

INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE DEATH OF A PILOT: THE Κυβερνήτης ἄριστος IN LUCIAN'S *VERAE HISTORIAE*

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

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Before beginning his journey into the unknown in the *Verae Historiae*, Lucian makes sure that his ship is well outfitted and that his men have enough provisions. Along with the materials needed for the voyage, he hired on a gifted pilot: καὶ κυβερνήτην τὸν ἄριστον μισθῷ παρέλαβον [And I secured the best pilot, persuading him with a great deal of money].¹ After the pilot is singled out in the prologue, the other members of the crew are introduced in a group as fifty like-minded young men: πενήκοντα δὲ τῶν ἡλικιωτῶν προσεποιησάμην τὴν αὐτὴν ἔμοι γνώμην ἔχοντας [I gathered a group of fifty young men, who had the same opinion as I],² the reader expects to hear more about this best of pilots. Were his skills worth the price? The reader's expectations are dashed, however, and we hear nothing about him until this very expensive pilot is killed in action, along with one other,³ while the crew battles against the fishy inhabitants of the sea monster.⁴

Despite the expectation that this loss would be mourned, or at least acknowledged, the pilot is merely replaced by Skyntharos, the old man the crew encounters in the belly of the sea monster,⁵ and they continue on their voyage. Shortly after, the crew crosses the Sea of Milk and reaches the Underworld,⁶ visiting both the Isle of the Blessed⁷ and the Isle of the Damned.⁸ Here, of all places, where the crew encounters the souls of so many others, we would expect a scene in which Lucian meets the pilot again, or at least mentions seeing him, there is, however, no trace of this pilot on either of these islands. The lack of emotion in the death of the pilot, and the ease by which he was replaced may be accounted for by the nature of the voyage itself: Ὀρμηθεὶς γὰρ ποτε ἀπὸ Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν καὶ ἄφεις εἰς τὸν ἑσπέριον

1 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 5.

2 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 5.

3 Although there seems to be some confusion about whether there is another mariner killed or not.

4 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 37.

5 Cf. GEORGIADOU/LAMOUR 1998.

6 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 3-35.

7 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 5-29.

8 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 30-32.

ὠκεανὸν [We set forth once from the Pillars of Herakles and sailed into the western ocean].⁹ All the experience this pilot had, which made him the “best” pilot, was of little use in this voyage, as it begins where his knowledge ends, beyond the Mediterranean Sea.

In taking up the concept of intertextuality and the “implied reader”¹⁰ and using it in the interpretation of Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*, the idea of the audience is of paramount importance. Already in the prologue, Lucian tells his audience, all knowing “implied readers” who exist in Lucian’s “imagination,”¹¹ that that he alludes to many other authors in his work: ἀλλ’ ὅτι καὶ τῶν ἱστορουμένων ἕκαστον οὐκ ἀκωμωδῆτως πρὸς τινὰς ἡνικταὶ τῶν παλαιῶν ποιητῶν τε καὶ συγγραφέων καὶ φιλοσόφων...καὶ ὀνομαστὶ ἄν ἔγραφον, εἰ μὴ καὶ αὐτῷ σοὶ ἐκ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως φαίνεσθαι ἔμελλον [Each thing I wrote contains some tacit illusion, not without humor, to ancient poets and historians and philosophers... and I would have mentioned them by name, if they themselves would not be known to you from the reading].¹² The “implied reader” as the “ideal recipient” of this text is able to understand all of the intertextual allusions Lucian uses;¹³ this makes him a foil to the actual reader, who may not understand all of these allusions.¹⁴ The construction¹⁵ of an all knowing “implied reader” allows the actual reader a certain freedom in interacting with the text, contributing his own interpretation of the various allusions.¹⁶ The interaction of Lucian’s intertextuality and the interpretation of the readers creates a multi-layered narrative in which every scene can and should be interpreted as holding allusion to a wide variety of other texts. The death scene of the pilot is no different, parallels with other sections of the text allowing the reader to find an intertextual connection, at least on one level, with the death scene of Elpenor in the *Odyssey*.

THE PILOT’S DEATH

In the belly of the sea monster, the crew decides that they would be safer if they clear out the strange and savage creatures that inhabit it.¹⁷ During the ensuing war, Lucian gives us a casualty list following their first battle: ἀπέθανον δὲ τῶν μὲν πολεμίων ἑβδομήκοντα καὶ ἑκατόν, ἡμῶν δὲ εἴς [καὶ] ὁ κυβερνήτης [Of their troops, one hundred and fifty died, of ours one, [and] the pilot].¹⁸ Like much else in the *Verae Historiae*, however, this death is not as straightforward as it seems.

9 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 5.

10 A concept first coined in BOOTH 1983. EAGLETON 1983, 84. ISER 1974.

11 SCHMID 2009. ISER 1974 and 1978.

12 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 2.

13 “Lecteur idéal” PRINCE 1973, 180.

14 And Lucian quickly follows up this praise with several examples of the allusions he is not going to mention.

15 SCHMID 2010, 51-52.

16 BAXTIN 2002, 427-428.

17 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 35.

18 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 37. The [καὶ], which is not seen in the Heinemann edition of 1931 is a bit of an issue. If it is to be ignored, then the pilot is the only one of Lucian’s men to die in this battle, if it is to be incorporated in the text, then there is another casualty along with the pilot. This does not, however, pose a problem to the interpretation of the text laid out below, as this mariner remains unnamed and faceless, while the pilot remains the focus of the scene. It is possible that Lucian would add in this other casualty as another irritation that makes the interpretation of the text that much more difficult.

While describing his preparations for the voyage, Lucian tells us that he not only hires on this pilot but: ἔτι δὲ καὶ ὄπλων πολὺ τι πλῆθος παρεσκευασάμην [What’s more, I prepared a great store of weapons],¹⁹ the men are, then, well equipped for a war, unlike the inhabitants of the whale, whose martial readiness Lucian is sure to inquire about before committing to a war with them: «Ὅπλα δὲ τίνα ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς;» «Οὐδέν» ἔφη, «πλὴν τὰ ὅσα τῶν ἰχθύων.» [What type of weapons do they have?“None,” he said, “save the bones of fish].²⁰ While never specifying, it can be assumed that Lucian, as a man of means, and his men had some military experience, even before their participation in the war between the inhabitants of the sun and the moon (V.H. I. 13-18). In addition to their technological superiority, then, the Greeks also enjoy a tactical advantage over the various fish form races inhabiting the sea monster.

Taking advantage of this, Lucian, together with Skytharos and the other mariners, develop a plan by which they will defeat their enemy. There is some discouraging news, however, for the Greeks, the fish people number «Πλείους...τῶν χιλίων» [More than...one thousand].²¹ This problem is quickly overcome by the mariners thanks to their tactical superiority. Rather than meeting all of these creatures head on, Lucian and his men divide and conquer, defeating the *Psetopodes* and the *Pangouridai* first:

ὁ δὲ ὑπεροπτικῶς ἀποκρινάμενος ἀπεδίωξε τοὺς ἀγγέλους. πρῶτοι οὖν οἱ Ψηττόποδες καὶ οἱ Παγουρίδαι χαλεπαίνοντες τῷ Σκινθάρω τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκαλείτο μετὰ πολλοῦ θορύβου ἐπήεσαν. ἡμεῖς δὲ τὴν ἔφοδον ὑποπτεῦντες ἐξοπλισάμενοι ἀνεμένομεν, λόχον τινὰ προτάξαντες ἀνδρῶν πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι. προεῖρητο δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῇ ἐνέδρᾳ, ἐπειδὴν ἴδωσι παρεληλυθότας τοὺς πολεμίους, ἐπανίστασθαι καὶ οὕτως ἐποίησαν. ἐπαναστάντες γὰρ κατόπιν ἔκοπτον αὐτούς, καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ αὐτοὶ πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὄντες καὶ γὰρ ὁ Σκινθάρω καὶ ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ συνεστρατεύοντο πηντιάζομεν, καὶ συμμίζαντες θυμῷ καὶ ῥώμῃ διεκινδυνεύομεν

[He, however, sent away the messengers, answering them disdainfully. First the *Psetopodes* and the *Pangouridai*, angry with Skintharos (this was his name) attacked with a great ruckus. We, having anticipated their attack, awaited them fully armed, we organized an ambush of twenty five men. Those in the ambush were instructed beforehand to rise up and fall upon the enemy when they saw them passing by; and this they did. Falling on them from behind they struck them, and we, being twenty five in number since Skytharus and his son fought with us, met them, engaging them zealously and hazarded all on our might].²²

Only after these first peoples are defeated do the mariners turn their sights on the remaining creatures, meeting them head on and defeating them as well:

τῇ ὕστεραία δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι αἰσθόμενοι παρήσαν, τὸ μὲν δεξιὸν κέρασ ἔχοντες οἱ Ταριχάνεσι γείτο δὲ αὐτῶν Πήλαμοστο δὲ εὐώνυμον οἱ Θυννοκέφαλοι, τὸ μέσον δὲ οἱ Καρκινόχειρες· οἱ γὰρ Τριτανομένδητες τὴν ἡσυχίαν

19 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 5.

20 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 36.

21 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 36.

22 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 36-37.

ἦγον οὐδετέροις συμμαχεῖν προαιρούμενοι. ἡμεῖς δὲ προαπαντήσαντες αὐτοῖς παρὰ τὸ Ποσειδώνιον συνεμίξαμεν πολλῇ βοῇ χρώμενοι, ἀντήχει δὲ τὸ κῆτος ὡσπερ τὰ σπήλαια. τρεψάμενοι δὲ αὐτούς, ἄτε γυμνήτας ὄντας, καὶ καταδιώξαντες ἐς τὴν ὕλην τὸ λοιπὸν ἐπεκρατοῦμεν τῆς γῆς. καὶ μετ' οὐ πολὺ κήρυκας ἀποστείλαντες νεκρούς τε ἀνηροῦντο καὶ περὶ φιλίας διελέγοντο· ἡμῖν δὲ οὐκ ἐδόκει σπένδεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ χωρήσαντες ἐπ' αὐτούς πάντας ἄρδην ἐξεκόψαμεν πλὴν τῶν Τριτωνομενδήτων.

[On the next day the others, hearing of what happened, attacked. The *Tarichanes* held the right flank under their commander *Pelamos*, while the *Thunnokephaloi* held the left, the center was held by the *Karkinocheires*. The *Tritonomendetes* were keeping peace, choosing to fight with neither side. We came upon them at the temple to Poseidon and we engaged with much shouting, the hollow echoed us like a cave. Turning them, since they were fighting nude, and pursuing them to the forest, we ruled over the rest of the land. Not long after, messengers were sent to ask for a truce to see to the dead and to propose friendship; we, however, did not think it right to make an alliance, but on the following day, attacking them again, we destroyed them entirely, all except the *Tritonomendetes*.]²³

That one of their number, well, perhaps two, Lucian may have said that the pilot dies “and one other,” the focus of the report and of the parody seems to be on the pilot, however, as his cause of death is given while the other is mentioned only in passing, dies in this war is not an unreasonable possibility, while they are poorly armed, these sea creatures do outnumber the mariners. It is only when we read how the pilot is killed: τρίγλης πλευρᾷ διαπαρεῖς τὸ μετάρφρονον [The backbone (or lung) of the mullet pierced through his back.],²⁴ that the reader is taken aback. This is the type of weapon that *Skyntaros* told Lucian the fish people were using, but it would be difficult to kill an unarmed man with this kind of a weapon, much less a fully armed and armored soldier. By having the pilot killed in this way, Lucian removes his death from the realm of the battlefield and creates an almost farcical or comic scene of a man who dies in an almost impossible, easily avoidable way.

OTHER DEATH SCENES

The death of a member of a ship's crew may not have been an unusual occurrence, the loss of an experienced pilot, however, especially one who is described as Lucian as “the best,” would certainly have posed a problem to the success of the mission. Surprisingly, very few of Lucian's men actually do die in the course of the voyage, the pilot is also the first member of the crew to actually die, along with another, unnamed member of their crew, possibly, the two men who succumbed to the attractions of the Vine Women do not die, they are lost to their comrades, but live on as vines and are about to bear fruit themselves.²⁵ Even when shipwrecked on the other side of the world,²⁶ there are no casualties reported

among the crew. The only other men to actually be killed in the *Verae Historiae* fall on the island of the Cowheads, shortly before the shipwreck.²⁷ Since there are so few instances in the narrative in which a mariner is killed, the two scenes in which this happens are immediately linked in the mind of the reader

On the Island of the Cowheads the reader is presented with a dichotomy. Already the name of the island leads the reader to two points of reference, the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, which is underscored in the description of the inhabitants of this island, who Lucian says: ἐνέμοντο δὲ αὐτὴν ἄνθρωποι ἄγριοι, Βουκέφαλοι, κέρατα ἔχοντες, οἷον παρ' ἡμῖν τὸν Μινώταυρον ἀναπλάττουσιν [The savage men called the Cowheads hold sway (here), these men have horns, as the Minotaur is depicted among us.],²⁸ as well as the horse of Alexander the Great. This is further underscored by the fact that the mariners have met both Theseus and Alexander the Great on the voyage, while they were in the Underworld.²⁹ The expectations which these points of reference bring up in the reader are, to a certain extent, met in the action that takes place on the island. Like the Minotaur, the cow-headed inhabitants of the island are aggressive and cannibalistic, the mariners fall upon the Cowheaders while they are “cutting up the flesh” of the men they had captured in their initial attack, which seems an ironic reversal of humans butchering cattle for food. The military activity one would expect from the name *Boukephalos* and the relationship this implies with Alexander the Great is also found in this scene, as Lucian and his men do not let the capture and death of their comrades go unavenged, but arm themselves and avenge them: οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ πρὸς τὴν θάλατταν καταφεύγομεν. εἶτα μέντοι πάντες ὀπλισάμενοι οὐ γὰρ ἐδόκει ἡμῖν ἀτιμωρήτους περιδεῖν τοὺς φίλους ἐμπίπτομεν τοῖς Βουκεφαλοῖς τὰ κρέα τῶν ἀνηρημένων διαιρουμένοις· φοβήσαντες δὲ πάντας διώκομεν, καὶ κτείνομεν γε ὅσον πεντήκοντα καὶ ζώντας αὐτῶν δύο λαμβάνομεν. [We, who remained, fled to the sea. Later we armed ourselves, for we did not think it right to leave our friends unavenged, and fell upon the Cowheads cutting up the flesh of the men they had captured. We put them all to flight and pursued them and we killed around fifty of them and took two of them alive.].³⁰

Here the allusions to what seem to be the overt inspiration for this scene end. Rather, much of the scene seems to be inspired by a scene from the *Odyssey*, the island of *Thrinacia*.³¹ *Odysseus* is warned not to eat the cattle on the island, since they belong to the god *Helios*, who would be displeased by such sacrilege, which would bring down disaster on them. *Odysseus* did attempt to heed this warning:

ὡς ἐφάμην, τοῖσιν δ' ἐπεπεῖθετο θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ.
μῆνα δὲ πάντ' ἄλληκτος ἤη Νότος, οὐδέ τις ἄλλος
γίγνεται ἔπειτ' ἀνέμων εἰ μὴ Εὐρὸς τε Νότος τε.

οἱ δ' ἦος μὲν σῖτον ἔχον καὶ οἶνον ἐρυθρόν,
τόφρα βοῶν ἀπέχοντο λιλαιόμενοι βιότοιο.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ νηὸς ἐξέφθιτο ἦια πάντα,
καὶ δὴ ἄγρην ἐφέπεσκον ἀλγτεύοντες ἀνάγκη,
ἰχθῦς ὄρνιθᾶς τε, φίλας ὅ τι χεῖρας ἴκοιτο,

23 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 38-39.

24 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 37.

25 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 8.

26 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 47.

27 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 47.

28 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 44.

29 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 8-9.

30 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 44.

31 Homer *Odyssey*. C.f. also REDMOND 2013, 79-80.

γναμπτοῖς ἀγκίστροισιν, ἔτειρε δὲ γαστέρα λιμός: δὴ τότε ἔγων ἀνά νῆσον ἀπέστιχον, ὄφρα θεοῖσιν εὐξαίμην, εἴ τίς μοι ὁδὸν φήνει νέεσθαι.³²

[“So I spoke, and their proud hearts consented. [325] Then for a full month the South Wind blew unceasingly, nor did any other wind arise except the East and the South. “Now so long as my men had grain and red wine they kept their hands from the kine, for they were eager to save their lives.¹ But when all the stores had been consumed from out the ship, [330] and now they must needs roam about in search of game, fishes, and fowl, and whatever might come to their hands—fishing with bent hooks, for hunger pinched their bellies—then I went apart up the island that I might pray to the gods in the hope that one of them might show me a way to go.”]³³

The dire straits the mariners are in leads them to disregard the warnings, choosing a possibly angry god over definite death by starvation. While Odysseus slept, his men: αὐτίκα δ’ Ἡελίοιο βοῶν ἐλάσαντες ἀρίστας ἐγγύθεν, οὐ γὰρ τῆλε νεὸς κυανοπρόροιο βοσκέσκονθ’ ἔλικες καλαὶ βόες εὐρυμέτωποι: τὰς δὲ περιστήσαν τε καὶ εὐχετόωντο θεοῖσιν, φύλλα δρεψάμενοι τέρενα δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο: οὐ γὰρ ἔχον κρῖ λευκὸν εὐσσέλμου ἐπὶ νηός. αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ’ εὐξάντο καὶ ἔσφαξαν καὶ ἔδειραν, μηρούς τ’ ἐξέταμον κατὰ τε κνίσση ἐκάλυψαν δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες, ἐπ’ αὐτῶν δ’ ὠμοθέτησαν. οὐδ’ εἶχον μέθου λειψαί ἐπ’ αἰθομένοις ἱεροῖσιν, ἀλλ’ ὕδατι σπένδοντες ἐπόπτων ἔγκατα πάντα.³⁴

[“Straightway they drove off the best of the kine of Helios from near at hand, for not far from the dark-prowed ship were grazing the fair, sleek kine, broad of brow. Around these, then, they stood and made prayer to the gods, plucking the tender leaves from off a high-crested oak; for they had no white barley on board the well-benched ship. Now when they had prayed and had cut the throats of the kine and flayed them, they cut out the thigh-pieces and covered them with a double layer of fat and laid raw flesh upon them. They had no wine to pour over the blazing sacrifice, but they made libations with water, and roasted all the entrails over the fire.”]³⁵

On the island of the Cowheads Lucian too is confronted by a dismal prospect: καὶ σιτία ληψόμενοι, εἴ ποθεν δυνηθείμεν· οὐκέτι γὰρ εἶχομεν [“and we would take on food, if we were able, for we had none.”]³⁶ Like the crew in the *Odyssey* Lucian’s men face the dire prospect of starvation, and they too come across cattle. Although not entirely bovine, these Cowheads, unlike other strange creatures encountered on the voyage so far, do not speak Greek, they look like cows. By having the Cowheads not be able to speak Greek, they are relegated to a more animal like

state than other monsters.³⁷

These cattle, however, do not need the protection of a deity, and the presence of a deity is not to be found, like in the rest of the *Verae Historiae*, as they are capable of defending themselves. These cattle do not wait patiently to be slaughtered, but, in a preemptive strike, attack Lucian and his men, carrying off the three men they proceed to butcher. The threat posed by these Cowheads parallels the threat posed to Odysseus’ men, in this case the threat of destruction is coming from the cattle themselves rather than through the cattle. The threat also parallels that faced in the belly of the sea monster, a group of aggressive part human part animal creatures are ready to exterminate the intrepid band of explorers, the threat is even more poignant here, as the fish-creatures in the whale would have been content with continued tribute, and it was the cessation of this tribute that prompted the battle. Like the battle in the sea monster, the mariners are well served by their superior weapons and tactics, and are victorious: φοβήσαντες δὲ πάντας διώκομεν, καὶ κτείνομεν γε ὅσον πεντήκοντα καὶ ζῶντας αὐτῶν δύο λαμβάνομεν [we put them to all to flight, killed about fifty of them and took two alive].³⁸ The expectation of the reader, built up by the similar setting of the *Odyssey* and the *Verae Historiae* is shattered. There is to be no disaster here, unlike Odysseus, Lucian is able to keep his men from consuming the cattle, is able to save his men from certain doom. In this way Lucian sets himself up as a superior to Odysseus as a captain and a leader of men.

THE CONTEXT OF THE ODYSSEY

In every scene in Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*, the author layers the parody, allowing the reader to come to a variety of conclusions about what other works are being alluded to. This is one of the most interesting and frustrating aspects of dealing with Lucian.³⁹ The death of the pilot, as part of the larger battle against the tribes of fish creatures inhabiting the stomach of the sea monster, is no exception. In their commentary on the text, Georgiadou and Larmour point out that Lucian creates a critique of philosophers in the various fish folk they battle, paralleling his work the *Piscator*: “in which various philosophers are represented by different species of fish;”⁴⁰ a critique Lucian continues in the absence of the philosophers in the underworld. Von Möllendorf also discusses this section, linking the battle both to an ambush in Xenophon’s *Hellenica*,⁴¹ as well as to the battle between the inhabitants of the moon and the inhabitants of the sun in Book I.⁴² Both commentaries also point out that this scene does seem to contain “some tacit illusion”⁴³ to the *Odyssey*. Von Möllendorf discusses the battle scene in the context of the slaughter of the suitors by Odysseus, while Georgiadou and Larmour, pointing this out as well, show that Skyntharos, the old man Lucian and his men meet in the belly of the sea monster, is : “reminiscent of both Eumaeus,

32 Homer. *Odyssey*. Book 12 Lines 324-334.

33 Homer *Odyssey* Book 12 Lines 324-334. (MURRAY 1924).

34 Homer. *Odyssey*. Book 12 Lines 352-363.

35 Homer. *Odyssey*. Book 12 Lines 352-363.

36 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 44.

37 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 44.

38 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 44.

39 See below pp. 13-14.

40 GEORGIADOU/LAMOUR 1998, 166.

41 Xenophon *HG* 4,8,37-39.

42 VON MÖLLENDORF 2000, 251.

43 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I.1.

the noble swineherd, and Laertes, Odysseus' father."⁴⁴

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

ὡς ἐφάμην, τοῖσιν δ' ἐπεπειθετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ. οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδ' ἔνθεν περ ἀπήμονας ἦγον ἐταίρους. Ἐλπήνωρ δέ τις ἔσκε νεώτατος, οὔτε τι λίην ἄλκιμος ἐν πολέμῳ οὔτε φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἀρηρῶς: ὅς μοι ἄνευθ' ἐτάρων ἱεροῖς ἐν δώμασι Κίρκης, ψύχεος ἰμείρων, κατελέξατο οἰνοβαρείων. κινυμένων δ' ἐτάρων ὄμαδον καὶ δοῦπον ἀκούσας ἐξαπίνης ἀνόρουσε καὶ ἐκλάθετο φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἄψορρον καταβῆναι ἰὼν ἐς κλίμακα μακρὴν, ἀλλὰ καταντικρὺ τέγεος πέσεν: ἐκ δέ οἱ αὐχὴν ἀστραγάλων ἔαγει, ψυχὴ δ' Ἄϊδόσδε κατῆλθεν.⁴⁵

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

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

Rather than in a one-on-one emulation, Lucian creates his parody on two levels:

1. In the position of the two scenes in their respective narratives. During their stay on the Island of the Blessed, one of the crewmen becomes enamored of Helen, and they decide to escape with a few confederates. Their plan fails, however, and they are caught: οἱ δὲ ὑπὸ προθυμίας ἐλαύνοντες περὶ μεσημβρίαν καταλαμβάνουσιν αὐτοὺς ἄρτι ἐς τὸν γαλακτώδη τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ τόπον ἐμβαίνοντας πλησίον τῆς Τυροέσσης: παρὰ τοσοῦτον ἦλθον διαδρᾶναι [They, driving on with great speed, captured them around noon, just entering the milk ocean near Tyroessa; so close they came to escaping].⁴⁷ By making the Island of Cheese the point beyond which the denizens of the Underworld cannot pass, except apparently Helen, Lucian sets up the Sea of Milk, like the River Styx,

44 GEORGIADOU/LAMOUR 1998, 166.

45 Homer *Odyssey* X: 551-560. (Murray, A.T. (trans.) *Odyssey*. Book 10 lines 550-560.).

46 Homer *Odyssey* X: 551-560. (MURRAY 1924).

47 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 26.

the border of the Underworld, as both a barrier and a conduit. Using this conduit, Lucian and his men undergo a *katabasis*. The pilot's death occurs in the belly of the sea monster, which comes shortly before this *katabasis* in the narrative, even if temporally relatively far removed from it. In the Odyssey too, Elpenor's death occurs shortly before their *katabasis*, so shortly, in fact, that when Odysseus and his men see his ghost in the Underworld, they were surprised:

πρώτη δὲ ψυχὴ Ἐλπήνωρος ἦλθεν ἐταίρου: οὐ γὰρ πω ἐτέθαπτο ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης: σῶμα γὰρ ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς ἄκλαυτον καὶ ἄθαπτον, ἐπεὶ πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγε. τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ δάκρυσσα ἰδὼν ἐλέησά τε θυμῷ, καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδων. Ἐλπήνωρ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα; ἔφθης πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ.⁴⁸

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

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

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

48 Homer *Odyssey* Book 11: 51-56.

49 Homer *Odyssey* Book 11: 51-56. (MURRAY 1924).

50 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 39.

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

LUCIAN AND ODYSSEUS

Despite saying in the prologue⁵¹ that he will not name those to whom he is alluding, complimenting the knowledge of his audience by saying that they will know to whom he is referring, the reader is still presented by a list of authors/liars to whom he alludes. This opening invites readers to engage in "literary archaeology,"⁵² to search for the possible origins for the various episodes and satires offered in the text. Problematic is, however, that Lucian admits to lying about everything he is writing: *κἄν ἔν γάρ δὴ τοῦτο ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι* [For in one thing only do I tell the truth, that I will lie].⁵³ By creating this uncertainty Lucian is able to work on two levels. He both encourages his audience to search for these sources of inspiration and "...exposes the fallacy of the very idea of origins, and explores the dangers inherent in the cultural privileging of origins through intentionalist readings..., literary *mimēsis*, and the supremacy of origin-related criteria such as the author and authenticity in literary and textual criticism."⁵⁴ Paradoxically, then, very search for this literary *mimēsis*, for a greater understanding of the text, allows the author to create an ambiguity, not only in the purpose of the text, but in the person of the author.⁵⁵ This ambiguity is reinforced by the absence of the author's name, which the reader does not know until the underworld scene (V.H. II. 28).⁵⁶ This ambiguity creates a vacuum in the mind of the reader, which is filled with those very authors he has no need to tell his audience about: Ctesias of Cnidos, Iambulus and Homer.⁵⁷

Chief among these, and therefore first in the mind of the reader, is Homer, or rather, Homer's Odysseus, further blurring the line of author and text:⁵⁸ *ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας ὁ τοῦ Ὀμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς* [Chief among them and the teacher of such foolishness was Homer's Odysseus].⁵⁹ This setup removes the charge of falsehood one step further from Lucian the narrator: "the charge of deception is transferred from the

poet to his character: Homer's Odysseus – not Homer himself – is named as the instructor to all subsequent literary liars. This splitting of author from character is programmatic for the *Verae Historiae*, where Lucian the author professes no intention to deceive his readers, while Lucian the Odyssean character-narrator lies with abandon."⁶⁰ Although Lucian connects himself with Odysseus in the mind of the reader, he immediately sets himself up as Odysseus' moral superior, both as author and as "character-narrator." Although Lucian the author, like Odysseus, lies throughout his work, he at least told the truth this once, and while the lies, like those of Homer, transfer to the character, this Lucian too is sure of himself: *ἐν οἷς καὶ Κτησίας ὁ Κνίδιος ἦν καὶ Ἡρόδοτος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί. τούτους οὖν ὄρων ἐγὼ χρηστάς εἶχον εἰς τοῦπιὸν τὰς ἐλπίδας· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῶ ψεύδος εἰπόντι συνηπιστάμην* [In which were Ctesias of Cnidos and Herodotus and many others. Seeing them I had great hope for the future, for I am not aware of any lie that I have told.].⁶¹ Interesting is that Odysseus, the greatest liar, is on the Island of the Blessed⁶² while these lesser liars are being punished on the Island of the Damned. Odysseus, however, is not happy on the Island of the Blessed, and wishes to escape and go be with Calypso, a message he has Lucian bring for him,⁶³ despite his physical location he is punished for his lies, while Lucian is able to both leave the island, what Odysseus longs to do, and enjoy further adventure and return to the island for eternal happiness when he does die.⁶⁴

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

51 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 1.

52 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2009, 13.

53 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 4.

54 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2009, 11.

55 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 84-85.

56 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 84-85.

57 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 85-86.

58 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 87.

59 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 3.

60 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2010, 87.

61 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 31.

62 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 22.

63 Lucina *Verae Historiae* II. 29.

64 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 27.

65 The importance of narrative space in the *Verae Historiae*, especially its implications in the dichotomy of lies and truth in the text is discussed in MOSSMAN 2009.

66 MOSSMAN 2009, 49.

67 MOSSMAN 2009, 49.

68 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 2.

69 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 2.

70 NI-MHEALLAIGH 2014, 207.

geography and narrative⁷¹ becomes especially important in the Odysseus-Lucian relationship in the description Lucian gives of his voyage: Ὀρμηθεὶς γάρ ποτε ἀπὸ Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν καὶ ἀφείς εἰς τὸν ἐσπέριον ὠκεανὸν οὐρίῳ ἀνέμῳ τὸν πλοῦν ἐποιούμην [Having set forth beyond the pillars of Herakles and making for the western ocean, we started our voyage with a good following wind.].⁷² By underscoring that his voyage starts out by sailing beyond the pillars of Herakles, Lucian immediately elevates his own voyage over that of Odysseus, he has sailed further, even beyond where those greatest of travelers, Dionysus and Herakles have voyaged,⁷³ in more unknown waters, putting to shame the voyage of Odysseus, who gets so lost in the Mediterranean!

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

Of these numerous scenes in the *Verae Historiae* in

71 MOSSMAN 2009, pg. 47.

72 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 5.

73 Lucian *Verae Historiae* I. 7.

74 Several such allusions, the Island of the Cowheads to the cattle of Helios, for example, as well as the battle against the fish people in the belly of the sea monster and its connection to the slaughter of the suitors after Odysseus' return to Ithaca. For other such allusions please see VON MÖLLENDORF 2000 and GEORGIADOU/LAMOUR 1998.

75 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 23.

76 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 24.

77 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 24.

78 Homer *Odyssey* I: 1.

79 Lucian *Verae Historiae* II. 24.

80 See above pg. 14.

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

νῦν δέ σε τῶν ὀπιθεν γουνάζομαι, οὐ παρεόντων, πρὸς τ' ἀλόχου καὶ πατρός, ὃ σ' ἔτρεφε τυτθὸν ἐόντα, Τηλεμάχου θ', ὃν μούνον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔλειπες; οἶδα γὰρ ὡς ἐνθ' ἐνδε κιῶν δόμου ἐξ Αἴδαο νῆσον ἐς Αἰαίην σχήσεις ἐυεργέα νῆα: ἔνθα σ' ἔπειτα, ἄναξ, κέλομαι μνήσασθαι ἐμεῖο. μή μ' ἄκλαυτον ἄθαπτον ἰὼν ὀπιθεν καταλείπειν νοσφισθεῖς, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι, ἀλλά με κακκῆαι σὺν τεύχεσιν, ἄσσα μοι ἔστιν, σῆμά τέ μοι χεῦαι πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης, ἀνδρὸς δυστήνοιο καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι. ταῦτά τέ μοι τελέσαι πῆξαι τ' ἐπὶ τύμβῳ ἔρετμόν, τῷ καὶ ζωὸς ἔρρεσσον ἐὼν μετ' ἐμοῖς ἐτάροισιν.⁸¹

[“Now I beseech thee by those whom we left behind, who are not present with us, by thy wife and thy father who reared thee when a babe, and by Telemachus whom thou didst leave an only son in thy halls; for I know that as thou goest hence from the house of Hades thou wilt touch at the Aeaean isle with thy well-built ship. There, then, O prince, I bid thee remember me. Leave me not behind thee unwept and unburied as thou goest thence, and turn not away from me, lest haply I bring the wrath of the gods upon thee. Nay, burn me with my armour, all that is mine, and heap up a mound for me on the shore of the grey sea, in memory of an unhappy man, that men yet to be may learn of me. Fulfil this my prayer, and fix upon the mound my oar wherewith I rowed in life when I was among my comrades.”]⁸²

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

81 Homer *Odyssey* 11. 66-78.

82 Homer *Odyssey* 11. 66-78. (MURRAY 1924).

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