

Eleni Bozia
Department of Classics
University of Florida
Dauer Hall, Room 137
PO BOX 117435
GAINESVILLE, FL 32611-7435, USA
e-mail: bozia@ufl.edu
Preferred Panel: Cultural Encounters and Fusions in the Roman Empire

Lucian's and Gellius' Literary and Social Realities.

The Roman Empire of the second century C.E. was a multinational society, within which the two ruling cultures, the Greeks and the Romans, seem to be monopolizing the social and literary scenes. Hence, what is intriguing in the assessment of that era is the attitude of Romans and Greeks towards 'foreign' nations. In this paper I discuss Lucian's *Toxaris*, *Scytha*, and *Anacharsis* and compare it to specific chapters from Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*. Lucian is a Syrian who writes in Greek about Greeks, Romans and other nations, while Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* consists of chapters mainly on Roman history, morality and lifestyle, while 'other nations' seem to exist only in the dim light of the background of the social milieu.

In this paper I will try to show that Lucian in those dialogues openly places people from foreign nations in a melting pot of nationalities under the Roman reign and gives them voice. He employs social stereotypes with which the Greeks and the Romans were usually targeting other nations and turns them around; In *Anacharsis*, for instance, it is a Scythian who criticizes the Greeks. On the other hand, there are strong social, historical and moral connotations in Gellius' works pertaining to Roman life. Gellius probably narrated these stories in an attempt to preserve the Roman past. The fluidity of the times, along with the plethora of non-Roman newcomers, has probably made Gellius feel insecure. Furthermore, 'foreigners' appear in his work but in narratives about strange events that took place amidst them and not on account of any sort of achievement in the realms of literature or morality.

In conclusion it seems that both Lucian's and Gellius' works indicate that there has been interaction between several nations in the boundaries of the Roman Empire and up to a degree there has also probably been fusion. Lucian perceives the Roman Empire in its entirety and considers it an entity which encompasses several different co-existing nations. Gellius, on the contrary, seems to be representing the Roman insecurity. The newly formulated social boiler has triggered in him the need for archaism and literary repositories full of memoirs from the Roman past.