

Warring Words: Homeric and Euripidean Misquotation in Lucian's *Fisherman*

Lucian's *Fisherman* has long been viewed as embodying the author's debt to Old Comedy and Platonic dialogue (Branham 1989, Whitmarsh 2001). While the influence of these genres has been well documented, the complexities of Lucian's use of Homeric and Euripidean quotations have yet to be fully realized. These references include verbatim quotations, misquoted lines, and lines of dubious origin. In general, examples of misquotation invite questions about the author's familiarity with his source or the possible existence of alternate versions. Discussion of Homeric misquotation in Plato, however, has revealed it often to be significant to the overall argument of the respective dialogue (Bernadete 1963, Mitscherling 2005, Maiullo 2014). In this paper, I advance our understanding of the *Fisherman* by demonstrating that Lucian adopts a Platonic model of poetic misquotation and stages a secondary debate in the *Fisherman* regarding the influence that the philosophic tradition exerts on their reception.

I begin by tracing the range of poetic quotations found within the *Fisherman*. In this dialogue, Lucian raises ancient philosophers from the dead to attack his alter ego, Parrhesiades, for auctioning them off in *Philosophies for Sale*. Lucian models the philosophers' initial attack on the *agon* of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, but replaces the *Acharnians*' weapons of choice, namely coals, with Homeric and Euripidean quotations. With the exception of minor alterations for sense, the philosophers' quote both Homer and Euripides almost verbatim. Parrhesiades, in contrast, rejoins with either centos of Homeric lines or lines that appear Euripidean but cannot be attributed to any known play. Given Parrhesiades' misquotation of Homer, I will suggest that his Euripidean lines are possible Lucianic compositions, designed to further distinguish his persona from the dead

philosophers by their treatment of the poetic tradition. This difference between the two quotation styles embodies the larger debate in the dialogue regarding the freedoms Parrhesiades has taken with the philosophical tradition.

In the second part of my paper, I examine how Lucian models Parrhesiades' approach on examples of Homeric misquotation in Plato's dialogues. As Bernadete (1963) demonstrates, in the *Apology* Socrates famously compares himself to Achilles, who chose to avenge the death of Patroclus rather than preserve his own life (28d). Quoting from Achilles' speech to Thetis in book 18, in which Achilles acknowledges his impending death, Socrates notably excludes a reference to Achilles' idleness (ἐτώσιον, 18.104). For Socrates, being idle would mean not questioning, something he subsequently refuses to do. Lucian similarly manipulates the original lines to serve the context of the *Fisherman*. For example, Parrhesiades' initial plea for his life stitches together part of *Iliad* 6.48 (χαλκός τε χρυσός), a scene in which Adrestus futilely begs Menelaus to spare him, with a rewrite of *Iliad* 20.65 (τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ·) that replaces στυγέουσι θεοί with φιλέουσι σοφοί. In Lucian's version, which reads "bronze and gold, which even wise men love" (χαλκός τε χρυσός τε τὰ δὴ φιλέουσι σοφοί περ· *Fish.* 3), the first half of the line casts Parrhesiades in the role of a suppliant, while the second half attacks philosophers by asserting that they love gold, not wisdom. Although ostensibly intended to stop the philosophers' attacks, Parrhesiades' version of these Homeric lines underscores the corruption of philosophy, a central issue of the *Fisherman*.

Beyond what it reveals about the *Fisherman*, this Lucianic *agon* has broader implications for our understanding of Lucian's use direct quotation. In his discussion of this, Anderson (1976) calls for a "pruning" of Householder's original (1941) catalogue on

the grounds that Lucian took “shortcuts” by either citing opening lines or acquiring the lines from an intermediary source, in many cases Plato. I argue that the fluidity of Parrhesiades’ quotations challenges philosophy’s role both as a source for poetic exempla and a lens through which those exempla are read and understood. Furthermore, I suggest that the discrepancy between the approaches embodied by the dead philosophers and Parrhesiades attests to the necessity of considering the relationship between the Lucianic character and the material quoted, an aspect of Lucian’s quotations that remains underexplored.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Graham. (1976) “Lucian’s Classics: Some Shortcuts to Culture.” *BICS* 23:59-68.
- (1978) “Patterns in Lucian’s Quotations.” *BICS* 25: 97-100.
- Bernadete, Seth. (1963) “Some Misquotations of Homer in Plato.” *Phronesis* 8.2: 173-8.
- Branham, R. Bracht. (1989) *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Householder, F.W. (1941) *Literary Quotation and Allusion in Lucian*. New York: Kings Crown Press.
- Maiullo, Stephen. (2014) “Philosophical Pursuit and Flight: Homer and Thucydides in Plato’s *Laches*,” *International Journal of Platonic Tradition* 8.1: 72-91.
- Mitscherling, Jeff. (2005) “Plato’s Misquotation of the Poets,” *CQ* 55.1: 295-98.
- Whitmarsh, Tim. (2001) *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: the Politics of Imitation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.