

Beyond the Straits of Heracles: Satire and Periplography in Lucian's True Stories

I. *Composition and Power?*

1.) Luc. *VH.* 1.4 [The royal context of telling marvels]:

ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας ὁ τοῦ Ὀμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς, τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀλκίνοον διηγούμενος ἀνέμων τε δουλείαν καὶ μονοφθάλμους καὶ ὠμοφάγους καὶ ἀγρίους τινὰς ἀνθρώπους, ἔτι δὲ πολυκέφαλα ζῶα καὶ τὰς ὑπὸ φαρμάκων τῶν ἐταίρων μεταβολάς, οἷα πολλὰ ἐκεῖνος πρὸς ἰδιώτας ἀνθρώπους τοὺς Φαίακας ἔτερατεύσατο.

“And the originator for these men [Ctesias, Iambulus, and other lying reporters] and teacher of such mendacity, is Homer's Odysseus, who, narrating to those around Alcinous the winds' slavery and certain one-eyed men, flesh-eaters, and savages, and further still many-headed creatures and the transformations by drugs of his companions, of many such marvels did he speak to the simple people, the Phaeacians.”

2.) Luc. *DHC.* 13 (cf. *DHC.* 12, on Aristobulus' flattering history of Alexander the Great): [The profit motive for writing history]

τοιοῦτοι τῶν συγγραφότων οἱ πολλοὶ εἰσι τὸ τήμερον καὶ τὸ ἴδιον καὶ τὸ χρειῶδες, ὃ τι ἂν ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας ἐλπίσωσι, θεραπεύοντες, οὓς μισεῖσθαι καλῶς εἶχεν, ἐς μὲν τὸ παρὸν κόλακας προδήλους καὶ ἀτέχνους ὄντας, ἐς τούπιόν δὲ ὑποπτον ταῖς ὑπερβολαῖς τὴν ὅλην πραγματείαν ἀποφαίνοντας.

“Many historians act like that, assiduously seeking short-term ends, personal objectives, and any advantages they hope to gain from history. Such men out to be reviled, at the present time for being transparent flatterers and for their lack of craftsmanship, and by future generations for making all historical activity suspect by their exaggerations.”

II. *The Explorer's Self-Presentation*

3.) Luc. *VH.* 1.5 [Lucian's periplectic interests and intellectual character]:

ὀρμηθεὶς γάρ ποτε ἀπὸ Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν καὶ ἀφείς εἰς τὸν ἐσπέριον ὠκεανὸν οὐρίῳ ἀνέμῳ τὸν πλοῦν ἐποιούμην. αἰτία δέ μοι **τῆς ἀποδημίας καὶ ὑπόθεσις ἢ τῆς διανοίας περιεργία καὶ πραγμάτων καινῶν ἐπιθυμία καὶ τὸ βούλεσθαι μαθεῖν τί τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ καὶ τίνες οἱ πέραν κατοικοῦντες ἄνθρωποι.** τούτου γέ τοι ἕνεκα πάμπολλα μὲν σιτία ἐνεβαλόμην, ἱκανὸν δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ ἐνεθέμην, πενήντην δὲ τῶν ἡλικιωτῶν προσεποιησάμην τὴν αὐτὴν ἐμοὶ γνώμην ἔχοντας, ἔτι δὲ καὶ ὄπλων πολὺ τι πλῆθος παρεσκευασάμην καὶ κυβερνήτην τὸν ἄριστον μισθῷ μεγάλῳ πείσας παρέλαβον καὶ τὴν ναῦν — ἄκατος δὲ ἦν — ὡς πρὸς μέγαν καὶ βίαιον πλοῦν ἐκρατυνάμην.

“For at that time, after having set out from the Pillars of Heracles and after going out into the Western Ocean with a favorable wind I was making my voyage. And the reason and theme of my trip abroad were the exceptional curiosity of my mind, a zeal for new experiences, and a desire to learn what the course of Ocean was and what sort of people live across there. Well on account of this, on the one hand, I loaded onboard countless foods, and on the other hand I also set aboard sufficient water, enlisted fifty contemporaries holding the same opinion as me, and further still prepared a great deal of equipment and, after persuading the best helmsman with a great payment, I also procured a ship—it was merchant galley—so that I was strengthened for a great and testing voyage.”

4.) Pseudo-Scylax (4th century B.C.E.) *Periplus* 1:

ἄρξομαι δέ ἀπὸ Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ μέχρι Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν τῶν ἐν τῇ Λιβύῃ, καὶ μέχρι Αἰθιοπῶν τῶν μεγάλων.

“And I shall begin from the Pillars of Heracles in Europe (and go) as far as the Pillars of Heracles in Libya, and as far as the Great Ethiopians.”

Pseudo-Scylax *Periplus* 112.1:

μετὰ δὲ Ἡρακλείους στήλας εἰς τὸ ἔξω πλέοντι, ἔχοντι τὴν Λιβύην ἐν ἀριστερᾷ, κόπος ἐστὶ μέγας μέχρι Ἑρμαίας ἄκρας.

“And after the Pillars of Heracles, to one sailing into the outside, holding Libya on the left, there is a great gulf up to the Hermaia Cape.”

5.) Arr. *Ind.* 20.1–2 [Alexander the Great’s exploratory spirit]:

Νεάρχῳ δὲ λέλεκται ὑπὲρ τούτων ὁδε ὁ λόγος: **πόθον** μὲν εἶναι Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐκπεριπλῶσαι τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν ἀπὸ Ἰνδῶν ἕστε ἐπὶ τὴν Περσικὴν, ὀκνέειν δὲ αὐτὸν τοῦ τε πλοῦ τοῦ μήκος καὶ μή τινα ἄρα χώρα ἐρήμη ἐγκύρσας ἢ ὄρμων ἀπόρῳ ἢ οὐ συμμέτρως ἐχούσῃ τῶν ὠρέων, οὕτω δὲ διαφθαρεῖ αὐτῷ ὁ στόλος, καὶ οὐ φαύλη κηλὶς αὕτη τοῖσιν ἔργοισιν αὐτοῦ τοῖσι μεγάλοισιν ἐπιγενομένη τὴν πᾶσαν εὐτυχίην αὐτῷ ἀφανίσῃ: ἀλλὰ ἐκνικῆσαι γὰρ αὐτῷ **τὴν ἐπιθυμίην τοῦ καινόν τι αἰεὶ καὶ ἄτοπον ἐργάζεσθαι.**

“About these matters the following account has been told by Nearchus: that it was Alexander’s longing to circumnavigate the sea which lies from the Indians to Persia, but he was afraid of the voyage’s length and that, after falling upon some deserted territory, or one without anchorage, or having excessive mountains, in this way his expedition would be destroyed, and that this stain, not paltry, overshadowing all of his great deeds,

would rob him of all his success. Yet the zeal to accomplish something new and unparalleled completely conquered him.”

6.) *The Troublesome Explorer?*

| | |
|---|--|
| VH 2:10 | Arr. <i>Ind.</i> 43.10 |
| The Lucianic explorer is charged for φιλοπραγμοσύνη and ἀποδημία by King Rhadamanthus on the Isle of the Blessed. | Arrian describes Alexander’s unrealized desire to circumnavigate Africa as a part of his πολυπραγμοσύνη . |

7.) Arr. *Perip.* 17.2–3 (cf. Arr. *Perip.* 11.2) [The *Periplus* as aide to conquest]:

τάδε μὲν [οὔν] τὰ ἀπὸ Βυζαντίου πλεόντων ἐν δεξιᾷ ὡς ἐπὶ Διοσκουριάδα, εἰς ὄπερ στρατόπεδον τελευτᾷ Ῥωμαίοις ἢ ἐπικράτεια ἐν δεξιᾷ εἰσπλεόντων εἰς τὸν Πόντον. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐπυθόμην Κότυν τετελευτηκέναι, τὸν βασιλέα τοῦ Βοσπόρου τοῦ Κιμμερίου καλουμένου, **ἐπιμελὲς ἐποίησάμην καὶ τὸν μέχρι τοῦ Βοσπόρου πλοῦν δηλώσαι σοι ὡς, εἴ τι βουλευόιο περὶ τοῦ Βοσπόρου, ὑπάρχει σοι καὶ τόνδε τὸν πλοῦν μὴ ἀγνοοῦντι βουλευέσθαι.**

“And these are the things, on the one hand, that are from Byzantium while sailing on the right, up to Dioskourias, into the encampment which is the limit of Roman power when one sails to the right into the Euxine Sea. But when I heard that Kotys, king of the so-called Kimmerian Bosphorus, had died, I decided that it was my duty to explain the voyage as far as the Bosphorus to you, so that, if you were planning something concerning the Bosphorus, you would be able to plan it without being ignorant of the voyage.”¹

III. *Monumentality, Topographic Belatedness, Literary Tracing*

8.) Arr. *Perip.* 1.2–4 [Arrian restores an altar and statue of Hadrian at Trapezous]:

καὶ οἱ βωμοὶ ἀνεστᾶσιν ἤδη, λίθου μέντοι γε τοῦ τραχέος, καὶ τὰ γράμματα διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ εὐδήλα κεχάρακται, τὸ δὲ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ ἡμαρτημένως γέγραπται, οἷα δὴ ὑπὸ βαρβάρων γραφέν. ἔγνωκα οὔν τοὺς τε βωμοὺς λίθου λευκοῦ ἀναθεῖναι, καὶ τὰ ἐπιγράμματα ἐγχαράξαι εὐσήμοις τοῖς γράμμασιν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀνδριάς ἔστηκεν ὁ σὸς τὸ μὲν σχῆμα ἐπιτηδείως — ἀποδείκνυσιν γὰρ τὴν θάλασσαν —, τὴν δὲ ἐργασίαν οὔτε ὁμοίός σοι οὔτε ἄλλως καλός, ὥστε πέμψον ἀνδριάντα ἄξιον ἐπονομάζεσθαι σὸν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τούτῳ σχήματι: τὸ γὰρ χωρίον ἐπιτηδειότατον ἐς μνήμην αἰώνιον.

“The altars are already set up, though in rather rough stone, and as such the inscribed letters are not particularly clear; the Greek inscription is also inaccurately carved, as it

¹ Translations of Arrian’s *Periplus Ponti Euxini* taken (and slightly modified) from Liddle, A. (2003).

was written by barbarians. I therefore decided to rebuild the altars in white stone, and to carve the inscriptions in clear letters. And though your statue has been erected in a pleasing pose—it points out to the sea—the work neither resembles you nor is beautiful in any other way. So I have sent for a statue worthy to bear your name, in the same pose; For that spot is very well suited to an everlasting monument.”

9.) Luc. *VH*. 2.28 [Lucian sets up an inscription on the Isle of the Blessed]

τότε μὲν οὖν τὰ περὶ τὸν πλοῦν παρεσκευασάμην, καὶ ἐπεὶ καιρὸς ἦν, συνεισιτώμην αὐτοῖς. τῇ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ ἐλθὼν πρὸς Ὅμηρον τὸν ποιητὴν ἐδεήθην αὐτοῦ ποιῆσαί μοι δίστιχον ἐπίγραμμα· καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐποίησεν, στήλην βηρύλλου λίθου ἀναστήσας ἐπέγραψα πρὸς τῷ λιμένι. τὸ δὲ ἐπίγραμμα ἦν τοιόνδε·

Λουκιανὸς τάδε πάντα φίλος μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν
εἶδέ τε καὶ πάλιν ἦλθε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.

“And so then I prepared the things for the voyage, and when the time was right, I feasted with them. And on the following day, I came to the poet Homer and asked him to make for me a two line epigram; and when he made it, I inscribed it on a beryl stone, having set it up near the harbor. And the inscription was the following:

‘Lucian saw all these things, a friend to the blessed gods,
and once more came back to his beloved ancestral land.’”

Selected Bibliography

- Anderson, G. 1976 a. *Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic*. Leiden.
———. 1976 b. *Studies in Lucian’s Comic Fiction*. Leiden.
- Bartley, A. (2003) “The Implications of the Reception of Thucydides within Lucian’s ‘Vera Historia.’” *Hermes*, 131: 222–234.
- Baumbach, M., and Möllendorff, P. von. 2017. *Ein literarischer Prometheus: Lukian aus Samosata und die Zweite Sophistik*. Heidelberg.
- De Romanis, F. (2014) “An Exceptional Survival and Its Submerged Background: The Periplus Maris Erythraei and the Indian Ocean Travelogue Tradition.” In Colesanti, G. and Lulli, L. (eds.) *Submerged Literature in Ancient Greek Culture*, vol. 2, 97–110. Berlin.
- Free, A. 2015. *Geschichtsschreibung als Paideia: Lukians Schrift ‘Wie man Geschichte schreiben soll’ in der Bildungskultur des 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* Munich.
- Greenwood, E. (2006). *Thucydides and the Shaping of History*. London.
- Korenjak, M. 2000. *Publikum und Redner: ihre Interaktion in der sophistischen Rhetorik der Kaiserzeit*. Munich
- Liddle, A. 2003. *Arrian’s Periplus Ponti Euxini*. London.
- Matijašić, I (2018). *Shaping the Canons of Ancient Greek Historiography*. Berlin and Boston.
- ní Mheallaigh, K. 2008. “Pseudo-documentarism and the Limits of Ancient Fiction.” *AJP* 129: 403–31.
- . 2009. “Monumental Fallacy: the Teleology of Origins in Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*.” In A. Bartley, ed. *A Lucian for our Times*, 11–28. Newcastle upon Tyne.
- . 2014. *Reading Fiction with Lucian*. Cambridge.
- Möllendorff, P. von. 2001. “Frigid enthusiasts: Lucian on Writing History.” *PCPS* 47: 117–40.
- Moles, J. 1999. “ΑΝΑΘΗΜΑ ΚΑΙ ΚΤΗΜΑ: The Inscriptional inheritance of Ancient Historiography.” *Histos* 3: 27–69.
- Porod, R. 2009. “Lucian and the Limits of Fiction in Ancient Historiography.” In A. Bartley, ed. *A Lucian for Our Times*, 29–46. Cambridge.

- Rood, T. 2011. "Black Sea Variations: Arrian's *Periplus*." *Cambridge Classical Journal* 57: 135–161.
- Swain, S. 1996. *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250*. Oxford.
- Wright, M. 2012. *The Comedian as Critic: Greek Old Comedy and Poetics*. London.
- Tamiolaki, M. 2015. "Satire and Historiography: The Reception of Classical Models and the Construction of the Author's Persona in Lucian's *De historia conscribenda*." *Mnemos*. 68: 917–36.