

# Visitors from beyond the Grave

## Ghosts in World Literature

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# MENIPPUS, A TRULY LIVING GHOST IN LUCIAN'S *NECROMANCY*

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**ABSTRACT:** The cynic philosopher Menippus is a standard character in Lucian's works. In *Menippus or Necromancy*, Lucian tells the story of the philosopher's *katabasis* which he undertakes to consult the seer Tiresias about true wisdom and the best way to lead one's life. Menippus has been unable to solve the question of the meaning of human life from the precepts of the different philosophical schools and the conduct of the philosophers themselves, who are often the butt of Lucian's criticism. Menippus narrates this voyage after his return to Earth. The philosopher has not died but has become a ghostly apparition to men still alive. The message that he brings with him from the world of the dead is none other than an exaltation of common sense and the value of humour as a universal pattern of behaviour for an authentic life. The aim of this chapter is to analyse some of the formal resources and themes that Lucian uses to achieve his goal through parody and, at the same time, to highlight his ability to create surprising narrative frameworks in which the contents of his writings always acquire a new perspective.

**KEYWORDS:** Lucian, Menippus, Hades, Tiresias, ghost, necromancy, *katabasis*.

## LUCIAN'S CRITICAL GAZE

Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, abide ye now no longer in my house against your will; but you must first complete another journey, and come to the house of Hades and dread Persephone, to seek soothsaying of the spirit of Theban Teiresias, the blind seer, whose mind abides steadfast. To him even in death Persephone has granted reason, that he alone should have understanding; but the others flit about as shadows. (Hom. *Od.* 10. 488-495)<sup>1</sup>

Circe replies to Odysseus in these terms when the king of Ithaca begs the goddess of magic to keep her promise to send him home, now that the time he was destined to stay with her has come to an end. The words of the goddess bring profound grief to the hero, who is well aware that nobody has yet been able to reach Hades alive. Still, Circe urges him to go; only Tiresias can show him the way home and tell him how long it will take.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by Murray 1984: 379-381.

By means of these lines in the *Odyssey* and their subsequent development, Homer establishes the *katabasis* as a mythical category in the classical world<sup>2</sup>. The voyage to the underworld thus becomes a recurrent episode in the biography of heroes from both myths and epic legends – who, thanks to the infernal journey, acquire a kind of knowledge about their own life or about death, or are simply put to the test. In this way, searching (in the cases of Odysseus and Aeneas), physical conflict (in the cases of Heracles and Theseus), and even verbal conflict (in the cases of Pollux, Orpheus and Persephone) represent different variations and motivations of the *descensus ad inferos*, which is also linked to certain ritual practices<sup>3</sup>. Thus, Odysseus must travel to Hades in order to learn of the circumstances of his return to his beloved homeland of Ithaca, from the mouth of someone who had the gift of prophecy and mediated between gods and men as a spokesman of the divine word. For mortals, divination is a passive way of accessing knowledge that is in possession of the gods. It embraces everything that humankind cannot know – especially the future, which is beyond the realm of rational foresight. In this way, the word of the gods becomes a way of expressing human decisions, imbuing them with authority and legitimacy<sup>4</sup>.

The Greek writer of the Roman Imperial era, Lucian of Samosata, is an acute, critical observer of his world and of the tradition in which he was educated and which provides a context for his works. In order to structure his critical vision, the author uses a variety of formal and scenographic resources and a wide range of characters. For example, Lucian made dialogue his own literary genre and adapted it: originally used to express philosophical ideals, Lucian moved dialogue into a new dimension and converted it into the necessary vehicle for comedy, as he himself explains in the work *Prometheus es in verbis*<sup>5</sup>. Lucian often lets his voice be heard through the characters who recur in his writings and behind whom he likes to hide: Lycinus, a name phonetically very close to his own; Parrhesiades, recalling the word *parrhesia*, or freedom of speech, which the philosophers and cynic sages so often use; and Syrius, referring by means of this gentile noun to his homeland, for Lucian was born in Syria, in the Roman province of Commagene<sup>6</sup>.

The point of view of the author, the narrator and the characters represent an essential formal element in satirical literary creation. In consequence, otherness in general – whatever its manifestation – is no doubt one of the most privileged vantage points for expressing criticism and building a satire. Fables and animal

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<sup>2</sup> The most ancient occurrence so far known of this 'archetypal' pattern is in the Akkadian epic poem, where Gilgamesh descends to the Underworld to rescue his servant and friend Enkidu.

<sup>3</sup> Morales Harley 2012: 127-138 studies various mythical themes in relation to ritual practices.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Dowden 2007: 220-235.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mestre - Gómez 2001: 111-122.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Dubel 1994: 19-26.

metamorphoses are good examples of this, as well as the figure of the traveller or the foreigner<sup>7</sup> – The *Golden Ass* by Apuleius is a clear example. Similarly, in Lucian's corpus, in *Anacharsis or Athletics* Lucian uses a conversation between the Scythian Anacharsis (a model of the barbarian from a Greek perspective)<sup>8</sup> and Solon the Athenian (the very essence of Hellenism) to reproduce all aspects of the political and legislative systems of the *polis* and of athletics competitions, which are genuinely Greek achievements<sup>9</sup>.

#### LUCIAN AND THE REALM OF DEATH

Lucian deals with otherness in a number of works to generate a critical portrait of his society, of power, of culture, of religion, of literary tradition, of men's vices and their deepest-rooted customs. He situates this otherness in the area of death and the underworld. According to Greek tradition, Death (*thanatos*), who was the brother of sleep (*hypnos*) and, like him, the child of the night (*nyx*), is identified with Hades, the underworld, where all the deceased end up without exception. This infernal realm of foggy darkness is governed by Hades-Pluto with his wife Persephone; he received it as his inheritance when Cronos was overthrown and the world was distributed between his male descendants<sup>10</sup>.

In Lucian's work, the presence of Hades is visible merely as an allusion, in the form of brief descriptions or references of various kinds, but also in a narrative space in which some of the author's most famous texts occur in their entirety, like the *Dialogues of the Dead*<sup>11</sup>. These short pieces have been the inspiration of many authors in the European literary tradition – Fénelon, Fontenelle and Quevedo, among others – ever since the Byzantine age, as proved by the satire *Timarion*<sup>12</sup>.

Through death, Lucian offers us a space which is unreachable in our everyday experience, and the construction of a utopian world which is, in the etymological

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Camerotto 2012: 224-236.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mestre 2003: 303-317.

<sup>9</sup> In a similar way, see also *The Scythian or the Consul*.

<sup>10</sup> Hom. *Il.* 14. 187-193; Apollod. 1. 2. 1. Lucian places three of the four groups of his *dialogi minores* in one of these three environments in which, according to the mythical tradition, the world was shared out between the sons of Cronos: the *Dialogues of the Dead* in Hades, the *Marine Dialogues* in the domains of Poseidon and the *Dialogues of the Gods*, in which neither Hades nor Poseidon appear, are all set in Olympus. Cf. Gómez 2014: 313-316.

<sup>11</sup> Hades, the god, participates in only four of the thirty dialogues that take place in his domain (*DMort.* 3, 14, 16, 28), and always with the ritual nickname of Πλούτων 'Rich'. According to Plato, this name is particularly apt for the god of the Underworld, for wealth comes from the earth, from underneath it (ἐκ τῆς γῆς κάτωθεν ἀνίεται ὁ πλοῦτος, *Cra.* 403 a). Lucian, from a comical perspective, makes use of this to refer to the deity in charge of "treasuring the dead", precisely to draw attention to human vanity and to the ephemerality of material goods. Cf. Gómez 2012b: 126-128.

<sup>12</sup> This work is included in one of Lucian's manuscripts (*Vaticanus Graecus* 87A) but dates from the twelfth century. Cf. Mestre 2013: 61-72.

sense, “out of place”<sup>13</sup>. In it, the author, or his “spokesman-character”, can give voice to his criticism and satire, because the description of the realm of the dead reflects a conception of the realm of the living, locating the narrator within this world as he sees it. The works of Lucian in which the world of *thanatos* have an important role are usually included – and for a good reason – among the writings with a cynical trend, or are even classified as Menippean.

The cynical philosopher Menippus appears in several works by Lucian. He fits the role of a satirical hero perfectly<sup>14</sup>, and plays a special part in the *Dialogues of the Dead*, in which he appears in ten out of the thirty pieces of the work. In the narrative sequence of these short dialogues<sup>15</sup>, Menippus and Diogenes of Sinope are the only characters among the souls in hell who smile. Menippus laughs at the other dead; he mocks their laments, and his cruel but entirely accurate words show all too clearly what has now become of the power, glory, beauty and possessions – things that the shadows pine for without exception from the very moment of their death, either on the crossing to Hades<sup>16</sup> or during their eternal wandering in the underworld.

It goes without saying that in Lucian's satire, the greater the privileges, wealth and tangible or intangible goods the deceased had possessed, the more intense, profound and constant are their laments. The tyrant Megapenthes even tries to bribe Clotho to allow him to take care of his worldly duties such as public works, his will, and the administration of his family<sup>17</sup>:

ΜΕΓ. Ἦκουσον, ὦ Κλωθοῖ, ἃ σοι ἰδίᾳ μηδενὸς ἀκούοντος εἰπεῖν βούλομαι· ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀπόστητε πρὸς ὀλίγον. ἂν με ἀφῆς ἀποδρᾶναι, χιλιά σοι τάλαντα χρυσοῦ ἐπισήμου δώσειν ὑπισχνοῦμαι τήμερον.

ΚΛΩ. Ἔτι γὰρ χρυσόν, ὦ γελοῖε, καὶ τάλαντα διὰ μηνῆς ἔχεις;

ΜΕΓ. Καὶ τοὺς δύο δὲ κρατήρας, εἰ βούλει, προσθήσω οὐς ἔλαβον ἀποκτείνας Κλεόκριτον, ἔλκοντας ἐκάτερον χρυσοῦ ἀπέφθου τάλαντα ἐκατόν. (*Cat.* 9)

MEGAPENTHES- Listen, Clotho, to something that I have to say to you in private, with nobody else listening. You people stand aside a moment. If you let me run away, I promise to give you a thousand talents of coined gold today.

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<sup>13</sup> The same utopia is the setting for the fantastical journey that the author undertakes in his *True Stories*. Cf. Georgiadou - Larmour 1998: 17-48.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Camerotto 2014: 63-83; Deriu 2017: 37-50.

<sup>15</sup> On the unity of these dialogues, see González Julià 2011: 357-379.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Luc. *Cat.* 3. 17; *DMort.* 3.

<sup>17</sup> The Moira does not allow Megapenthes any special privilege. On the contrary, she reveals to him how the lives of those he left in the world of the living are proceeding since his death: his wife, children, servants, friends... All of them, in spite of crying for him a great deal, have already forgotten him and his fortune is now in someone else's hands. On the possible identification of Megapenthes with Herodes Atticus, see Mestre - Gómez 2009: 93-107.

CLOTHO- What, you ridiculous creature, have you gold and talents still on the brain?

MEGAPENTHES- And I'll give you also, if you wish, the two wine-bowls that I got when I put Cleocritus to death, they are of refined gold and weigh a hundred talents each<sup>18</sup>.

This is why the instructions of the helmsman Charon are so precise when he sees how much useless cargo his passengers try to bring on board his boat, and he instructs Hermes (the god who accompanies the souls on their way to the afterlife) to make sure that they embark on the voyage naked and without luggage, because the boat is small and cannot carry an excessively heavy load<sup>19</sup>.

To this effect, the tyrant of Gela Lampicus tries to keep his diadem, and is forced also to discard his cruelty, his ignorance, his pride and his wrath; the athlete Damasias has to give up his crowns, the public tributes and even his beautiful muscles before he can start on the final journey; and an anonymous orator is not allowed on board Charon's boat with his "unending verbosity, antitheses, parallelisms, clauses and foreign words" (*DMort.* 20. 10). In contrast, Cyniscus – a cynic philosopher (as his name suggests)<sup>20</sup> – and Micyllus see death as a kind of liberation and long for their arrival in Hades. Even Hermes is surprised that a humble man like the cobbler Micyllus<sup>21</sup> does not lament his situation:

ΕΡΜ. Μίκυλλε, σὺ δ' οὐδὲν οἰμῶζεις; καὶ μὴν οὐ θέμις ἀδακρυτὶ διαπλευσαί τινα.

ΜΙΚ. Ἄπαγε· οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἐφ' ὅτῳ ἂν οἰμῶξομαι εὐπλοῶν.

ΕΡΜ. Ὅμως κἂν μικρόν τι ἐς τὸ ἔθος ἐπιστέναξον.

ΜΙΚ. Οἰμῶξομαι τοίνυν, ἐπειδὴ, ὦ Ἑρμῆ, σοὶ δοκεῖ. οἴμοι τῶν καττυμάτων· οἴμοι τῶν κρηπίδων τῶν παλαιῶν· ὅττοτοῖ τῶν σαθρῶν ὑποδημάτων. οὐκέτι ὁ κακοδαίμων ἔωθεν εἰς ἐσπέραν ἄσιτος διαμενῶ, οὐδὲ τοῦ χειμῶνος ἀνυπόδητός τε καὶ ἡμίγυμνος περινοστήσω τοὺς ὀδόντας ὑπὸ τοῦ κρύους συγκροτῶν. τίς ἄρα μου τὴν σμίλην ἔξει καὶ τὸ κεντητήριον; (*Cat.* 20)

HERMES- Micyllus, you are not lamenting at all, are you? Nobody may cross without a tear.

<sup>18</sup> Translation by Harmon 1968: 19.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Luc. *DMort.* 20. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Cyniscus is one of Lucian's recurrent characters, and he usually acts as a spokesman of the author himself. Cf. Luc. *J Conf.*

<sup>21</sup> Micyllus appears again in *The Dream or the Cock*, in which a cock, the property of the cobbler and the alleged reincarnation of the philosopher Pythagoras, speaks with his owner to show him what true happiness is. The animal reasons that happiness does not depend on riches or on unmeasured lust for material goods.

MICYLLUS- Get out with you! I have no reason to lament while the wind is fair.  
HERMES- Do cry, however, even if only a little for custom's sake.  
MICYLLUS- Well, I'll lament, then, since you wish it, Hermes. Alas, my scraps of leather! Alas, my old shoes! Alackaday, my rotten sandals! Unlucky man that I am, never again will I go hungry from morning to night or wander about in winter barefooted and halfnaked, with my teeth chattering for cold! Who is to get my knife and my awl?<sup>22</sup>

Thus, this absence of lamentation is found only in those who have nothing to lose through their death and their crossing to Hades, where neither worldly things nor the longing for glory, riches, treasures, or the various honours that men so tirelessly seek in life have any value. They – the humble people – had nothing while they lived, and they are fully convinced that in the eternal dwelling they will undergo none of the suffering they endured when they were alive<sup>23</sup>. This latter consideration refers to the cynical vision of death as a levelling of everyone and everything; so the cynic philosopher Menippus is also happy, smiling, and well prepared when he meets Charon, carrying only his staff and his bag after deciding to throw his worn-out tunic into the lake<sup>24</sup>.

#### MENIPPUS VISITS HADES: A RETURN TRIP

As we have already pointed out, the spectre of the dead Menippus is also fundamental to the narrative construction of the *Dialogues of the Dead*. It clearly acts as the voice of the author's conscience, in order to draw attention to the ignorance, fatuity and pretensions of poor mortals: all those who, even as but shadows after their death, refuse to accept their own ephemeral condition. This sole fact reveals the profound ignorance that reigns among humans, an ignorance that was such a frequent target of Lucian's. To express his disapproval, in some of his works the author makes use of an observer who is alien to the everyday lives of men, contemplating from a distance the sad spectacle that they offer.

Thus, in *Charon or The Inspectors*, the infernal boatman temporarily abandons the underworld with the intention of seeing life on earth for himself and, thus, to understand once and for all why men are so unwilling to leave it<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Translation by Harmon 1968: 41.

<sup>23</sup> In *Luct.* 16-17, Lucian depicts the ghost of a young man who, now dead, reproaches his old father for the laments that he utters over his corpse. Instead, the boy thinks himself fortunate because he will now no longer suffer cold, hunger or thirst; nor will he have to fight in the army or live in fear of a tyrant; and, above all, because he has escaped dreadful old age.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Luc. DMort.* 20. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Helm 1906: 56-61 regards this work as one of the best examples of Menippus of Gadara's decisive influence on the Lucianic corpus. As a reflection of this Menippean filiation he notes that in this work Lucian refers to historical events which all occurred prior to the fourth century BC. However, this chronological argument is refuted by Hall 1985: 82-94, who, like

Similarly, in *Icaromenippus* or *The Sky-man*<sup>26</sup>, the cynic philosopher Menippus, now equipped with wings like a new Icarus, goes on an airborne journey which takes him to Olympus and even as far as the Moon, and introduces him to the characteristics of the world and the cosmos, its manifestations, and even how the gods live.

In these two examples, *Charon* and *Icaromenippus*, the literary observer ascends and contemplates the scene from a new vantage point. He is, therefore, an *episkopos*, and the scene is the object of his thoughts, criticisms or questions, all of them presented in the form of a dialogue (*Charon* is a conversation that takes place on Earth between the ferryman and the god Hermes<sup>27</sup>) or in the form of a narration, albeit framed in an apparent dialogue, as is the *Icaromenippus*.

Clearly, Lucian is particularly adept at creating complex (and often surprising) narrative frames. In these environments the content of his works, and especially the themes that were dear to him<sup>28</sup>, always acquires a renewed relief; very similar issues are articulated in very different presentations. Lucian's *modus operandi* becomes evident in the way in which he treats death as a ghostly image of humankind's earthly existence. Thus, in *Menippus* or *The Descent into Hades*, the author narrates the cynic philosopher's *katabasis* on which he embarked in order to discover authentic wisdom and to understand the ways of human life. Just as in *Charon* or in *Icaromenippus*, in this work, too, it is the motif of travelling that allows the protagonist-observer once more to become a critic of the inconsistency of human affairs. Menippus wishes to achieve true knowledge and legitimate wisdom which have so far not been offered to him by those who are considered wise and also by those who pretend to be so with no reason, especially poets and philosophers. Moved by his desire for knowledge Menippus becomes a *kataskopos* on this occasion, and must descend into the gloomy world of Hades in order to contemplate the truth. However, the story, the *diegema*<sup>29</sup>, takes place on earth, in the form of a dialogue between the philosopher and an anonymous character identified solely as a friend, since his name is Philos.

Thus, if a ghost is the image of a dead person that appears to the living, or a person who goes about in disguise at night and frightens people, then Menippus in this work could well be a ghost on both counts: the ghost of a human among

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Bompaire 1958: 335-378 before him, does not believe that the cynic philosopher was Lucian's only source.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Camerotto 2009: 24-47.

<sup>27</sup> Favreau-Linder 2015: 197-209 explores the proximity of this dialogue with the *Dialogues of Dead*.

<sup>28</sup> Anderson 1976.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Theon *Prog.* 78. 15 Patillon: Διήγημά ἐστι λόγος ἐκθετικός πραγμάτων γεγονότων ἢ ὡς γεγονότων ("Narrative is language descriptive of things that have happened or as though they had happened").

the dead, and a true apparition which disconcerts the living because of his attire and because of the message he brings with him from the underworld<sup>30</sup>. Menippus wears a woollen hat and a lion skin, and carries a lyre<sup>31</sup>, accoutrements associated with the traditional heroes who descended into Hades such as Odysseus, Orpheus and Heracles<sup>32</sup>. In fact, the philosopher's artifice is not just physical but affects his speech as well: in his first interventions, he is only able to speak in verse, to the surprise of his friend. Menippus explains this odd mode of expression as follows:

νεωστὶ γὰρ Εὐριπίδη καὶ Ὀμήρῳ συγγενόμενος οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἀνεπλήσθη τῶν ἐπῶν καὶ αὐτόματά μοι τὰ μέτρα ἐπὶ τὸ στόμα ἔρχεται. (*Nec.* 1)<sup>33</sup>

I have just been in the company of Euripides and Homer, so that somehow or other I have become filled with poetry, and verses come unbidden to my lips.

These are not just any verses; they have been carefully selected by Lucian to contextualise his story not as a serious imitation but as a satire<sup>34</sup>. In this way, by means of four quotes from Euripidean tragedies<sup>35</sup>, and one from the *Odyssey*, Lucian announces that Menippus is now returning from the kingdom where Hades lives apart from all other gods<sup>36</sup> ("All hail, ye halls and portals of my home! What joy you give mine eyes, to light returned"<sup>37</sup>). He was taken there by a youthful impulse rather than by reason<sup>38</sup>, so that, without being dead ("Nay, I

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<sup>30</sup> Aguirre 2009: 179-189 explores the topic of ghosts in ancient Greece presenting the continuity of this theme in Greek literature from Homer to Lucian, also on the basis of the information provided by iconographical representations.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Luc. *Nec.* 1.

<sup>32</sup> This constitutes a very typical reference in Lucian. It reflects how the author often enjoys the art of allusion in order to challenge his audience of *pepaidemenoí*, with whom he shares the knowledge of a literary tradition.

<sup>33</sup> Gómez 2012a: 13-29 analyses how Charon, upon ascending to the earth, also speaks poetically, contaminated by Homer, who during the infernal journey never stopped reciting even when "he became seasick and jettisoned most of his lays, including Scylla and Charybdis and the Cyclops" (Luc. *Cont.* 7). Elsewhere, Aeschylus' ghost claims that his poetry is still alive and did not die with him (ἡ πόσις οὐχὶ συντέθνηκέ μοι, *Ar. Ran.* 868); cf. Planchas Gallarte 2014: 8-17 on the agonistic confrontation in Hades between Aeschylus and Euripides.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Camerotto 1998: 213-215.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Macías Otero 2015: 137-153 on the poignant references to Euripides, tragedy and theatre which are pervasively made in Lucian's *Necromancy*. In general, Euripides is the most quoted, paraphrased or alluded tragic poet in Lucian's works, as Karavas 2005: 175-182 pointed out.

<sup>36</sup> E. *Hec.* 1-2: "Ἦκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας / λιπῶν, ἴν' Ἄιδης χωρὶς ὄκισταί θεῶν, "I have come from the hiding place of the dead and the gates of darkness / where Hades dwells apart from the other gods", translation by Kovacs 1995: 401.

<sup>37</sup> E. *H.F.* 523-524: ὦ χαῖρε μέλαθρον πρόπυλά θ' ἑστίας ἐμῆς, / ὡς ἄσμενός σ' ἑσεῖδον ἐς φάος μολῶν.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. E. *Fr.* 149 Kannicht: Νεότης μ' ἐπήρε καὶ θράσος τοῦ νοῦ πλέον.

was living when I went to Hell<sup>39</sup>), he could ask the soul of the Theban Tiresias to make a prophecy. Tiresias was, no doubt, a renowned soothsayer in life; in addition, since Homer's times, knowledge of the past, the present and the future is an inherent attribute of the souls of the dead<sup>40</sup>.

The disguise, another motif with Homeric roots<sup>41</sup>, is used here as a device that guarantees the loss of identity. This loss is only apparent, but necessary in order to ensure a distancing that is essential for the adoption of the critical point of view. On the other hand, the mix and alternation of prose and verse – the *prosimetrum* – is a formal element that characterises texts with a parodic and satiric intention<sup>42</sup>. However, the change in Menippus' speech after his stay in the underworld is merely provisional, and the philosopher once again speaks normally when he turns his attention to the real, every-day world and questions his friend about events on earth and the activities of his fellow citizens during his absence. “Nothing new;” Philos replies, “just what they did before – stealing, lying under oath, extorting usury, and weighing pennies” (Καινὸν οὐδέν, ἀλλ’ οἷα καὶ πρὸ τοῦ ἀρπάζουσιν, ἐπιπορκοῦσιν, τοκογλυφοῦσιν, ὀβολοστατοῦσιν, *Nec.* 2). Receiving such a negative answer, Menippus feels that his journey has not been in vain because, unlike the rest of the living, he now knows the fate that awaits them. He considers them to be unfortunate because they are still mired in profound ignorance:

MEN. ἄθλιοι καὶ κακοδαίμονες· οὐ γὰρ ἴσασιν οἷα ἔναγχος κεκύρωται παρὰ τοῖς κάτω καὶ οἷα κεχειροτόνηται τὰ ψηφίσματα κατὰ τῶν πλουσίων, ἃ μὰ τὸν Κέρβερον οὐδεμίᾳ μηχανῇ διαφεύγειν αὐτούς. (*Nec.* 2)

MENIPPUS- Poor wretches! They do not know what decisions have been made of late in the lower world, and what ordinances have been enacted against the rich; by Cerberus, they cannot possibly evade them!

Nevertheless, for the time being Lucian does not explain the contents of these ordinances: he only does so almost at the end of the work, just before Menippus can question Tiresias. It is Philos who creates the narrative suspense by interrupting him when he, very reluctantly, was about to reveal the secret. Instead, Philos prefers to know:

<sup>39</sup> E. Fr. 936 Kannicht: Οὐκ, ἀλλ’ ἔτ’ ἔμπουν Ἄϊδος μ’ ἐδέξατο.

<sup>40</sup> So Odysseus admits explicitly to his mother in Hades: ψυχῇ χρησόμενον Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο (Hom. *Od.* 11. 165).

<sup>41</sup> Athena instructs Odysseus to alter his appearance so that he will look abject to the wooers – and will thus be able to deceive and kill them (Hom. *Od.* 13. 397-403).

<sup>42</sup> Carmignani 2009 studies the significance and use of the *prosimetrum* in narrative works such as Petronius' *Satyricon* in relation to the Menippean satire. This combination of prose and verse allows a literary echo which is made far wider by the interaction of the different stylistic registers.

τίς ἢ ἐπίνοιά σου τῆς καθόδου ἐγένετο, τίς δ' ὁ τῆς πορείας ἡγεμών, εἶθ' ἐξῆς ἅ τε εἶδες ἅ τε ἤκουσας παρ' αὐτοῖς· εἰκὸς γὰρ δὴ φιλόκαλον ὄντα σε μηδὲν τῶν ἀξίων θεάς ἢ ἀκοῆς παραλιπεῖν. (*Nec.* 2)

What was the purpose of your going down, who was your guide for the journey, and then, in due order, what you saw and heard there; for it is to be expected, of course, that as a man of taste you did not overlook anything worth seeing or hearing.

Lucian uses these questions to structure his chronicle of Menippus' descent into Hades. The story is organised as an orderly response to each of the questions: the reasons for his descent (§§ 3-5), the guide (§§ 6-9), the underworld and the characters there (§§ 10-14), and the life of the dead (§§ 15-18). The story ends with the decree enacted against the rich and the words of Tiresias (§§ 19-21). Menippus then very briefly summarises his return to life (§ 22).

The aim of his journey is to find out some truth about the life of humankind. Menippus feels unable to obtain this truth because of the dilemma in which he finds himself<sup>43</sup>: on the one side, the verses of the poets – and he explicitly quotes Homer and Hesiod – in which he was instructed in his infancy and youth, describe facts and praise actions condemned by human laws: wars, adultery, abuse, incest, treason... and on the other, the philosophers, to whom he turned in search of an easy, safe way through life, express entirely contradictory opinions in relation to one and the same thing. Menippus confesses his disappointment:

ὥστε μήτε τῷ θερμόν τὸ αὐτὸ πράγμα λέγοντι μήτε τῷ ψυχρὸν ἀντιλέγειν ἔχειν, καὶ ταῦτ' εἰδόμενα σαφῶς ὡς οὐκ ἂν ποτε θερμόν τι εἴη καὶ ψυχρὸν ἐν ταῦτῳ χρόνῳ. ἀτεχνῶς οὖν ἔπασχον τοῖς νυστάζουσι τούτοις ὅμοιον, ἄρτι μὲν ἐπινεύων, ἄρτι δὲ ἀνανεύων ἔμπαλιν. (*Nec.* 4)

When the selfsame thing was called hot by one and cold by another, it was impossible for me to controvert either of them, though I knew right well that nothing could ever be hot and cold at the same time. So in good earnest I acted like a drowsy nan, nodding now this way and now that.

However, Menippus admits that his greatest perplexity emerges when he sees that all these people that are called philosophers only coincide – as Lucian so often denounces – in preaching in their discourse and teaching the very

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<sup>43</sup> Camerotto 2014: 180 believes that, although the initial reason for Menippus' journey may respond to a search for knowledge or scientific questions, he soon identifies with an ethic *aporia*.

opposite of what they themselves do<sup>44</sup>:

τοὺς γοῦν καταφρονεῖν παραινούντας χρημάτων ἐώρων ἀπρὶξ ἐχομένους αὐτῶν καὶ περὶ τόκων διαφορομένους καὶ ἐπὶ μισθῶ παιδεύοντας καὶ πάντα ἔνεκα τούτων ὑπομένοντας, τοὺς τε τὴν δόξαν ἀποβαλλομένους αὐτῆς ταύτης ἔνεκα πάντα ἐπιτηδεύοντας ἡδονῆς τε αὐτῆς σχεδὸν ἅπαντας κατηγοροῦντας, ἰδίᾳ δὲ μόνη ταύτη προσηρτημένους. (*Nec.* 5)

For instance, I perceived that those who recommended scorning money clove to it tooth and nail, bickered about interest, taught for pay, and underwent everything for the sake of money; and that those who were for rejecting public opinion aimed at that very thing not only in all that they did, but in all that they said. Also that while almost all of them inveighed against pleasure, they privately devoted themselves to that alone.

As for his guide on this eccentric journey, Menippus justifies with some resignation his decision to entrust himself to a Babylonian magician, with long white hair and a venerable long beard, because he had heard that the disciples and heirs of Zoroaster:

ἐπιφθαίεις τε καὶ τελεταῖς τισιν ἀνοίγειν τε τοῦ Ἅιδου τὰς πύλας καὶ κατάγειν ὃν ἂν βούλωνται ἀσφαλῶς καὶ ὀπίσω αὐθις ἀναπέμπειν. (*Nec.* 6)

With certain charms and ceremonials could open the gates of Hades, taking down in safety anyone they would and guiding him back again.

Menippus is well aware that Hades is off limits to the living and that the dead cannot return from it<sup>45</sup>. The philosopher narrates in full detail the charms, the baths and even the diet that he was obliged to follow during twenty-nine days before descending via the Euphrates to the place where, after digging a hole and carrying out the due blood sacrifice (like a new Odysseus)<sup>46</sup> – and invoking the Furies, the Erinyes, the nocturnal Hecate and the terrible goddess Persephone, he was able to enter Hades<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> This is a constant reproach (e.g. *Pisc.* 34; *Tim.* 54-55; *Herm.* 11-12; *VH* 2. 18; *Symp.* 34) that Lucian directs against the false and hypocritical behaviour of philosophers. This does not mean, though, that the author criticises the ideologies of the different philosophical schools or that he is disrespectful to the philosophical tradition. Cf. Mestre 2012-2013: 72.

<sup>45</sup> Johnston 1999: 127ff. describes the cases in which, according to Greek beliefs, the dead were able to return to earth and appear to the living: premature deaths (*aoroi*), violent deaths (*biaiothanatoi*) or those who have not received due burial (*ataphoi*), like Patroclus when he demands Achilles to fulfil his need to be buried (*Hom. Il.* 23. 71-74).

<sup>46</sup> *Hom. Od.* 11. 23-36.

<sup>47</sup> This ritual of purity evokes some instructions that can also be found in the so-called Orphic gold tablets, which contain a narrative of the deceased's journey to the underworld and

Lucian thus draws on geographical distance as the vehicle for his critical gaze and his acerbic words which he also addresses to the ritual practices that characterise every people and every belief, and thus have no absolute value in themselves<sup>48</sup>. At the same time, the figure of the stranger as the initiatory guide accentuates the extraordinary nature of Menippus' journey to a place of no return, but from which he will be able to come back precisely because he has renounced his own identity<sup>49</sup>. Only by impersonating Orpheus and Heracles and taking on their attributes is he able to make a return journey that is prohibited on two counts – his condition as a man who is still alive, and his mortality. In this way, as a living creature, as long as he remains among the dead he must be only an apparition, a ghost wearing the disguise of other characters – demigods and mythical heroes – who also descended alive into Hades and were able to cross the gates of the underworld (in both directions). No one with the appearance of these individuals would raise suspicion among the terrible guards of hell, as the philosopher explains to his perplexed friend:

αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν μαγικὴν τινα ἐνέδου στολὴν τὰ πολλὰ ἑοικυῖαν τῇ Μηδικῇ, ἐμὲ δὲ τουτοῖσι φέρων ἐνεσκεύασε, τῷ πῖλῳ καὶ τῇ λεοντῇ καὶ προσέειπε τῇ λύρῃ, καὶ παρεκελεύσατο, ἥν τις ἔρηταί με τοῦνομα, Μένιππον μὲν μὴ λέγειν, Ἡρακλέα δὲ ἢ Ὀδυσσεά ἢ Ὀρφέα. (*Nec.* 8)

He himself put on a magician's gown very like the Median dress, and speedily costumed me in these things which you see – the cap, the lion's skin, and the lyre besides; and he urged me, if anyone should ask my name, not to say Menippus, but Heracles or Odysseus or Orpheus.

This description of Hades presents all the standard features that had accumulated in the literary tradition in relation to the landscape and the characters who dwell there. The place is deep, with a river, a lake and the boatman. When he sees the lion's skin, Charon makes room for Menippus even though his boat is full, for he believes that once more he is carrying Heracles among his passengers<sup>50</sup>. There is also Pluto's palace and the asphodel meadows, and the ferocious Cerberus. Like a new Orpheus, Menippus tames the animal with his lyre<sup>51</sup>. Menippus also sees the judge Minos in full sway, and the punishment

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their encounter with the powers in there; cf. Edmonds 2004: 46-82.

<sup>48</sup> Menippus' scepticism reminds us, in a way, of Heraclitus' criticisms of certain religious and cult practices. The Ephesian believed that to take part in practices that men consider mysteries is to initiate oneself in impiety: τὰ γὰρ νομιζόμενα κατὰ ἀνθρώπους μυστήρια ἀνιερῶστί μούονται (fr. 22B 14DK = Clem. Al. *Protr.* 20. 2).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Bremmer 2015: 126ff. for Persians and Magi as necromancers.

<sup>50</sup> Luc. *Nec.* 8.

<sup>51</sup> Thus, like Dionysos in the Aristophanes' *Frogs* or the soul in Plato's *Phaedo*, before reaching the realm of the dead, Menippus has to face the obstacles that obstruct the traveler's path in the

of the impious souls – some anonymous, others mythical characters<sup>52</sup> – and, of course, the laments. Death makes them all equal; and because of this, the philosopher feels happy when he sees those who used to live full of pride and surrounded by wealth and power arriving naked and crestfallen at the tribunal of Minos; he says that even in Hades “they almost expected to be shown submission” (καὶ προσκυνεῖσθαι περιμενόντων, *Nec.* 12). In contrast, Menippus notes the goodwill of the judge towards the poor because “they received only half as much torture and were allowed to rest at intervals before being punished again” (τοῖς μέντοι πένησιν ἡμιτέλεια τῶν κακῶν ἐδίδοτο, καὶ διαναπαυόμενοι πάλιν ἐκολάζοντο, *Nec.* 14). Death also makes humans equals in their physical aspect; in the underworld it is difficult to distinguish the heroes from the common dead, some of whom (especially the elderly) are already mouldy, and others in a better state such as the Egyptians “thanks to the durability of their embalming process” (διὰ τὸ πολυαρκῆς τῆς ταριχείας, *Nec.* 15). Still, they are all just naked bones piled up, with a terrible, empty gaze and fleshless teeth. On seeing such a disheartening vision, Menippus wonders:

ᾧτινι διακρίναμι τὸν Θερσίτην ἀπὸ τοῦ καλοῦ Νιρέως ἢ τὸν μεταίτην Ἴρον ἀπὸ τοῦ Φαϊάκων βασιλέως ἢ Πυρρίαν τὸν μάγειρον ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔτι τῶν παλαιῶν γνωρισμάτων αὐτοῖς παρέμενεν, ἀλλ’ ὅμοια τὰ ὅστ’ ἦν, ἄδηλα καὶ ἀνεπίγραφα καὶ ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς ἔτι διακρίνεσθαι δυνάμενα. (*Nec.* 15)

How I could distinguish Thersites from handsome Nireus, or the mendicant Iros from the King of the Phaeacians, or the cook Pyrrhias from Agamemnon; for none of their former means of identification abode with them, but their bones were all alike, undefined, unlabelled, and unable ever again to be distinguished by anyone.

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narrative of the journey to the other world; cf. Edmonds 2004: 222-227.

<sup>52</sup> In *Nec.* 14 Lucian mentions several mythical characters who were famous in particular because of the eternal punishment to which they were condemned. The punishment of the impious souls after death is a theme that this author also recreates in *VH* 2. 31, where the narrator states that those who had often lied in life were suffering the greatest punishments, among them Ctesias of Cnidus, Herodotus, and many others.

### KNOWING LIFE THROUGH DEATH

The scenes contemplated in Hades briefly take Menippus away from the narrative structure. Now, back to Earth in the presence of his friend, he reflects on real human life. The philosopher can only equate it with a stage play in which humans, as mere actors, perform the role that has been assigned to each of them by the goddess Fortune at a particular moment and only for a limited time – after which they all lose their costume and disguise. Humankind, however, ignores this:

ἐπειδ' ἂν ἀπαιτῆ τὸν κόσμον ἐπιστάσα ἢ Τύχη, ἄχθονται τε καὶ ἀγανακτοῦσιν ὥσπερ οἰκείων τινῶν στερισκόμενοι καὶ οὐχ ἄ πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐχρήσαντο ἀποδιδόντες. (*Nec.* 16)

Some, however, are so ungrateful that when Fortune appears to them and asks for her trappings back, they are vexed and indignant, as if they were being robbed of their own property, instead of giving back what they had borrowed for a little time<sup>53</sup>.

Therefore, the conclusion is simple: in the underworld, earthly goods are of no value. The power King Philip had on earth is worth nothing; in Hades he is but a humble tinker. Nor do worldly riches help Mausolus, who in fact is crushed by his magnificent tomb<sup>54</sup>. With Menippus' thoughts and the sentence with which they finish (“That is what human affairs are like, it seemed to me as I looked”, ἐκεῖνα ὀρῶντί μοι ἐδόκει ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίος, *Nec.* 16), Lucian is now ready to reveal the contents of the motion announced at the beginning. The enactment of this motion allows the author to present the paradox that the existence of the dead goes by in the same manner as life on earth, as if in a mirror, at least regarding their organization: for the dead have their assembly as well, their magistrates and their proposals to be discussed and voted upon, all adapted, of course, to the conditions of the underworld<sup>55</sup>:

Εἶπε τὴν γνώμην Κρανίων Σκελετίωνος Νεκυσιεύς φυλῆς Ἀλιβαντίδος. Τούτου ἀναγνωσθέντος τοῦ ψηφίσματος ἐπεψήφισαν μὲν αἱ ἀρχαί,

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<sup>53</sup> On the use of theatrical metaphors in Lucian's works, see Jufresa 2003: 171-186.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Luc. *DMort.* 29, where Diogenes asks the Carian king Mausolus in what way the possession of his magnificent tomb is beneficial to him in Hades.

<sup>55</sup> In a similar way, despite the alternative scenario of Olympus, the gods also take their decisions according to the parameters that direct the earthly communal living of humankind. Momus, for example, himself an “eroe de la satira tra gli dei” (Camerotto 2014: 79), regrets the disadvantageous situation of the ancestral divinities after the arrival of the new ones, and proposes a decree which corresponds in its formulae to the Athenian decrees of the fifth and fourth centuries BC (cf. Luc. *Deor. Conc.* 14-18).

ἐπεχειροτόνησε δὲ τὸ πλῆθος καὶ ἐνεβριμήσατο ἢ Βριμῶ καὶ ὑλάκτησεν ὁ Κέρβερος· οὕτω γὰρ ἐντελεῖ γίγνεται καὶ κύρια τὰ ἐγνωσμένα. (*Nec.* 20)

On motion of Scully Fitzbones of Corpsebury, Cadavershire. After this motion had been read, the officials put it to the vote, the majority indicated assent by the usual sign, Brimo brayed and Cerberus howled. That is the way in which their motions are enacted and ratified<sup>56</sup>.

The motion admonishes the rich for their unjust acts against the poor during their lifetimes. This behaviour is unacceptable in a place like Hades, where all inhabitants shall receive the same equal treatment for eternity:

ΨΗΦ. Ἐπειδὴ πολλὰ καὶ παράνομα οἱ πλούσιοι δρῶσι παρὰ τὸν βίον ἀρπάζοντες καὶ βιαζόμενοι καὶ πάντα τρόπον τῶν πενήτων καταφρονοῦντες, δέδοκται τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ, ἐπειδὴν ἀποθάνωσι, τὰ μὲν σώματα αὐτῶν κολάζεσθαι καθάπερ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων πονηρῶν, τὰς δὲ ψυχὰς ἀναπεμφθεῖσας ἄνω εἰς τὸν βίον καταδύεσθαι εἰς τοὺς ὄνους, ἄχρις ἂν ἐν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ διαγάγῃσι μυριάδας ἑτῶν πέντε καὶ εἴκοσιν, ὄνοι ἐξ ὄνων γιγνόμενοι καὶ ἀχθοφοροῦντες καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν πενήτων ἐλαυνόμενοι, τούντεϋθεν δὲ λοιπὸν ἐξεῖναι αὐτοῖς ἀποθανεῖν. (*Nec.* 20)

MOTION- Whereas many lawless deeds are done in life by the rich, who plunder and oppress and in every way humiliate the poor, Be it resolved by the senate and the people, that when they die their bodies be punished like those of the other malefactors, but their souls be sent back up into life and enter into donkeys until they shall have passed two hundred and fifty thousand years in the said condition, transmigrating from donkey to donkey, bearing burdens, and being driven by the poor; and that thereafter it be permitted them to die.

Nevertheless, the decision taken in Hades about the rich cannot affect them, for they are dead; thanks to the *isotimia* of the underworld, all the creatures that once lived are now equal<sup>57</sup>. Indeed, the decree is only valid while they are alive, and because of this the infernal assembly plans a new life for the souls of the rich, doomed to be reincarnated as donkeys for “two-hundred fifty thousand

<sup>56</sup> In one of his festive *premiáticas* (*Pregmática que han de guardar las hermanas comunes o Premiáticas contra las cotorreras*), Quevedo, too, names the competent authority from whom he obtained his juridical ordination. His text begins as follows: “Nos, el hermano mayor del Regodeo, unánime y conforme con los cofrades de la Carcajada y Risa, salud, dineros y bobos”, and it ends: “Regente Trapala Trapala. Doctor Barajúnda. El licenciado Bulla. Doctor Chacota. Por mandado de sus señorías, Secretario Arborbola.” (García-Valdés 1993: 330 and 342).

<sup>57</sup> Diogenes entrusts Pollux with the following task: while he is on earth, in his alternation between life and death with his twin brother Castor, he must explain to the poor that the rich are nothing in Hades (*DMort.* 1. 4).

years”, and to be denied the condition of pure shadow residing in the asphodel meadows, where they can finally be released from all necessities. From the point of view of those who understand death as a liberation, or those who acknowledge the scarce value of mundane goods, paradoxical as it may seem, this is the worst punishment that one might receive: the impossibility of being definitively dead.

Lucian's joke, apart from the implicit satire on the transmigration of souls with its Pythagorean connotations<sup>58</sup>, once more targets the ignorance of humans as the sole cause of their ills, and in particular the ignorance of the rich, as they live their lives fooled by the belief that possessions are the most important thing. Hence the advice of Tiresias: “a blind little old gentleman, pale, with a piping voice” (τυφλόν τι γερόντιον καὶ ὠχρὸν καὶ λεπτόφωνον, *Nec.* 21)<sup>59</sup> to Menippus when the visitor eventually finds him:

Ο τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἄριστος βίος καὶ σωφρονέστερος παυσάμενος τοῦ μετεωρολογεῖν καὶ τέλη καὶ ἀρχὰς ἐπισκοπεῖν καὶ καταπτύσας τῶν σοφῶν τούτων συλλογισμῶν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα λήρον ἠγησάμενος τοῦτο μόνον ἐξ ἄπαντος θηράσει, ὅπως τὸ παρὸν εὖ θέμενος παραδράμῃς γελῶν τὰ πολλὰ καὶ περὶ μηδὲν ἐσπουδακῶς. (*Nec.* 21)

The life of the common sort is best and wiser: if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, spit your scorn at those clever syllogisms, and count all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing at most things and taking nothing seriously.

The kind of life that Tiresias describes as positive and reasonable is that of the *idiotai*, a term that Lucian also uses on other occasions when he wants to unmask the supposed wisdom of the false sages or the arrogant erudition of certain characters. Thus, Lycinus declares himself an *idiotes* in front of the wise Hermotimus, as he appeals to the Socratic recognition of one's own ignorance as the only way to achieve knowledge of any kind:

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<sup>58</sup> In *The Dream or The Cock*, by means of the questions that Micyllus addresses to the cock-Pythagoras, Lucian ridicules the theory of metempsychosis and other absurd beliefs and precepts of this philosophical sect. In Hades, Lucian presents Pythagoras asking Menippus for something to eat and, although the latter can only offer beans, he is ready to eat them when he firmly states: ἄλλα παρὰ νεκροῖς δόγματα (“the precepts are others among the dead”, *DMort.* 6. 3). Cf. Grau 2015: 171-178 on the comic tradition of deriding philosophical asceticism.

<sup>59</sup> Lucian's irony is evident: in the darkness of Hades, the fact that Tiresias is blind is irrelevant. In addition, Menippus has just referred to the empty gaze of the skulls, as also in *DMort.* 9. 1. However, Ogden 2001: 221 points out that the image of the ghost as he was in life is already present in Homer, and so the ghost usually appears with his characteristic features.

ΕΡΜ. Μόνος δὲ σὺ τάληθές κατείδες, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι ἀνόητοι ἅπαντες ὅσοι φιλοσοφοῦσιν.

ΛΥΚ. Καταψεύδη μου, ὦ Ἑρμότιμε, λέγων ὡς ἐγὼ προτίθημι πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν τῶν ἄλλων ἢ τάττω ὅλως ἐν τοῖς εἰδόσι, καὶ οὐ μνημονεύεις ὧν ἔφην, οὐκ αὐτὸς εἰδέναι τάληθές ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἄλλους διατεινόμενος ἀλλὰ μετὰ πάντων αὐτὸ ἀγνοεῖν ὁμολογῶν. (*Herm.* 53)

HERMOTIMUS- You alone have seen the truth, all the others who study philosophy are fools.

LYCINUS- You wrong me, Hermotimus, when you say that I somehow put myself before other people or in general rank myself in some way with those who know. You do not remember what I said. I did not maintain that I knew the truth more than other people. No, I admitted that like all men I was ignorant of it<sup>60</sup>.

#### BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE

The exhortation to common sense and the importance of humour as a universal guide of conduct in the life of humankind are not motifs invented by Lucian; nor are they exclusive to this work in the ensemble of the Lucianic corpus. Once more, Lucian's skill lies in re-taking a Homeric literary motif (the questioning of the dead)<sup>61</sup> and building his own story from it (the descent of Menippus) while creating and re-creating the narrative stage (Hades). The parodic formulation of themes and traditional characters found in this scene entertains and amuses the audience, but by means of it the author provides material for a serious reflection. It is the same satirical intention that centuries later will move the sharp attack of a writer such as Quevedo on the social, political and religious values of his time. Quevedo writes from the unreal space of his *Sueños* ("Dreams"). Note especially the *Sueño de la Muerte* ("the Dream of Death"), whose main character reasons as follows on waking up:

Con esto me hallé en mi aposento, tan cansado y tan colérico como si la pendencia hubiera sido verdad y la peregrinación no hubiera sido sueño. Con todo eso, me pareció no despreciar del todo esta visión, y darle algún crédito, pareciéndome que los muertos pocas veces se burlan, y que gente sin pretensión y desengañada más atiende a enseñar que a entretener<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Translation by Kilburn 1968: 361.

<sup>61</sup> The literary summoning of the dead is documented since Homer (*Od.* 10. 467-12. 7), but it may reflect a traditional practice among the Greeks. Cf. Bremmer 2002: 71-76.

<sup>62</sup> Arellano 2010: 405.

The traditional tale of the journey to the underworld in Greek literature is indeed neither simple nor singular, but each telling reveals a different perspective on the cosmos, a reflection of the order of this world through the image of the other. Once more, in the work of Lucian, too, the mixture between the serious and the comical – the *spoudogeloion*<sup>63</sup> – is incarnated in the cynic philosopher Menippus. In this particular necromancy, though, the cynic philosopher plays a dual role: that of the wise living man among the dead and, at the same time, the voice from the afterlife among the living, both informative and prophetic, as its knowledge is beyond that of any mortal<sup>64</sup>. The satirical hero is, in short, a ghostly image of Lucian himself. It only frightens because it invites the audience to discover human existence by means of their reasoning, an existence whose naked reality is only perceptible through death, as Quevedo admonishes:

Estos son gente que están en el otro mundo y aún no se persuaden a que son difuntos. Maravillóme esta visión, y dije herido del dolor y conocimiento:  
–Dionos Dios una vida sola y tantas muertes; de una manera se nace y de otra se muere; si vuelvo arriba, yo procuraré empezar a vivir bien por la muerte<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Camerotto 1998: 120-129, on Lucian's use of the serious-comical *μῆξις* as a parodic artistic expression.

<sup>64</sup> The ghost of Polydorus in Euripides' *Hecuba* also informs about the dead and foretells what is to happen. Cf. Aguirre 2006: 115-117.

<sup>65</sup> Arellano 2010: 338.