



Martin, P. (2018). Cleansing the Palate: Vomit and Satire in Lucian's Lexiphanes. *Illinois Classical Studies*, 43(2), 507-20.
<https://doi.org/10.5406/illiclasstud.43.2.0507>

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

License (if available):
Other

Link to published version (if available):
[10.5406/illiclasstud.43.2.0507](https://doi.org/10.5406/illiclasstud.43.2.0507)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the final published version of the article (version of record). It first appeared online via University of Illinois Press at <https://doi.org/10.5406/illiclasstud.43.2.0507> . Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>



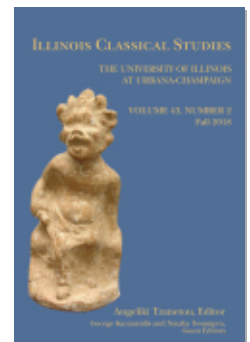
PROJECT MUSE®

Cleansing the Palate: Vomit and Satire in Lucian's
Lexiphanes

Paul Martin

Illinois Classical Studies, Volume 43, Number 2, Fall 2018, pp. 507-520 (Article)

Published by University of Illinois Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/721084>

Cleansing the Palate: Vomit and Satire in Lucian's *Lexiphanes*

PAUL MARTIN

This article explores how Lucian's satire is conceptualized in the *Lexiphanes* through analysis of the presentation of Lexiphanes's illness and its diagnosis and cure. Lexiphanes is portrayed as suffering from melancholy, which is diagnosed and cured by Lycinus with the help of the doctor Sopolis. I argue that, by drawing on contemporary medical theory and practice, Lucian aligns himself with Lycinus and figures his satire as an emetic whose parrhesiastic force has a curative effect.

Lucian's *Lexiphanes* is a text fundamentally concerned with language.¹ For Lucian, using the right kind of language is not simply a marker of one's education, it is a sign of one's sanity and health. By the same token, the wrong kind of language reflects disease and madness. Extending the metaphor, literary texts are conceived as a kind of *pharmakon*, either a medicine or a poison. This article explores how Lucianic satire is conceptualized in the *Lexiphanes*. I argue that, by portraying Lexiphanes as presenting symptoms of melancholy, Lucian figures his satire as an emetic whose parrhesiastic force has a curative effect. In doing so, Lucian blends influences from medical theories and treatments with literary tropes to present his satire as possessing an authoritative, quasi-iatric impetus.

The *Lexiphanes* begins with the meeting of Lycinus (a common guise for Lucian)² and Lexiphanes, who has just written a new symposium to rival that of the son of Ariston, i.e., Plato (ἀντισυμποσιάζω τῷ Ἀρίστωνος ἐν αὐτῷ, *Lex.* 1); Lexiphanes agrees to read out a portion of this work, which turns out to be an absurd, bombastically worded text (2–15). Convinced that Lexiphanes must be suffering

1. I have used Macleod (1972–87) for the text of Lucian and Harmon (1921–36) for translations unless otherwise specified. I have also used Pormann (2008) for Rufus of Ephesus. For other authors I have referred to Potter (1988) and Braund (2004) for translations of Hippocrates and Juvenal and Persius, respectively.

2. For Lucian's use of onomastic games, see Ní Mheallaigh (2010), who points especially to the near-homonymy of "Lycinus" (Λυκίνος) and "Lucian" (Λουκιανός), which both invites and confounds attempts to connect the name of the protagonist with the author himself.

from a dreadful illness, Lycinus hails the doctor Sopolis (whose name may be meant to recall Eupolis's father Sosipolis). He persuades him to help cure Lexiphanes and Sopolis gives Lexiphanes an emetic (16–20). After Lexiphanes has vomited up all of his bilious Atticisms, Lycinus sets out a new regimen of texts for Lexiphanes to read (21–25). By focusing on the diagnosis and curing of Lexiphanes, I aim to elucidate how Lycinus's curative abilities reflect Lucian's literary abilities.

As we shall see, Lucian draws on three facets of medical diagnosis and practice: Lexiphanes's nonsensical language is presented as a symptom of melancholy and treated so as to purify his body in line with medical treatises; parrhesiastic speech is imagined to be a kind of preventative medicine; and Classical literature is metaphorically portrayed as restorative food in Lycinus's dietetic regimen. These medical or pseudo-medical effects present Lycinus as possessing medical expertise, as he is able quickly and accurately to diagnose Lexiphanes's verbal spewing. His parrhesiastic speech, didactic abilities, and knowledge of the Classics all invite us to identify Lycinus with Lucian himself, whose works are framed as a curative force with the power to educate.

Diagnosing Drivel

After retching his way through Lexiphanes's wretched new work, Lycinus quickly realizes that Lexiphanes is suffering from a serious illness and is immediately able to identify the specific problem: melancholy. In this section, I shall demonstrate that Lucian draws on medical knowledge to portray Lycinus (and thus himself) in the guise of the satirist-cum-doctor. In this dialogue, more specifically, vomit becomes the major metaphor for figuring the effect of the text on its reader: bad literature causes illness, and good literature can purge the body of bad elements. In both cases, the text itself is a kind of food to be consumed, which possesses positive or negative qualities.

Both of the main metaphors at play in the *Lexiphanes*, the text as food or drink and the author as doctor, are anticipated in the opening of the dialogue. For instance, when Lexiphanes agrees to read out a portion of his work, Lycinus retorts as follows: "Well then, you must read me a few passages from the book, so that I shan't miss the feast entirely. I dare say you will properly 'wine us with nectar' out of it." The metaphor of the text as a kind of food or drink derives primarily from Greek comedy. Wine-drinking as a source of inspiration, for instance, is the basis of Cratinus's *Pythine*, and Metagenes claims that he feasts the audience on many novel side-dishes.³ This metaphor is then later found in

3. See schol. *Ar. Eq.* 400a and Metagenes fr. 15 K-A, respectively. For the use of food and drink as metaphors in comedy more generally, see Wright (2012) 125–39; for Metagenes, see also Orth (2014) 467–78.

Roman satire, as Emily Gowers has discussed.⁴ As we shall see, however, in Lucian the metaphor of literature as food/drink can be two sided: good literature can nourish and educate, while bad literature can cause illness. For instance, when Lycinus interrupts Lexiphanes's reading, he says that if he does not vomit up (ἐξεμέσω) everything he has heard, he suspects that Lexiphanes's words will drive him crazy (κορυβαντιάσειν, *Lex.* 16).

The medical metaphor in the opening of the text is centered around the ears. After Lycinus "mishears" νεοχμός ("new or novel") for ἀρχμός ("drought"), Lexiphanes is concerned that Lycinus's ears are stopped with wax ("make your ears permeable before you give them to me," *Lex.* 1). Clean ears are receptive not just to hearing, but to understanding properly and learning.⁵ Cleaning one's ears out, or making them permeable, might be seen as a procedure from the world of medicine. Such seems to be the case in the Roman satirist Persius, who, like Lexiphanes, wants a reader with his ear steamed clean (*inde uaporata lector mihi ferueat aure*, *Pers.* 1.126).⁶ To have one's ears blocked is to prevent them from appreciating or understanding what they hear, and so this metaphor prepares the ground for the concern throughout the *Lexiphanes* that texts can positively or negatively affect the reader or audience.

After Lexiphanes's public reading, however, the central metaphor in the text is vomit. As I have already suggested, however, this shift follows naturally from the metaphors established in the opening of the text. Given the metaphor of the text as wine in the opening, for instance, what Lycinus has consumed threatens to be brought back up ("if I do not very soon throw up everything you have recounted, you know, I think I'll go completely crazy, surrounded by the buzzing of those words you've poured all over me," *Lex.* 16, trans. my own). Likewise, it is by purging the body by taking an emetic that Lexiphanes is eventually cured. I would like to turn, therefore, to the diagnosis of Lexiphanes's illness and the aims of the cure. What mileage does Lucian get out of drawing upon medical ideas?

When Lycinus first diagnoses Lexiphanes's illness, he identifies it immediately. In section 16, he says that, although his initial response to Lexiphanes's text was to laugh, Lycinus soon realized that he had "fallen into a labyrinthine maze from which there was no escaping" and he was "afflicted with the most serious of all illnesses—to be precise, melancholy" (καίτοι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον γελᾶν ἐπίηι μοι

4. E.g., Hor. *Serm.* 2.4. See Gowers (1993).

5. Compare Plut. *De Aud. Poet.* 15d, where Plutarch rejects blocking young men's ears with wax to prevent them encountering the harmful (i.e., morally reprehensible) elements of poetry.

6. For ears as a metaphor in Persius, see Bartsch (2015) 757–76. Vinegar is suggested as a way of cleaning ears by Celsus (*Med.* 6.7.7B).

ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, ἐπειδὴ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ πάντα ὅμοια ἦν, ἠλέουν σε τῆς κακοδαμονίας ὀρῶν εἰς λαβύρινθον ἄφυκτον ἐμπεπτώτα καὶ νοσοῦντα νόσον τῆν μεγίστην, μᾶλλον δὲ μελαγχολῶντα). So despite the fact that Lexiphanes's only symptom is a "swarm of outlandish distorted expressions" (ἔσμὸν ἀτόπων καὶ διστρόφων *Lex.* 17), Lycinus is nevertheless able to diagnose the problem quickly and accurately.

Lexiphanes's symptoms are then explained in more detail after the arrival of the doctor, Sopolis, to whom Lycinus describes the situation:

Good-day to you, Sopolis. Do take charge of Lexiphanes here, who is my friend, as you know, and at present has on him a nonsensical, outlandish distemper affecting his speech which is likely to be the death of him outright (λήρω δὲ νῦν καὶ ξένη περὶ τὴν φωνὴν νόσῳ ξυνόντα καὶ κινδυνεύοντα ἤδη τελέως ἀπολωλέναι). Do save him in one way or another. (*Luc. Lex.* 18)

Here Lycinus speaks like a doctor in his own right, specifying Lexiphanes's symptoms (a nonsensical, outlandish distemper) and the potential consequences of the disease (death), if left untreated. One term Lycinus uses in particular is also found in medical texts to describe a kind of symptom: λῆρος. As Stephen Kidd has recently discussed, nonsense terms are commonly used to describe a symptom of various illnesses.⁷ The symptoms of *opisthotonos*, from Hippocrates's *On Diseases*, offer a useful example: "the patient cries out and sometimes talks nonsense (φλυηρέει); when the pain is present, he is unable to restrain himself, casting himself about, but when it remits, he is still. Sometimes they may also become speechless during an attack, at the same time being seized by some sort of rage or melancholy (ἢ μανικοί τι ἢ μελαγχολικοί); such patients generally die on the third day after becoming speechless. These patients, too, vomit (ἀνεμέουσι) through their nostrils" (*Hippoc. Morb.* 3.13, 7.132–34 L.). Here the patient's type or lack of speech is a determining symptom, which is then accompanied by other symptoms such as *mania* or *melancholia*.

At the same time, λῆρος frequently describes kinds of speech and literature that are regarded as poor in an abstract sense, for instance in Aristophanes's *Knights* to describe the drivel produced by Cratinus in his old age (*Eq.* 531). As used by Lycinus, therefore, λῆρος serves double duty, both describing the text he has heard recited and as a symptom of Lexiphanes's supposed melancholy.

While in medical writing λῆρος is always a symptom, vomit can be a symptom or a cure. In Hippocrates, *On Diseases*, for instance, the patients are said to vomit through their nostrils as a symptom of their illness.⁸ On the other hand,

7. Kidd (2014) 26–31.

8. For vomit and nonsense, cf. Hippocrates, *Morb.* 2.67, 7.102 L. (on *phonôdês*).

Rufus of Ephesus's *On Melancholy* recommends vomiting as a cure for diseases of the head: "there is nothing better for diseases of the head having their origin in the stomach than vomiting and purging. I reckon that brain fever is caused only through a great quantity of bile in the stomach, because of which the brain is damaged, so that it is prevented from carrying out its [habitual] tasks."

What precisely defines melancholy was much disputed in antiquity. By the time Galen was writing, it was possible to speak of several varieties of melancholy, which might depend on the heat of the bile (e.g., ps.-Arist. *Prob. Phys.* 954a11–26) or the extent to which the patient's blood had become melancholic (Gal. *De Loc. Affect.* 3.9–10). However, melancholy was usually considered to have both physical and mental effects. The Hippocratic writings emphasize fear and depression (e.g., Hippoc. *Aph.* 6.23, 4.568 L.; *Morb.* 1.30, 6.200 L.), while for Celsus melancholy is a form of *insania* (Cels. *Med.* 3.18).⁹ Accordingly, the cures proposed have both physical and psychotherapeutic elements. One consistent feature of the physical cures is purgation (κάθαρσις). This might take the form of vomiting, as in Rufus *On Melancholy* above; alternatively, Celsus and Aretaeus of Cappadocia recommended bloodletting and hellebore as a means of purgation (Cels. *Med.* 3.18, Aret. *CD.* 1.5.1).¹⁰

Likewise, Sopolis emphasizes the notion of purging in his treatment of Lexiphanes. Thus, when he realizes the gravity of Lexiphanes's illness, Sopolis says that, as chance would have it, he has on him a *pharmakos* which he was taking to a choleric person (τῶν χολώντων τι), and specifies that this was supposed to act as an emetic (ὡς πῶν ἐμέσειε). This he then gives to Lexiphanes, saying that it should make him well and *katharos*, "pure" or "purged" (ὡς ὑγιῆς ἡμῖν καὶ καθαρὸς γένοιτο, *Lex.* 20).¹¹ Later, Sopolis narrates as Lexiphanes "brings up" (ἐμεῖν) his bombastic language.¹² After Lexiphanes has been relieved, Sopolis claims that he has now been cleansed (ἀλλ' ἤδη μὲν καθαρὸς οὐτοσί, *Lex.* 21).

9. For the different ways in which melancholy might be said to affect the mind, see Kazantzidis (2013).

10. Note that white hellebore was used as an emetic, while black hellebore is a laxative. Compare Gal. *De Loc. Affect.* 3.9–10: venesection is recommended for extreme cases, but in cases where yellow bile is blocked in the stomach, symptoms can be relieved by vomiting. For treatments of melancholy, see Ahonen (2014) 19–23.

11. Again note that *καθαρός* could both describe Lexiphanes physically and refer to his speech, as *καθαρός* was also used to refer to a clear or everyday style of poetry, e.g., by Hermogenes (229.8–9 R).

12. Lexiphanes apparently vomits up everything apart from *σιληπορδία*, "arrogant behavior," which Sopolis says will make a "great racket when it comes tumbling out on the wings of the wind," playing on the similarity to the verb *πέρδομαι* ("fart").

Lucian seems to adopt the basic outline of medical diagnoses and treatments, such as the mental deficiency associated with melancholy and the importance of purging the body,¹³ and this is then adapted to suit the humor and satirical point. Bloodletting fits less well with a cure for the specifically *verbal* symptoms Lexiphanes displays. Vomit as a medium for purgation, on the other hand, allows Lucian to draw upon the well-established connection between what goes into and comes out of the mouth.¹⁴ At the same time, by drawing upon medical treatments for melancholy, Lycinus acts like a doctor in being able to recognize illness and diagnose the problem. In this respect, Lycinus serves as a foil for Lucian himself, who has also “diagnosed” the disease of hyper-atticism in the Second Sophistic. Lucian frequently exposes the supposed *paideia* of particular groups, revealing their pomp and circumstance to be nothing but bluster (*alazoneia*).¹⁵ The idea of the author as doctor, a figure who can diagnose societal illnesses, can be found already in Roman satire. Persius, for instance, says that there is no point asking for hellebore as treatment when it is already too late (*Pers.* 3.63–66). Similarly, in *Satire* 1, Persius depicts his poetry as more boiled down, *decoctius*, than anything else you’ll find (*aliquid decoctius*, *Pers.* 1.125).¹⁶ Lucian’s satire, by contrast, is emetic, forcing out bad elements into the open.

We should note, however, that Lucian’s language and metaphors are not solely drawn from medical writings, but also build on pre-existing literary tropes. On the one hand, the curative properties of poetry in particular are commonplace. In the opening of Pindar *Nemean* 4, for instance, poetry as much as *euphrosunê* is the best healer of toils (1–5). On the other, the vomiting scene might be viewed as playing off Aristophanes’s depiction of Cleon having to vomit up five talents (*Ach.* 6) or other passages in Lucian where speech is presented metaphorically as vomit.¹⁷

As we have seen, Lexiphanes is presented as suffering from melancholy. I do not wish to suggest, however, that Lexiphanes’s symptoms are systemati-

13. For Lexiphanes’s insanity, cf. the description of him as “half-crazed and full of drivel” (ἡμιμανεῖς καὶ κορυζῶντας, *Lex.* 18).

14. See, for instance, Worman (2008), esp. pp. 25–61.

15. For Lucian’s satire of rhetoric and language, see *The Ignorant Book-Seller, Professor of Public Speaking, and Pseudologista*; cf. Hall (1981) 252–309.

16. Bartsch (2015) reads Persius’s *Satires* as a curative force; for the depiction of the body and medical language in Roman satire in general, see Barchiesi and Cucchiarelli (2005).

17. For vomiting imagery in Greek comedy, cf. Nicophon fr. 20 K-A and Aristophanes fr. 49 K-A; for Lucian, see for example: τὸν βόρβορον τῶν λόγων ἐκείνων ἐμείν (“spewing out the nastiness of those speeches,” *Pseudol.* 25); cf. *Charon* 7, which draws on a story also found in *Ael. VH* 13.22.

cally aligned with medical thought about melancholy. Instead, I have argued that Lucian does adopt important aspects of such theorizing, especially mental deficiency and purgation.¹⁸ Clearly the disease and its cure function metaphorically to refer to what constitutes good or bad literature. Just as vomit in medical writing can be either a symptom of disease or a path to purging the body, texts can produce vomit that is an indicator of either “diseased” or “curative” literature. Within this framework, Lucian’s own work is imagined as a curative emetic that purges the body of excessive bile. Furthermore, as in Roman satire, the medical language has an authorizing function—the satirist is portrayed as being able to detect and diagnose physical, moral, and ethical diseases. Lucian’s satirical emetic is in this context the appropriate cure for the kind of linguistic illness that plagues Lexiphanes.

Preventative *parrhêsia*

As we have already seen, Lycinus is able, with doctor-like precision, to recognize Lexiphanes’s symptoms and to diagnose his illness. Before the appearance of Sopolis in the dialogue, Lycinus also claims that the reason his illness has become such a problem is that his audiences have been lauding him (“you are praised by the fools, to be sure, who do not know what ails you,” *Lex.* 17). In contrast to these flatterers, Lycinus positions himself as a parrhesiast, someone who is willing to speak painful truths but who in so doing can educate others.¹⁹ Lucian’s satire’s imagined efficacy, by extension, derives from its ability to call out problems openly and educate its audience in alternatives. The emphasis in this passage on *parrhêsia*, freedom of speech, importantly situates Lycinus/Lucian’s satire in the context of the kind of licence enjoyed by comedy and iambic poetry. However, what is unique in this dialogue is the notion of “preventative *parrhêsia*,” that satire is not just able to *cure* illness, as we saw above, but it is also able to *prevent* it by telling people the honest truth.

After diagnosing Lexiphanes, Lycinus attributes the onset of Lexiphanes’s illness to the fact that he is “destitute of friends and relatives and well-wishers” and that he has never “fallen in with an independent man (ἀνδρὶ ἐλευθέρῳ) practising frankness (παρρησίαν ἄγοντι), who by telling you the truth might have relieved you” (*Lex.* 17). Instead, he is praised by fools who cannot recognize his disease. Of course, Lexiphanes now *does* know a parrhesiast who will call out his ridiculous tongue: Lycinus.

18. I would therefore disagree with Swain (2008) 119 that in *Lex.* and elsewhere there is no sign of interest in the medical aspects of melancholy.

19. For *parrhêsia* as a marker of a good friend, cf. Plut. *Mor.* 55b.

Parrhêsia in Lucian's works is commonly connected with his strategies of self-authorization, primarily with recourse to precursors in iambic and comic poetry as well as Cynic philosophy.²⁰ In the opening of the *Pseudologistes*, for instance, Archilochus is described as "a man absolutely independent and given to frankness" (ἄνδρα κομιδῆ ἐλεύθερον καὶ παρρησίᾳ συνόντα, *Pseudol.* 1). Then, later in the same work, the first-person speaker claims that it is necessary to call on one of Menander's prologues, "Exposure (Ἐλεγχος), a god devoted to Truth and Frankness (Ἀληθείᾳ καὶ Παρρησίᾳ)" (*Pseudol.* 4). Similarly, Lucian's teacher Demonax is said to have been praised by the Athenians for his freedom of speech and action (παρρησίᾳ καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ, *Demon.* 11). In such passages, we find a frequent collocation of three key ideas: freedom of speech (παρρησίᾳ), freedom (ἐλευθερία), and truth (ἀληθείᾳ). This connection is perhaps best encapsulated by the familial background of Parrhesiades in the *Piscator*, who is the son of Truthful and grandson of Renowned Investigator (Παρρησιάδης Ἀληθίονος τοῦ Ἐλεγχικλέους, *Pisc.* 19).²¹ Given the connections between the *Lexiphanes* and Greek comedy,²² Lycinus's espousal of an independent man practicing frankness clearly plays into Lucian's wider literary agenda and underlines the *Lexiphanes*'s debt to the literary past.

At the same time, the idea that the satiric parrhesiast is necessary to *prevent* people from becoming "ill" is innovative. As we saw in the previous section, the trope of the satirist as doctor is already well established in Roman satire. Here, however, Lucian espouses a kind of preventative satire, according to which satiric truth can prevent people like Lexiphanes from believing their own bullshit, as though *alazoneia* were a disease. This attitude extends the medical metaphor from satire as treatment to satire as prevention. Prevention had an important place in Greek medicine, and Galen mentions the importance of baths, gymnasia, massage, and of course a doctor's expertise for rectifying problems before they grow to be serious.²³

20. For the connection between these different forms as precursors to Lucian's style, see Dialogue's complaint against "the Syrian" (i.e., Lucian) in *Bis Acc.* 33: "he unceremoniously penned me up with Jest and *iambos* and Cynicism and Eupolis and Aristophanes" (trans. adapted from Harmon).

21. For the connection between *parrhêsia* and truth in Lucian, see Macleod (1979) and Branham (1989) 30–34.

22. For example, in section 12, the speaker of Lexiphanes's symposium describes Dio using language strongly reminiscent of comedy. However, Ian Storey's suggestion (2015) 175–77 that the vomiting scene is based on a comedy, perhaps specifically Eupolis's *Marikas* is overly optimistic given that there is no evidence for the appearance of a doctor in that play (for our knowledge of the plot of Eupolis's *Marikas*, see Olson [2016]). For the role of doctors in Greek comedy, see Gil and Alfageme (1972).

23. For preventative medicine in Galen, see Wilkins (2016).

Nourishing Education

The very end of the *Lexiphanes* turns to the question: what next? Lexiphanes has been purged, but he is not yet entirely back to health. Sopolis therefore turns to Lycinus and says “it is for you next, Lycinus, to take him on, mending his education and teaching him what to say.” Here again, the metaphors of consumption and medicine are bound together, as Lycinus sets out a dietetic regimen for Lexiphanes to follow:

If you really desire to be genuinely praised for style and to have a great name among the public, avoid and shun all this sort of thing. After beginning with the best poets and reading them under tutors, pass to the orators, and when you have become familiar with their diction, go over in due time to Thucydides and Plato—but only after you have trained yourself thoroughly in attractive comedy and sober tragedy (πολλὰ καὶ τῆ καλῆ κωμῳδία καὶ τῆ σεμνῆ τραγῳδία ἐγγυμασάμενος). When you have garnered all that is fairest from these sources, you will be a personality in letters. Before, you had unconsciously become like the images shaped for the market by the modelers of figurines, colored with red and blue on the surface, but clay on the inside, and very fragile (ὡς νῦν γε ἐλελήθεις σαντὸν τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν κοροπλάθων εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν πλαττομένοις ἐοικώς, κεχρωσμένος μὲν τῆ μίλτῳ καὶ τῷ κωανῷ, τὸ δ’ ἔνδοθεν πῆλινός τε καὶ εὐθρυπτος ὢν) . . . Before all else, however, please remember not to imitate the most worthless productions of the Sophists who lived only a little before our own time, or go nibbling at that stuff as you do now (μηδὲ περιεσθίειν ἐκεῖνα ὥσπερ νῦν)—tread this sort of thing underfoot and copy the ancient models only. And do not let yourself be enticed by the windflowers of speech, but follow the custom of the athletes and habituate yourself to solid nourishment (ἢ στερρά σοι τροφή συνήθης ἔστω). (Luc. *Lex.* 22–3)

In this passage, Lucian completes the portrayal of Lycinus as a medical expert by creating a literary *diaita* that encompasses both dietary concerns as well as exercise. Here, however, Lucian’s metaphor of the text as food or drink shifts. In the opening of the dialogue, the text was imagined as something (hopefully) pleasurable (“I dare say you will properly ‘wine us with nectar’ out of it,” *Lex.* 1). This fits with the metaliterary use of food and drink in comedy: comedians might emphasize quantity as an appealing aspect of their poetry (e.g., Phercrates in the *Krapataloi*, who claims not to leave any of the audience thirsty in fr. 101 K-A), or alternatively the quality of the food might be more significant (Callias, for instance, compares his poetic opponents to cheap food in fr. 26 K-A). At the end of the *Lexiphanes*, however, Classical authors are adduced for their didactic/dietetic qualities—they are “solid nourishment” in contrast to Lexiphanes’s habit of “nibbling at that stuff as you do now.” This shift in the

metaphorical force of food reflects Lucian's use of medical treatises about the role of food in healthy life. Food was important both for preventing the body from becoming ill and in treating illness.²⁴ Each kind of nourishment has its own force: it might be wet or dry, cold or hot.²⁵ In particular, however, Lycinus's suggestion of "solid nourishment" (στερρὰ τροφή) for Lexiphanes's long-term recovery is reminiscent of Hippocrates's treatise on nourishment, in which he claims that those who require slower reinforcement need solid nourishment (ὀκόσοι δὲ βραδυτέρης προσθέσιος δέονται, στερεὴ τροφή, *Alim.* 50, 9.118 L.). Furthermore, the *diaita* Lycinus sets out here seems to recognize the importance of a balance between nourishment and exercise (cf. Hippoc. *Vict.* 3, 6.592–4 L.), as he suggests that Lexiphanes reads Thucydides and Plato only after exercising himself (ἐγγυμνασάμενος) in comedy and tragedy.²⁶ In assuming his role as teacher, directing Lexiphanes towards valuable literature, Lycinus, and by association Lucian, again demonstrates his medical expertise, metaphorically balancing edible and gymnastic literature.

At the same time, if we read Lycinus's advice in the context of Lucian's other works, one aspect of this literary regimen suggests that we cannot so straightforwardly associate Lycinus and Lucian. After enumerating what Lexiphanes should go and read, Lycinus says that "before, you had unconsciously become like the images shaped for the market by the modellers of figurines, colored with red and blue on the surface, but clay on the inside, and very fragile." The idea of an individual or text as a brittle clay figurine is also found in Lucian's *Prometheus Es* (*You are a Literary Prometheus*), in which Lucian responds to a person who enigmatically called him a "literary Prometheus," exploring what precisely this might mean. He begins by saying that, if what is meant is that his works are like clay, then he will accept this description, even if he uses dirty mud for his works.²⁷ Lucian then goes on to imagine two destructive consequences for his literary output based on this comparison. First, if Lucian's works are fired pots, by throwing one little stone you can destroy his whole corpus (ἐπεὶ καὶ εὐθροπτα ἡμῶν τὰ ἔργα ὡσπερ ἐκεῖνοις τὰ χυτρίδια, καὶ μικρὸν τις λίθον ἐμβάλων συντρίψειεν ἅν πάντα, *Prom. Es* 2). Alternatively, if "literary Prometheus" refers to his originality (καινότης),²⁸ rather than a slavish imitation of Classical models, Lucian says that,

24. Wilkins (2015).

25. For the force (δύναμις) of nourishment, see Hippocrates *Alim.* 7 and 13 (9.100–2 L.); Hippocratic physicians specifically emphasize wet and dry (e.g., *Alim.* 1, 9.98 L.), while Galen also includes hot and cold foods in *De Alim. Fac.* Cf. Powell (2003) 2–4.

26. For balance in Hippocratic writings, see Craik (1995) 346–48.

27. For an analysis of the clay metaphor, see Ní Mheallaigh (2014) 3–5 and Romm (1990).

28. For καινότης as a feature of Lucian's authorial self-construction (e.g., in the *Zeuxis*), see Branham (1989) 38–43.

if his work was not thought graceful as well, he would trample it under foot and destroy it (ἀλλα εἰ μὴ καὶ χάριεν φαίνοιτο, αἰσχυνοίμην ἄν, εὖ ἴσθι, ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ ξυμπατήσας ἄν ἀφανίσαιμι, *Prom. Es.* 3).

Lucian's concerns about the fate of his works in *Prometheus Es* form an important backdrop for the end of the *Lexiphanes*. On one hand, Lucian's clay pots are very fragile (εὐθροπτος), just as Lycinus says Lexiphanes had been previously; on the other, Lycinus recommends that Lexiphanes trample underfoot (καταπατεῖν) the works he previously imitated in the same way that Lucian threatens to trample (ξυμπατήσας) his ungracious works. If Lycinus's final speech invites us to look to Lucian's *Prometheus Es*, then Lucian's own corpus could be said to face many of the same dangers as the work produced by Lexiphanes, especially given that Lucian also wrote a Platonic-style *Symposium*, in which Lycinus narrates a wedding feast gone wrong.²⁹ This reading brings to the fore two problems: what precisely makes Lucian's work different from Lexiphanes's, if anything? Secondly, are we supposed to take Lucian's pseudo-medical expertise at face value? These are not questions we can definitively answer, but are actively invited by the text, not least by the already problematic association between Lucian and Lycinus. If we are tempted to equate Lycinus with Lucian, much of the legitimizing force of the portrayal of Lycinus as a satirist is undone, if we believe that Lucian's work, like Lexiphanes's, is at risk of destruction by hostile readers. The conditionals required just to formulate the position underline how fraught the exercise of finding "Lucian's real position" is. However, such problems are not uncommon in Lucian's work and any readers familiar with it might well expect to find Lucian playing with his own authorial position. As Tim Whitmarsh puts it, "this is a comedy of nihilism."³⁰ By opening up the space between himself and Lycinus, Lucian creates a space to be at once efficacious didactic satire and a fragile clay figurine. As a consequence, we as readers become implicated in the process of diagnosis, as the necessity of a critically informed response to the text is already prefigured in Lycinus's response to Lexiphanes's rival *Symposium*.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the presentation of Lexiphanes's illness to explore how Lucian's satire is conceptualized in the *Lexiphanes*. As we have seen, Lexiphanes is portrayed as melancholic and his diagnosis and cure are consistent with several aspects of medical thought and practice. Lycinus's ability to diagnose the problem immediately presents him as being like a doctor. This presentation is supported by his claim that Lexiphanes needed someone to speak freely to him,

29. For Lucian's reception of Plato, see Ni Mheallaigh (2005) and Branham (1989) 67–123.

30. Whitmarsh (2001) 252; for the slipperiness of Lucian's identity, cf. Goldhill (2002) 60–107.

associating *parrhêsia* with preventative medicine, and his expertise in the kind of pseudo-dietetic literary regimen needed to keep Lexiphanes on the straight and narrow. Through this portrayal of Lycinus, we are invited by extension to imagine Lucian's own satire as possessing an authoritative and curative force based on the trope of the satirist-cum-doctor.

If Lucian is a doctor, then his text is a cure, in particular the kind of emetic used to force Lexiphanes to abandon his previous loquaciousness. The idea of the text as an emetic is consonant with the way vomit throughout the dialogue is used as a metaphor for different kinds of response to literature: bad literature causes vomit as a disgust response, while good literature can be a curative emetic. The treatment of Lexiphanes, therefore, acts as a metaliterary comment on Lucian's own satirical activities, reflecting Lucian's satirical stance on the linguistic and rhetorical fads of his age. This satire is framed as a kind of comic *parrhêsia* that possesses a didactic bent. At the same time, given that the modern term humor lexically derives from Greek humoral theory (χυμός),³¹ it is attractive to see aspects of humor in antiquity that are grounded in physical or physiological experience. The metaphor of the text as a "cure" for societal problems in the *Lexiphanes* is, in a sense, more than a metaphor; the curative force of Lucian's work reflects the physiological experience of satire in this dialogue.

Finally, while the end of the dialogue on one level confirms the medical and didactic expertise of Lycinus, seemingly strengthening the ties between Lycinus and Lucian, if we read the *Lexiphanes* against Lucian's *Prometheus Es*, we might detect a concern about the efficacy, or the durability, of Lucian's work. This concern invites us to question just how closely Lycinus resembles Lucian and how straightforwardly we should take the *Lexiphanes*'s medical posturing. These questions directly engage us, as readers of his text, in a negotiation of our own response. In short, then, Lucian's work is definitely going to make us vomit (figuratively speaking). However, is this a sign of disease or a cure for it, and how are we supposed to tell the difference?³²

University of Bristol

paul.s.martin@bristol.ac.uk

Works Cited

- Ahonen, M. 2014. *Mental Disorders in Ancient Philosophy*. Heidelberg: Springer.
 Barchiesi, A. and Cucchiarelli, A. 2005. "Satire and the Poet: The Body as Self-referential Symbol." In K. Freudenburg, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, 207–23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

31. For the linguistic development of "humor" and its implications, see Rugenstein (2014).

32. My thanks to Matthew Wright and the reviewer for their thoughts and to George Kazantzidis and Natalia Tsoumpa for all their work on the "Morbid Laughter" conference and this issue.

- Bartsch, S. 2015. *Persius: A Study in Food, Philosophy, and the Figural*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Branham, R.B. 1989. *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Braund, S.M. 2004. *Juvenal and Persius*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Craik, E. 1995. "Hippocratic diaita." In J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson, eds., *Food in Antiquity*, 343–50. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Gil, L. and Alfageme, I. R. 1972. "La figura del medico en la comida ática." *CFC(G)* 3: 35–92.
- Goldhill, S. 2002. *Who Needs Greek? Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gowers, E. 1993. *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, J. 1981. *Lucian's Satire*. New York: Arno Press.
- Harmon, A.M. 1921–1936. *Lucian*, Vol. 3–5. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kazantzidis, G. 2013. "'Quem nos furorem, μελαγχολίαν illi vocant': Cicero on Melancholy" In W. V. Harris, ed. *Mental Disorders in the Ancient World*, 245–64. Leiden: Brill.
- Kidd, S. 2014. *Nonsense and Meaning in Ancient Greek Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Littré, E., ed. and trans. 1839–1861. *Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate, Vol. I-X*. Amsterdam: Hakkert.
- Macleod, M. D. 1972–87. *Luciani Opera*, Vol. I–IV. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1979. "Lucian's Activities as a μισαλόζων." *Philologus* 123: 326–8.
- Ní Mheallaigh, K. 2005. "'Plato alone was not there . . .': Platonic presences in Lucian." *Hermathena* 179: 89–103.
- . 2010. "The Game of the Name: Onymity and the Contract of Reading in Lucian." In F. Mestre and P. Gómez, eds., *Lucian of Samosata: Greek Writer and Roman Citizen*, 121–32. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona.
- . 2014. *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olson, S. D. 2016. *Eupolis: Kolakes—Chrysou Genos*. Heidelberg: Verlag Antike.
- Orth, C. 2014. *Aristomenes—Metagenes*. Heidelberg: Verlag Antike.
- Pormann, P. E. 2008. *Rufus of Ephesus: On Melancholy*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Potter, P., ed. and trans. 1988. *Hippocrates*, vol. 6. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Powell, O. 2003. *Galen: On the Properties of Foodstuffs (De Alimentorum Facultatibus)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Romm, J. 1990. "Wax, Stone, and Promethean Clay: Lucian as Plastic Artist." *CA* 9.1: 74–98.
- Rugenstein, K. 2014. *Humor: Die Verflüssigung des Subjekts bei Hippokrates, Jean Paul, Kierkegaard, und Freud*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink.
- Storey, I. C. 2015. "Exposing Frauds: Lucian and Comedy." In C. W. Marshall and T. Hawkins, eds., *Athenian Comedy in the Roman Empire*, 163–80. London: Bloomsbury.

- Swain, S. 2008. "Social Stress and Political Pressure: *On Melancholy* in Context." In P. E. Pormann, ed., *Rufus of Ephesus: On Melancholy*, 113–38. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Whitmarsh, T. 2011. *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilkins, J. 2015. "Good Food and Bad: Nutritional and Pleasurable Eating in Ancient Greece." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 167: 7–10.
- . 2016. "The Treatment of the Man: Galen's Preventative Medicine in the *De Sanitate Tuenda*." In G. Petridou and C. Thumiger, eds., *Homo Patiens: Approaches to the Patient in the Ancient World*, 213–31. Leiden: Brill.
- Worman, N. 2008. *Abusive Mouths in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, M. 2012. *The Comedian as Critic: Greek Old Comedy and Poetics*. London: Bloomsbury.