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**The Gender of Lies: Lucian's *True Story***

In Lucian's *True Story* (*Alethes Historia*), an elaborate parody of the fantastic elements in many Greek ethnographical accounts, women are few. When they appear, they are a cipher for the deceptive, the wet, and the lethal. They appear as "hybrids," and not as species unto themselves. In fact, the schematization of the marked gender is taken so far by the narrative that the characteristics of actual physical women are co-opted and transformed in the service of understanding an entirely male "tribe," the moon-men. This paper contains a synopsis of Lucian's ethnographic question-template, used to describe many of the "tribes" visited by the narrator of the story and his crew; then a description of Lucian's method of introducing female "tribes," characters and feminine symbolism into *TS*; and finally, an examination of the moon-men and their society. In conclusion, I offer some thoughts on the importance of Lucian's treatment of women for the claims of identity for author and audience in the work.

*TS* describes many strange peoples, and non-peoples (*e.g.* Lamps, Dreams). The vast majority of groups are presumptively male: "their" women are not mentioned, and their bodies are described as a singular biological form; often, their military might, weaponry and prowess are highlighted. The narrator describes them using an ethnographic question-template: are they hostile or friendly? what are their bodies and clothing like? how/what do they eat and drink? how do they move themselves? how do they reproduce? what are their weapons and army like? etc. The template process produces a picture of society that is "naturally" male-focused.

Women, both as individuals and as a group, are largely absent from *TS*. Two "tribes" of women do appear, however, placed conspicuously first and last in the story: the vine-women (1.8) and the donkey-legged-women (2.46). These dangerous groups are not described with the same template as the other groups (*e.g.* locomotion, reproduction, food and drink are not described). Both vine-women and donkey-legged-women are closely connected with wine and water, as is true of other female entities (including even the giant Halcyon-bird) in *TS*: the vine-women are found living on the far side of a river of wine, human imitations of the vines that are the river's source; the donkey-legged-women offer men wine in the hope of making them drunk; one melts into water when the plan is foiled. Both vine-women and donkey-legged-women are portrayed as neither human women nor another "species," but rather a hybrid form. Their role in the story and their characterization are largely limited to their methods of trapping and killing men. Both groups of women are explicitly said to speak Greek (a few vine-women speak other languages as well). Lucian does not mention the language of other "tribes."

The moon-men are a study in the possibility of male co-optation of the functions of female bodies (including the use of dildos!). Female colonization of male bodies (as in the case of the vine-women) becomes externalized (Hesperos is to be colonized), and the physical characteristics of women are improved upon (*e.g.* the belly is lined with fur, offering a convenient shelter for children). This symbolic physical replacement of women

within the confines of an entirely male culture is the logical end of an ethnographic analysis that ignores the role of the non-masculine in human society.