, cluster together without chronological distinction in a dizzying, synoptic bricolage of the entire Greek literary-cultural tradition.[123] The reader's disorientation is further exacerbated by Lucian's elision of the intangible boundaries separating the 'fictional' from the 'real', allowing authors to interact freely with the characters that populate their work, and diegetic characters surreally to threaten to wrest control from the authors who created them.[124] Even the real author Lucian himself morphs paradoxically into a fictional character here, as the inscription of his name into a Homeric text (*VH* 2.28) powerfully represents his rendering-into-narrative or *diegeticization*, and hints at his own future enclosure within this Homer-dominated world (perhaps also his own inescapable orbit as an author around Homer). Lucian also raises the possibility that the fictional characters may break out to infiltrate our own reality outside the book.[125] In the society on the Isle of the Blessed,

[121] Goldhill 2002, 84.

[122] For further analysis of Lucian's social satire, see Whitmarsh 2001, 247–94; Goldhill 2002, esp. 82–93.

[123] Rütten (1997, 69) also notes the chaotic effect of the lack of historical differentiation.

[124] See also van Mal-Maeder 1992, 137. Kim (2010, 159) reads this blurring between poets and their subjects as a characteristic technique of Lucian's satire.

[125] For Lucian's enclosure within the Homeric universe through the inscription, see Kim 2010, 172–3, esp. 173: 'it . . . represents the moment when the Lucianic narrator (and the Lucianic author as

Lucian has chosen to instantiate his own contemporary literary culture as a space crowded with the ghosts of the past, where that past is endlessly replayed. Although Lucian himself is ultimately reluctant to leave, the island generates claustrophobia among certain permanent residents. Some try to escape physically (for example, Helen and Odysseus) or figuratively through innovation and change (Helen, Odysseus and Thersites), or through seclusion (such as Plato in his micro-state). It is not difficult to see a correlation between this stultifying world and the more negative aspects of mimeticism. In the Isle of the Blessed, Lucian explores the nightmarish extremes of a repetitive culture crammed with the voices of the past, where one might be tempted to linger but from which one needs to escape to find an uncrowded space for one's innovative literary ambitions.[126]

If literary journeys to the lands of the dead represent attempts to experience 'close encounters' with the past, then Lucian's Isle of the Blessed is the *hyperreal* experience that trumps all others.[127] Firstly, in a dramatization of the compendious impulse that characterized the miscellanies and encyclopaedic works of the imperial period, the cast of the entire Greek cultural tradition has been rounded up together, conveniently, on one island, in a similar fashion to modern wax museums that provide the visitor with a compendium of history under one roof.[128] But it also offers the reader *more* – more celebrity souls than ever before, closer and more real encounters (with Homer in person, for example), providing more information than ever about the literature of the past. The Isle of the Blessed is a

well?) is literally inscribed into Homer's poetic world, when he becomes a "character", like the other heroes, of his own (admittedly brief) Homeric narrative . . . Lucian has been enclosed in the poet's literary universe.'

[126] Rimell (2002, 153) interprets Croton in Petronius' *Satyrica* in a similar way, as a metaphorical underworld where ghosts of the literary past pressurize the world of the present: 'The notion that old souls continue to be present and to exert their all too vital energies is a hard-hitting metaphor for the influence of "past" texts, and of past experience in general, on present writing and reading activities. Croton is a self-consciously fictional space inhabited by walking poems and narratives which enact just how embodied ghosts of texts (or our own literary memories) drive and complicate social and sexual interactions.' Eco (1998) ascribes the obsessive replication of the past in the bricolage of art and architecture which characterizes certain cities (as well as private domiciles) in North America to the *horror vacui* of a society for whom the present time holds no depth; it therefore crams its spaces with instantiations of the past.

[127] See also Kim (2010, 158): 'These texts speak to, at varying levels of seriousness, the wish to gain closer and more personal access to the literary and historical past so revered in the Imperial period. In the *True stories*, Lucian does these narratives one better; he fulfils the ultimate fantasy of the educated Imperial Greek, directly visiting and consorting for over six months with *all* of the illustrious figures of the Greek past (or at least all of the 'good' ones).'

[128] Bompaire (1958, 365) designates it (my emphasis) 'une véritable mosaïque . . . *produit de l'éclecticisme scolaire*'. The Isle of the Blessed dramatizes the compendious impulse in contemporary intellectual culture.

hyperreal museum of the past which vies to surpass 'reality' by offering fictions that both supplement and oust what was accepted as 'fact'.

The bewildering kitsch of Lucian's conglomeration, which, as we have seen, nonchalantly elides boundaries of history, geography and even ontology, is similar to the extravaganzas of the fake described by Eco in 'Travels in Hyperreality', for example the wax-museum on the Californian coast which seats the great artists of European history together in a café in bourgeois comfort:

> As in some story by Heinlein or Asimov, you have the impression of entering and leaving time in a spatial-temporal haze where the centuries are confused . . . in a café in the seaside style of England's Brighton, Mozart and Caruso at the same table, with Hemingway standing behind them, while Shakespeare, at the next table, is conversing with Beethoven, coffee cup in hand . . . [129]

Or the Getty Museum, whose opulent Italian garden is peopled with recreations of the canonical statues of the classical Greek world: 'It's like going to a party and finding old friends: Here is the Discobulus, over there's the Laocoön, hello Apollo Belvedere, how've you been? My God, always the same crowd.'[130]

In fact, this analogy is more literal than one might initially think; there was a fashion in the visual culture of the Roman empire for sculptural representations of Homer and the great intellectuals of the past, which would enable the viewer to experience a more 'direct' encounter with the past than that provided through the medium of literature.[131] Libraries, for example, were decorated with portrait busts of the canonical authors including Homer, presenting the library-visitor with a vivid visual encounter with the progenitors of the literary heritage which the building housed, to supplement the encounter they would experience through reading.[132] This postclassical desire to instantiate the past visually in the present can be seen clearly already in a Hellenistic sculpture-group from the Serapeion at Memphis which featured a larger-than-life-size Homer surrounded by a cast of authors and intellectuals from various historical eras, including (possibly) members of the ruling Ptolemaic family. This

[129] Eco 1998, 11. [130] Eco 1998, 36.

[131] This section is indebted to Zeitlin's excellent discussion of the importance of visualizations of Homer in the art and literature of the Roman empire (Zeitlin 2001, esp. 207–18). For consideration of the relative 'immediacy' of the encounters with the past offered by art and literature, see Swain 1996, 79–87.

[132] Pliny *NH* 35.2.9–11; see Zeitlin 2001, 211–12. Too (2010, 191–214) examines the supplementary role of artistic decoration in ancient libraries.

synopsis of the literary-cultural past in visual art is mirrored in both Lucian's imaginary congregation on the Isle of the Blessed and Eco's hyperreal Californian café.[133] In particular, the *mélange* of past and present (represented by the figures of the royal family), which connected the origins of Greek culture directly to the Ptolemies, is mirrored in Lucian's intrusive self-inscription into the topography of the Isle of the Blessed.

The encounter with the past which Lucian offers in the hyperreality of the Island of the Blessed outdoes what visual artists could offer, however, because in the narrative, Lucian actually converses with the ghosts of Homer and Odysseus, and receives new written and oral messages from them, something which the viewer cannot hope to accomplish with statues. However, as Kim points out, although 'Lucian indulges in the thrill of entering the world of Greek *paideia*, meeting and conversing with the most famous figures of the literary and cultural canon . . . [h]is experiences on the Island . . . seem marked less by novelty and the acquisition of knowledge than by a sense of déja vu . . . '[134] The reader may be delighted to learn – direct from poet himself! – that Homer's 'real' name is Tigranes, but (s)he can't escape the knowledge that the interview is a deliciously inventive fraud. Similarly, though Lucian may quicken his reader with an exquisite pang of excitement at the prospect of reading Homer's third epic, he actually fails to deliver anything but a most disappointing first line which is itself a banal echo of lines already written. Lucian playfully offers to satisfy the reader's wish for an encounter with the past, whilst reminding us that such encounters are the stuff of fantasy. In its metaleptic abandon as well as its temporally undifferentiated chaos, the Isle of the Blessed instantiates the troublesome interrelation between the 'real' and the 'fictional' and 'past' and 'present', as Lucian explores the anxiety of entrapment and the crisis of posteriority of his own literary-cultural *milieu*.

Texts in the text

We have seen how *True stories* dramatizes the complex interrelation between the original and the epigonic through dangerous encounters with alien species (the Vine-women and Ass-legs) and through Lucian's encounters with the literary past in the Isle of the Blessed. *True stories* also contains a series of internal mirror-texts which intensify the text's preoccupation with

[133] Discussed at Zeitlin 2001, 208–9. The statue-group dates from the later second or early first century BCE, and was renovated in later antiquity. For discussion, see Zanker (1995, 172), with further bibliography.

[134] Kim 2010, 173.

fictions of authenticity. I will examine in detail the two most significant of these mirror-texts, Odysseus' letter to Calypso (*VH* 2.35) and Lucian's inscription on the Isle of the Blessed (*VH* 2.28).

Odysseus' letter: (re-)writing the self

On the Isle of the Blessed, where there are no boundaries separating the real world from the world within the text, authors coexist on the same ontological plane as the characters that populate their narratives: Homer dines with Odysseus (this pair is inseparable in the *True stories*), Socrates chops logic with Palamedes, and so on.[135] In this realm, authors are characters – and characters can become authors. The maligned Thersites takes a case of defamation against Homer for his misrepresentation in the second book of the *Iliad*, but is worsted – again – by Odysseus, Homer's legal aid.[136] Odysseus in turn (always a character with authorial aspirations) takes the pen – literally – to rewrite and supplement his own narrative from the *Odyssey*, in a posthumous letter to Calypso, in which he updates his story from the point where he left Ogygia to his present existence on the Isle of the Blessed:

> Odysseus to Calypso, greetings. Know that as soon as I built the raft and sailed away from you I was involved in a shipwreck and brought safely, with some difficulty, by Leucothea to the land of the Phaeacians, by whom I was escorted home. There I found throngs of my wife's suitors living a life of luxury in our home. I killed them all, and was later slain by Telegonus, my son by Circe, and I am now on the Isle of the Blessed, very much regretting abandoning life with you and the immortality you proffered. So if I get the chance, I shall run away and come to you.[137]

In the preface to the *True stories*, Lucian established an explicit parallel between himself, as author, narrator and character of a bogus autobiography, and Odysseus the travel-adventurer, mendacious narrator (*VH* 1.3), and now author of his own story in the letter to Calypso. Odysseus' fantastic autobiographical microtext embedded in the narrative therefore mirrors

[135] *VH* 2.14–19. [136] *VH* 2.20.

[137] *VH* 2.35: Ὀδυσσεὺς Καλυψοῖ χαίρειν. Ἴσθι με, ὡς τὰ πρῶτα ἐξέπλευσα παρὰ σοῦ τὴν σχεδίαν κατασκευασάμενος, ναυαγίᾳ χρησάμενον μόλις ὑπὸ Λευκοθέας διασωθῆναι εἰς τὴν τῶν Φαιάκων χώραν, ὑφ᾿ ὧν ἐς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀποπεμφθεὶς κατέλαβον πολλοὺς τῆς γυναικὸς μνηστῆρας ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις τρυφῶντας· ἀποκτείνας δὲ ἅπαντας ὑπὸ Τηλεγόνου ὕστερον τοῦ ἐκ Κίρκης μοι γενομένου ἀνῃρέθην, καὶ νῦν εἰμι ἐν τῇ Μακάρων νήσῳ πάνυ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ τῷ καταλιπεῖν τὴν παρὰ σοὶ δίαιταν καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ σοῦ προτεινομένην ἀθανασίαν. ἢν οὖν καιροῦ λάβωμαι, ἀποδρὰς ἀφίξομαι πρὸς σέ. On Odysseus' letter, see Rosenmeyer 2001, 133–4; Jenkins 2006: 2–5; Kim 2010, esp. 168–72.

True stories, the pseudo-autobiography of Lucian as an 'ersatz Odysseus';[138] it is a *mise en abyme* of the text that frames it.[139] Both texts are monuments to playfully specious origins: Lucian's records a life that was not lived outside the text; Odysseus' rewrites a life that exists only in other authors' texts. The letter raises Calypso's expectations of meeting Odysseus in person, but postpones their reunion indefinitely; the narrative never returns to Ogygia, leaving the old lovers in eternal suspense, Odysseus always at the point of running away, while Calypso, holding onto his letter, forever anticipates the arrival of its author. Whilst their curious state of suspended animation is explained by the dominating fixity of the canonical Homeric story which prevails in the Isle of the Blessed and brooks no innovation or alteration,[140] this dramatization of reading and writing within the text also nicely mirrors the tease of the *True stories* itself, whose autobiographical format affects to proffer the reader a personal encounter with the author – but leaves the reader, like Calypso, holding onto a text which never delivers, for the *True stories* is a decoy which does not relate to its author's real life with any veracity whatsoever. As we shall shortly see, we do indeed encounter 'Loukianos' in this text – almost uniquely in Lucian's *oeuvre* – but this 'Loukianos' is an egregious fake, an entity who exists in a text (the inscription) within the text, but is explicitly *not* the 'real' author.

Several forms of writing contractually offer to communicate the 'real' author through the text, for example the diary, the letter and the autobiography. Another connection between Odysseus' letter and Lucian's narrative, therefore, is the reader's desire for contact with the author in each case. However, to write is always to mediate, to sever the direct connection with the 'real' author in person, to construct a persona instead; Odysseus' mythical letter to Palamedes, a story which hovers in the air here (for it is this which prompts Lucian anxiously to break the letter's seal) is a vivid reminder of the potential of the written sign to conceal and fictionalize its author in the act of forgery. Consequently, the act of writing is, from the author's point of view, a form of self-erasure, where the 'real' person is concealed and replaced by a representation of the self. It is richly suggestive, in this connection, that Odysseus' assumption of the authorial role

[138] I borrow this phrase from Kim 2010, 172.

[139] See also Jenkins (2006, 2–5) who explores the various responses of readers of the letter-within-the-text as a projection of divergent reader-responses to the text of *True stories*.

[140] Kim 2010, 172: 'the self-imposed limits of the episode are in line with the rest of the stories that take place on the Island: like Helen and Thersites, Odysseus longs to write a new chapter to his story, but the best he can do is write a letter expressing these yearnings.'

requires him, paradoxically, to narrate his own death: ἀναιρέθην, 'I was killed'. The verb *anaireō* means both 'I kill' and 'I erase, I remove'. In addition to denoting Odysseus' mortal death (its primary meaning here), it is suggestive of his self-erasure through writing, implying a connection between writing and death, as to become an author is, ultimately, to be erased and replaced by a constructed self. The effect is intensified by the fact that Odysseus' authorial 'death' occurs in a letter, a literary form which stands in lieu of a person and so *literally* represents the displacement of the author by his or her text.

Odysseus' letter is a hypertextual fake which engages eristically with its hypotext (chiefly Homer's *Odyssey*) by altering it as well as amplifying it – the characteristic *more* of hyperreality, analogous to Homer's 'lost' third epic. In this case a character takes the pen and *rewrites* his narrative in a bid for teleological control over his own story, as well as autonomy from his author.[141] The letter irrevocably alters the love story of Odysseus and Penelope from the *Odyssey*, which from now on becomes a prequel to the next saga: Odysseus' attempt to break free from his wife (the paradigm of marital happiness turned out to be less than ideal) and gain a second, reverse *nostos* – back to Ogygia and Calypso.[142] The image of Odysseus handing Lucian his hopeful epistle at the harbour of the Isle of the Blessed, longing to be reunited with the nymph (*VH* 2.29), completely reverses the *Odyssey*, where he continually wept for Penelope on Calypso's shore.[143] The letter also *continues* Odysseus' story beyond Homer's poem to relate the hero's death, as the *Telegony*, a poem of the epic cycle, had done, and beyond even the reach of the epic cycle by narrating the hero's afterlife. It ends by creating a space for a future, as yet unwritten, story with Calypso, inviting the reader to construct his or her own narrative paths; in this respect, too, the letter mirrors Lucian's narrative, itself a 'new *Odyssey*'[144] which also ends with references to further, unwritten, adventures.

[141] Kim (2010, 171) reads this as the 'desire of a hero to break out of the literary world of the Island, although in this case, Lucian never reveals (or perhaps never learns of) the outcome'.

[142] Zeitlin 2001, 246: 'in one stroke he [Lucian] has overturned the very ideological basis of the epic, its investment in marital fidelity and embrace of mortality as the human condition in favour of the all too human desire to live forever.' Fusillo (1999, 373 with n. 54) links the episode with the fashion for eroticizing Odysseus' adventures, which began in the Hellenistic period. As Kim (2010, 172) notes, the letter is fashioned out of a *zētēma* which vexed ancient *Odyssey*-commentators: why did Odysseus not accept Calypso's offer of immortality? (Sch. *ad Od.* 23.337.)

[143] *Od.* 5. 151–9.

[144] 'une nouvelle *Odyssée*', Bompaire 1988, 38; see van Mal-Maeder (1992) for a fuller analysis of the *True stories* as a hypertext of the *Odyssey*.

As well as generating the possibility for multiple 'alternative endings' for Homer's poem, Odysseus' letter, by establishing itself in a competition with its original hypotext, provokes unsettling questions concerning authenticity and authority in texts: which is the more 'authentic' and authoritative narrative – the earlier, well-known, canonical version by Homer, where Odysseus the loyal husband yearns to return to his wife – or the newer, private document which supersedes it, in which Odysseus himself rewrites the foundational legend of marital bliss in favour of *amour fou* with a nymph? The letter, which is both more 'up to date' than the *Odyssey*, and penned, after all, by Odysseus himself, appears to have the greater claims to authenticity; the fact that it is written in good Attic prose may even constitute a ludic bid to outdo its Homeric origins by appealing to the linguistic fashion of imperial Greek culture: Odysseus, ironically, writes 'better Greek' than Homer.[145] Indeed, as an Atticizing prose author of a Homeric hypertext (especially one that exploits the self-authenticating documentary form of the *letter*), Odysseus competes with other authors, real and apocryphal, in the contemporary literary trend for Homeric revisionist fiction. This is a playful demonstration of how a text that is epigonic and even overtly false or specious (remember, Odysseus is the arch-liar in the *True stories*, not Homer) has the potential to erase the canonical 'authentic' origins from which it was born, and replace them with pseudo-traditions that purport to be *more* authentic and *more* authoritative – and also offer *more*, in the sense of a continuation to the 'next episode'. The discovery of new texts can radically alter what we know (perhaps even the discovery of the 'lost books' of the *True stories* itself could dramatically reconfigure our understanding of the text we have). Odysseus' letter, which threatens to undermine the fixity of the timeless book-world of the Island of the Blessed, constitutes, for the reader of Lucian's text, a playful threat to the authority of the father-poet Homer and the canon of Greek literature – a threat almost but not quite wholly neutralized by the Odyssean author's ambivalent admission to 'truthful lying' in his prologue.

Inscription-fiction and autobiographical desire

The desire to commemorate the self through writing is embodied also in two inscriptions in the narrative of *True stories*. The first of these is on the island of the Vine-women.

[145] A nice observation made by Bär 2013, 235–6.

> Approaching about three stades from the sea, we saw through the woods a column made of bronze, inscribed in Greek letters that were faded and worn away, saying: 'As far as this Heracles and Dionysus came.'[146]

This text marks the progress of Lucian's predecessors and so determines the point from which Lucian's travels will outstrip those who went before him. In metaliterary terms, it therefore marks the competitive mimeticism of Lucian's work, and Lucian's unique achievement of going farther than any of his predecessors in the realm of fiction.[147] Even as it marks this achievement, it also inscribes the text's anxiety about writing, self-memorial and posterity into the fabric of the fictional world, for in spite of the fact that its letters have been inscribed on a column of bronze, which is the proverbial medium of longevity, they are barely legible, giving the lie to Horace's confidence about literary monuments that are, proverbially, *aere perennius*.[148]

The author's prologal desire to write *True stories* as a monument for posterity is realized when he erects an inscription on the shore of the Isle of the Blessed which inscribes his name and presence for all time into the very landscape of the hereafter (2.28).[149] Instead of bronze, Lucian's own inscription is carved on a column of precious beryl, the material out of which the temple of the immortal gods is also constructed: by implication, Lucian's literary achievement will outlast the brazen efforts of his predecessors. Given that the Isle of the Blessed in *True stories* is populated exclusively by the poets, writers and philosophers of the canonical past, Lucian's gesture hints at his ambition to join the ranks of the classics. In this respect, the inscription's emphatic liminality – it stands on the shore of the Isle of the Blessed beside the harbour where it is erected just before Lucian's departure – is suggestive of the tentative nature of Lucian's literary ambitions, or the fact that, as an as-yet-living-author, he cannot expect to dwell fully there yet; in writing the *True stories* he is precociously staking his claim *ante mortem*.

[146] *VH* 1.7: προελθόντες δὲ ὅσον σταδίους τρεῖς ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάττης δι᾽ ὕλης ὁρῶμέν τινα στήλην χαλκοῦ πεποιημένην, Ἑλληνικοῖς γράμμασιν καταγεγραμμένην, ἀμυδροῖς δὲ καὶ ἐκτετριμμένοις, λέγουσαν Ἄχρι τούτων Ἡρακλῆς καὶ Διόνυσος ἀφίκοντο.

[147] See Chapter 6.

[148] The reference is to Horace's closural poem *Odes* 3.30 *exegi monumentum aere perennius* (I have erected a monument *more lasting than bronze*), which seals his poetic achievement in the three books of his *Odes*.

[149] von Möllendorff (2000, 420–4) connects the inscription with Lucian's desire for immortal fame in the prologue, and notes the similarity with Alexander's arch and inscription at the ends of the Earth (*AR* 2.41).

This inscription inscribes (literally) questions about canonicity, what it means to be a classic, and whether *True stories* and its author can qualify, centrally into Lucian's text. These are still problems facing Lucianists:[150] how, precisely, do we situate this author who, through his slippery cultural persona and the hybrid, anti-generic nature of his work, seems systematically to defy categorization, to belong nowhere, and yet, paradoxically, to be paradigmatic of Roman Greek culture? *Can* Lucian be regarded as a classic?

Lucian's inscription, using his real name, lies at the heart of the truth/lies paradox of *True stories*. The 'autobiographical contract' stipulates that, in principle, the authorial self in the text should faithfully reflect the 'real' person outside the text; the fact that Lucian must warn the reader so emphatically about his autobiography's *non*-veracity, to avoid accusations of fraudulence (*VH* 1.4), only proves the force with which this contract is implicitly felt.[151] Of course, there is nothing to prevent a subversive author from breaking the contract by fictionalizing him or herself within a framework that promises a true account of the author's real life: *True stories*, a pseudo-autobiography, where *nothing* is true, is an extreme exercise of this possibility. The two embedded mirror-texts, Odysseus' letter and Lucian's inscription, intensify the message that *all* acts of writing the author are potentially specious as they constitute a *replacement* of the 'real' author by a textual representative who, irrespective of how faithfully (s)he relates to the 'real' author, becomes, for the reader, more 'real' than the real person outside the text: fiction can overtake reality.

As if to underscore this fact, the act of self-writing in *True stories* requires Lucian, like Odysseus, to narrate his own quasi-death when he passes into the afterlife on the Isle of the Blessed. After Cinyras' failed attempt to

[150] This is nowhere more marked than in attempts to categorize *True stories* itself, which generates problems about classification of prose fiction more generally. Reardon's justification for including Lucian's text in his *Collected ancient Greek novels* is representative: 'The claim of this piece to inclusion in the present volume may be thought tenuous, but the novel, or romance – prose fiction – cannot be confined too fine, in antiquity or any other age' (Reardon 1989, 620). Swain is similarly hesitant about the classification of Lucian's work, whilst remaining convinced of its importance, e.g.: 'As a work of sustained narrative, *True Histories* could well be described as a novel. Yet there is no characterization, no developed focus on named persons, and it is perhaps better not so called, however convenient the label may be . . . anyone interested in the novel must pay attention also to other types of prose fiction in the same period. *True Histories* is the best of the rest' (Swain 1999, 8 and 32).

[151] Lejeune (1982, 199–200: 'it [i.e. the author's name] is the only mark in the text of an indubitable "outside-of-the-text", designating a real person . . . Of course, the reader is not going to go out and verify it, and he may very well not know who this person is, but his existence is beyond question; exceptions and fraud only serve to emphasize the general credence given to this variety of social contract.'

abduct Helen, the troublemaking mortals are voted off the Isle of the Blessed. On the day before their departure, Lucian approaches Homer and asks him to compose a couplet to commemorate his sojourn. Lucian himself carves Homer's verses on a *stēlē* of precious beryl which stands on the shore of the Island as a monument to Lucian's *quondam* presence among the Blessed:

> Lucian, dear to the blessed gods, saw all these things
> and went back again to his dear native land.[152]

This microtext, a terse summary of Lucian's entire narrative, is a densely concentrated *mise en abyme* of the *True stories* which intensifies the central paradox of autobiographical fiction.[153] The precise context is significant: the Isle of the Blessed is a *milieu* where, as we have seen, distinctions between authors and characters are blurred, so it is a fitting location for an inscription which collapses the boundary between Lucian's real and fictional selves. The *stēlē*'s liminal setting 'beside the harbour', where it is erected just the day before Lucian sails away for other worlds, emphasizes the inscription's figurative liminality, straddling two 'realities'.

True stories and its embedded mirror-texts, Odysseus' letter and Lucian's inscription, present the reader with textual reprsentations of their authors, in lieu of the author in person. To intensify the reader's awareness of this fact, both texts take the form of documents which represent the substitution of text for flesh-and-blood subject: a letter and an inscription.[154] If the 'Lucian' proffered by *True stories* is a fake who shares nothing with the real author except his name, this is only an extreme enactment of the basic principle that *all* textual representations of the self are potentially fakes. By compelling the reader, paradoxically, to sever the experiences of the authorial self from his counterpart outside the text, *True stories* highlights the ever-potential mediatedness of the authorial *ego*, and exposes the naivety of reading any authorial *persona* at face value as a conduit to the 'real' author outside the text. The fact that the inscription is attributed explicitly to *Homer* further reinforces the disjunctivity between the *Loukianos* in the

[152] *VH* 2.28. Zeitlin (2001, 247) sums up the irony of this commemorative gesture: 'Without the bard to attest to the reality of an unreal journey, who would otherwise believe his eyewitness report?'

[153] See von Möllendorff (2000, 568) who also notes the quasi-funerary status of this inscription on the isle of the dead, reinforcing the narrative's status as Lucian's legacy to posterity (*VH* 1.4). For analysis of this episode, see von Möllendorff 2000, 412–25.

[154] On the pseudo-documentary nature of the embedded texts in *True stories*, see ní Mheallaigh 2008; for the text as the vestige of the 'real' author, see also ní Mheallaigh 2009.

text and the 'real' author.[155] As Kim notes, Lucian is playing with notions of attribution and naming here.[156]

This message pertains not only to readers of 'autobiographical' texts, but to readers of any work of literature. The intentionalist mode of reading literature predominated until the post-Romantic era, and in antiquity, authors' texts were regularly quarried for biographical information, as if they were simply the imprint of real authors' lives. *True stories* challenges this approach, too, and exposes it as a critical fallacy through Lucian's own self-disavowal in the prologue, as well as through Homer's revelation of his 'true' identity, Tigranes of Babylon, during Lucian's interviews with him on the Isle of the Blessed.[157] It was a well-known fact in antiquity that Homer did not mention Babylon in his epics – a silence which Strabo interpreted as evidence of the poet's ignorance about the city.[158] By attributing a Babylonian identity to the poet, and therefore identifying him polemically with a place that is entirely alien to the story-world of his poems, Lucian emphasizes the fissure between the 'real' author and his text; the fact that Babylon does not feature in the poems of this putatively Babylonian author, and that generations have so grossly misconstrued Homer's identity on the basis of his poems, illustrates both the irrecoverability of the 'real' author from his text (one would never construct a Babylonian Homer out of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), and also his strange irrelevance to it (Tigranes' 'real' identity has, after all, left no imprint on his work). Through the pseudo-autobiographical paradox which it imposes on its readers (where the author fakes himself), as well as the encounters with playfully fraudulent texts and authors embedded in the narrative, *True stories* hints that the search for the 'real' author through texts only ever leads to a persona who may not necessarily relate to the 'real' person with any authenticity whatsoever: *caveat ergo lector*.

155 See ní Mheallaigh 2009.

156 Kim 2010, 172. This play is intensified by the possible cross-reference between the inscription in *True stories* 2.28 (*Loukianos tade . . . eide . . .* , 'Lucian . . . saw these things') and the epigram attributed to Lucian (Photius *Bibl.* cod. 128, 96b7–10) in which he asserts authorship over his work (*Loukianos tad' egrapsa . . .* , 'I, Lucian, wrote these things'); see Baldwin 1975 and von Möllendorff (2000, 422–3), who argues that this lends the reader who recognizes the allusion an additional 'metapoetic perspective' on the inscription in *True stories*. The converse also holds true: the overt speciousness of the inscription in *True stories* could undermine the epigram's authorial claim.

157 See also Briand (2005, 130–1): 'La rencontre du narrateur avec Homère répond à l'idée qu'une oeuvre s'explique par les intentions conscientes et la biographie de l'auteur . . . Lucien ironise, assimilant le texte et l'auteur . . . '

158 Strabo 15.3.23. As Heath (1998, 31) points out, 'a Babylonian, then, is what Homer was least likely to be . . . [Lucian's] Babylonian Homer is, of course, a joke'.

Conclusion

Lucian's assertion in the prologue of *True stories* of his text's mimeticism, as well as its status as an autobiographical fiction, problematizes the hierarchy between reality and fiction from the start, as the text creates a fake life instead of recording a real one. This subversive relationship between fiction and reality is characteristic of the narrative, with its repeated paradoxical inversions between reality and fiction, between original and copy, and between past and present – themes which are centrally important in imperial literary culture. The entire narrative itself is framed at its beginning and end by two episodes – the encounter with the Vine-women and the Ass-legs – which dramatize surreal reversals in the relationship between master-text and mimetic text, as Lucian narrates the nightmares and fantasies of the author's attempt to assert autonomy within an intensely mimetic literary tradition.

Reversals between the real and fictional worlds recur in the substantial episode on the Moon, and in the shorter visits inside the Whale and on the Island of Dreams, with implications for the reader of *True stories*, who must him- or herself repeatedly shuttle between the real world and the fictional world of Lucian's book. In this way, Lucian's adventures dramatize the reader's encounter with *True stories* itself, as well as the encounter between Lucian's culture world and its past.

The second half of this chapter focused, within the framework of Eco's ideas about hyperreality, on the lengthy episode on the Isle of the Blessed, where Lucian reinstantiates the literary-cultural past in his own present by bringing the canonical authors and intellectual figures of the archaic and classical periods back to life, and allowing their stories to replay in the timelessness of the afterlife where nothing ever changes. In this episode Lucian explores again the claustrophobia of mimetic literature, which endlessly repeats the stories and voices of the past. Balancing this, however, there are also striking authorial attempts to break free of the domination of tradition through the rebellious rewriting both of critical literature and of canonical texts, as can be seen in Lucian's interviews with Homer and in Odysseus' letter respectively. Lucian's own inscription on the Isle of the Blessed highlights the paradoxical relationships between fiction and reality, past and present in a manner that is reflexive of *True stories* itself. This microtext quite literally inscribes into the heart of Lucian's narrative both this crisis of authenticity in imperial culture, and a playful fantasy of posteriority where the dead poet Homer takes control of *Lucian's* story, making contemporary reality, surreally, the subject of Homer's epic

creativity and sealing it with the canonical authority of the father-poet himself.

This chapter is beginning to draw connections between Lucian's fantasy in *True stories* and his contemporary culture, and in this connection, Eco's ideas about hyperreality provide a framework for a particularly fertile understanding of both Lucian's contemporary thought-world and ours. Lucian's extravaganza of hyperreality does not stand alone; in Petronius' *Satyrica*, Trimalchio's house, with its bricolage of tasteless and precious objects, all piled together in a congeries of bewildering kitsch, is itself a veritable *Wunderkammer* and a place of illusion where the boundaries of reality and fantasy are radically unstable. This house of horror-curiosity, which is haunted by Trimalchio's sense of his own inauthenticity,[159] offers readers ancient and modern an experience of hyperreal fakery that is directly comparable to Lucian's *True stories*. These obsessions are endemic – and in the final chapter of this book, therefore, I wish to examine more closely the traction which Lucian's fiction, as well as that of his contemporaries, had in the *real* world, in the culture of wonder and hyperreality.

[159] On Trimalchio's sense of worthlessness as an ex-slave, see Bodel 1994.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion
Fiction and the wonder-culture of the Roman empire

In the chapters of this book I have explored the intense fascination among writers of the imperial period – among whom Lucian is an especially penetrating example – with the dividing lines between fake and authentic, the real and unreal. I have examined in particular Lucian's insistent use of the language and themes of wonder and paradox to talk about his artistic enterprise and readerly responses to it. I wish now to examine the broader ramifications of this language of paradox, for when Lucian refers to the effects of seeing strange, portentous monsters or magic, or uses the world of the theatre and spectacle as analogues for fictional experience, he is drawing on dimensions of the real life and entertainment-culture of the Roman empire. The fictions which I have examined in this book are firmly embedded within the idioms of this contemporary *Wunderkultur*, which ranged from the magnificent shows in the Roman amphitheatre and the weird paraphernalia of the imperial 'storehouse' or *Kunstkammer*, to the more quotidian tricks, acrobatics and storytelling of ambulant street performers.[1] By forging connections between literature and *Wunderkultur* for us in a particularly explicit way, Lucian offers us a new approach to understanding the dynamics of fiction itself, for like the world of Lucian's fiction, this contemporary world of wonder was a test-site for the interplay between the real and the fake, and here too, novelty and the production, through artifice, of the 'authentic' marvel were key to success. In this final section of the book I wish, therefore, to begin to suggest ways in which one might fruitfully open up this dialogue between the fictional literature and *Wunderkultur* of the imperial period – to begin to see the ways not only

[1] Whitmarsh (2001, 245–94, esp. 254–65) explores the satirical implications of resonances between the theatrical dimensions of Lucian's work and the Roman culture of spectacle: 'Lucian . . . does not exonerate himself from the general spectacularization of literary culture . . . [he] ironically advertises his own complicity in the mimetic identity-crisis of his age . . . what his writings dramatize is the elusiveness of the heartfelt voice, the evanescence of "Greek views of Rome"' (pp. 264–5 and 294). On the 'culture of spectacle' and the politics thereof in the Roman imperial period, see Beacham 1999.

in which fiction draws on its contemporary world of magic, wonder and spectacle, but also how ancient technology itself – the very instruments and stagecraft of illusion – deal in the language of fiction as well. What we are moving towards here is a broader landscape and sociology of fiction.

The ancient *Wunderkammer* and the crisis of belief: globsters, giant bones and other curiosities

When Lucian speaks of hippocentaurs, tragelaphs and other monstrous creatures, he is not just drawing on myth in an allusive way, but giving his fiction real traction in his contemporary culture. Literature of the period abounds with reported discoveries of weird and wonderful creatures: centaurs, Tritons, mermen, Nereids and other marvellous fauna. Often, the creatures are already dead when discovered, but sometimes live sightings are reported or else they are seen preserved and on display in the emperor's 'storehouse'. A live satyr was reportedly captured by Sulla's men in Dyrrhachium in 83 BCE, but the creature died before it could be transported to the capital.[2] According to Pliny, the people of Olisipo (Lisbon) reported to the emperor Tiberius several sightings of a Triton who was seen and heard playing his conch-shell in a local cave; they also sighted a Nereid on their coast. The citizens of Gades (Cadiz) reported a similar sighting of a 'merman' (*marinus homo*), and the governor of Gaul wrote to Augustus about the large number of dead Nereids, presumably seals, that had washed up on the shores there.[3] Pausanias claims to have seen the headless body of a Triton himself, a great 'wonder' (*thauma*) which was on display in the temple of Dionysus in Tanagra, as well as another, smaller one 'among the wonders of Rome' (*en tois Rhōmaiōn thaumasi*). He describes the appearance of the Tritons as follows: their hair is greenish-brown in colour ('the colour of frogs in ponds'), and one can't distinguish one lock from the other (suggesting, possibly, a slimy mass of head hair); the rest of the body bristles with small scales, rough like fish-skin; they possess gills under their ears and a human nose, but a broader mouth and the teeth of a wild beast; they seem, Pausanias thinks, to have grey eyes; they have hands and fingers with nails resembling the curving tops of shells; below the chest and stomach they have a tail like a dolphin instead of feet.[4] Aelian gives a vivid account of this Tanagran Triton in his *History of animals* as well, but lays greater emphasis there on the question of credibility which surrounds

[2] Plutarch, *Sulla* 27. [3] Pliny, *NH* 9.4.9–11. [4] Pausanias 9.20.4–21.1.

the marvel.[5] Although rumours about Triton-sightings are rife, Aelian says, fishermen deny having any clear account or sure evidence about them. Nevertheless, he reports Demostratus' description of the Tanagran Triton from his work *On marine life*; according to Demostratus, the creature appeared very similar to paintings and statues of Tritons, but its head was so badly decomposed, it was barely recognizable. Its scales were, however, genuinely piscine, as Demostratus discovered when he touched them, causing one to fall off, and when singed with fire it emitted a strong animal odour. Whatever the strange creature actually was, this was evidently not an instance of a teratological fake created by the clever use of wax, a practice which Aelian and others report elsewhere.[6]

Phlegon of Tralles, probably a freedman from the reign of Hadrian, records the capture of a live hippocentaur on a high mountain in Arabia.[7] The creature was sent to the prefect of Egypt. According to Phlegon, it was carnivorous, had a savage human face, hands and fingers, and was joined at its lower rib cage to equine forelegs and stomach. On its feet were the hardened hoofs of a horse, and it also had a mane of tawny colour. In size it was not like the centaurs of paintings, Phlegon says, but not too small either. The creature, however, died en route to Egypt, as it was unable to adapt to the change in climate. The prefect had it embalmed there and sent to Rome where it was first put on display in the imperial palace; it is now, says Phlegon, kept in the emperor's storehouse (*apokeitai en tois horriois tou autokratoros*) where one can view it if one does not believe his account. Pliny also reports seeing this hippocentaur, which, he says, was preserved in honey and brought from Egypt to Rome during the reign of Claudius; he saw as well a phoenix which had flown into Egypt and was subsequently brought to Rome.[8] Reports of satyrs and 'wild men' are relatively common: Pliny talks about communities of satyrs and other more fantastic beings found in Africa and India, and Pausanias reports on a wild man who was captured in Libya and sent to Rome 'as a marvel'.[9] In the

[5] Aelian, *Hist. an.* 13.21.

[6] Aelian, *Hist. an.* 11.40. Lucian reports Alexander's hoax with an egg and wax: he blew out the contents of a goose-egg, inserted a baby snake inside the shell, then resealed the egg using wax to make it appear whole again. At the appointed time, Alexander 'discovered' the egg, cracked it open and the little snake, which he claimed to be the incarnation of the god Asclepius, emerged to the astonishment of the gathered crowd (*Alex.* 13–14).

[7] *Mir.* 34–5.

[8] Hippocentaur: Pliny, *NH* 7.3.35. Phoenix: Pliny *NH* 10.2.5; Tac. *Annals* 6.28; cf. Dio 58.27.1.

[9] Pliny, *NH* 5.8.44–46 and 7.2.24; Pausanias 2.21.6–7. The *Alexander Romance* contains a fictional account of the capture of wild humans (ps.-Kallisthenes *AR* 2.33).

later empire, Jerome reports seeing a satyr which was preserved in salt and sent to Antioch so that Emperor Constantine might view it.[10]

A noteworthy feature of these reports is the presentation to the emperor of these remarkable beings. The emperor, who was himself an aberration, unique and isolated in his social status, took a particular interest in those with physical deformities or disabilities who were regarded as human freaks.[11] The emperor Augustus was known for his personal collection of wonders in his 'storehouse', which contained the remains of huge sea-creatures and other animals, the bones of Giants, and weapons belonging to heroes of old.[12] Temples and sanctuaries were also sites for the display of wondrous objects. Sanctuaries were frequented by exegetes who could offer to explain the significance of these items to curious visitors; these local experts come under attack in some authors for their venality and the exaggerated nature of their claims.[13] Pausanias' travel narrative is full of accounts of such artefacts, which he claims to have seen on his tour around Greece in the second century.[14] Exhibitions of wonders, whether temporary or permanent, were a regular feature of the Roman world, and they piqued both quasi-scientific curiosity and voyeuristic awe, combined with a degree of scepticism about the authenticity of the objects themselves.[15] These were marvels which were almost 'too good to be true': they offered the viewer real sensory experience of the marvellous, the opportunity to touch and see the heroic past, the exotic and the legendary for oneself, to experience the unbelievable as real.

At the same time, at least some viewers of such wonders must have wavered in their belief about the authenticity of what they beheld. Hybrid monsters like centaurs are repeatedly cited in contemporary literature in the context of the crux between belief and disbelief, and become a byword for the fantastic. In his discussion of the difficulty of writing about

[10] Jerome, Life of St Paul 8. For a survey of discoveries of centaurs, satyrs and tritons in the ancient world, see Hansen 1996, 170–6.

[11] Garland 1995, esp. 50–2.

[12] Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 72. On the emperors as patrons of living human oddities see Garland 1995, 48–50.

[13] Lucian, *Philops*. 3–4.

[14] Paus. 8.46.1 and 8.47.2 on the Temple of Athene at Tegea, where the skin and tusks of Calydonian Boar resided (until Augustus removed the tusks); Paus. 3.16.1: Sanctuary of Hilaeira and Phoibe in Sparta where Helen's egg could be found. For discussion of Pausanias' work within the ancient tradition of travel-narrative, see Pretzler 2007, 44–56.

[15] On exhibitions of wonders, see Phlegon, *Mir.* 15, 19, 26, with discussions in Frilingos 2004, 43–53 (with a slant towards the context of Christian martyrologies) and – especially fascinating – Petsalis-Diomedis 2010, 154–67, who explores paradoxographical collections (literary and material) alongside the context of healing pilgrimage and the Pergamene Asklepion.

the legendary past, for example, Diodorus uses this mixed and paradoxical attitude to hybrid monsters to confront the problem of credibility, pointing out that 'even though we do not believe that hybrid Centaurs formed from two different bodies or triple-bodied Geryon exist, we nevertheless accept stories of this sort in the theatres . . . '[16] Diodorus requests the same indulgence of his own readers, especially when it comes to his account of the accomplishments of heroes who were larger and stronger in ancient times than men are today. The Phoenician in Philostratus' *Heroicus* dramatizes Diodorus' anti-reader; he describes himself as generally sceptical towards the mythical because he has never yet met anyone who actually witnessed such phenomena for himself; instead, so-called 'witnesses' have invariably heard about them from another source, or it is a matter of their personal belief, or else they have read about such things in a poem. Like Diodorus' readers, the Phoenician quibbles in particular about the reputed size of heroes in the legendary past: charming fictions for storytelling, he thinks, but 'false and unconvincing' (*pseudē . . . kai apithana*) for anyone who is investigating these matters according to nature, 'for which contemporary humans provide the measure'. When he was a child, he admits, he used to believe these stories, but now he no longer accepts such things on faith.[17] In order to persuade him to believe, the vine-dresser cites a catalogue of material evidence discovered recently in adjacent regions, some of which he claims he had seen himself: a catalogue of gigantic skeletons to prove, beyond doubt, that the men of legendary times were indeed larger than the men of today, although he concedes that there is no evidence among these finds for the existence of hybrid monsters.[18] Tychiades, Lucian's sceptic in *Philopseudes*, includes 'Pegasuses and Chimaeras and Gorgons and Cyclopes' among the embarrassing poetic fantasies which enthral only children who still believe in monsters and those lovers of lies who ought to know better.[19]

[16] Diodorus Siculus 4.8.4: καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις, πεπεισμένοι μήτε Κενταύρους διφυεῖς ἐξ ἑτερογενῶν σωμάτων ὑπάρξαι μήτε Γηρυόνην τρισώματον, ὅμως προσδεχόμεθα τὰς τοιαύτας μυθολογίας . . .

[17] Philostratus, *Her.* 7.9–12, translation adapted from Maclean and Aitken 2001. On this excursus in the *Heroicus*, see Kim (2010, 200–2), who connects it with the discussion of belief in marvels in Lucian's *Philopseudes*, with the sceptical Phoenician of the *Her.* in the role played by Lucian's Tychiades.

[18] *Her.* 8. Pausanias (8.29.3–4) reports the emperor's discovery of the bones of a giant in the bed of the river Orontes. For discussion of such discoveries, see Jones 2000 and Rusten 2004.

[19] *Philops.* 2.

Spectacular illusions: automata, public charades and other wonders

In the imperial period, a variety of devices of mechanical wonder were used to provide entertainment, a practice which had its origins in the automatic *thaumata* that were so cherished by Hellenistic kings.[20] Attesting to this flourishing tradition in the imperial era is Hero's *On Automata* which dates to the first century CE, a treatise in two books in which the author describes in detail how to create two types of mechanical drama: a 'moving' and a 'static' puppet-show.[21] Hero's description of both mechanisms is shot through with the language of credulity, doubt, fictionality and even hyperreality, the pleasure in artifice which is acknowledged to be superior to the real thing.

The moving puppets (*ta hypagonta zōidia*) are the more elaborate and complicated mechanisms.[22] This show involves fully rounded marionettes which are manipulated by strings and pulleys. Hero describes a Dionysiac puppet-show which was based around a model temple: there is a Dionysus-puppet brandishing a *thyrsus* in one hand and a wine-cup in the other, with a panther-puppet reclining at his feet. The goddess Nike is on top of the temple, and Maenads surround the structure on either side. Through the manipulation of strings and pulleys behind the scene, Dionysus is made to glide out of the temple, wave his *thyrsus* and raise his cup so that the wine it contains (*real* wine) spills out onto the reclining panther; Nike is made to flap her wings at the epiphany, whilst the revellers move around the temple and the rumbling of thunder is simulated through the use of balls of lead which are rolled out onto a skin which is drawn tight, like a drum. Hero specifies that novelty is the key appeal in such shows.[23] He also says that

[20] See Schürmann 1991.

[21] On Hero's date, see Drachmann 1948. The text of *On Automata* is in Schmidt 1976, and there is a translation with exegetical notes (mainly on technical aspects of Hero's instructions) in Murphy 1995. Critical interpretations of Hero's automata are thin on the ground, but increasing slowly: most of the scholarship as yet approaches his work from the perspective of ancient engineering (see Amedick 2000, 20003 and 2005). A notable exception, however, is the excellent article by Tybjerg (2003), who examines Hero's use of the philosophical concept of wonder to invest his mechanics with epistemological complexity and raise technological expertise to the status of philosophy. On the importance of Hero's automata in the history of theatre, see Beacham 2013. Although it does not focus on Hero, Johnson (2013) is a fascinating analysis of the liminal position which is occupied by automata more generally in the topography of the credible in the ancient thought-world.

[22] Hero describes the moving theatre in *On automata* 3–4.

[23] *On automata* 2.12: δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὰς τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐκφυγεῖν διαθέσεις, ὅπως καινότερον τὸ κατασκεύασμα φαίνηται· 'We need to move away from the shows of our predecessors of old to make the machine appear more original (*kainoteron*).' He also emphasizes the novelty of his own treatment of the static theatre (*On automata* 20.1).

the puppets themselves should be sizeable, but not too large, for fear that the audience will suspect the presence of a puppet-master inside them, for, he notes, the audience is always suspicious.[24] It was a crucial part of this entertainment, therefore, that the show should be *genuinely* mechanical and that the puppets should move and interact without any direct human manipulation. This was an audience that wanted the illusion of seeing inanimate objects move of their own volition, in the full knowledge that the illusion was achieved through highly complicated mechanical methods.

The particular plots which Hero selected for his mechanical theatre thematized the wonder and fictionality of the technological show itself. Dionysus, as the god of the theatre, is a natural enough choice of subject for Hero's moving puppet-show, which apes the setting of 'real' drama. But in this particular context of mechanized *mimēsis*, of drama that is pseudo-real, the theme acquires a particular *piquance*, as a metaphor for the peculiar blending of real and fake in this animated display. Dionysus' instantly recognizable accoutrements – his *thyrsus* and wine, his Maenads and his pet panther – remind viewers that he is the god who presides over boundaries between the tame and the wild, the civilized and the savage, as well as over illusion itself and the boundaries that distinguish the real from the fake. On his mythological travels to the Greek world, he brought life to inanimate objects such as the ship's mast which spontaneously sprouted vines, and he caused his victims to see phenomena that were not real.[25] Arguably, therefore, the puppet-show celebrates the Dionysiac illusion more perfectly than 'real' drama, because the pseudo-animation of automata which simulate the theatre itself is *more* marvellous – and the illusion more exquisitely artificial – than the transformation that takes place with human actors. Here, mechanical illusion has replaced the transformative magic of the theatre. The puppet Nike herself, hovering in simulated flight over Dionysus' temple, represents the triumph of mechanical artifice which has reached its apex in this hyperreal art-form.

Hero devotes the second book of the treatise to the 'static' puppet-show (*ta stata automata*), a subject in which he acknowledges his great predecessor Philo of Byzantium, for whom he expresses great respect.[26] This form of puppet-show had a longer ancestry than its dynamic counterpart; Hero describes it first in its more primitive form, which involved a *tableau* (*pinax*) with doors which opened and closed on different 'scenes'.[27] The puppets in this type of show were not fully realized in the round, but were a

[24] *On automata* 4.4. [25] *Homeric hymn to Dionysus* 7.34–42. [26] *On automata* 20.1 and 3.
[27] The stationary theatre is described in *On automata* 24–30.

combination of figures painted on the background canvas, with individual moving parts. When the doors first opened, they revealed simply a painted face with moving eyes, and then subsequently figures involved in different, mundane activities. The show therefore included three categories of moving parts: the doors which opened and closed mechanically, the moving eyes, and any moving limbs of the working figures in individual scenes. Hero, however, stresses that in his day, it had become customary to use the static automata to perform sophisticated stories which required lots of different movements, in a virtuoso performance of mechanical narrative and visual display.[28]

The example which Hero expounds is the story of the homecoming of the lesser Ajax, which is known from the epic cycle as well as from fragments of a tragedy by Sophocles, *Nauplius the fire-kindler* (*Nauplius pyrkaeus*).[29] The show opens with a scene of twelve marionettes, arranged in three rows of four. These represent the Achaeans who are busy preparing for the launch of their ships after the Trojan War. The puppets are engaged in a variety of artisan activities including sawing, chopping with axes and working with nails, and real sound-effects enhance the authenticity of the activity: 'just as if it was happening in real life', according to Hero: *kathaper an epi tēs alētheias gignoito*.[30] The mechanical doors close, and when they reopen there is a fresh tableau of the ships being dragged down to the sea. This is followed by a scene showing nothing but air and open sea, with the ships sailing and dolphin-puppets bobbing and diving all around them, 'just as in real life' (*kathaper epi tēs alētheias*).[31] As this tableau draws to its close, the 'sea' becomes visibly stormier. In the next scene, most of the sailors have disappeared; the Nauplion headland is visible, its treacherous beacon represented by the glow of real flames.[32] When the doors close and open again, we have the catastrophic crash-scene and the Ajax puppet is swimming in the sea. The goddess Athena pops up in an epiphany, accompanied by the sound of simulated thunder, and a golden bolt of lightning swoops down to strike Ajax. The puppet vanishes behind a newly fallen roll of canvas scenery, and the final closing of the mechanical doors marks the end of the show.

The entire show required exquisite mechanical skill, combined with artistry and smooth choreography. Hero repeatedly emphasizes the need

[28] *On automata* 22.1–3.
[29] See Marshall 2003; the connection with Sophocles was first made by Prou 1881. Tybjerg (2003, 460) discusses the rich technological associations of the myth, especially through the character of Nauplius' son, the inventor Palamedes, whose death Nauplius is avenging.
[30] *On automata* 1.5 and again at 22.4. [31] *On automata* 22.5. [32] *On automata* 22.6.

for realism: the working figures from the first scene, for example, must have 'utterly convincing movements' (*pithanōtatas diatheseis*).[33] They consist of figures painted on the background canvas and their only moving 3-D part is their arms, which must be made of horn, as this is a very light material which will ensure nimble, naturalistic movement; Hero is anxious at all times to prevent any jamming or stuttering motion in his puppets, which would hint at their mechanistic nature. Even their little tools and implements must be fashioned out of horn, and everything must be painted in such a way that there is no palpable difference between the painted and prosthetic parts of the figures.[34] As Hero notes, the doors are important, not just for demarcating different episodes for the audience's benefit, but also for generating the necessary time-delay (*khronous kai dialeimmata*) which is required for changing the canvas backdrops for each scene as well as preparing the puppets and the sound-effects.[35]

As with the Dionysiac moving puppet-show, the themes in this performance emphasize artistry and illusion in a way that seems provocatively self-reflexive.[36] The show begins with the scene of the craftsman-puppets (*zōidia tektainonta*) plying their miniature axes, saws and hammers on their ships, and it ends with the epiphany of Athena, the goddess of crafts, who presides over the deception of Ajax through the trick of the false beacon. Ajax's misinterpretation of the beacon in the elemental tumult of the sea-storm in the story reflects the confusion, for the audience, between 'real' elements in the show – or, rather, elements which are artificially 'real', such as the simulated thunder, the 'real' arms and tools of the puppets – with less 'real' aspects, such as the painted figures. In the end, the show celebrates the triumph of Athena, the goddess of crafts, over Ajax the hapless 'reader' in the play.

Shadow-play and puppetry had, from its earliest inception in the Greek thought-world, been an icon for the interplay of reality and illusion. Most famously, we find this is the famous analogy of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, where humans are likened to prisoners chained in a cave, with a fire burning behind them, who observe shadows play on the cave-wall; the prisoners take these shadows for reality, not realizing that this murky visual display is

[33] *On automata* 24.1. [34] *On automata* 24.1–2. [35] *On automata* 23.8.

[36] Many of my arguments about the themes of Hero's automatic theatre overlap, fortuitously, with the excellent discussion in Tybjerg 2003, 457–62. Tybjerg explores Hero's use of mythology as a means to reinforce the associations between mechanics and cunning intelligence, and thereby elevate the status of his automata, whereas my emphasis here is on Hero's thematization of the fictionality of his automata-shows.

a mere simulation of reality, not reality itself.[37] Shadow-play must have been a common phenomenon in classical Athens for Plato to use it as the basis for his analogy in this way. Although puppetry does not leave much of an impression on the literary record, we can glean some idea of its popularity from isolated references. From Athenaeus in the third century CE we learn that the Athenians of the fifth century BCE so enjoyed the skill of Potheinos the puppet-master that they put him on stage; Athenaeus even claims that Euripides and his followers were inspired by Potheinos' marionette-shows, though he does not provide any detail about the nature of this influence.[38] Potheinos is described as a *neurospastēs*, a 'string-puller', which indicates that his marionette-show required a human agent to manoeuvre the figures directly through strings.

Hero's show is altogether more sophisticated as his puppets are manipulated directly by a sequence of mechanisms rather than by human intervention. The mechanism enhances the illusion that the figures move of their own accord. Hero, moreover, repeatedly emphasizes the absolute verisimilitude of his puppet-show: this is not mere illusion; it is virtual reality. The very mechanics of wonder – by which I mean the machinery and other props used to generate for audiences the experience of the illusory as real – interlock with the philosophy of wonder, and the poetics of curiosity and fiction in contemporary literature itself.[39] Hero strives to create a world where inanimate objects appear to move and interact of their own volition, whilst the audience always knows that this is not really the case and savour the marvel that this is not magic, but exquisite engineering. For Hero's ideal audience, his puppet-show celebrates the near-perfection of virtual reality, where the illusion is so perfect, it *becomes* real – and reality itself appears afterwards inferior to the simulation which has been mechanically generated. The fact that 'reality' in this case refers to the theatre, which is itself a world of illusion and simulation, adds yet another layer to the paradoxical interplay with fantasy in this art-form. The 'reality' with which Hero's automata vie is none other than drama, which is itself a mere simulation of reality; Hero's little machines outdo both the artistic reproduction and the original reality itself, and the audience thrills to the mercurial skill by which the illusion is created.

[37] Plato, *Rep.* 514a—18b; for an interpretation of Plato's cave allegory in terms of the theory of fictional worlds, see Laird 2003, esp. 120–1.

[38] Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 1.19e.

[39] See Tybjerg (2003) for the philosophical dimension to Hero's *thaumata*.

Mechanical wonders played a major role in mass-entertainment during the Roman empire in other areas as well. Our sources attest to a variety of mechanical devices whose purpose was to generate surprise and amazement. In 57 CE, in Nero's wooden amphitheatre, the audience marvelled as a pseudo-'forest' grew out of the *hypogeum* beneath the saffron rain that was showered down simultaneously from above.[40] Public executions at Rome provided an unexpected opportunity for spectacular illusion. In the 30s CE Strabo witnessed the public execution of a Sicilian prisoner called Seleurus 'son of Etna' in the Roman forum. Seleurus was propped upon a massive volcano-like edifice, purpose-built for the occasion to collapse and crush its hapless victim, generating a brutal irony that the trouble-making 'son of Etna' would be killed by this pseudo-Etna. The mechanism itself may even have spouted flames, as Coleman suggests, like the machine which was later reputedly used for entertainment by the emperor Carinus, with catastrophic results.[41] In the circus in 204 CE, the emperor Septimius Severus celebrated the *Ludi saeculares* with a hunting-display or *venatio* which featured an enormous cage in the form of a ship which collapsed at the appropriate moment, spilling the wild animals – presumably crazed with fright – out into the circus-ground below.[42] The technology of wonder must, however, have reached its acme in the massive mock sea-battles or *naumachiae* that were staged for Roman audiences in the amphitheatre, circus and other locations. The most famous and spectacular of these was performed under the emperor Claudius in 52 CE on the Fucine Lake. The show was in fact a mass-execution of some 19,000 prisoners, staged as a naval battle between the Sicilians and people of Rhodes. The starting signal was given by a silver triton *automaton* which rose from the lake and blew its trumpet.[43]

Fantasy also became reality, sometimes with the aid of technology, in Roman public executions, where myth was re-enacted as reality. In such 'fatal charades', to use Coleman's term, prisoners were cast in the role of hapless victims of mythology and their stories acted out for public entertainment. Martial is our source for several examples. In one such show a prisoner was cast in the role of the mythical musician 'Orpheus',

[40] Calp. Siculus, *Ecl.* 7.69–72.

[41] Strabo 6.273; for Carinus' fire-spouting, mechanical volcano, see *SHA Car.* 19.2. I draw heavily on Coleman (1990) for the references in this paragraph as well as the argument for the date of Seleurus' execution.

[42] Dio 76.1.4.

[43] Suet. *Claud.* 21.6. Other *naumachiae* were put on by Julius Caesar (46 BCE) and Augustus (2 CE); see Coleman 1990, esp. 70–2.

only to be mauled by the bear which appeared from the *hypogeum* to confront him.[44] As Martial wryly observes, this outcome was 'contrary to the plot' (*par' historian*), as Orpheus was supposed to enchant wild animals with his music, not be devoured by one. In this case, the audience savoured the delicious clash between the fantasy and the reality of the myth's re-enactment.[45] In other instances of such fatal charades, 'Daedalus' is killed by a bear, and a female prisoner re-enacts the mythical mating between Pasiphae and the bull with fatal consequences.[46]

These performances were not symbolic performances of myth (as one might imagine taking place on stage, for example) but actual instantiations of the myth as reality, involving real human beings, real animals and fatal consequences. But the reality of these 'fatal charades' was of a peculiar order. The encounters between man and beast were artificially engineered through the intricate stagecraft of the amphitheatre, its cages, lifts, trap-doors and labyrinthine *hypogeum*. The animals, terrified by their unfamiliar surroundings and the roaring crowd, frequently had to be goaded to attack their human victims and exhibit the ferocity that was expected of them by their spectators. These encounters were self-evidently artificial, yet they were better than any encounter that would naturally take place in the wild, inasmuch as their violence was more concentrated and more controlled. In the amphitheatre, the violence of nature was released in safely choreographed encounters between animal and animal or between man and beast and converted, through the combination of artifice and technology, into an enhanced re-enactment of natural violence for the delectation of the crowd.

This experience of hyperreality pertained also in other types of entertainment where nature was 'improved upon' through artifice. Our sources report many wonder-shows involving wild and exotic fauna which were trained to perform tricks and simulate human behaviour. In particular, elephants were renowned for their trainability and featured frequently in dressage performances which included (unlikely though it may seem) tight-rope walking, synchronized dancing, musical performance, and even, according to one source, the staging of an elephant-symposium where a troupe of six bull elephants and six cows, all elaborately dressed, reclined together and dined and drank using their trunks in a display of egregiously

[44] Martial, *Lib. spec.* 21.
[45] See Coleman 1990, 62 with n. 162 where she discusses this reconstruction of Martial's text.
[46] Martial, *Lib. spec.* 8 and 5 respectively.

civil conviviality. Some elephants were even trained to write.[47] We hear also of tamed lions such as the *leo mansuetus* of Statius *Silvae* 2.5, whose training enabled him to overcome his instinctive ferocity, only for this to render him vulnerable to attack by another animals in the arena. In their celebration of the triumph of artifice over nature, these performances appealed to the spectators' desire to savour illusion over reality, in a manner analogous to the hyperrealistic fatal charades. This blurring of the boundaries of fantasy and reality is reflected in Statius' poem, where the dying lion displays a final, noble burst of courage against his enemy, just like a dying soldier, all the other lions bow their heads in shame for the death of their comrade, and all of the spectators, including the emperor himself, mourn this single animal's demise, in the midst of so many others, as if he were a noble gladiator.[48] In another instance, a doe which is being pursued by hounds in the arena stops and bows down before the emperor 'in the manner of a suppliant and like one who is petitioning for mercy'. The hounds do not attack her.[49] Martial interprets this unusual animal interaction as a sure sign of the emperor's divinity and holy power, for 'animals have not yet learned to lie'.[50] The thick lens of anthropomorphism through which both Martial and Statius present these episodes is more than a poetic conceit; it reflects the genuine conflation between illusion and reality that was central to the atmosphere of the arena, as animals who were trained to ape human behaviour became, in the viewers' minds, virtually human, and were attributed with human feelings, motives and even sometimes greater-than-human sensibility (as in the case of Martial's deer and her attackers) or nobility.[51]

[47] For performing elephants in the imperial period, elephant dressage and the elephantine symposium, see Pliny, *NH* 8.2–3; Aelian, *HA* 2.11; Arrian, *Indica* 14.5–6; Martial 1.104. 9–10. Wondrous performances of elephant tightrope-walking (*elephanti funambuli*) are reported by Seneca (*Ep.* 85.41), Suetonius (*Nero* 11.2 and *Galba* 6) and Dio Cassius (61.17.2). Aelian (*HA* 2.11) records the performance by an elephant which had been trained to write in Greek or Latin letters. On elephants in antiquity, see Scullard 1974, esp. 252–3 on their performing tricks, and Toynbee 1973, 46–9.

[48] The lions' shame: ll. 13–15; the lion's noble death, compared to a soldier: ll. 17–23; the lion mourned like a gladiator: ll. 25–7.

[49] Martial, *Lib. spec.* 30.3–4: *Caesaris ante pedes supplex similisque roganti | constitit, et praedam non tetigere canes.*

[50] Martial, *Lib. spec.* 30.7–8: *Numen habet Caesar: sacra est haec, sacra potestas, | credite: mentiri non didicere ferae.*

[51] In his analysis of this poem, Newmyer (1984, 3) describes the 'air of unreality and artifice inherent in such a subject', which 'is heightened by the language in which Statius describes the death of the animal, for the reader is cleverly made to forget that the participants in the poem are animals and not human beings . . . For Statius, as for Martial, the perverse art of the Flavian amphitheatre suggests a world turned upside down.' For Newmyer, this preference for the artificial over the natural was a 'tenet central to the Flavian aesthetic code'.

In these public extravaganzas of hyperreality the blending of the fake and the real created for the viewer an experience of fiction as reality. In the space of the arena the boundaries separating fantasy and reality interacted in a kind of mercurial magic; myth, fantasy and artifice fed and shaped reality, a pseudo-reality which in turn guaranteed the veracity of the myth (in Martial's words, 'Believe it that Pasiphae was joined with the Cretan bull: we saw it – the ancient story has acquired its proof')[52] and even of reality itself, as in the case of the animals' instinctive acknowledgement of the Emperor's power in Martial's epigram. Eco's comments in 'Travels in hyperreality' on the animal shows which he observed in the US are apposite here:

> In the humanization of animals is concealed one of the most clever resources of the Absolute Fake industry . . . In the Marinelands all is reality but aspires to appear sign. The killer whales perform a square dance and answer their trainers' questions not because they have acquired linguistic ability but because they have been trained through conditioned reflexes, and we interpret the stimulus–response relationship as a relationship of meaning. Thus in the entertainment industry when there is a sign it seems there isn't one, and when there isn't one we believe that there is. The condition of pleasure is that something be faked.[53]

The technologies and other forms of artifice that were used to enhance such enactments of myth and fantasy invested the whole reality-show in yet another layer of fakery. And over this entire magical transformation presided the emperor himself, whose power was being staged here as well, not only directly in the display of his absolute control over the life and death of the hapless victims in the arena, but also more subtly through the wonders of hyperreality: through the display of his mastery over the natural behaviour of animals, through his ability to convert myth into a series of spectacular morality lessons, bending tradition and fantasy to his will, and his power to synthesize reality with near-perfection, providing for his people the dizzying experience of artifice and illusion that was better than reality.

Nor was the culture of hyperreality, with its better-than-real illusion, its instruments of wonder and its bricolage of weird and marvellous *curios* (both authentic and fake) confined to purpose-built edifices of entertainment such as the theatre or amphitheatre, or to lavish repositories

[52] Martial, *Lib. spec.* 5.1–2: *Iunctam Pasiphaen Dictaeo credite tauro: | uidimus – accepit fabula prisca fidem.*

[53] Eco 1998, 52.

such as the imperial storehouse and temple sanctuaries. Anyone wandering city-streets in the Roman empire would have encountered marvels of a more quotidian variety: magic tricks, puppet-shows, acrobatic displays and performing animals which were the stock-in-trade of ambulant street entertainers (*circulatores*, *praestigiatores*), itinerant magicians and wonder-workers (*thaumatopoioi*), as well as the incredible-but-true tales and urban legends which swelled the repertories of itinerant storytellers who have left only a ghostly vestige on our written record.[54] All these lowlier traffickers in fantasy exploited the boundaries between reality and illusion to eke a living by entertaining the daily passers-by. Religious life, too, offered the itinerant 'holy man' (*theios anēr*) who roamed from city to city astonishing local crowds with his performance of apparent 'miracles' such as demon-exorcisms, cures, necromancy, fortune-telling and the power to tame animals. We know the names of several notorious individuals from the first and second centuries CE. The charismatic Apollonius of Tyana attracted empire-wide fame and the attention of the emperor in the first century CE, and his life became the subject of a marvellous biography by Philostratus two centuries later. Lucian's works, in the second century CE, are filled with more acerbic sketches of fraudulent 'holy men', most famously Alexander of Abonuteichus who shot to fame and wealth in the East through a series of carefully staged 'miracles'. Alexander exploited the gullible with a tame snake who was supposedly an incarnation of the god Aesculapius, and a serpent-puppet which he manipulated in the dim half-light of his tent where the faithful visited him to consult the god's prophetic wisdom. To judge from Lucian's description, the experience of Alexander's tent must have been absolutely mesmeric: his room was a theatre of light-and-dark where the god's mysterious voice was ventriloquized through a series of artificial pipes in the fake snake's head from an accomplice who lurked next door. Through this room the faithful, already intoxicated with stories of Alexander's divine reputation, were ushered in haste, to ensure they could not tarry long enough to discern his elaborate trickery.[55] Imperial society's predilection for the bizarre can be seen, too, in its fascination with physical deformity. Not only were disabled or physically unusual slaves and *moriones* fashionable in aristocratic and imperial households, but Rome was also the location for the 'freak-market' (*hē tōn teratōn agora*) where such individuals were displayed and sold. Plutarch describes the sort of slaves that were

[54] For wonder-workers and magicians in the Roman empire, see Dickie 2001, esp. 192–201. On itinerant storytellers, see Salles 1981.

[55] Petsalis-Diomedis (2010, 60–6) discusses conflicting models of elite and popular religion in Lucian's *Alexander*.

typically sold in this market: people with physical deformities such as the 'short-legged, short-armed, three-eyed and sparrow-headed'. According to Plutarch, these unusual slaves piqued the acquisitive curiosity of buyers who were bored with 'pictures and statues . . . beautiful boys and women', and so presumably they could command a high price.[56]

A sense of this contemporary *Wunderkultur* pervades the pages of ancient fiction. Both Greek and Latin versions of the ass-novel directly present the reader with the public executions of the Roman amphitheatres,[57] and Slater suggests that these 'fatal charades' are evoked by the elaborate wineskin charade in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.[58] Nor is this merely a matter of realistic *décor*: the sword-swallowing performance in Apuleius' novel, for example, has been interpreted persuasively as a scene of metafictional significance: 'a visual comment on the genre of prose fiction, a low kind of literature contrived to entertain a gullible audience' and 'the novel in a nutshell'.[59] In addition to acrobats and tales of horror,[60] a sense of technological wonder pervades the atmosphere of Trimalchio's banquet: Trimalchio, for example, dominates the conversation with a lecture of 'pedantic accuracy' on astrology,[61] and excurses on the invention of Corinthian bronze and unbreakable glass.[62] He has even named his chef after the mythological inventor, Daedalus. As we have already seen, the tale of the unbreakable glass is repeated twice elsewhere in ancient literature and may well be an ancient form of urban legend.[63] It is noteworthy, too, that among the surviving fragments of the poems of Mesomedes, a poet under Hadrian's patronage, there is one devoted to glass-making (fr. 13) and two to clocks (frr. 7 and 8). In his examination of Mesomedes' delicate balancing of the power in the patron–poet relationship, Whitmarsh interprets the technological poems as evidence of Mesomedes' interest in productivity and how luxury looks 'from below'.[64] It is certainly intriguing, in this connection, that Mesomedes shares Trimalchio's freedman status as well as his technological interests, but my analysis here suggests that this is also part of a wider culture of technophilia, and that Mesomedes' poetry was, in this respect,

[56] Plutarch *Mor.* 520c; see more generally Garland 1995.

[57] Hall (1995, 49–50) emphasizes this dimension of the Greek *Onos*.

[58] *Met.* 2.32–3.11; see Slater 1997, 104 n. 36. The intersection between amphitheatre spectacles and the Book of Revelation is explored in Frilingos 2004.

[59] *Met.* 1.4.2–3; see Keulen 2003 (I quote from pp. 168 and 170).

[60] *Sat.* 54.4 (acrobats); *Sat.* 61–2 (werewolf story); *Sat.* 63 (story about a witch).

[61] For Trimalchio's lecture on astrology, see *Sat.* 39, with Smith 1975, *ad loc.*

[62] On Corinthian bronze, see *Sat.* 50. Rimell (2007b, 117) notes that Trimalchio 'plays on . . . a background of Roman connoisseurship of the metal which culminates in Pliny's entry in his *Natural history* 24.6.12.'

[63] See pp. 95–6.

[64] Whitmarsh 2013a, esp. 168–71.

very much *du jour.* With his automaton-clock, collapsible ceiling, jointed skeleton and other devices of wonder, including a zodiac dish which may have been based on Manilius' orrery,[65] Trimalchio is clearly a gadget-man, much like the later emperor Commodus, whose estate was reputed to include, in addition to gladiatorial accoutrements and luxury wares, 'vehicles of the latest engineering design . . . with exquisite seats which could be turned now towards the setting Sun, now towards a chance breeze; and various devices for measuring distance and showing the time and other things which were consistent with his vices'.[66] In Trimalchio's case, the technology and *automata* also play a dynamic role in the text's fictionality, for his house, as I have already suggested, is itself a veritable *Wunderkammer* where the instability of the boundaries separating reality and illusion dramatizes both Encolpius' mythomaniac delusions and the reader's own uncertainty about how to interpret his narrative.

There can be no doubt about it: from the lowest echelons of society in murky back-alleys and street-corners, to the opulent abodes of the privileged including the emperor himself, life in the Roman empire, both public and private, was saturated with curiosity, wonder and illusion. Literary fiction such as Lucian's and that of his near-contemporaries (Petronius, Apuleius, Lollianus, Phlegon, Philostratus, Antonius Diogenes, to name a few) existed in dialogue with this contemporary culture of wonder, with its predilection for the paradoxical, the pseudo-antique, the fantastic and the bizarre. As a body of fiction, this collection is under-scrutinized in the scholarship on imperial literature, and it is easy to see why: critically awkward, an untidy, heterogeneous cluster of works on ludicrous, 'popular' or trivial themes, this ragged nebula of 'paranovelistic' fiction is all too easily eclipsed by the meteoric luminescence of those contemporary stars of prose fiction, the romantic novels. But it is in the ghostly atmosphere of this nebula – with its mirages of reality and illusion – that the most penetrating insights into the postclassical imagination and the heart of imperial culture are to be found.

[65] *Sat.* 26 (clock); 34 (silver skeleton); 60 (collapsible ceiling; cf. Suetonius *Nero* 31.2 for an imperial version). The circular zodiac dish is marvellous for its 'novelty' (*novitas*, *Sat.* 35). Smith (1975, *ad Sat.* 39) suggests that Trimalchio may be imagined to turn the circular dish to illustrate his lecture, using it like a celestial sphere; for the similarity with Manilius' orrery (*Astr.* 1.672–80), see Rimell 2007b, 117.

[66] *SHA Pertinax* 8.6–7: *nec non vehicula arte fabricae nova . . . exquisitis sedilibus nunc ad solem declinandum nunc ad spiritus opportunitatem per vertiginem; et alia iter metientia horasque monstrantia et cetera vitiis eius convenientia.*

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