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Mixis
Le mélange des genres chez Lucien de Samosate

Demopolis

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DOI: 10.4000/books.demopolis.2252

Publisher: Demopolis

Place of publication: Demopolis

Year of publication: 2017

Published on OpenEdition Books: 1 October 2020

Serie: Quaero

Electronic ISBN: 9782354571535



<http://books.openedition.org>

Electronic reference

BOSMAN, Philip. 12. *Tailored for School: Lucian's Jupiter Tragoedus and Jupiter Confutatus* In: *Mixis: Le mélange des genres chez Lucien de Samosate* [online]. Paris: Demopolis, 2017 (generated 04 October 2020). Available on the Internet: <<http://books.openedition.org/demopolis/2252>>. ISBN: 9782354571535. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.demopolis.2252>.

Tailored for School

Lucian's Jupiter Tragoedus and Jupiter Confutatus

Philip Bosman

Any discussion of generic mixing in the Lucianic oeuvre should give some pride of place to the *Jupiter Tragoedus*¹. If the author indeed pinned his fame on the novel παράζευξις ('yoking together'; *Bis Accusatus* 34) of dialogue and comedy, then this piece falls right into the mould with its double staging of philosophical debate and extended comic frame. In the *Bis Accusatus*, the Syrian enumerates the measures he took to render philosophical dialogue more palatable, accessible and up-to-date, on top of which he paired it to Comedy². In this article, I will argue that the particular pairing in the *Jupiter Tragoedus* had additional aims relating to packaging as well as to content. When compared to its sister dialogue, the *Jupiter Confutatus*, it emerges that the generic mixing affords Lucian structural support, first for setting up his Epicurean spokesperson as victor in the philosophers' dispute, and secondly for creating a more convenient (di)stance towards the peddled Epicurean position in the dialogical section of the work.

1. Robert Bracht BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 167.

2. *Bis Acc.* 34: Ἐπί τῆς γῆς βαίνειν εἶθισα εἰς τὸν ἀνθρώπινον τοῦτον τρόπον, μετὰ δὲ τὸν αὐχμὸν τὸν πολλὸν ἀποπλύνας καὶ μειδιᾶν καταναγκάσας ἡδῖω τοῖς ὄρωσι παρεσκευάσσα, i.e. to make it 'walk on the ground like a human', to 'wash off its accumulated grime' and to 'force a smile' upon its face. I would assume the pairing with Comedy only reinforced these measures. The 'Syrian' is generally taken to be as close to an authorial voice as one could presume with Lucian.

The relationship between the two works

It should be no surprise that the two mentioned works have often been compared³. They have in common the name of the supreme Olympian in their respective titles, but they also share a debate on the topic of the gods' apparent lack of agency in relation to the Fates. The *Jupiter Tragoedus*, longer and more dramatized, is notable for its 'Doppelbühne', with action simultaneously taking place on both the divine and the human planes⁴. Prior to the philosophers' dispute, Lucian adds conversations among the gods on the coming debate's significance, leading into a full divine assembly on the conundrum facing the gods. But the two works have a number of differentiating elements as well, including that a Cynic character Cyniscus in the *Jupiter Confutatus* is substituted by the Epicurean Damis in the longer work, and that the god Zeus in the *Jupiter Confutatus* is replaced by the Stoic character Timocles. These differences have not been dealt with satisfactorily, as recently noted by Berdozzo⁵. I would propose that the relationship between composition and philosophy in the two works deserves closer scrutiny, as this provides us with clues to the unique perspective each of the works offers⁶.

Their relationship is still to a large measure determined by the positions as represented by Helm and Bompaire⁷. Helm's main hypothesis is, of course, that Lucian ripped most of his Menippean works from the oeuvre of the third century BC Cynic author. This dependency accounts for their shared debate on similar

3. Scholars tend to place these two works in a trio with as third member the *Deorum concilium*, the latter sharing with the *Jupiter Tragoedus* both the assembly and the character Momus; cf. Rudolf HELM, *Lucian und Menipp*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, [1906] 1967, p. 115 sq.; Vittorino GAZZA, « I tre scritti affini di Luciano: Ζεύς Ἐλεγχόμενος, Ζεύς Τραγωιδος, θεῶν Ἐκκλησία », *Aevum* 27,1, 1953, p. 1-17, esp. p. 9-11; Jacques BOMPAIRE, *Lucien Écrivain. Imitation et Création*, Paris, de Boccard, 1958, p. 497 sq.; Graham ANDERSON, *Lucian. Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic*, Leiden, Brill, 1976, p. 269 sq.; Jürgen COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos. Überlieferungsgeschichte, Text und Kommentar*, Meisenheim am Glan, Anton Hein, 1977, p. 35; Fabio BERDOZZO, *Götter, Mythen, Philosophen. Lukian und die paganen Göttervorstellungen seiner Zeit*, Berlin & Boston, De Gruyter, 2011, p. 125.

4. J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 35 refers with the term only to when both spheres are simultaneously in action.

5. F. BERDOZZO, *Götter, Mythen, Philosophen...*, p. 125.

6. Adam BARTLEY, « The compositional style of Lucian's minor dialogues », *Hermes* 133, 2005, p. 358-367 has the similar aim « to provide insight into Lucian's handling of similar topic material in various manners », but focuses on the mini-dialogues.

7. Cf. R. HELM, *Lucian und Menipp*, p. 141-3; J. BOMPAIRE, *Lucien écrivain...*, p. 497-499.

philosophical issues from which, in Helm's estimate, little originality should be expected. With regard to the *Jupiter Tragoedus*, Helm is willing to concede that the 'packende Inszenierung' of the Göttersammlung, ironically the most Menippean aspect in terms of style⁸, is Lucian's own contribution. But with this addition the final work suffers from a major structural flaw in that the winning side of the debate merely repeats what has already been said by Momus at the divine assembly⁹. Bompaire, on the other hand, proposes an organic progression from the *Jupiter Confutatus* to the *Jupiter Tragoedus*: the former presents the topic still in an unrefined state ('l'état brut'), an initial attempt better achieved when Lucian enhanced the philosophical dispute dramatically by the addition of action on the divine plane¹⁰. To both these scholars, therefore, the real Lucian is to be found in the first section of the *Jupiter Tragoedus* where our author ridicules the gods, or, to be more precise, ridicules a conception of the gods determined by Homer and the Greek classical past¹¹.

Lucianic hermeneutics

Helm and Bompaire's disdain for the mediocre quality of the dispute is echoed by the current consensus that Lucian has little interest in either philosophy or religion, that his comprehension of philosophical issues is superficial and hackneyed, and that he employs such themes for comic potential only, in the process implicating himself by the misrepresentation of the intricacies of the various systems¹². As a result, little significance is to be attached to the fact that Lucian summarily swaps a Cynic spokesman in the *Jupiter Confutatus* for an Epicurean in the *Jupiter Tragoedus*, or that a god in the former becomes a Stoic in the latter¹³. Correspondences in argument¹⁴ should be blamed on Lucian's penchant for repeti-

8. Menippean satire is characterized by its interspersing of prose writing with poetry; cf. Joel C. RELIHAN, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

9. R. HELM, *Lucian und Menipp*, p. 147.

10. J. BOMPAIRE, *Lucien écrivain...*, p. 497.

11. In contrast, J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 35 regards the divine assembly as preparation for the work's main emphasis, namely the dispute.

12. Cf. Jennifer HALL, *Lucian's Satire*, New York, Arno Press, 1981, p. 169-70.

13. J. BOMPAIRE, *Lucien écrivain...*, p. 497: « Damis n'est pas un véritable Épicurien car il raille certaines positions épicuriennes [...] il est un doublet du Cyniscos de *J. conf.* »

14. Carefully pointed out by R. HELM, *Lucian und Menipp*, p. 115-151.

tion. As a consequence, the relationship between the works may be summed up as that they have in common a facile and distorting philosophical discussion, to which the presumed later and more elaborate work added a parody of the gods in session.

Amid the general disappointment in Lucian's lack of philosophical expertise, Branham's generic approach (1989) draws attention to his comic strategies and, in particular, to his play with genres to disclose discrepancies between traditional literary presentation and novel generic settings. To do Lucian justice, we have to sharpen our appreciation of what he meant to accomplish, namely to create humorous incongruities. This shift in focus has taken much pressure off our author to perform as the penetrating philosopher and religious iconoclast he has since late antiquity been accused (of posturing) to be¹⁵. Thus, when the gods of Greece act as bumbling fools on the verge of extinction, this is primarily for comic effect and not due to the author's disenchantment with traditional religion.

There can be little quarrel with Branham's analysis of Lucian's method, and one cannot but agree that reading Lucian as advocating either a philosophy or atheism amounts to generic abuse. But the approach may yield more comprehensive results when avoiding a narrow focus on generic spoofing and appreciating the impact of seriocomedy's σπουδή-component on what may be presumed to have been Lucian's diverse audience. Satiric intent implies a form of social engagement, and mocking the gods of a living religious tradition would inevitably be contentious. A too narrow focus on generic manipulation in the *Jupiter Tragoedus* may again miss a good part of the work's pragmatics¹⁶. Lucian might conceal his social sting in his literary form, but the sting is nonetheless present, and equally careful analysis is required to reveal the particular kind of pain it inflicts.

Branham mentions the Lucianic προλαλῖαι as essential to understand what Lucian aimed to achieve, and for what I would like

15. Cf. J. HALL, *Lucian's Satire*, p. 194-198. Hall claims that while « no educated person in Lucian's day took the myths literally », Lucian is not anti-religious; rather he opts to entertain within the confines of good taste; cf. also Matthew W. DICKIE, « Lucian's Gods: Lucian's Understanding of the Divine » in *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* ed. J.N. Bremmer and E. Erskine, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011, p. 348-361 on Lucian's religious sympathies as indirectly conveyed in works such as the *Philopseudes*, the *De sacrificiis* and the *Demonax*.

16. Cf. R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 163-177. On *spoudogeloion*, cf. id., *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 26-28; also Lawrence GIANGRANDE, *The Use of Spoudaiogeloion in Greek and Roman Literature*, Den Haag, Mouton, 1972.

to stress, the *Zeuxis* in particular seems important¹⁷. Here Lucian expresses his disappointment when his audiences only see the novelty (καινότης) of his work, while he wishes them to appreciate *all* aspects of his craft: his good use of vocabulary, conformity to the old canon, his keen intellect and comprehension, Attic grace, harmonious structure/composition and craftsmanship¹⁸. The latter two especially were what he admired in the painter Zeuxis: his extraordinary craftsmanship and his skill in putting together even a strange or an unfamiliar scene¹⁹. And this is what he exhorts his audience to do as well, namely to look at every bit of detail of his work like a craftsman would (μετὰ τέχνης ἕκαστα ὀρᾶτε)²⁰.

I doubt if Lucian would have been satisfied with us focusing solely on the novelty of his generic manipulations but neglecting, for instance, attention to the detail of content and composition and the tight relationship between them. Take for instance the *Dialogi mortuorum*, in which the prominent part played by Cynic characters is no mere coincidence: Lucian indeed puts known characters in discordant settings in order to exploit incongruity, but it works best when the τῦφος of those characters is exposed by Cynic characters: Diogenes, Crates and Menippus made exactly this their life's work even when they were still in the land of the living. The aim of τῦφος-exposure brings us to a fuller understanding of the intent behind the two Zeus dialogues. And its trail goes through the imaginary worlds created in these two works, and their relationship with the compositional structures of both the literary and the intellectual kind.

The *Jupiter Confutatus*: a Cynic in heaven

Of the two works, the *Jupiter Confutatus* is much shorter and simpler. The dialogue is between Zeus and Cyniscus, a Cynic-type character Lucian employs elsewhere. No context is provided, but given that Zeus is interrogated, we may assume some heavenly realm, probably Olympus. Cyniscus' 'one easy question' (§ 1) to

17. R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 38-40.

18. LUCIAN *Zeuxis* 2: Ὀνομάτων δὲ ἄρα καλῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἀρχαῖον κανόνα συγκεκμημένω ἢ νοῦ ὀξέος ἢ περινοίας τινός ἢ χάριτος Ἀπτικῆς ἢ ἁρμονίας τῆς ἐφ' ἅπασι.

19. Id., *Zeuxis* 3.

20. Id., *Zeuxis* 12.

Zeus leads to the gradual exposure of logical inconsistencies when the god admits that the *Moirai* hold the final say in what happens on earth. The dialogue is not, strictly speaking, a debate between philosophical adversaries, but — as befits a conversation between god and mortal — a human interrogator pretending ignorance and seeking enlightenment from his superior, only to turn the question-and-answer session into a real grilling. Cyniscus nonetheless controls the conversation up to the final ἀπορία, reducing the god to inadequate defensive strategies. Apart from warnings and abusive accusations, obvious attempts to mask argumentative inadequacies, Zeus' role is to provide keys to further point scoring in Cyniscus' exposure of the damaging presence of the fates (and their Stoic theorizing) in traditional belief and morality. The author puts the spotlight on how embarrassingly ineffectual the literary gods are when such doctrines are accepted, but Cyniscus also manages to disparage determinism itself, thus including two targets of Cynic ridicule²¹.

Cyniscus' questions display a decent range of arguments for and against Stoic determinism²², but his main target is the Homeric depictions of the gods. Particularly Cynic is the audacious style of the interrogator to confront the god himself, though Lucian is milder and more parodic than the harsh satire of Oenomaus. The philosophical arguments are not peculiarly Cynic, but do not jar with Cynicism either. This in contrast to other schools: he rejects the Epicurean blissful self-sufficiency of the gods, and, as opposed to sceptic suspension of judgement, Cyniscus pushes on relentlessly in his search for truth, even going to the abode of the gods itself. The Cynic's conversation with Zeus makes use of Menippean travel to areas liminal to human experience (the heavens/Olympus or the Underworld), which offer an unobstructed vantage point from where to observe the affairs of humans and their unthinking conformity to custom²³.

21. Ivo BRUNS, « Lucian und Oenomaus », *Rheinisches Museum* 44, 1889, p. 374-396 already explored the *Jupiter Confutatus*' close relationship to the invective of Oenomaus of Gadara, cf. also R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 257 n. 65; Philip R. BOSMAN, « Lucian among the Cynics: the *Zeus Refuted* and Cynic Tradition », *Classical Quarterly* 62.2, 2012, p. 785-795.

22. Cf. detailed references, discussion and literature in Paul GRÖSSLER, *Untersuchungen zum Juppiter Confutatus Lukians*, New York, Peter Lang, 1998.

23. E.g., *Icaromenippus* 12-16.

The *Jupiter Tragoedus*' two tiers: Stoics destroyed, Epicureans subverted

In comparison, the *Jupiter Tragoedus* is a longer work in two parts, the first of which 'embracing' the second by retaining a continuous though curtailed presence during the second part. On the meaning of τραγῳιδος in the title, Bompaire and Branham take the term to refer to the theatrical qualities of the work²⁴, while Berdozzo links it to the threatening situation the gods find themselves in²⁵. The usual meaning of the term, however, applies well enough, that is, the disparaging depiction of a mythico-fictional setting and central character, the latter further characterized by the occasional outburst of grandiose diction²⁶. When Zeus comes to word in the opening scene, it is consequently in tragic meters, and the first lines of the work is a medley of poetic lines²⁷, ostensibly to underscore the gravity of the situation but soon to emerge as parodic in intent. The Menippean roots of the technique are obvious.

The *Jupiter Tragoedus*' Doppelbühne is unique in the Lucianic oeuvre. Significantly, communication between the divine and the human plane is slight, and only from the bottom to the top: the gods know what is happening on the human plane, but not *vice versa*. The scene in the divine sphere gives Lucian the opportunity to develop a little drama²⁸ with typical structural components of

24. J. BOMPAIRE, *Lucien écrivain...*, p. 3; R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 163, 171 translates as 'the tragic actor' indicating the impersonation of the mythic persona, despite arguing that the work renovates Old Comedy.

25. F. BERDOZZO, *Götter, Mythen, Philosophen...*, p. 126.

26. Glenn W. MOST, « Generating Genres The Idea of the Tragic », in *Matrices of Genre Authors, Canons and Society*, ed. D. D. Obbink and M. Depew, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University, 2000, p. 15-35, esp. the summary of the adjective on p. 20 is worth quoting in full: « Applied to literary style, the word means "splendid, grandiose," is opposed to "clear, readily intelligible," and is generally negative; applied to external circumstances or conditions, it means "magnificent, pompous," is opposed to "plain, simple," and is often negative; applied to personalities and psychological states, it means "arrogant, presumptuous, vain," is opposed to "modest, affable," and is always negative; applied to varieties of discourse, it means "mythical, fictional, philosophically unserious or historically unverifiable," is opposed to "scientific," and is uniformly negative. »

27. Luc. *Jup. Trag.* 1.12-14, a parody on the opening lines of Eur. *Or.*; cf. Austin Morris HARMON, *Lucian. Volume II. LCL 54*. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1915, p. 9. In addition, Hermes parodies a Menander servant and Athena « impersonates her own Homeric self », R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 168.

28. J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 34.

both tragedy (prologue, messenger speech) and comedy (*agon*)²⁹. Already Bompaigne noted that the philosophical dispute resembles the Old Comic *agon*³⁰, but Lucian does not wait until the second part before introducing disrupting comic elements: Zeus' tragic lament elicits first admiration from Athena but then an illusion-breaking prose response from Hera, which brings the scene down to New Comedy mode³¹. So also Hermes' complaint that he is not very good at versification (6.13-17). Later on, Apollo's attempt at a versified oracle (31.1-8) turns out to be a non-sensical failure. Poetic insertions in tragic style receive due comment from characters unwilling or unable to play along, giving them a meta-theatrical feel but at the same time drawing attention to the generic incongruity of high tragedy in a New Comedy setting³².

The discussion among the Olympians turns to Zeus calling a full divine *assembly* to warn all divinities — also those from other parts of the world — of the gravity of events about to take place in the Athenian agora: their joint fate depends on which philosopher can persuade the attending group of notables at the debate. If the Epicurean wins, the gods will be reduced to 'mere names' (ὀνόματα μόνον εἶναι, 4.15)³³, they will not be honoured, and they will starve to death for the lack of sacrifices (18.1-9).

The constituted assembly, which turns out to be a mix between a Homeric meeting of the gods and an Athenian ἐκκλησία³⁴, contains some fine comic touches. First, chaos breaks out with the seating arrangements, by which Lucian takes a dig at the lost status of the aging Greek gods. All the gods enter as statues and Zeus makes the mistake of allowing the seating to be organized in terms of material rather than aesthetic value (7.1-8.1): the gods of Egypt and the East,

29. Cf. V. GAZZA, « I tre scritti affini di Luciano... », p. 1-17.

30. J. BOMPAIRE, *Lucien écrivain...*, p. 252 sq.; J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 109-111; R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 174-176.

31. J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 38; cf. also R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 168.

32. Lucian frequently employs conscious/conspicuous parody; cf. J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 43.

33. Cf. also the alternative outcomes of the debate in *Jup. Trag.* 4: ἡ παρεῶσθαι ἀνάγκη, ὀνόματα μόνον εἶναι δόξαντας, ἢ τιμᾶσθαι ὡσπερ πρό τοῦ; and in 3: εἶτε χρὴ τιμᾶσθαι ἡμᾶς ἐτι καὶ τὰ γέρα ἔχειν τάν τῆ γῆ εἶτε καὶ ἡμελήσθαι παντάπασι καὶ τὸ μηδέν εἶναι δοκεῖν; Momus in 20, διανοοῦνται περὶ ἡμῶν ὡς οὐδὲν ὄλως ὄντων.

34. On Lucian's use of the *topos* of the divine assembly, see R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 164-166 and notes.

huge and costly, relegate the beautiful but inexpensive Olympians to the back tiers. The Colossus of Rhodes contains so much bronze that he has to sit in the front, but is then sent to the back again for obstructing the view. The meeting resembles a labour union gathering, with disgruntled gods shouting about nectar running out and the lack of hecatombs, and that sacrifices should be equitably shared (§ 13.1-4). The burlesque is sustained when Zeus forgets the first part of his speech and resorts, on advice of Hermes, to quoting Demosthenes. He then relates how he took an evening stroll through the Potter's Quarter in Athens when he came across the squabbling philosophers. The Epicurean was clearly on the ascendancy but night fortunately set in and they agreed to settle the scores the following day. After a rather lengthy speech by Momus calling for divine introspection (§ 19-22), Poseidon proposes to intervene with violence (§ 24) but is blocked by Zeus on the grounds that this would be transgressing on the domain of the *Moirai*. Heracles is so disgusted by his newly-discovered lack of agency that he chooses to return to Hades where he can at least scare the shades (§ 32).

The only speech at the assembly without obvious parodic intent is by the god-critic Momus (also featuring in a similar role in the *Deorum concilium*) who suggests that the threat against their existence is of their own doing for not performing their duties properly³⁵. The gods are lax in upholding moral behaviour on earth, and they are capable neither of knowing nor of influencing the future³⁶. Momus' remarks are proven correct when most of the issues he raises turn out to be crucial in the philosopher's debate. Zeus' repeated rejection of proposals to intervene on the human plane³⁷ results in the gods struck with inertia, and they are reduced to listening helplessly³⁸ how the Epicurean Damis rhetorically humiliates his Stoic opponent.

35. Situational parody includes and colours Momus' speech as well, i.e., admonishing a group of statues representing an obsolete mythic conception of the divine, on their disregard for justice — I thank Prof. Manuel Baumbach for raising the point. But within the imaginary world there are no obvious textual markers that deliberately alienate Momus from the audience.

36. Christopher Prestige JONES, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 40 traces the theme back to Cicero's Cotto in the *Nat. D.* 3.79-85.

37. First proposed by Athena in *Jup. Trag.* 5 to manipulate affairs, countered by Hermes that Zeus will be thought a tyrant; secondly by Poseidon (§ 24) to get rid of Damis, countered by Zeus (§ 25) that such power lies with the *Moirai*, and it would reflect badly on the gods; thirdly by Heracles (§ 32) to bring down the porch, rejected by Zeus on the basis of collateral damage and historical-aesthetical and generic-conventional considerations.

38. *Jup. Trag.* 33: Τί οὖν ἔτι ποιεῖν λοιπόν, ὦ θεοί, ἢ ἀκροασάσθαι ἐπικύψαντας αὐτῶν;

Timocles, as inept in argument as Zeus is in the *Jupiter Confutatus*, resorts in desperation to personal abuse and to the usual Stoic defences for the existence of the gods (§ 38-51). These are one by one refuted by the more polished and persuasive rhetor Damis, by means of the equally common counter-arguments³⁹. Timocles finally loses his cool and Damis, mockingly conceding defeat, leaves the scene in a scornful fit of laughter. The work ends with the spotlight returning to the divine sphere, with Hermes relieved that the damage ought to be containable, and with Zeus wistfully wishing that Damis were rather on his side (§ 53).

The most interesting feature of the *Jupiter Tragoedus* lies no doubt in its structure. From a generic point of view, the two focal points create a « characteristically Lucianic mode of interplay between types of discourse and planes of awareness »⁴⁰. By adding the gods, Lucian provides a comic frame to disrupt the threatening seriousness of the scene below⁴¹. At the same time, they serve « to elucidate the philosophical assumptions of the travesty » which, in Branham's view, is about « the mimetic value of serious mythological poetry »; Lucian's aim is to entertain by means of the Homeric gods shown to be a literary fantasy. Consequently, he takes aim at the excessively traditionalist, literary-based conceptions of his second century AD audience. But there is, from this perspective, little attempt at seriousness: « this clash of the gods and philosophers is aimed less to persuade than to give the audience a temporary relief » from the seriousness posed by both religion and philosophy⁴².

But there is more to be read into Lucian's choice of a two-tier presentation, and it relates to the relationship between form and content. The god's lack of intervention is particularly striking, and has in the past been linked to the roles they perform of comic buffoons or to Homer's gods watching the heroes battle it out⁴³. More obviously, however, is that their 'policy' of non-intervention is required by the plot to ensure an Epicurean victory in the dispute.

39. Cf. SEXT. EMP. *Adv. Math.* 9.60; R. HELM, *Lucian und Menipp*, p. 143 sq.; Jacques SCHWARTZ, *Biographie de Lucien de Samosate*, Bruxelles, Latomus, 1965, 109 sq.

40. R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 176.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

42. *Ibid.* p. 177.

43. J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 110; R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 176.

As mentioned above, form and content are similarly tied in the *Jupiter Confutatus*, with the composition carefully attuned to the Cynic main character. It is typically Cynic not to remain in a condition of skeptic ἀφασία/ἐποχή⁴⁴ nor to resort to Epicurean deism, but to boldly go in search of the truth, even beyond the gates of heaven. The ἀνάβασις itself is typically Cynic, reflecting the search for a vantage point from where to judge the follies of humankind sans the clutter of convention. Cyniscus displays Cynic παρρησία by directly confronting the supreme god himself⁴⁵. Finally, Cyniscus manages to expose the τῦφος of Zeus with his obsolete Homeric conceptions and tacit affinity for Stoic determinism. The *Jupiter Confutatus* structurally creates an imaginary Cynic world where Zeus is made to conform to Cynic logic.

In like manner, the Doppelbühne-composition of the *Jupiter Tragoedus* can be read as reflecting an Epicurean world of parallel universes for gods and humans. Damis wins the debate because the gods do not intervene. But closer analysis reveals a more ambiguous situation. Though Damis never explicitly denies the gods their existence, his arguments amount to exactly that⁴⁶. Lucian thereby exploits ambiguity in Epicurean doctrine, which does not clearly state whether the gods have an existence independent of the human mind⁴⁷. Dramatically speaking, the Epicurean argument is refuted by the very presence of the gods eavesdropping on the dispute.

Further subverting the Epicurean argument is that the gods do not, as in Epicurean orthodoxy, remain aloof of humans thanks

44. Cf. SEXT. EMP. Pyr. 1.8, 192-193; brief accounts of Pyrrhonism and Sextus Empiricus' thought in Luca CASTAGNOLI, « Early Pyrrhonism: Pyrrho to Aenesidemus », in *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy* ed. J. Warren and F. Sheffield, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 496-511, esp. p. 501-502 and Svavar Hrafn SVAVARSSON, « Sextus Empiricus » in *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, p. 581-595.

45. Oenomaus' invective is an obvious literary precursor. Contra C. P. JONES, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, p. 41 who denies the dialogue a specific Cynic character.

46. Cf. Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 1.123; J. COENEN, *Lukian Zeus Tragodos...*, p. 71.

47. On the gods, EPIC. *Ep. Men.* 123-4 (« blessed and immortal »), *Sent. Vat.* 1, LUCR. 2.646-51, 6.68 sq.; Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.47-8 (removed from the human plane in a state of untroubled peace above emotion and concern); for the 'realist' (= mind-independent existence, O'Keefe p. 465) and 'idealist' (= thought-constructs; idealisations of the human mind, SEXT. EMP. *Math.* 9.43-7) interpretations of the gods in Epicurean epistemology, cf. David KONSTAN, « Epicurus on the gods' and Sedley, David, 'Epicurus' theological innatism » in *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*, ed. J. Fish and K. Sanders, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 53-71 and p. 29-52 respectively, also T. O'KEEFE, « Epicurus' garden: Physics and epistemology », in *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, p. 465-467.

to their self-sufficient and blissful ἀταραξία. These gods are very much concerned about, even dependent upon humans. They enjoy their honours, and they live on sacrifices. These will come to an end when humans stop thinking that they do exist, here again returning to the ‘idealist’ Epicurean theory with a slight twist. More mortal to the Epicurean cause is, however, the reason for their non-intervention: human affairs are outside their jurisdiction; it is the Moirai who are really in charge of what happens. Thus an Homeric notion of fate, with considerable affinity to Stoic determinism, is the real reason for Damis’ victory. Consequently the *Jupiter Tragoedus* sets up an Epicurean-looking world in which non-Epicurean gods act as expected by an Epicurean, not because they adhere to Epicurean principles but rather because they are Homeric in conception.

The author’s so-called superficial grasp of the intricacies of philosophy has little to do with the imaginary world he creates. Rather, we see the satirist at work, simplifying, distorting and manipulating his material to the exasperation, one would think, of the philosophically-minded in his audience. Another possible response from a heterogeneous audience would, in fact, have been the absurdity of the idea (and the arrogance of the philosophers to believe) that religion, and the existence of the gods in particular, should be made dependent upon the outcome of a debate determined as much by rhetorical skill as by rational argument.

So we are led to conclude that the literary environment Lucian sets up is in fact not so Epicurean-friendly that we might have expected⁴⁸. And once that is conceded, it also emerges that Lucian is not so uncritical of his Epicurean character either. Conceded that we know from the start that Damis will win the debate, the author leaves textual pointers to ensure that the audience would not unconditionally associate with him. At the start he engages in an infantile exchange with Timocles (§ 35):

T – Τί φής, ὦ ἱερόσυλε Δᾶμι, θεοὺς μὴ εἶναι μηδὲ προνοεῖν τῶν ἀνθρώπων;

D – Οὐκ. ἀλλὰ σὺ πρότερος ἀπόκριναί μοι ᾧτινι λόγῳ ἐπέισθης εἶναι αὐτούς.

T – Οὐ μὲν οὖν, ἀλλὰ σύ, ὦ μιარέ, ἀπόκριναί.

D – Οὐ μὲν οὖν, ἀλλὰ σύ.

48. R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 177: « The reader may well be left wondering whether Lucian’s joke is really on Zeus or on Damis... »

And at the end of the dialogue Damis emerges as the better rhetor, but leaving the scene in a bout of sardonic laughter (see already § 16), he is not a particularly attractive character (§ 51-52). Most of all, he is completely mistaken in thinking that the gods (1) do not exist, (2) do not care about humans, as the audience are throughout very much aware of their presence and their interest in *cum* dependence upon humans.

The only speech left unsubverted within the imaginary world is that by Momus, who does not approve of the Epicurean argument, but rather sees it as a consequence of the moral ineptitude among the gods. If we wish to retain Lucian as a religious critic of some sort, it would not be that he advocates atheism, but rather that he exploits the glaring contradictions of a particular form of theology (for lack of a better term) that depends on an obsolete literary/aesthetically inspired gallery of gods without the power, or, for that matter, the will to interfere in human affairs⁴⁹.

I hope to have shown that, in these two dialogues, Lucian is carefully shaping imaginary worlds in support of the philosophical arguments he wishes to win the day. But in the *Jupiter Tragoedus*, the relationship between composition and authorial perspective is such that it does not support, and in fact subverts an Epicurean world. By subtle authorial modifications, the author dissociates himself and his audience from the Epicurean character, so that the only perspective they are encouraged to take seriously is that of Momus in his indictment that the gods will remain ludicrous as long as they stick to their Homeric personas.

49.Cf. also C. P. JONES, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, p. 39-41. R. B. BRANHAM, *Unruly Eloquence...*, p. 170 puts it succinctly: the *Jup. Trag.* « does not merely parody anthropomorphic conceptions but rather insists on the reality of the gods as a product of the imagination and as parodic reflections of their makers ».