

Lucian's *True Stories*: Paradoxography and False Discourse

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In *Prometheus es* Lucian tells us that Ptolemy Philadelphus brought two novelities (καινά) to Egypt and displayed them in the theater: a black Bactrian camel and a two-colored man (4). They were meant to be the apex of the show, after the display of many other, probably milder, *paradoxa*. Ptolemy intended to amaze the public (ἐκπλήξειν), but the reception, Lucian says, was rather disappointing: the spectators were frightened at the sight of the camel, while the strange man was either laughed at or abhorred like a monster (ὥς ἐπὶ τέρατι). Seeing that through this novel display he gained neither popularity nor admiration, Ptolemy allegedly distanced himself entirely from his *paradoxa*.

This anecdote, although rooted in the Hellenistic tradition, is obviously not an accurate account of the birth and development of the culture of *paradoxa* and of paradoxography. We have far more reliable sources for the king's interest both in live marvels and in paradoxographical literature.¹ Lucian uses it as a mere illustration of his own cultural anxieties. The Egyptians' alleged reactions, either laughter or fright and flight, exemplify the audience's potential rejection of his literary novelty, contrary to Lucian's expectation of a positive form of ἐκπληξις (*astonishment*) as source of good fame and admiration.

Lucian presents here two different types of reception corresponding to two different aesthetic experiences of his text: a lower, superficial form of reception, a cognitive shock resulting in either complete rejection or a base form of enter-

¹ Ptolemy Philadelphus supported expeditions for hunting elephants and other strange beasts that were the object of public display (Agatharch. F 1 Burstein = Phot. *Bibl.* 250. 441b, F 80 Burstein = Diod. Sic. 3.36-37, Str. 17.1-5). At the Great Procession animals both familiar and strange were displayed (Callixenus of Rhodes, *FGrH* 627 F2 = Athen. 5.31-32). It is also possible that both Archelaus and Philostephanus flourished at his court. Schepens makes a good case for the propagandistic use of *paradoxa* by the first Ptolemaic kings (1996, 404-407).

tainment, and a higher, sophisticated form of reception, an aesthetic experience that sublimates the shock of novelty – be it of subject matter or of generic mixture – from bewilderment to aesthetic enthrallment.² While in Lucian's case *paradoxon* is the literary product itself in its novelty, in Ptolemy's Hellenistic world, the cradle of paradoxography, marvels were the object of both visual and literary display. Paradoxography was, therefore, a softer and more elevated alternative to the crude and popular visual spectacle. It nevertheless counted on *ekplexis*, although in a milder form, as intellectual experience. It is this *ekplexis* that Lucian claims to revive and sublimate to an even more sophisticated form of enthrallment.

The fascination of the Greeks with marvels reflects their perspective on the unknown, on the otherness expected to be the unexpected. Θαύματα or παράδοξα proliferate in many literary genres. Fundamentally didactic, therefore true, discourse combines instruction (διδασκαλία) with enthrallment (ψυχαγωγία). The latter comes, among other things, from *poikilia* – often entertaining digressions on myths and marvels, if we are only to consider the classical example of Herodotus. Yet some authors, including most paradoxographers, exploit only the shock of novelty and marvel. Even Strabo, the harsh critic of those historians who indulge too much in this latter ingredient, acknowledges the efficiency of using myths for didactic purposes on the grounds of their novelty (καινολογία), 'because what is novel (τὸ καινόν) is pleasant (ἡδύ)'.³

Paradoxography exploits specifically this effect of using novelty per se. Initially designed as both instructional and entertaining discourse, it partly expropriates, later, the forms and functions of historiography.⁴ Yet, unlike proper didactic discourse, it takes a new turn in its manner of blending instruction and enthrallment. Besides satisfying an appetite for learning, or rather pseudo-learning, reading paradoxography produces pleasure not so much through style, which is often wanting, but mostly through the shock of mere novelty, of marvel.⁵ For 'Longinus' *ekplexis* is the effect of the sublime, of a wonderful style (θαυμάσιον).⁶ In paradoxographical terms, the wonderful (θαυμάσιον, παράδοξον) produces astonishment that results in a more primitive pleasure than the aesthetic one. The process of instruction suffers when the reader/consumer of *paradoxa*, under the manipulation of the paradoxographer, gradually surren-

² This is a recurrent theme in Lucian's *prolaliai*, especially *Zeuxis* and *Dionysus*; cf. *De domo*.

³ Strab. 1,2,8. Cf. his criticism of *paradoxa*-writers (15,1,28; 2,1,9; 5,4,9).

⁴ Jacob 1983, 135-136; Schepens 1996, 407-408; Gabba 1983, 14-15.

⁵ Schepens 1996, 399; Jacob 1983, 135. Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1460a17: τὸ δὲ θαυμαστὸν ἡδύ.

⁶ Ps.-Long. 1,4,2-5.

ders his critical sense and succumbs to the pleasure of marvels, shocking but pleasant lies.

*Mimesis and mimics of paradoxo-graphy*⁷

In *True Stories*, Lucian draws heavily on the paradoxographical tradition, not just on paradoxography per se, but mostly on the insertion of *paradoxa* in other literary genres, chiefly historiography, ethnography, utopia, and travel stories that fundamentally claim, or just pretend, to be true discourse.⁸ Acknowledging a long paradoxographical tradition (πολλὰ τεράστια καὶ μυθώδη, 1,2), starting with Odysseus, 'the originator and the teacher of this sort of coarse jesting' (ἀρχηγὸς...καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας, 1,3), in *True Stories* Lucian mimics the discourse of the paradoxo-grapher, his methods, style, motifs, and mannerisms.

The stated **purpose** of these *True Stories* is to bring relaxation from more serious readings, yet to offer not just pleasure, but also the occasion for thought and meditation. The goal, therefore, is to mix entertainment with the exercise of the mind, just as initially paradoxography was conceived. Lucian claims his work is seductive not only due to novelty of subject, pleasantry of thought, and the variety of lies, i.e. *paradoxa*. Its seduction comes also from comic allusions to and implicit criticism of those authors who claim their discourse interwoven with *paradoxa* is truthful. Whereas we sense Lucian's criticism of the practices of the paradoxo-grapher, we also need to retain the argument that his discourse provides both mental exercise and seduction through novelty (i.e. *paradoxon*) and *poikilia* (ψεύσματα ποικίλα), two essential features of the paradoxo-grapher's discourse (1,1-2). Moreover, the concept of relaxation from more serious literary studies fits the status of second degree literature, of consumption literature, that paradoxography comes to acquire. Even closer to the paradoxo-grapher's motivation and purpose are the reasons and goal of the journey (αἰτία...καὶ ὑπόθεσις), presumably shared by his audience: a curious disposition (ἡ τῆς διανοίας περιεργία), a passion for novelty (πραγμάτων καινῶν ἐπιθυμία), and the desire to learn about the distant otherness (πέραν, 1,5). While the paradoxo-grapher proper performs an imaginary journey through books and then, by compiling information, facilitates for his reader a similar, yet less laborious journey, paradoxo-graphers like Ctesias, Iambulus, and Herodotus travel them-

⁷ The hyphenated forms 'paradoxo-graphy' and 'paradoxo-grapher' will be used as comprehensive terms, referring to the wider literary practice of writing on *paradoxa*.

⁸ Cf. Fusillo 1999, 353.

selves, or at least claim to, in order to satisfy both their own and their reader's curiosity. Lucian mimics the latter's enterprise – the travel, but ends up doing somehow just as the former: his is an imaginary, therefore wholly fictitious, journey.

The **vocabulary** in *True Stories* is suggestively sprinkled with terms suited for a paradoxo-grapher: **παράδοξον, θαῦμα, τεράστιον, καινόν, ξένον**, and their derivatives. The **subject matter** (ὕποθεσις) consists in overabundant paradoxographical material, or rather pseudo-paradoxographical, since, contrary to the paradoxo-grapher's practice, Lucian labels it as mere lie in his prologue (1,4). In the very first episode of *True Stories*, Lucian sets the tone by mentioning a stele, recording the visit of Heracles and Dionysus on the island, and also the huge footprints of the two. This alludes, of course, to a landmark of Herodotean paradoxo-graphy: the huge footprint of Heracles found in Scythia.⁹

Lucian summarizes the subject matters of paradoxo-graphy – reduced here to travel story (συνέγραψαν ὥς δὴ τινες ἑαυτῶν πλάνας τε καὶ ἀποδημίας, 1,3) – as natural *paradoxa*, (of both animal and human *physis*) and exotic *paradoxa* (of *nomos*): beasts of huge size, savage people, and novel, strange ways of life (βίων καινότητος, 1,3).¹⁰ They constitute also the main fabric of Lucian's own narrative of a journey prompted by curiosity for novelty (πραγμάτων καινῶν ἐπιθυμία, 1,5). While huge beasts and strange people populate both the lunar and the marine world of *True Stories*, Lucian mimics also the pseudo-ethnographic discourse with his fictitious *paradoxa* of *nomos*: the novel and strange way of life on the moon (καινὰ καὶ παράδοξα, 1,22-25), or the phallonauts' extraordinary fashion of sailing (καινῶ τῷ τρόπῳ, 2,45).

However, motives especially dear to the paradoxographer proper are particularly embedded in his travel story. While I shall not attempt a comprehensive survey of possible sources, which would take the space and time of a whole study by itself, but rather try to highlight the rich and diverse paradoxographical atmosphere that Lucian creates in *True Stories*, I will exemplify it with *paradoxa* on waters, predominant by far in the paradoxographical corpus.¹¹

Early paradoxographers manifest a predilection for wonders related to waters. Water is symbolically essential for *True Stories* both as the vehicle for exploration of new and remote worlds and as the element that provides many instances of marvels. On their first stop the travelers find a river of wine with

⁹ Hdt. 482. Cf. *Mir. ausc.* 97,2 on the footprints of Heracles in Pandosia and Iapygia.

¹⁰ Cf. Giannini 1963, 249-250.

¹¹ Comprehensive, yet not exhaustive information can be found in Georgiadou & Larmour 1998. Since they point out mostly passages from literature other than paradoxography proper, I will limit my references almost exclusively to the latter.

sources in springs of wine. The fish from the river resemble wine in color and taste. They are full of lees and induce inebriation; therefore they need to be mixed with fish from water (1,5-7). This is a paradoxical mixture, of fish from different sources instead of the liquids themselves, reflected also in the paradoxical compound: wine-eating (οἰνοφαγία, 1,7).¹² There are many references to the mixture of water and wine in the paradoxographical corpus. There are reports on a spring consecrated to Isis that provides a spontaneous and pleasant mixture of water and wine whenever a cup of wine is dipped into it (*Antig.* 149; *Par.Flor.* 18). There are references to waters that disagreeably alter the taste of wine (*Par.Flor.* 14), or that even make those who drink from them hate wine (*Par.Flor.* 12, 13, 24; *Par.Pal.* 5). Some waters have inebriating properties (*Antig.* 164; *Pal.Flor.* 20; *Pal.Vat.* 12, 22) or produce effects usually associated with inebriation: some induce madness (*Antig.* 145; *Par.Flor.* 1), some make people confess to things done in secrecy (*Par.Flor.* 17), some cure lovesickness (*Par.Vat.* 37), others cause a sudden and lasting erection (*Apollon.* 14), to which the phallo-nauts episode might allude (2,45).¹³

The journey to the moon is occasioned by a storm that causes the sea waters to spring up into the air and carry the ship on high (1,9). On one occasion the travelers reach a steep precipice that cuts the sea in two and they have to cross it by sailing through a bridge of water high above it (2,43). There are paradoxographical reports on surging waters. A river in Liguria raises its waters so high that it makes the other bank impossible to see (*Mir.ausc.* 92). A spring in Sicily launches its waters high up in the air (*Mir.ausc.* 57; *Par.Flor.* 8). And in the middle of a lake in Sicily the waters spring up sometimes cold, sometimes warm (*Antig.* 154). The opposite is also reported: a Sicilian river, scared by the thunder, hides beneath the earth and then comes up again (*Par.Vat.* 20). Related to the topic of rising waters are also the reports on sea tides (*Antig.* 125; *Mir.ausc.* 55, 136) or those on waters that violently throw out and back on land those swimming or bathing in them (*Philosteph.* F8; *Mir.ausc.* 112; *Par.Flor.* 3, 30).

¹² Cf. *Apollon.* 43: Theophrastus reports that the seeds of pomegranates in Egypt have the taste of wine.

¹³ Other paradoxical effects of waters are healings (*Antig.* 138, 142, 150; *Mir.ausc.* 117, 130; *Par.Flor.* 9), change in color of hair for people, or animals, or their offspring (*Antig.* 78, 134; *Nymph.* F4; *Isig.* F14; *Sot.* F2; *Mir.ausc.* 169, 170; *Par.Vat.* 10; *Par.Flor.* 1, 19; *Par.Pal.* 13, 15), sickness (*Mir.ausc.* 152; *Par.Vat.* 18), loss of hair, toenails, or teeth (*Par.Flor.* 21, 26), ability to prophesy (*Par.Vat.* 30), lack of senses (*Par.Flor.* 25; *Par.Vat.* 33), petrification (*Mir.ausc.* 95b), death (*Antig.* 141, 152a; *Par.Flor.* 15, 16, 22; *Par.Vat.* 13, 38), proving of adulteries and false oaths (*Polem.* F2; *Mir.ausc.* 57, 152; *Par.Vat.* 16, 17), etc.

While inside the whale, looking out through the open mouth of the monster the travelers witness a sea battle between huge men sailing on floating islands instead of ships (1,40-42). After escaping from the whale, they come across cork-footed men running on water to their city built on cork (2,4-5). *Paradoxographus Florentinus* gives three consecutive accounts on floating islands that change their place when pushed by the winds (37, 38, 39).

In the next episode, our travelers reach a sea frozen by the north wind (2,2). Aside from numerous paradoxographical reports on the mixture of warm and cold waters, there is a mention of rivers that freeze in winter (*Mir. ausc.* 168). A lake in Liguria turns into solid earth and its water vanishes from sight when strong winds stir up the dust from its bottom; thus the locals take out the fish by breaking through the solidified lake with tridents (*Mir. ausc.* 89), just as our travelers get their fish by digging into the frozen sea.¹⁴

Towards the end of the journey, our travelers fight pirates riding on huge dolphins that neigh like horses (2,39). Later on, they meet harmless people who sail sitting on corks drawn by dolphins (2,45). Lucian mentions somewhere else the transformation of pirates into dolphins by Dionysus as the *aition* for the benign character of these sea creatures towards men, with particular reference to the story of Arion.¹⁵ Myrsilus of Methymna, who wrote a collection of historical *paradoxa*, mentions the similar story of Enalus (F6).¹⁶ Antigonus dedicates a passage to the mildness of dolphins, the tamest of sea creatures, especially towards their own offspring and kin (55).

The episode of the wine-fish on the island beyond the Pillars of Heracles (1,7) resonates with a paradoxographical account on the extreme abundance, exquisite quality, and great size of tunny fish that the Phoenicians brought from the same region (*Mir. ausc.* 136). Antigonus (71) and *Paradoxographus Vaticanus* (6) coincide in their report on the lack of esophagus in fish: a bigger fish, when chasing a smaller one, pushes its belly close to its mouth. Lucian's account of the ship and travelers being swallowed by the whale echoes the paradoxographical description: the monster approaches gaping and showing its teeth; when it swallows the travelers, they slip unharmed through its teeth, directly into the belly; once inside they look around and discover a wide hollow, large enough for a big city, where they end up living for a while (1,30-31).

¹⁴ On mixture of cold and warm waters see Antig. 133, 148, 154; *Par. Flor.* 11. Cf. reports on boiling waters, or waters that emit warm vapors or flames (Antig. 130, 133, 139.3, 143, 159, 160; *Mir. ausc.* 114, 152; *Par. Pal.* 9), or on a mixture of sweet and salty waters (Antig. 129.2; 133).

¹⁵ Luc. *Dial. mar.* 5. Cf. *H. Hym. Dion.*; Hdt. 1,23.

¹⁶ Hyg. *Ast.* 2,17.

There is also a paradoxographical report on whales having milk, information for which Antigonus mentions Aristotle's authority (Antig. 22,2). In *True Stories* water and milk are interconnected: the travelers cross a sea of milk (πέλαγος...γάλακτος), then they land on an island of cheese (νήσος...τυρός) where milk-vines grow (ἄμπελοι...πλήρεις...γάλα) and where there is a temple dedicated – of course – to Galatea, and they eat the cheese-soil itself (2,3). Nicholaus of Damascus mentions a Scythian tribe of *galactophagoi* among whom Anacharsis, a character dear to Lucian, was born.¹⁷ Two parallel paradoxographical accounts connect goat milk with the sea: some goats born in Thrace do not drink water for six months, while they only look towards the sea and take in the sea breezes through their open mouth (Alex. F2); the goats on Cephallenia do the same thing always (*Mir. ausc.* 9).¹⁸ An even stranger case is that of goats that breathe through their ears (Archel. F1). While these animals satisfy their needs in unexpected ways, Lucian's men on the moon have a strange way of satisfying both their thirst and hunger: they drink air from which they squeeze some sort of dew and they eat by sniffing the smoke of roasted frogs (1,23).¹⁹ Since their elderly do not die but turn into air, by drinking air they practice, in fact, a sort of anthropophagy, or rather anthropo-*posis* (1,23).²⁰ The paradoxographical corpus contains references to anthropophagy, especially among the Scythians (Isig. F15; *Par. Vat.* 47 and 61). Another custom of the moon men, the eating of cheese made of their own sweat-milk and mucus-honey (1,24), can be connected with the paradoxographical story on people who pluck flowers and make honey themselves, just as good as the honey produced by bees (Apollon. 38).²¹

While the sea in *True Stories* can paradoxically provide milk and cheese, the springs and rivers on the Isle of the Blessed run with myrrh, honey, milk, and wine (2,11; 2,13). Likewise, there are in the paradoxographical corpus numerous accounts of rich waters that provide, aside from wine, gold (*Mir. ausc.* 46), oil (Antig. 139, 150; *Mir. ausc.* 113,2; *Par. Flor.* 5), salt (Antig. 143, 157; *Mir. ausc.* 138,1; *Par. Pal.* 12,2), or vinegar (Antig. 139). Other waters, although not running with oil, have nevertheless the same anointing effect (*Par. Flor.* 23; *Par. Pal.* 9, 16). Lucian's description of the Isle of the Blessed, with the richness of its waters and the delightful fragrance of its air (2,5) echoes the pseudo-

¹⁷ Cf. Luc. *Anach.*, *Scyth.*

¹⁸ Cf. Antig. 128b: the goats on Zacynthus, another Ionian island, during the etesian winds turn their open mouth in the direction of Boreas and thus do not need to drink water.

¹⁹ Apollonius quotes Aristotle on the story of Andron, an Argive man, who never felt thirst and never drank water (25).

²⁰ Cf. *Par. Vat.* 59: in Liguria the useless elderly are thrown down into a precipice.

²¹ See *Mir. ausc.* 22,1 on the use of honey to produce something different, in this case wine.

Aristotelian description of Uranius, a mountain in northern Africa with a spring of fragrant oil and flowers that charm the travelers with their perfume (*Mir. ausc.* 113).

The interior of the whale is a paradoxical combination of sea bottom and land. Inside, the travelers discover, besides fish and wreckage traces (ships, human remains, anchors, and cargoes), a whole terrestrial world: an island with trees, a vegetable garden, sea birds, a temple of Poseidon, graves, a spring with sweet water, the house of Scintharus, etc. (1,31-33). Somewhere else a large, thick, rootless forest grows on the sea (2,42). Megasthenes describes trees growing in the Indian sea (Antig. 132). There are also paradoxographical reports on submerged worlds: foundations, temples, statues, and other signs of sunken cities could be seen on the bottom of two Italian lakes (*Par. Flor.* 41); splendid dinner tables, silver, gold, and other signs of royal opulence could be seen on the bottom of a lake in Macedonia (*Par. Flor.* 42).

In addition to destructive or regenerative effects of waters mentioned earlier,²² the paradoxographical corpus contains also references to resurrection of dead creatures or physical restoration of objects. Choked birds and animals are brought back to life when immersed in a Cilician lake (*Mir. ausc.* 29; *Par. Flor.* 6). Besides healing the wounds and bruises of both men and yoke-cattle, a little Thessalian spring is able to restore into a pristine condition a broken piece of wood, as long as it has not been completely split (*Mir. ausc.* 117). In one of the last episodes of *True Stories* Lucian introduces a sequence of similar marvels (τέρατα μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά): the wooden goose on the stern post claps its wings and shouts, bald Scintharus suddenly has long hair, and the ship's mast grows branches and fruits (2,41).²³

However suggestive, Lucian does not mimic just the vocabulary and topics of paradoxo-graphy, but also the paradoxo-grapher's **methods** used to emphasize the truthfulness of his discourse. Paradoxographers confer credibility on their works by acknowledging their sources and by applying some rudimentary **critical judgment** on them. Positive criticism, thus trustworthiness, is given to sources whose authority comes from competence, experience, and autopsy. Negative criticism, i.e. lack of credibility, is given to sources whose authority is traditionally discredited, usually because of lack of autopsy. Such accounts are branded as ἄπιστα, τερατώδη, or simply ψεύδη, yet nevertheless mentioned,

²² See n. 12.

²³ See Georgiadou & Larmour 1998, 225 for details on the obvious literary allusions in this passage as well as their observation that 'Scintharus' sudden sprouting of hair may signify the return to the world of the living'. Cf. *Dial. mort.* 6,4, where Menippus observes that all the dead around him are bald.

even if very briefly. The epitome of this is the infamous case of Ctesias, criticized even by Antigonos, a paradoxographer, for his fabulous lies (15,3b) and discredited by Lucian for lacking autopsy (1,3).²⁴

Within the frame of the travel story 'Lucian', the traveler and storyteller, plays with these practices. He emphasizes **autopsy** throughout the entire narrative. When he does not experience himself some marvels, 'Lucian' avoids mentioning them because they would seem incredible. Thus, he omits details on sparrow- or ostrich-acorns and horse-vultures because what he hears about them seems unbelievable (τεράστια γὰρ καὶ ἄπιστα περὶ αὐτῶν ἐλέγετο, 1,13). Even when autopsy would allegedly entitle him to mention some marvels, he would avoid it, as in the case of the huge number of cloud-centaurs, lest it seem incredible (μὴ τῷ καὶ ἄπιστον δόξῃ, 1,18).

There are variations on this practice. One is to simulate hesitation to mention an autoptic marvel that – as the storyteller himself would admit – seems unbelievable, yet to eventually mention it nonetheless. Thus, he hesitates to talk about the removable eyes of the moon-men (ὀκνῶ μὲν εἰπεῖν) lest he be considered a liar, given the incredibility of the *paradoxon* (μὴ τίς με νομίσῃ ψεύδεσθαι διὰ τὸ ἄπιστον τοῦ λόγου, 1,25). However, after short consideration, he chooses to do it (ὁμῶς δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἐρῶ). Elsewhere, the storyteller describes without reluctance *paradoxa* that, although allegedly sanctioned by autopsy, he acknowledges the audience would find incredible, as in the case of the floating islands (οἶδα μὲν οὖν ἀπίστοις εἰκότα ἱστορήσων, λέξω δὲ ὁμῶς, 1,40), or the mirror on the moon. In the latter case, we see a further (pseudo-) argument for credibility, the future autopsy of the incredulous receptor: whoever does not trust his account (ὅστις δὲ ταῦτα μὴ πιστεύει) would certainly do so (εἴσεται ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγω) whenever he would go to the moon and see the marvel himself (ἂν ποτε καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκεῖσε ἀφίκηται, 1.26).²⁵ This argument is as improbable as a trip to the moon. Another pseudo-argument from autopsy and competence is the one invoked for the report that comet-people, unlike moon-people, consider long hair to be beautiful (a pun on κομήτης): this is the account of comet-people themselves who happen to visit the moon at the same time as our storyteller and on whose existence 'Lucian' is the sole source (1,23).

Then, there are the pseudo-**documents** of the travel: the gifts from Endymion, which would document the trip to the moon, are left inside the whale (1,27), 'Lucian' loses on his journey back the new epic poem that Homer composes on the Isle of the Blessed (2,24), the epigram on the presence of 'Lucian' on the Isle of the Blessed is inscribed and set in that inaccessible realm (2,28), and the

²⁴ Schepens 1996, 382-389; Jacob 1983, 132-133.

²⁵ Cf. Sciolla 1988, 59.

letter written by Odysseus is handed to Calypso (2,35) (although the storyteller claims to let us peek generously at its intimate content, 2,29). ‘Lucian’ also takes on an impossible mission when he uses his alleged autopsy to attempt to prove a comic poet truthful: the trip to the Cloud-cuckoo-town is an occasion to prove, against all odds, the existence of Aristophanes’ bird city (1,29). The same method is applied in the case of Homer to prove the existence of a city of Dreams (2,32-34), although a ludic twist is added by trying to correct Homer’s report, and in the case of Antimachus, whose verse on ‘sailing through the forest’ is proved by our travelers’ experience to reflect a reality.²⁶

The paradoxographer proper would hardly attempt to rationalize *paradoxa*, since marvel itself is his material and a marveling audience his target. At best, myths could serve to explain marvels, quite the opposite of what mythographers like Palaephatus or Heraclitus do. On the other hand, the paradoxo-grapher would try better to incorporate *paradoxa* into avowed true discourse that targets a reasoning audience, through a feeble attempt to explain them rationally. This explanation can simply take the guise of a mythological cause, such as Ctesias uses to explain the appearance of Derceto, the goddess mother of Semiramis, who has the body of a fish and a woman’s face, if indeed he is the source for the local reports in Diodorus.²⁷ The rationalizing attempt is sometimes reduced to the mere wondering about causes, nevertheless failing to produce them, as we see in Herodotus’ inability (θωμάζω δὲ τὸ αἴτιον) to explain why the lions ate only the camels, animals unknown to them, and did not touch the yoke-cattle and the men of Xerxes’ army.²⁸ The same Herodotus fails to explain (θωμάζω) the causes of a strange phenomenon, the impossibility to breed mules in Elis, and thus reduces them to local reports of a curse.²⁹ Yet elsewhere he filters a θῶμα through more consistent reasoning, although still failing to be persuasive: among the bones scattered on a former battlefield in Egypt, the skulls of the Egyptians are considerably stronger than those of the Persians because the Egyptians use to shave their heads and thus their bones become thicker and stronger by being exposed to the sun.³⁰

Lucian mimics such attempts in his *True Stories*. The storyteller simulates efforts to search for causes and rationalize *paradoxa*. He invokes a fabulous explanation for the existence of the island inside the whale: it was formed of the mud the monster must have swallowed (1,31); or a mythical one for the river of

²⁶ For more on ‘concretization of metaphors and myths’ see Fusillo 1999, 372-374.

²⁷ *FGrH* 688 F1b.83-116 (ap. Diod. 2,4,2-3).

²⁸ Hdt. 7,125.

²⁹ Hdt. 4,30.

³⁰ Hdt. 3,12.

wine: the presence of Dionysus on the island (1,7). In a playful twist on this practice, 'Lucian' attempts to explain the obvious through the complicated concoction of a *paradoxon*: hailstones falling on earth are the grapes of water-vines on the moon shaken by winds (1,24). Such a paradoxical explanation may even get an etymological flavor: the origin of the Greek compound γαστροκνημία (*calf of the leg*, literally *belly of the leg*) lies in the moon-men's practice of conceiving and carrying their children in their calves (1,22). And the Greek name of Homer (Ὅμηρος) is explained by 'revealing' a popular etymology to which details heard from the man himself are added: the Babylonian Tigranes changed his name after falling hostage (ὄμηρος) among the Greeks (2,20).

True Stories through the κάτοπτρον of the prologue

The obviously exaggerated accumulation of *paradoxa* and the noticeable twists of the paradoxo-grapher's style are all clues that these 'true stories' rooted in the paradoxographical tradition fall deliberately short of an authentic paradoxographical discourse.³¹ In articulating the prefatory statements on the stories themselves, Lucian names Odysseus as the founder of this type of discourse (1,3). As the character paradoxically becomes author, this 'phenomenological slippage'³² hints that Lucian's *True Stories* are to be read more through the lens of myth and fiction, rather than that of truth. Moreover, none of the persistent attempts to emphasize the truthfulness and the legitimacy based on autopsy stand, since the prologue states that everything that follows is a lie (μηδὲν ἀληθὲς λέγειν). The author strongly undermines here any future claim to autopsy, experience, and personal inquiry, thus to the truth of his stories, turning completely up-side-down the paradoxo-grapher's topics and methods: 'well then, I am writing about things which I have neither seen, nor experienced, nor heard from others, and still things which do not even exist at all, and which, in the first place, cannot exist' (1,4).

This is the main point in which Lucian distances himself from a paradoxo-grapher: he admits to the unreality of his accounts. Thus he separates himself from the traditional prose discourse, be it historiography, ethnography, travel story, or philosophical prose (even Plato uses historical features, like characters and events, that confer realism to his dialogues), because the values of truth and falsehood apply differently to his own discourse. Lucian's type of prose is from a different stock and it demands a different analysis when it comes to the true-

³¹ Cf. Fusillo 1999, 362-365 and 368-372.

³² Laird 2003, 126.

false dichotomy, as the prologue to *True Stories* clearly claims. First of all, this is not the regular introduction to a traditional prose work:

Just as athletes and those engaged in physical training are not only preoccupied with a good physical condition and with exercising, but also with timely relaxation (τῆς κατὰ καιρὸν γινομένης ἀνέσεως [φροντίς]) – and indeed they consider this the greatest part (μέρος τὸ μέγιστον) of their training –, thus also for those earnestly pursuing literary studies (τοῖς περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐσπουδακόσιν) I think it suitable, after a long reading of more serious works (μετὰ τὴν πολλὴν τῶν σπουδαιότερων ἀνάγνωσιν), to relax their mind (ἀνιέναι τὴν διάνοιαν) and to strengthen it (ἀκμαιότεραν παρασκευάζειν) for future effort. And it would be a suitable recreation (ἐμμελὴς ἢ ἀνάπαυσις) for them, if they should spend time with such works that will not only offer simple pleasure (ψιλὴν τὴν ψυχαγωγίαν) based on cleverness and charm (ἐκ τοῦ ἀστείου τε καὶ χαρίεντος), but will also show (ἐπιδείξεται) some refined thought (θεωρίαν οὐκ ἄμουσον), as I think they will deem this work does. (1,1-2)

Although Lucian introduces *True Stories* as not the most serious reading, he nevertheless emphasizes its usefulness. Its lack of seriousness is culturally crucial (μέρος τὸ μέγιστον) because it performs a spiritual regeneration on the reader, as it offers a recharging break from more serious mental exercise. It is not just a sophisticated *jeux d'esprit*, but displays the author's deep thought, observation, and meditation (θεωρία). Enthralment and seduction (ψυχαγωγία, ἐπαγωγόν) are the effect of the novelty of topic (τὸ ξένον τῆς ὑποθέσεως), of a charming style (τὸ χάριεν τῆς προαιρέσεως), and of ψεύσματα ποικίλα, varied or even subtle, intricate lies, presented in a plausible and truth-like manner. The objects of θεωρία, on the other hand, are τεράστια καὶ μυθώδη, the astonishing and marvelous stories of the writers of old, to which Lucian playfully hints (οὐκ ἀκωμωδῆτως ἥνικται).

Traditionally, literary criticism associates serious literature with instruction (διδασκαλία), therefore with usefulness (ὠφέλεια). Less serious literature, on the other hand, attains seduction and produces pleasure (ψυχαγωγία; cf. ἐπαγωγόν). Yet Lucian performs a paradoxical mixing in the terms of these equations, claiming that a lighter work like his is indispensable to literature culture, thus useful, and that, although focused on producing pleasure and keeping with a light tone, it nevertheless cannot be denied a subtly concealed serious value. The paradoxographer's subject was *the strange* (τὸ ξένον) too, and his purpose was a combination of entertainment and instruction, with the balance initially inclining

towards the latter, but ending up by favoring the former. Similarly, the paradoxo-grapher's didactic focus would succumb to marvels that should have only spiced an essentially serious work. Lucian seems to surrender his *True Stories* completely to *paradoxa*, to abandon any plan for usefulness and instruction; yet the prologue makes a different claim. Underneath this apparently reinless paradoxographical discourse, underneath the intricate lies and the pretense of relaxation, there is a subtly articulated claim at *opheleia* through rest and renewal (ἀνιέναι τε τὴν διάνοιαν καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἔπειτα κάματον ἀκμαιοτέραν παρασκευάζειν). What makes *True Stories* a less serious work is not the intention therefore, but rather the design, the appearance. It is lighter not because it is not serious, but because it works with a low-key material and a ludicrous method, *paradoxa* and their presentation as mere reality, because its reflection of such discourse has a humorous tone, and, most importantly, because it is emphatically different (τὸ ξένον) from the serious, good, excellent literature (τὰ σπουδαιότερα).³³

The seduction comes from the refreshing difference. Yet, blurring the polarity light/entertaining – serious/useful, Lucian claims his work is also useful. The prologue's paradoxical and obviously (self-) ironic statement that relaxation is in fact the greatest part (μέρος τὸ μέγιστον) of physical training³⁴ articulates through a convoluted rhetoric that the otherness of *True Stories* offers the studious reader (τοῖς περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐσπουδακόσιν) a fresh perspective for the contemplation of the Greek literary heritage. This contemplation, θεωρία, renders the term διδασκαλία, which is traditionally set in polarity with ψυχαγωγία. *Theoria* refers not only to travel, i.e. seeing the world, as the theme of *True Stories*, but also to travel narrative as a form of paradoxographical discourse that often fails in *didaskalia* and incurs Lucian's criticism, and to intellectual contemplation made possible through Lucian's mimicry of paradoxographical discourse.³⁵ Lucian's own contemplation of paradoxo-graphy and its claim to truth creates *True Stories*.³⁶ He takes his audience on a sailing journey through *paradoxa* to reconsider paradoxo-graphy and to consider accepting a new type of literature that works with and reflects on old material in a new way.

The expressed manner in which *theoria* is facilitated to the audience is a sort of low-key intellectual challenge that counterbalances *psychagogia*, which results from the enjoyment of novelty and lies. This mental exercise for *pepaide-*

³³ LSJ s.v. σπουδαῖος I,2 and II.

³⁴ Cf. Pl. *Leg.* 4,724a-b: σπουδῆς τε πέρι καὶ ἀνέσεως.

³⁵ Cf. von Möllendorff 2000, 39-41; cf. LSJ s.v. θεωρία III.

³⁶ Cf. Brandão 2001: 'não se trata apenas de uma narrativa a mais que se tece, mas de um texto *sobre as narrativas* [...]'; 'se recusa a narrativa por um discurso *das narrativas* (*sobre as narrativas e a partir das narrativas*)', 255-256.

umenoi seems an easy and amusing guessing game that consists in recognizing the fabulous lies of the authors of old, at which Lucian only hints, because presumably they would be easily recognizable (1,2). In making this playful *theoria* seem easy and light, Lucian alludes to the sub-cultural and intellectually unchallenging character of the literature of *paradoxa* in general. His claim that the hypotext is easily identifiable seems rather another deception, since he seldom alludes to specific instances, but mostly to the general paradoxographical ambience reconstructed in its motifs and mannerisms.³⁷

Therefore, the essence of *theoria* is not the amusing game of identifying specific sources, but rather a higher-key intellectual exercise, the contemplation and assessment of paradoxographical discourse that claims the truth of *paradoxa*. Lucian offers his audience the opportunity of *en-strangement*, of the perspective from otherness to reexamine the literary tradition and to embrace the other.³⁸ The strangeness of subject matter translates the strangeness of the discourse of *True Stories*, the literary other that Lucian creates. Therefore the true-false dichotomy seems to be suspended, since the text is not itself the object of *theoria*, but rather the means, the distorted mirror that reveals the reality of other texts in their more lively incongruity: their *paradoxa* in literary disguise, obvious lies masquerading as truth.

The audience addressed in *True Stories* is obviously one of *pepaideumenoi* (τοῖς περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐσπουδακόσιν, 1,1). They would be able to read the stories through the lens of the prologue and enjoy them precisely for their avowed lack of truth. This reception is opposite to that of Odysseus by the uneducated Phaeacians (ιδιώτας ἀνθρώπους, 1,3), and obviously the opposite of the regular reader of paradoxography, expected to suspend critical judgment, bewildered by the shock of novelty. Instead of *pepaideumenoi*, the typical term for a learned audience, Lucian uses here ἐσπουδακόσιν, *serious*, *earnest*, *zealous*, which deepens even more the problem of the text's interpretation.³⁹ Lucian is not shy of using a term with simultaneous polysemy or stretching its semantic sphere. In

³⁷ Whitmarsh 2006, 113. Cf. Georgiadou & Larmour 1998, 5-22; Camerotto 1998, 33-34.

³⁸ Cf. Sher's introduction to Shklovsky and his coinage of the term 'enstrangement', 1990, xviii-xix.

³⁹ Whitmarsh 2006, 112: 'That the readership is described as 'serious' (ἐσπουδακόσιν), and not, for example, 'educated', is crucial. To begin with, it draws the text into the orbit of the familiar Lucianic rhetoric of 'serious play' (τὸ σπουδογέλοιον). But more pertinently: is a 'serious' reader of a comic text the ideal interpreter? The question is immediately redoubled: the narrator defines the text we are reading as a relaxation from 'serious matter' (τῶν σπουδαιωτέρων): which is to say, the *True Stories* will be, pointedly, a renunciation of the serious. Will serious readers be able to handle a text that defines itself as non-serious? If we self-select as the σπουδαῖοι, the educated readership, will we be laughing with Lucian, or is the joke on us?'

Zeuxis, for instance, he addresses his educated audience as γραφικοί, expecting them to appreciate his art compared to that of the famous painter. Lucian's invitation of a serious readership (τοῖς περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐσπουδακόσιν) to value his less serious text is, in its paradox, more than just an invitation to relaxation. Beyond and by means of *psychagogia* and comic tone (οὐκ ἄκωμωδῆτως), Lucian challenges his audience to *theoria*, a literary exercise that his text facilitates. The polyvalent wording might suggest that there is no true relaxation (ἄνεσις, ἀνάπαυσις) in *True Stories*, but rather the opportunity to let go (ἀνιέναι) of an established opinion (διανοίαν) on what more serious literature should be and form a new one, better and more seasonable (ἀκμαιοτέραν).⁴⁰

Having examined the purpose and the addressee of the text, let us look more carefully at the expressed means by which Lucian reaches his audience and, at the same time, performs and facilitates the exercise of *theoria*. The text of *True Stories* consists of varied and intricate lies narrated in a plausible and truth-like manner (πιθανῶς τε καὶ ἐναλήθως, 1.2). The adverb ἐναλήθως is a *hapax*; the substantive adjective (τὸ ἐνάληθες) is used in 'Longinus' to describe the appropriate type of rhetorical imagery as corresponding to the truth of reality (τὸ ἔμπρακτον καὶ ἐνάληθες). Whenever the style (τὸ πλάσμα) of a speech transgresses into the poetic and fabulous (μυθῶδες) and ends up in an impossibility (ἀδύνατον), the digressions become strange and alien (δεινὰ δὲ καὶ ἔκφυλοι αἱ παραβάσεις).⁴¹

On the other hand, πιθανῶς refers to the mode of credible, persuasive narrative,⁴² including good fiction,⁴³ unlike that of Iambulus, for instance, where the lie is conspicuous (γνώριμον μὲν ἅπασι τὸ ψεῦδος πλασάμενος, 1.3). Lucian himself acknowledges that an effective and persuasive lie, as in slander for example, requires artfulness, wit, and extreme diligence (πολλῆς μὲν τέχνης, οὐκ ὀλίγης δὲ ἀγχινοίας, ἀκριβοῦς δὲ τινος ἐπιμελείας) in making it plausible (πιθανόν τινα τρόπον) and stronger than the truth.⁴⁴ Therefore, the authors he mentions in the prologue certainly do not display such qualities, since Lucian is amazed not so much at their lies, but rather at the fact that they thought they would easily escape notice in presenting lies as truth (ἐκεῖνο δὲ αὐτῶν ἐθαύμασα, εἰ ἐνόμιζον λήσειν οὐκ ἀληθῆ συγγράφοντες, 1,4).

⁴⁰ LSJ s.v. ἀνίημι II; LSJ s.v. διάνοια A,2; LSJ s.v. ἀκμαῖος II.

⁴¹ Ps.-Long. 15,8.

⁴² Cf. Hdt. 1,214.

⁴³ Cf. Strab. on Homer 1,2,36 and 3,4,4 (οὐκ ἀπίθανον ἐποίει τὸ πλάσμα).

⁴⁴ Luc. *Cal.* 11.

Lucian applies both terms *πιθανῶς* and *ἐναλήθως* to the manner in which he himself lies. However, nothing is plausible in *True Stories*, and everything is deliberately exaggerated. Scholars have noticed the different levels of reality in *True Stories* and the tension between Lucian the author and ‘Lucian’ the storyteller whose discourse is constantly undermined by the external narrator.⁴⁵ Even when the storyteller simulates concern for plausibility, his pseudo-paradoxographical rhetoric renders his discourse implausible.⁴⁶ These terms, therefore, playfully reenact the paradoxo-grapher’s failure to sustain a credible discourse although repeatedly claiming authority. The lies (*ψεύσματα ποικίλα*) allude (*ἡνικταί*) to the incredible and fabulous writings (*πολλὰ τεράστια καὶ μυθώδη*) of consecrated poets, historians, and philosophers. Thus, the terms *τεράστια* and *μυθώδη* become interchangeable with *ψεύσματα*, undermining credibility. Yet, in choosing the more radical term (*ψεύσματα*) to qualify his own work, Lucian not only imposes this key for reading his text, but also expresses the difference between himself and the writers to whom he alludes: the author’s acknowledgment of his own lies, in anticipation of the critic’s judgment. While other authors – like Ctesias – present as true that which is based neither on autopsy, nor on proper inquiry (*ἱστορία*), or – like Iambulus – claim their own experience of things that are obvious lies (*γνώριμον μὲν ἅπασι τὸ ψεῦδος πλασάμενος*, 1,3), Lucian prefaces his text with an emphatic admission of mendacity. The end of the prologue (1,4) states that in his vain desire for literary posterity (*ὕπὸ κενοδοξίας ἀπολιπεῖν τι σπουδάσας τοῖς μεθ’ ἡμᾶς*), lest he be the only one without a share in the freedom to write on fabulous things (*ἵνα μὴ μόνος ἄμοιρος ὦ τῆς ἐν τῷ μυθολογεῖν ἐλευθερίας*), yet having nothing true to say (*ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἀληθὲς ἱστορεῖν εἶχον*), since he experienced nothing worthy to be said (*οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐπεπόνθειν ἀξιόλογον*), Lucian turned to lying (*ἐπὶ τὸ ψεῦδος ἐτραπόμην*). Yet his lying is more reasonable, more prudent than the lies of others (*πολὺν τῶν ἄλλων εὐγνωμονέστερον*): ‘for, at least, I shall tell the truth (*ἀληθεύσω*) with respect to this one thing (*ἐν...τοῦτο*): when I say that I lie (*λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι*).’ His lies are more considerate, because Lucian frees the reader altogether from the effort of exerting any critical judgment concerning the truth or falsehood of his stories; they are more prudent because, unmasked by their own author, they escape accusation (*τὴν...κατηγορίαν ἐκφυγεῖν*). Moreover, Lucian ends his prologue with the ultimate advice: the reader should not believe anything in these stories (*μηδαμῶς πιστεῦειν*). Through this ‘delicious’

⁴⁵ Sciolla 1988, 59; Ligota 2007, 66-67.

⁴⁶ Cf. Eur. F. 396 Kannicht: ‘but if indeed it is possible among mortals to falsely tell plausible things (i.e. to tell plausible lies, *ψευδηγορεῖν πιθανά*), you have to believe also the opposite, that many incredible things that are true (*ἄπιστ’ ἀληθῆ*) happen to mortals’.

variation on the liar's paradox,⁴⁷ Lucian's *stories* resist any conventional interpretation from the perspective of the traditional true-false dichotomy. As the author claims only the truth of his lying, it is nevertheless unclear if or to what degree the prologue is also self-referential, a puzzle that epitomizes the *aporia* of a readership that would approach Lucian's *True Stories* as a conventional text.

In lieu of conclusion

Lucian describes his lies as 'things which I have neither seen (μήτε εἶδον), nor experienced (μήτε ἔπαθον), nor heard from others (μήτε παρ' ἄλλων ἐπυθόμην), and still things which do not even exist at all (ἔτι δὲ μήτε ὅλως ὄντων), and which, in the first place, cannot exist (μήτε τὴν ἀρχὴν γενέσθαι δυναμένων).' While the first part of the sentence denies any claim to the proper methods of true discourse in general (autopsy, experience, and inquiry), the second part denies any claim to its factual content. Our text is not only about things which cannot exist, but it breaks the promise of a future description of the other continent, of the opposite world (τὴν ἵππειον...τὴν ἀντιπέραν).⁴⁸ The empty promise becomes itself a text without truth, without reality, bringing to a perfect end the bigger text essentially devoid of truth. Lucian leaves his audience gaping curiously at the promised other world that epitomizes his literary otherness and which can be enjoyed through retrospective *theoria*.

On the one hand, the subject matter – *paradoxa* – represents the other, a different, strange, foreign world. The adventures carry our storyteller through worlds that stand, each and every one, in a strong polarity with the familiar world: moon versus earth, sea versus land, dead versus living. The authorial approach to his subject matter and audience is also startlingly different. Defying the traditional criticism of intermingling falsehood with what claims to be true discourse, Lucian claims for himself the freedom to lie (τῆς ἐν τῷ μυθολογεῖν ἐλευθερίας, 1,4) and the right to be judged for the art of his new form of discourse, in spite of, or rather precisely because of its deliberate and avowed lack of truth. Lucian's text is artistically valid: well designed, charming, not lacking in *poikilia* (1,1-2). It therefore could bring immortality to its author (1,4). Lucian reassesses the status of fiction by giving it a place and a genre of its own, not disguised under other genres, such as paradoxography, historiography, poetry, philosophy, etc. He places his text within a tradition he modifies through a para-

⁴⁷ Whitmarsh 2004, 466.

⁴⁸ Cf. scholium ad finem: καὶ τὸ τέλος ψευδέστατον μετὰ τῆς ἀνυποστάτου ἐπαγγελίας.

doxical treatment, by claiming the right to *paradoxa*, yet admitting they are lies. Suggestively, on the Isle of the Dreams our storyteller enters the city through the ivory gates, the gates of deceit (2,32).⁴⁹

Among the marvels on the moon, there is a *κάτοπτρον*, which paradoxically functions not like a proper mirror, but like a lens: those who look into it do not see a reflection of themselves, but see through it the world back on earth. Lucian's text is a literary *katoptron*, a lens whose degree of distortion comes from displacement, from the perspective of the other. Thus, it helps the reader contemplate the Greek literary heritage by highlighting its distorted and badly manipulated conception of truth. The *katoptron* here is obviously different from the one in *How to Write History* (50), where Lucian compares the *gnome* of the ideal historian with a clear and faithful mirror of the facts related. Thus, here Lucian transfers the right to pure fiction from poetry to prose, the typically true and instructive discourse. Like other authors, Lucian uses *psychagogia* to reach the values of *opheleia* and *didaskalia*, yet through an oblique rhetoric. He renounces any sense of balance and exceedingly indulges in pleasant lies, more so than the authors he denounces, yet – unlike them – he does not intend to escape notice, but admits to lying (1,4-6). Lucian invests the lie with the power of instruction and usefulness, traditionally reserved to what is considered true discourse. However, its usefulness lies not in the text per se, but rather in the intricately concealed referential system that the text creates, and which illuminates the truth-value and usefulness, or occasional lack thereof, in texts that claim to tell the truth.

In *Lovers of Lies*, lies (ψεύσματα) are useful and justifiable only in a few situations: to ensure safety and help surmount crises, to spare the livelihood of tourist guides, and to spice up the poets' works.⁵⁰ These same cases apply to *True Stories*: Lucian uses lies to over-spice his fictional prose. He uses them also as an expedient to surmount the crisis of the writer who has nothing true to say, thus to salvage his 'livelihood' both as an author, and as a literary 'guide' – as his text is itself a literary voyage.⁵¹ Last, but not least, these lies 'save' Lucian's life, keeping him alive for posterity, as the prologue overtly claims.

The paradoxographers were literary guides too, yet of another sort. Schepens describes them as 'some kind of literary counterpart to the activities of the hunters and explorers', in search of paradoxical beasts, and notes that 'the guided tour around the wonders of the world, offered to the reader, was [...] a tour [...]

⁴⁹ Cf. *Od.* 19,564-56.

⁵⁰ *Luc. Philops.* 1-4.

⁵¹ Majorel 2003.

within the walls of a great library'.⁵² Just as the paradoxographers excerpted and collected marvels, Lucian excerpts and collects the paradoxographical tradition itself, or rather a paradigmatic paradoxographic discourse that his mimicry of it creates. Thus, the works of the writers of old become marvels themselves, yet of another sort, as our 'collector' experiences and inspires amazement at the audacity of those authors who thought their deceit would escape notice. At the same time, the 'collection' itself, *True Stories*, becomes a marvel of invention and also of audacity, as its author admits deceit. Yet, while the lies of *True Stories* are pleasant too, they are also useful, as they prompt the reader to reposition in amazement and contemplate tradition and novelty.

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⁵² Schepens 1996, 406, 388.

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