RHETORIC, LIBERTIES, AND CLASSICAL CULTURE.
FROM FREE SPEECH (PARRHESIA) TO SERIO-COMIC (SPOUDOGELION) IN LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA

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SUMMARY. This paper extends a recently published preface (in Lageot & Marchadier F. (dir.), Le blasphème dans une société démocratique. Paris: Dalloz, 2016). In the polymorphous and paradoxical works of Lucian of Samosata, “the ancient Voltaire,” I propose to focus on some rhetorical devices which intensely perform and stage the freedom of speech denoted by the Greek notion of parrhesia, as M. Foucault reappraised it, in a cultural and political perspective (Foucault M. Le courage de la vérité. Le gouvernement de soi et des autres II (Cours au Collège de France, 1984). Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 2009). For instance, in The Dead Come to Life or The Fisherman and Philosophies for Sale, or Zeus Rants, Lucian stretches and articulates sophistic and true (or false) philosophy, Socratic dialogue and comedy, epideixis and dialectics, by renewing, hybridizing or inventing genres and registers which still inspire contemporary critical theory, as well as a significant part of post-modern creations. As he applies a pragmatic conception of thought, which is not reluctant to use satire, allegorical fiction, and polemical or fantastic discourse, Lucian may become an important reference for new rhetoric, as it both resists and produces new dynamic values, altogether practical and theoretical, or even, while facing discourses and images, is able to combine active, even critical and distanced, reception and sensitive immersion, and reflexivity or meta-fictionality. Four main enunciative strategies and processes have been scrutinized in this study: the interplays of rhetoric and false or true philosophy; the dynamics of hyperrealistic, fantastic, and specular auto-fiction, e.g., in Alexander the False Prophet, True Stories, The Dream or Lucian’s Carrier; the dialogic powers of serio-comic (spoudogeloion), between reflexion and comedy, e.g., in The Fly, Charon or the Inspectors, and the Dialogues of the Dead; and the dialectics of critical / immersive readership and meta-fictional / committed authorship, e.g., in Heracles, The Hall and About Dance.

KEYWORDS: freedom of speech, postmodernity, parrhesia, auto-fiction, meta-fiction, serio-comic, scepticism, Lucian of Samosata, satirical dialogue, authorship/readership, classical culture, critical thought.

As a contribution to the general debate about what the rhetorical tradition may offer to confront some contemporary challenges, I chose to focus on liberties, especially freedom of thought and speech, and the way several classical models may provide us with some discursive, artistic, and cognitive devices that, although essentially literary, are not mere ornaments but necessary to the efficient expression
and discussion of intricate and tensed issues that monological and simplistic discourses and convictions often excessively reduce to binary or totalitarian norms and solutions. Our times really need rhetoric and (classical) culture, at least if we hold that literature, as thought in action, must relate to life. And the revaluation of contemporary rhetoric may partly rely on the rehabilitation of ancient Sophists, both of the first (Vth and IVth c. B. C.) and second Sophistic (IInd c.), as humanists and experts of practical philosophy. Among these rhetorical devices which democracy (and humanity) needs, I shall count figures like irony, fiction, reflexivity and meta-fiction, or metalepsis, and interplays of realism and fantasy, seriousness and humor, or even commitment and critical distance, as displayed by the Greek rhetorician and satirist of the IInd century, Lucian of Samosata, surnamed “le Voltaire de l’Antiquité” by Mme de Staël.¹

He is both a perfect historical example of critical thought and enlightenment,² a radically sceptical thinker with unique skills for comic effects, and a vivid prototype for our post-modern culture, that is intrinsically connecting classicism and contemporaneity. There is no space here to study this question through the approximately eighty texts we have received from him, including dialogues, treatises, and narratives, but I shall try to show how inspiring this reference is.

INTERPLAYS OF RHETORIC AND FALSE OR TRUE PHILOSOPHY

This paper is connected to a recently published foreword proposed for the proceedings of a conference which was tackling a crucial issue in contemporary culture and politics and where I was referring to ancient rhetoric as a still vivid source, not only for forms, but also for ways of thought and action, or even better said for efficient and embodied discursivity and thought, as well as for thoughtful and meaningful action.³ One crucial issue in a democracy is the freedom of speech, and in the polymorphous and paradoxical works of Lucian of Samosata, we may first focus on some rhetorical devices which intensely perform and stage the Greek notion of

¹ Mme de Staël, De l’Allemagne, 1813.
parrhesia, as Michel Foucault reappraised it, in a cultural and political perspective. Lucian invented the name Parrhesiadiès (Free-Speaker) for one of the various figures representing him in his dialogues, as in The Dead Come to Life or The Fisherman, in defense against the violent critics Lucian had just faced in his Philosophies for Sale. In this satiric dialogue (another model from which (post-)modernity might get much inspiration and cultural, argumentative, and cognitive efficiency), he represented an Athenian market where the products to be sold, through hard bargain, were the prominent figures of all philosophy schools, like Chrysippus, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, etc. In The Dead Come to Life or The Fisherman Lucian imagines that all the dead philosophers run out of the netherworld to attack the writer, because of his comic texts they consider as blasphemous libels (blasphêmia in Greek is not limited to religious questions) against Philosophy herself. They intend to stone to death Parrhesiades, who eventually manages to be judged in a regular trial chaired by Philosophy herself, with such prestigious jurors as Truth or Argument. After the speeches for the prosecution by Diogenes and for the defense by Parrhesiades himself, the prosecuted Sophist triumphs over his assailters and is considered innocent by the jury of true philosophers. The last part of the piece is a quasi-Aristophanian fantasy, where Parrhesiades and some philosophers, with the help of different allegories, try to identify the different schools of philosophy among the thousands of philosophical fishes, which they attract with golden baits: the satire continues intensively, for the sake of truth and laughter.

The strength of rhetoric (the words) is here typically opposed to physical violence. Pursued by the philosophers, Παρρησιάδης utters what could be a slogan for all free-thinkers and democrats confronting terror, for instance, the editorial cartoonists of Charlie Hebdo: The Dead Come to Life 3, “Then will ye slay me now, because of words?” (Νῦν ἕκατι ῥημάσιν κτενεῖτέ με;). And the following arguments, which Plato and others try to answer as self-proclaimed defenders of Philosophy, already are the first steps to Lucian’s victory, since they substitute dialogue and reflexion, even fragile and tense, to sheer brutality and fanaticism: “Well, then, as you are absolutely determined to kill me and there is no possibility of my escaping, do tell me at least who you are and what irreparable injuries you have received from


6 All the English translations of Lucian quoted here are from the Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, by A. M. Harmon.
me that you are irreconcilably angry and have seized me for execution.” At the end of the dialogue, conversely, Lucian associates Rhetoric with Philosophy as its best defender, especially against false philosophers, that is, those whose real behavior does not match their constantly dull claims and outlooks. This capacity to unveil hypocrisy is at the core of the plea Parrhesiades presents to the allegory of Philosophy, who is chairing the trial; the advocacy for rhetoric is also a praise of real philosophy:

In that way you can find out whom I put up for sale and abused, calling them pretenders and cheats (κακῶς ἠγόρευον ἀλαζόνας καὶ γόητας ἀποκάλων). And I beg you merely to note throughout whether what I say about them is true. If my speech should prove to contain anything shocking or offensive (τι βλάσφημον ἢ τραχύ), it is not I, their critic (τὸν διελέγχοντα ἐμὲ), but they, I think, whom you would justly blame for it, acting as they do. As soon as I perceived how many disagreeable attributes a public speaker must acquire, such as chicane, lying, impudence, loudness of mouth, sharpness of elbow, and what all besides, I fled from all that, as was natural, and set out to attain your high ideals, Philosophy ... (The Dead Come to Life, 29)

Lucian’s apology also concerns true philosophers: rhetoric is one of the best methods to distinguish truth and lies, good and bad lives, and noble and ridiculous personalities. This is paradoxical only for those who do not know that laughter, fiction, and images are necessary for thought and action, especially when addressing an audience larger than the readers of univocally serious treatises.7

These self-styled philosophers do just that, and I for my part abused their sort (κακῶς ἠγόρευον), and shall never stop criticizing and ridiculing them (διελέγχων καὶ κωμωδῶν). But as for you and those who resemble you — for there are, there are some who truly cultivate philosophy and abide by your laws — may I never be so insane as to say anything abusive or unkind of you! (The Dead Come to Life, 29)

The dialogue called Philosophies for Sale, for which Parrhesiades / Lucian was about to be stoned to death, well shows the philosophical and social usefulness of satirical rhetoric and literature, when utopia tackles crucial issues like the precarious and multiple meaning of life. As a sophist criticizing all philosophical schools, Lucian is a philosopher, and also when he caricatures the Cynics, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, or even Socrates himself (9–11 and 15–16). And Lucian’s rhetoric is thoroughly reflexive, that is, meta-rhetorical, with important consequences for the way he stages man’s relations to his environment in his imaginary dialogues. For example, in Zeus Rants he promotes the necessity of critical thought and culture, that is, rhetoric again, and mockery, for the construction and transmission of the good and beautiful. Zeus himself proclaims it, when speaking to Momus, an allegory of derision (19): “Speak, Momus, with full confidence (πάνυ θαρρῶν),

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for it is clear that your frankness will be intended for our common good (τὸι συμφέροντι παρρησιασόμενος).”

This is also a way to confirm a radical conception of humanism, more based on dissent than on compromise: for Lucian, the real gods want to let human beings live by themselves. When Timocles accuses the sceptic Damis of blasphemy, for his claiming the gods do not exist or at least have no interest in humanity, Damis argues pleasantly about their laziness and lack of concern for humans, pious or not (37):

And when can they find time for me, when they have so many cares, you say, and manage all creation, which is unlimited in its extent? That is why they have not yet paid you back for all your false oaths and everything else — I don’t want to be forced to deal in abuse (βλασφημεῖν) like you, contrary to our stipulations: and yet I don’t see what better manifestation of their providence they could have made than to crush your life out miserably, miserable sinner that you are!

In a more general perspective, the intention of this study is to show briefly how a reference to Lucian, such a prominent and complex member of the Second Sophistic, with Philostratus, Plutarch, or Galen, may provide us with still useful devices; and how those texts, in their meaning as well as in their oratory and spectacular pragmatics, stretch and articulate sophistic and philosophy, Socratic dialogue and comedy, or epideixis and dialectics: to do so, Lucian renews or invents genres and registers which still inspire contemporary critical theory, consciously or not, as well as a significant part of post- and alter-modern creations. As he applies a pragmatic conception of thought, which does not shy away from satire, fiction, and polemical or fantastic discourse, Lucian may become a reference for new rhetoric, as it both resists and produces dynamic values, altogether practical and theoretical, or even, while facing discourses and images, is able to combine active, even critical and distanced reception and sensitive immersion.

Besides parrhêsia, three main enunciative strategies and processes will be discussed here: fantastic auto-fiction, in V. Colona’s terms; Lucianic dialogue as a hybridization of laughter and thought (e. g., Dialogues of the Dead); and both the serious and the comical register of spoudogeloion, in its cynical / sceptical and theatrical double meaning. And this reflection should prepare us for a comparison of post-classical and post-modern rhetoric, that is, of Lucian and our times.

A fine example of spectacular hyperrealism in Lucian of Samosata might be the biography of *Alexander the False Prophet*; for instance, the description of his death, both ridiculous and horrible, where Lucian, as a critical historian, shares some features with Momos, the allegory of sarcastic denunciation. Here, satirical rhetoric is one of the most efficient ways to reveal the mendacities and swindles of false thought leaders and gurus (59):

In spite of his prediction in an oracle that he was fated to live a hundred and fifty years and then die by a stroke of lightning, he met a most wretched end before reaching the age of seventy, in a manner that befitted a son of Podaleirius; for his leg became mortified quite to the groin and was infested with maggots. It was then that his baldness was detected: because of the pain he let the doctors foment his head, which they could not have done unless his wig had been removed.

In doing so in many texts, dialogues or discourses, Lucian also proves the argumentative value of literature, which he calls rhetoric or even poetry, especially when it unmasks manipulative and mendacious self-proclaimed philosophers or historians, as in the preface to the *True Stories*, which, like their title implies, provide essential truths precisely because they are fantastical fictitious: this work presents itself as a rhetorical journey allegorized as both a satirical and a fantastic voyage (A2), “the sort of reading that, instead of affording just pure amusement based on wit and humor (ἐκ τοῦ ἀστείου τε καὶ χαρίεντος ψιλὴν παρέξει τὴν ψυχαγωγίαν), also boasts a little food for thought that the Muses would not altogether spur (θεωρίαν οὐκ ἄμουσον)”.

Consciously outspoken fiction, especially in a programmatic preface such as this one, helps readers to be aware of Lucian’s intentions, both parodic and serious. Especially when they are both satirical and obviously fabulous, rhetorical stories may be enigmas worth interpreting from a philosophical point of view:

I tell all kinds of lies in a plausible and specious way (ψεύσματα ποικίλα πιθανῶς τε καὶ ἐναλήθως), but also because everything in my story is a more or less comical parody (οὐκ ἀκωμωιδήτως ἤινικται) of one or another of the poets, historians and philosophers of old, who have written much that smacks of miracles and fables (πολλὰ τεράστια καὶ μυθώδη).

Here Lucian refers to Socratic self-irony, which he exceeds by associating it with abundance and seduction. He goes further than his philosophical model, who may

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be more Xenophon’s than Plato’s Socrates, and relates with his readers / listeners in a most ambivalent way, typical of a cultural context where *pseudos* can be both lie and fiction and the notion of *plasma* (“modelling, shaping, fiction”) gets positive undertones, in relation to the notion of “poetic licence” and the freedom to tell fictions (A4):¹¹

Therefore, as I myself, thanks to my vanity, was eager to hand something down to posterity, that I might be the only one excluded from the privileges of poetic licence (ἐν τῶι μυθολογεῖν ἐλευθερίας), and as I had nothing true to tell (μηδὲν ἀληθὲς ἱστορεῖν), not having had any adventures of significance, I took to lying (ἐπὶ τὸ ψεῦδος ἐτραπόμεν). But my lying is far more honest than theirs, for though I tell the truth in nothing else, I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar (κἂν ἓν γὰρ δὴ τούτο ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεῦδομαι).

Thus rhetoric gives the writer and the listener or reader a superior or distanced posture, which is well symbolized by the great “looking-glass fixed above a well” (A26) Lucian found on the Moon, during his stay there. This marvel (θαῦμα) provides the narrator with the ability to watch and listen to everything going on everywhere on earth, especially in his country, city, and family: the sophist here stages the critical vision by which we may better understand and judge our own lives.¹² But he does it in a playfully ambivalent way: this marvel only exists in the fantastic fiction he is narrating and describing: “Anyone who does not believe this is so will find, if ever he gets there himself, that I am telling the truth (εἴσεται ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγω).” And concerning precarious though crucial relations of reality, truth, and imagination, another powerful allegory is presented in the episode of Lucian’s visit (B34):

> There were winged and portentous dreams among them, and there were others dressed up as if for a carnival, being clothed to represent kings and gods and different characters of the sort. We actually recognised many of them, whom we had seen long ago at home. These came up to us and greeted us like old acquaintances, took us with them, put us to sleep and entertained us very splendidly and hospitably. They treated us like lords in every way, and even promised to make us kings and nabobs. A few of them actually took us off home, gave us a sight of our friends and families and brought us back the same day.


Though both fantastically and comically depicted, these rhetoric forms are quite serious affairs, as it is well shown in Lucian’s texts where the “ego” is more directly autobiographical, or at least auto-fictional. For example, in *The Dream or Lucian’s Career*, Lucian tells the story of his childhood and youth: as coming from a poor Syrian family, he first was an apprentice at a stone-mason and sculptor’s workshop, before, during one night, two allegories (of Sculpture and Education) appeared to him in a dream, and made him choose rhetoric (and Greek culture) for a living, rather than the dirty and hard job of handicraft. Education (*Paideia*) presents herself as Lucian’s true destiny (9): “My child, I am Education, with whom you are already acquainted and familiar, even if you have not yet completed your experience of me.” The child’s future, that is Lucian’s present, is promoted as bright, rich, and free: rhetoric is clearly one of the best ways of emancipation, humorously first for the sophist himself, as a brilliant member of the Second Sophistic, but exemplarily too for any Roman citizen, from any origin, who could be educated in Greek values and culture (12-13): “If ever you go abroad, even on foreign soil you will not be unknown or inconspicuous, for I will attach to you such marks of identification that everyone who sees you will nudge his neighbor and point you out with his finger, saying, *There he is*!”

The sophist may even be compared to Prometheus himself, the god of cunning intelligence, who created all living creatures, especially human beings, from clay figures. As *plasma* designates both concrete figures and fiction (as different from lies), the god is also a rhetorician, and conversely the sophist somehow divine, with a bit of humor. Modern, post-modern, and contemporary constructionism and relativism often have ancient references. For instance, in the dialogue *To One Who Said “You’re a Prometheus in Words”* (1-2):

> What you do is truly alive and breathing and, yes, its heat is that of fire. This too is from Prometheus with the sole difference that what you fashion is not clay but in many cases your fictions are golden (*πλάττετε ... πλάσματα*). We however who come before a crowd and offer our lectures, such as they are, show you a few figurines (*εἴδωλα*), and our modelling is entirely in mud as I said just now, like that of doll-makers.

That also concerns rhetorical forms: for Lucian, the most interesting and typical of his own practices are the most hybrid, apparently disharmonious and asymmetrical, like an Hippocentaur. Lucian ironically and provocatively assumes the responsibility for these artificial and monstrous figures representing his works, like the Lucianesque dialogue, a vivid crossing of philosophical dialogue with (ancient or new) comedy (*To One Who Said * ... 5*):

> “… even the combination of those two very fine creations, dialogue and comedy, is not enough for beauty of form if the blending lacks harmony and symmetry. The synthesis of two fine things can be a freak — the hippocentaur is an obvious example”.

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Something similar happens in *The Double Indictment* (6–7), where a trial opposes Lucian (the Syrian) to the allegory of Dialogue, who complains about the way the sophist made him comical and popular. This complex attitude is typical not only for Lucian himself, but also for a rhetorical culture, both profound and alwaysironically distanced with itself, that is partly similar to critical and sceptical philosophies, as in the preface to the *True Stories*:

Nevertheless I have dared to combine them (philosophical dialogue and comedy) as they are into a harmony, though they are not in the least docile and do not easily tolerate partnership. (…) Whom could I steal from? Unless someone has invented such fish-horses and goat-stags independently without my knowing. But what could I do? I must abide by what I chose once and for all. To change one’s plan is the work of Epimetheus, not Prometheus.

Lucian is an expert in all kinds of mixed discursive and literary genres and this heterogeneity of enunciative voices, tones, styles, and philosophical references is constitutive of his own polyphonic creation and expression as well as of his eloquent, colorful, and animated conception of human life, fundamentally agonistic and unsteady. And this is especially difficult for any monological reader, who is looking forwards to getting from the texts he explores univocal solutions and responses.

**THE DIALOGIC POWERS OF SPOUDOGELOION: BETWEEN REFLEXION AND COMEDY**

This problematic and always problematized characteristic of the works of Lucian, typically rhetorical and philosophical at the same time as well as providing possible models for our times, appears in monologues, for instance, in paradoxical praises (since irony is related to polyphony) or in fantastic auto-fictions like *True Stories*, no less than in comical dialogues about philosophical topics, such as *Charon* or the *Dialogues of the Dead*.

A fine example of a polyphonic monologue (and a spectacular one, typical of Lucian’s sophistic activities as a kind of roving showman) is *The Fly*, where the mocking praise of the humblest of insects turns into a dynamic deconstruction of Platonism and its serious systematicity. Here, rhetorical culture aims uppermost to produce, stage (first in oral conferences, then in published texts), and transmit practical devices, which help dealing with life, language, and thought. What the contemporary philosopher Gilles Deleuze called a “toolbox” (boîte à outils)—“that’s exactly what a theory is. It has to serve, it must perform its function. And not just for itself. If there are no people for it to serve … it’s as if it isn’t worth anything, or
at least its moment has not arrived.”¹³ One of these tools is paradoxical irony, like in The Fly (7), where Lucian criticizes Plato for having forgotten to mention the immortality of the insect’s soul.

The same appears in dramatized texts like Charon or the Inspectors (1), where the ferryman of the underworld takes some vacation in the living world, in order to better understand the human beings he is the first to welcome when they are dead. And under the baton of Hermes, both the guide of the dead into the netherworld and the god of interpretation and exegesis, Charon observes our world from high mountains resembling theater-benches, in a way similar to the mirror on the moon, in the True Stories: “I wanted to see what it is like in life, Hermes, what men do in it, and what they lose that makes them all grieve when they come down to us; for none of them has ever made the crossing without a tear.” Among various reactions of Charon, whom the precariousness of human values makes mostly laugh, one rhetorical tool can frequently be found: metaphor, as in the passage where men are best comprehended as bubbles, both ridiculous and pathetic. Hermes assimilates it to Homer’s comparison of men and tree-leaves (19–20):

Let me tell you, Hermes, what I think men and the whole life of man resemble. You have noticed bubbles in water, caused by a streamlet plashing down — I mean those that mass to make foam? Some of them, being small, burst and are gone in an instant, while some last longer and as others join them, become swollen and grow to exceedingly great compass; but afterwards they also burst without fail in time, for it cannot be otherwise. Such is the life of men; they are all swollen with wind, some to greater size, others to less; and with some the swelling is short-lived and swift-fated, while with others it is over as soon as it comes into being; but in any case they all must burst.

In fact, in Lucian’s texts, especially the satirical ones that are deeply philosophical, one crucial issue is death.¹⁴ As of course in the Dialogues of the Dead, a genre invented again by Lucian, which could have been performed during banquets (symposia) and played a role similar to the philosophical observation of skulls and skeletons, as in Petrone’s Satiricon. A typical example is the scene where Menippus the Cynic ironically welcomes Socrates himself, the ironist and gay lover, to the underworld, in Dialogue 20.5:

Menippus. In these respects at least, you’re a lucky fellow, Socrates. At any rate they all think you were a wonderful (θαυμάσιον) man, and knew everything, though — I think I’m right in saying so — you knew nothing. – Socrates. That’s what I myself kept telling


them, but they thought it was all pretence (εἰρωνείαν) on my part. – M. But who are these round you? – S. Charmides, my good fellow, and Phaedrus and Clinias’ son. – M. Bravo Socrates! Still following your own special line here! Still with an eye for beauty! – S. What could I find to do more agreeable? But won’t you lie down by us, please? – M. Oh, no; I’m going off to Croesus and Sardanapalus, to stay near them. I expect to have plenty of fun hearing their lamentations.

Critical/Immersive Readership and Meta-fictional/Committed Authorship

Lucian, as a perfect rhetorician, always offers at least two modalities of reception for his oral discourses/written texts: one immersive, impressive, based on energetic effects of sensorial intensity (visual, aural, kinaesthetic, etc.) and therefore outstandingly pleasant, for instance, in vivid descriptions and discussions; the other critical and reflexive, satirical and distanced, somehow para-platonic or stoic. His attitude is quite similar to the situation his contemporary Philostratus stages in the Images, when he presents both dynamic ekphraseis of the paintings he describes and their critical interpretation. Lucian does something of the same quality in his pro-lalia (“introductive talk”) Heracles,15 which might have been a sort of preface to one book of the True Stories, when they were performed orally. Lucian describes here an enigmatic painting of Heracles Ogmios, which he tells he discovered in Gaul, during one of his successful tour in the best theaters of the Empire.16 Happily, he benefited from the help of a Celtic guide and interpreter. He first gives a direct and “most surprising” (παραδοξότατον) and “strangest” (ἀτοπώτατον) description of the old hero (3), who “drags after him a great crowd of men who are all tethered by the ears”, by chains of gold and amber. The followers of this “leader” are cheerful and joyous, always not only accepting, but also praising their submission. And the most enigmatic detail, in the representation of Heracles, is that the artist “pierced the tip of his tongue and represented him drawing the men by that means”, ant that the hero “is smiling”, when looking back at his subjects.

Then follows the allegorical meaning of the painting (Heracles 5), making the sophist a kind of an explicitly seductive god of speech and words. The special humour of the text relies on the fact that Lucian pretends to warn his...


listeners / readers about the dangers of rhetoric and fiction, which he will submit
them to, in the *True Stories*:

In general, we consider that the real Heracles was a wise man who achieved everything
by eloquence and applied persuasion as his principal force. His arrows represent words,
I suppose, keen, sure and swift, which make their wounds in souls. In fact, you your-
selves admit that words are winged.

Quite important too is the fact that these cultural skills (visualisation, interpre-
tation, sense of humour) are exemplified by an hellenized Syrian, Lucian, and his
Celtic interlocutor, both citizens of the Roman Empire, that is one ancient kind of
cultural globalization. Here again, culture is based upon Hellenism, that is first of
all rhetorical, artistic, and philosophical practices. Lucian was himself a Barbarian,
when not educated, but now he is an outstanding Greek, like in *The Hall*, where he
praises a beautiful place where he is presenting a lecture. As Isocrates, the classical
rhetorician of the V–IV\(^{th}\) c. Athens, puts it in his *Panegyricon* (50):

Our city has so far surpassed other men in thought and speech that students of Athens
have become the teachers of others, and the city has made the name “Greek” seem to be
not that of a people but of a way of thinking; and people are called Greeks because they
share in our education (*paideusis*) rather than in our birth.

Lucian opposes barbarian vanity and Greek, that is rhetorical, culture,
while associating spectacular rhetoric and visual art, in *The Hall* (6): \(^{18}\) “… the
beauty of this hall has nothing to do with barbarian eyes, Persian flattery
(Περσικὴν ἀλαζονείαν), or Sultanic vainglory. Instead of just a poor man, it
wants a cultured man for a spectator, who, instead of judging with his eyes, applies
thought to what he sees”.

**EPILOGUE**

A last remark about what Lucian and ancient rhetoric may provide us and post-mo-
dern rhetoric with, also in our complicated times, may well be exemplified by a
passage in his treatise *About Dance* (81), which is in fact ancient pantomime. In
this passage he compares sophistic and choreographic spectacles with philosophical
introspection. The rhetor and the dancer are well represented, he says, by Proteus,
the god of “elusive sea change” and metamorphosis. This passage of Lucian’s treatise


offers a possible model for what our post-modern conception of embodied thought and intelligent action and our notion of rhetoric (and oratory performance) could entail, that is, the search for fluid and real self-knowledge all tying together the Delphic precept “know thyself,” Socratic introspection and dialectics, artistic culture and mediation, and sophistic expression and pleasures:

In general, the dancer should be perfect in every point, so as to be wholly rhythmical, graceful, symmetrical, consistent, unexceptionable, impeccable, not wanting in any way, blent of the highest qualities, keen in his ideas, profound in his culture, and above all, human in his sentiments. In fact, the praise that he gets from the spectators will be consummate when each of those who behold him recognises his own traits, or rather sees in the dancer as in a mirror (ἐν κατόπτρῳ) his very self, with his customary feelings and actions.

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RAKTAŽODŽIAI: kalbos laisvė, postmodernybė, pareizėja, autožodžių, metažodžių, rimtoji komika, skepticizmas, Lukianas iš Samosatos, satyrinis dialogas, skaitojo nuostatos / autorinių nuostatų kritika, klasikinė kultūra, kritinis mąstymas.