

Paradoxography and Self Presentation in Lucian's *Prolaliai*
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This paper explores Lucian's use of paradoxographical material in his rhetorical introductions, *prolaliai*, as an oblique rhetoric of self-reference. Specifically it shows that he deliberately uses narrative, descriptive, and lexical elements typical for the literature of *paradoxa* (wonders, marvels) in reference to art and aesthetics in general, and to his own literary art and his relationship with the audience in particular. Lucian describes his literary novelty in paradoxographical terms (*paradoxon*, *thauma*, etc.) in other texts too, yet in the *prolaliai* the pervasive paradoxographical hypotext is more than just a conventional rhetorical repertoire used to present the author and his work as exotic (and the exotic still sells in the Second Sophistic).

I divide Lucian's introductions into three thematic groups, not clear-cut separated, but rather in a fluid continuity and cross-referential correspondence. This division underlines Lucian's developing rhetorical skills in incorporating paradoxographical material, as well as the changes in his socio-cultural status, which determine the way he guides his audience in their reception of *paradoxa* and, therefore, of his own work. A first group is concerned with establishing an audience while blending in, and the treatment of paradoxographical material aims at a positive reaction towards *paradoxa*. A famous artist appears as a marvel (*Harm.*). A stranger Herodotus coming from Asia to Greece and from anonymity to fame is a paradigm for Lucian's own cultural homecoming, for his path from the margin to the center, from otherness to familiarity (*Herod.*). Just as Anacharsis, perceived as a strange barbarian, is smitten with the Greek culture in its otherness, Lucian is enchanted with his Macedonian hosts and hopes that through them, like the Scythian through Solon, he will be perceived as culturally Greek, no longer a barbarian (*Scyth.*). An African *paradoxon*, the thirst-snake, expresses Lucian's own unquenchable thirst for an elite audience and for literary fame (*Dips.*).

A second group is concerned with establishing a degree of difference in reception. A now established Lucian plays down the novelty and strangeness in favor of *techne*. As a traveler who, enchanted by mythical stories, goes in search of wonders and finds none, he compares his disenchantment with the one his audience, having come with similar expectations, might experience after his performance (*Electr.*). While a visceral reaction to *paradoxa* is paradigmatic for the uneducated audience facing literary novelty, Lucian aims at an intellectual reaction of the *pepaideumenoï* who should value not just the novelty, but also the *techne* (*Zeux.*).

Finally, in a third group of introductions, Lucian reestablishes himself after an alleged absence from the rhetorical arena and returns to the use of *paradoxa* as positive reference. A smitten Lucian admiring the strange Gallic, i.e. barbarian, representation of an old eloquent Heracles is the parallel for the audience admiring a now old and eloquent Lucian (*Herc.*). An Indian *paradoxon*, the intoxicating spring of Silenus, which makes old men eloquent, becomes an allegorical self-reference (*Bacch.*).

Through these examples I argue that the paradoxographical material, gradually building up to sophisticated paradigms for reception of novelty and otherness, is here part of a sophisticated strategy, a complex referential system through which Lucian defines his poetics and reflects the multilayered cultural climate of his time, in which he attempts to establish himself as a paradoxically both unorthodox and orthodox identity.