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Karen Ní Mheallaigh
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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

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[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).

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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

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[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.

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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

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[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.

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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 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]

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[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.

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'

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[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, παρά 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 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.

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[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.

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

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[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.

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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

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[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.'

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(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

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[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.

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[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.