

Georgia Mystrioti

**Katabasis and anabasis as means of satire in Aristophanes and  
Lucian**

(Supervisor: Nicoletta Kanavou, Assistant Professor of Ancient Greek Literature)

*Katabasis* (ascent) as a narrative theme is already encountered in *Nekyia* and the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic* (10.614b-621d): the protagonist *descends* to the Underworld so as to become acquainted with the order that prevails after death. *Katabasis* is accompanied by (and thus closes with) with an *anabasis* (ascent) to the world of the living (Nesselrath, 2018: 260); this means that the protagonist has now seen the end that awaits everyone after they die and is urged to narrate it all to those that are still alive. In both the aforementioned cases, though, the *anabasis* occurs rather hastily, especially in *Nekyia*, as Odysseus faces his fear of an imminent death (Karanika, 2011: 10) after seeing Persephone carrying Medusa's head (633-635). The *katabasis* and *anabasis* are additionally used in Xenophon's *Anabasis* in order to depict the course to and from the coasts during the campaign of the Ten Thousand (e.g. *Anab.* 5.5.4). However, the aforementioned references do not imply that *katabasis* and *anabasis* are only used in a metaphysical context: Aristophanes and Lucian employ the *katabasis* and *anabasis* themes as means of satire regarding the political and intellectual climate of their era. Both writers not only creatively use the *katabasis* and the *anabasis* in a metaphysical geography environment (the Underworld – the sky), but also emphasize the *anabasis* part of the *katabasis* narrative and often use it as a separate plot (e.g. Aristophanes' *Birds* or Lucian's *Charon*). Through the lens of reception, the use of *katabasis* and *anabasis* in both Old Comedy and Lucian's satire (or *comic dialogues* according to Peterson, 2010: 4), the expansion of the meanings of *katabasis* and *anabasis* by Aristophanes and Lucian in order to fulfil their dramatic and narrative needs, and the new significance that is given to *anabasis*, which is not encountered in *Nekyia* or the Myth of Er, are examined along with the influence of Aristophanes to Lucian regarding the use of these themes.

Keywords: *katabasis*, *anabasis*, Aristophanes, Lucian, reception

## Essential Bibliography

Aristophanes (2012) *Birds. Peace. Wealth. Aristophanes' Critique of the Gods*. Translated by Wayne Ambler and Thomas L. Pangle, Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books.

Edmonds, R. G. (2004) *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets*, Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, M. J. (1989) "Satire and Verisimilitude: Christianity in Lucian's 'Peregrinus'", *Historia* 38:1, 89-98.

Fields, D. (2013) "The Reflections of Satire: Lucian and Peregrinus", *TAPhA* (1974-2014) 143:1, 213-245.

Grey, S. F. (2018) "Cosmology, psychopomps, and afterlife in Homer's *Odyssey*" in *Imagining the Afterlife in the Ancient World* (ed. Juliette Harrison), London; New York: Routledge, 2018, 101-116.

Johnson, W. R. (1976) *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's "Aeneid"*, University of Chicago Press, 1-16.

Jones, C. P. (1986) *Culture and Society in Lucian*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.

Kanavou, N. (2011) "Political Myth in Aristophanes: Another Form of Comic Satire?", *GRBS* 51, 382-400.

Karanika, A. (2011) "The End of the 'Nekyia': Odysseus, Heracles, and the Gorgon in the Underworld", *Arethusa* 44:1, 1-27.

Lauwers, J. (2015) *Philosophy, Rhetoric and Sophistry in the High Roman Empire, Mnemosyne Supplements Vol. 385* (ed. G. J. Boter), Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Mossman, H. (2009) "Narrative Island-Hopping: Contextualising Lucian's Treatment of Space in the *Verae Historiae*" in *A Lucian for our Times* (ed. Adam Bartley), Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 47-64.

Nagy, G. (2013) *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, Harvard University Press.

Nesselrath, H.-G. (2018) "Down There and Back Again: Variations on the *Katabasis* theme in Lucian" in *Cultural Interactions in the Mediterranean Vol 2: Round Trip to Hades in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition - Visits to the Underworld from Antiquity to Byzantium* (edd. Gunnel Ekroth and Ingela Nilsson), Leiden: Brill, 260-272.

Peterson, A. I. (2010) *Laughter in the Exchange: Lucian's Invention of the Comic Dialogue*. Dissertation. Ohio State University. Available in: [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send\\_file?accession=osu1275416015&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1275416015&disposition=inline). (Read 7/10/2019).

Peterson, A. (2019) *Laughter on the Fringes: The Reception of Old Comedy in the Imperial Greek World*, Oxford University Press.

Stamatopoulou, M. (2014) 'Laughter in Lucian: Perspectives on wealth and poverty in *Necyomantia*, *Catapulus*, and *Dialogi Mortuorum*', Master's thesis, Lund University:

Centre for Languages and Literature – Greek Section, Lund. Available in:  
<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=4467425&fileId=4467432>. (Read 25/09/2019).