

IDENTITY IN THE WRITINGS OF LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA

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ABSTRACT

The second-century CE Greek sophist, rhetorician, and satirist Lucian of Samosata (c. 120-185 CE) presents a complex figure in his writings. A native of the province of Syria who wrote in Greek under the Roman Empire, Lucian's identity and perspective on the world around him seems complex and often self-contradictory in his works. In light of Lucian's complexity, readers and later scholars have sometimes tried to pigeonhole his identity into simple terms of "Greek," "Syrian," or "Roman." This thesis offers an alternative view, applying the postcolonial lens of "discrepant identities" to Lucian's literary personae in his writings. Lucian's self-portrayal shifted between his works due to a variety of factors stemming from Roman imperial rule.

Through a series of case studies of Lucian's works (*De Dea Syria*, *Heracles*, *De Mercede Conductis*, *Apologia*, and *Patriae Encomium*) this thesis shows the malleability of Lucian's self-presentation within his literary corpus due to his evolving circumstances, the broader context of the Roman Empire, and the pressures of unfavorable stereotypes. Finally, as a figure with a sizable literary record, Lucian offers an excellent model of how the identities of other provincials may have shifted as a response to the necessities of life in the heterogeneous Roman Empire.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
Lucian's Biography	3
Thesis and Method	9
CHAPTER 1: SYRIAN OR GREEK? IDENTITY AND RECEPTION IN LUCIANIC SCHOLARSHIP	15
Lucian's Identity, 1500-Present	16
Deconstructing the "Modern" Lucian	21
Conclusion.....	27
CHAPTER 2: DISCREPANCY AND IDENTITY IN THE LUCIANIC CORPUS	28
<i>De Dea Syria</i> : The Syrian Lucian?.....	30
<i>Heracles</i> : The Greek Lucian?.....	35
Lucian takes on Rome: <i>De Mercede Conductis</i>	39
The <i>Apologia</i> for <i>De Mercede Conductis</i> : The Roman Lucian?	43
<i>Patriae Encomium</i> : Lucian's Ambivalence?.....	48
Conclusion.....	53
CHAPTER 3: LUCIAN IN CONTEXT: ROMAN SYRIA AND ANTI-SYRIAN STEREOTYPES	54
Roman Rule and Anti-Syrian Stereotypes.....	55
Lucian and Anti-Syrian Stereotypes.....	61
Conclusion.....	64
CONCLUSION	65
APPENDIX: ABBREVIATIONS	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, as a result of demonstrations which spread through the Arab world, fighting broke out in Syria between multiple pro- and anti-government factions. Now in its tenth year of violence and turmoil, the Syrian Civil War reverberates far beyond the borders of the Middle East. Millions of Syrian civilians have been displaced as a result of this conflict, causing one of the greatest mass population movements in recent memory. For the United States and the “West” as a whole, the Syrian refugee crisis caused an important reckoning. The debate over immigration has remained a centerpiece of American politics for several decades, while the political climate following 9/11 led to enduring hostility and xenophobia towards Middle Easterners among some segments of the US population. This national discussion took on additional significance in a border state like Texas, which has the distinction of being one of the most common destinations for refugees resettled in the US.¹ Accordingly, the mid-2010s saw important questions surrounding the crisis in Syria brought to the forefront of American national rhetoric, such as who should be allowed into the United States and what defines someone as “American” or “other.”

In an era of identity politics, these questions within the American immigration debate touch on the larger discussion of identity as well. Modern notions of identity have become increasingly more prominent in the national discussion. Beyond debates over national identity and ethnic identity, questions of gender, sexuality, economic class, religion, political beliefs, and other factors have increasingly entered the public consciousness about self-identification. Such concerns are by no means inconsequential. This discourse drives public

¹ Jens Manuel Krogstad, “Key Facts about Refugees to the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, October 7, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>.

opinion, social movements, and governmental policy, and eventually becomes entrenched in our laws, culture, and beliefs.

Within the complex modern dialogue surrounding identity, an analysis of ancient identity can provide a helpful framework to understand the modern situation. From one perspective, the ancient world provides a level of critical distance from the controversies surrounding the modern situation. In other words, it offers a laboratory in which modern ideas can be tested. Furthermore, Greco-Roman antiquity is often viewed as one of the pillars of so-called “Western Civilization.” The ancient world is therefore deeply entangled in our own modern notions of identity; an analysis of how the past has been characterized speaks volumes about society today. It is these notions which make a study of ancient identity so useful.

This brings us to Lucian of Samosata. As a resident of the eastern portion of the Roman Empire in the second century CE, Lucian problematizes both a simple definition of identity as well as the traditional Eurocentrism inherent in the study of Greco-Roman society. Throughout his works, Lucian often emphasized his origins in the Roman province of Syria, a vaguely-defined region that at various times included (in part or in whole) the modern nations of Syria, Jordan, southwestern Turkey, Israel, Palestine, and western Iraq. Like the shifting and sometimes ill-defined borders of ancient Syria, Lucian’s own identity, too, appears mutable throughout his works. His literary fluency in his second language allowed him into the cultural spaces of his Greek and Roman society, but his topics of choice—religions in the east, Scythian “barbarians,” and numerous Syrian characters—illustrate the complexity of his own identity. The obstacles which Lucian faced—xenophobic suspicion, stereotypes, and backlash against his Middle Eastern origins—are not very different from

today's challenges. Like many individuals in modern times, Lucian cannot be easily defined by an overly-simplistic designation.

As a case study of ancient identity, Lucian proves to be a beneficial topic of consideration. First, Lucian has left a large imprint upon the historical record, unlike most other individuals from the ancient world. Lucian's vast literary corpus offers a unique window into an ancient literary mind; moreover, his works span the course of several decades, and offer adequate opportunity to exhibit changes of opinion over time, as this thesis will show. Additionally, any study of Lucian must almost instinctively turn to his identity. For several centuries, scholars have had a singular fixation on clarifying Lucian's identity, with numerous academic studies (and at least one conference) dedicated to the subject.² Just like the modern situation, Western scholars have not quite known what to do with Lucian; his Syrian origins, coupled with his mastery of the Greek language, have confounded generations of readers in Europe and beyond. It is this problem of Lucian's identity—the question of belonging—that will be explored below.

Lucian's Biography

The writings of Lucian of Samosata have had an enduring influence on later literature. A towering literary figure of the Second Sophistic and the Antonine Age, the rhetorician and satirist Lucian (c. 120-185 CE) produced over 70 works which have survived from antiquity.³ His works inspired countless imitations and adaptations across a variety of genres, including pieces as diverse as Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, Jonathan Swift's

² See Francesca Mestre and Pilar Gómez, eds., *Lucian of Samosata: Greek Writer and Roman Citizen* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2010).

³ Walter Manoel Edwards, Robert Browning, and Graham Anderson, "Lucian," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Gulliver's Travels, and Disney's *Fantasia* (1940).⁴ Lucian's most widely-read work today, the *Verae Historiae* (*True Histories*), is sometimes considered the earliest attempt at science fiction.⁵ To historians, Lucian's most notable work is a short treatise titled *Quomodo Historia Conscribenda Sit* (*How History Ought to be Written*), noted by one modern historian as "the first coherent work exclusively concerned with the art of history-writing."⁶ Lucian's imagination and wit influenced generations of authors, artists, thinkers and historians to follow.

Despite Lucian's later importance to literature, relatively little is known about his life. The biographical details surrounding Lucian are sketchy at best, and no other references to him have survived from antiquity aside from his own works and one contemporary passage among the writings of Galen.⁷ He does not appear in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, which names many of the other famous literary figures of Lucian's day. His other contemporaries also seem to have ignored him. The nearest biographical source, the *Suda* (the tenth-century Byzantine lexicon) is hostile and unreliable: after taunting Lucian's writing ability and accusing him of blaspheming Christianity, the author suggested that

⁴ Lucian's influence on Shakespeare: see David M. Bevington, ed., *Shakespeare: Three Classical Tragedies* (Toronto; New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 143–44, 256. Lucian's influence on European literature in general: Christopher Robinson, *Lucian and His Influence in Europe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Robert Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions*, *Revealing Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 11–12; Michael O. Zappala, *Lucian of Samosata in the Two Hesperias: An Essay in Literary and Cultural Translation*, *Scripta Humanistica* 65 (Potomac, MD.: Scripta Humanistica, 1990); David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humorism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998). Lucian and *Fantasia*: see Robert Lebling, "What's so Funny about Lucian the Syrian?," *AramcoWorld* 67, no. 4 (July 2016): 12–17.

⁵ See Aristoula Georgiadou and David H.J. Larmour, *Lucian's Science Fiction Novel True Histories: Interpretation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

⁶ Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, *Historiography in the Modern World: Western and Indian Perspectives* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

⁷ Ernst Wenkebach and Franz Pfaff, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum, Volume 10.1* (Leipzig; Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1934), 402.

Lucian was torn apart by dogs and that he “will inherit with Satan a share of the eternal fire.”⁸

Faced with a dearth of usable material, scholars instead have turned to Lucian’s own works to cobble together a rough understanding of his biography.⁹ He was born around the year 120 CE in Samosata—modern Samsat, Turkey—the principal town of Commagene in the northernmost part of the Roman province of Syria.¹⁰ Located on the banks of the Euphrates River, the city was a fortified site of regional importance. It had been occupied since prehistory, but was refounded by a king named Samos I during the Hellenistic period, who apparently gave the city its name.¹¹ Throughout the Hellenistic period, it was ruled by a dynasty of Iranian-Greek kings, who continued to rule as client-kings under the Romans as a buffer between Rome and the Parthian Empire to the east.¹² In this status, the small state nevertheless remained among the wealthier Roman client kingdoms.¹³ Commagene remained functionally autonomous until 72-73 CE, when it was invaded by Roman forces and formally annexed into the province of Syria.¹⁴ During the second century CE, Samosata housed a Roman garrison, the *XVI Flavia Firma*, as part of Rome’s ongoing management of the Parthian threat.¹⁵

⁸ *Suda*, “Loukianos,” lambda 683, Akihiko Watanabe, trans., *The Suda On Line*, <https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/sol/sol-cgi-bin/search.cgi>.

⁹ The best recent biographical accounts of Lucian are C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986), 6–23; Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1996), 300–329.

¹⁰ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 24.

¹¹ Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*, 46 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 187.

¹² Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 299; Kevin Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London; Los Angeles: British Museum Press; J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Publications, 2003), 90.

¹³ Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 90.

¹⁴ Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC - AD 337* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 82–83.

¹⁵ Nigel Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 265–68.

It was in this milieu that Lucian was born: a Hellenistic city on the edge of Syria, formerly ruled by Iranian-Greek kings and now occupied by Roman troops. Indeed, Lucian reflects this “borderlands” identity. His writings, especially *De Dea Syria* (*On the Syrian Goddess*), indicate an affinity to Syrian religion despite his general disapprobation of superstition. His inclination to use “barbarian” characters, especially Syrians and Scythians (a nomadic people in the Black Sea region), further reinforces this notion.¹⁶ Yet the Hellenistic legacy of Lucian’s homeland, a territory ruled by Alexander the Great and his Greek successors, also offered him access to the larger post-Hellenistic world. Lucian, like any educated person of his day, wrote in a highly cultivated Attic (and occasionally Ionic) Greek in imitation of older styles. It was Lucian’s acculturation to Greek literary style that would later allow him to travel throughout the Roman Empire. The broader Hellenic literary audience presented an additional opportunity for Lucian to preserve his Syrian culture (see the section on *De Dea Syria* in Chapter 2, below).

There remains the problem of Lucian’s name, a Hellenized form of the Latin “Lucius” and a possible designator of Roman citizenship. It remains unclear where he got this; postulations that his father was a Roman soldier in the garrison at Samosata are merely speculative.¹⁷ Whatever the case, Lucian certainly was influenced by the wide range of cultures within this border context, and (as shown below) had a profound effect on his self-presentation in his writings.

¹⁶ Inger Neeltje Irene Kuin, “Being a Barbarian: Lucian and Otherness in the Second Sophistic,” *Groniek* 49, no. 211 (January 17, 2017): 131–43.

¹⁷ Fred W. Householder, *Literary Quotation and Allusion in Lucian*, (New York: Crown Hill Press, 1941), 95–96.

The modern scholarly consensus thus sees Lucian as a product of local Syrian (rather than Greek) ethnic origins. He likely spoke Aramaic in addition to Greek.¹⁸ In his *Somnium* (*The Dream*), Lucian claims that he became an apprentice sculptor in his youth, but failed at this and ultimately turned to the study of rhetoric.¹⁹ In this capacity, he travelled throughout the empire as a teacher and public speaker, visiting Greece, Italy, and Gaul, and achieving a moderate degree of fame and wealth—or so he would have his readers believe.²⁰

Despite his success in rhetoric, Lucian's *Bis Accusatus* (*Twice Accused*) suggests that he had some sort of midlife crisis around the age of forty.²¹ He likely shifted to writing dialogues during this part of his career, and briefly attached himself to the court of the Roman co-Emperor Lucius Verus. Several of his works from this period can be dated securely: *Imagines* (*Portraits*) and *De Saltatione* (*On the Dance*) were composed between 163 and 164 CE, coinciding with Lucius Verus' time in Antioch, the most important city in Syria.²² Near the end of his life, he accepted a post in the Roman imperial administration in Egypt, either under the emperor Marcus Aurelius or Marcus' son and successor, Commodus.²³ Lucian certainly lived until at least 180 CE, as he references the recently-deified Marcus Aurelius in *Alexander*. Lucian disappears from the historical record after this date. It is therefore likely that he died sometime during the reign of Commodus (180-192 CE).²⁴

¹⁸ J.N. Adams, Mark Janse, and Simon Swain, eds., *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 14–15.

¹⁹ Lucian, *Somn.* 1-4, 18.

²⁰ Lucian, *Apol.* 15; *Bis. acc.* 27.

²¹ Lucian, *Bis. acc.* 32.

²² Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 168–69.

²³ Lucian, *Apol.* 12.

²⁴ Lucian, *Alex.* 48.

This approach to constructing Lucian's biography has its flaws. Many of Lucian's references to "himself" form part of his fictional personae, and his works can only be described as semiautobiographical at best.²⁵ To cite these works authoritatively as real, biographical accounts of Lucian's life would run the risk of circularity. What modern scholars know of Lucian's life comes only from his works; his biography, accordingly, should not be overused to contextualize the same works from which that biography derives.

Alternatively, these biographical accounts could prove useful in examining Lucian's identity construction and how he sought to portray himself. This is not a simple task, as Lucian's self-references in his own works do not provide any straightforward answers to the problem of his identity. Lucian often presents his literary personae as "Syrian" or "Assyrian," as he does in *Bis Accusatus*, for instance. However, he wrote all of his works in Greek and almost exclusively uses Greek literary motifs. At some points, he even presents himself wholly as "Greek" with little indication of his Syrian origins at all. Lucian's relationship with the Roman Empire further complicates his self-characterization. On the one hand, he was briefly associated with the imperial court and, late in his career, a minor provincial administrator; on the other, he was fiercely critical of Rome in works such as *Nigrinus* and *De Mercede Conductis* (*On Salaried Posts in Great Houses*). He even had the audacity to satirize the political activities of the Roman Emperor, poking fun at Marcus Aurelius' repeated meddling in the Athenian government in *Deorum Concilium* (*The Council of the Gods*).²⁶ Beyond this, he was the first Greek writer to use the pronoun "us" to describe

²⁵ See Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 247–94; Daniel S. Richter, "Lucian of Samosata," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic*, ed. Daniel S. Richter and William A. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²⁶ James H. Oliver, "The Actuality of Lucian's Assembly of the Gods," *The American Journal of Philology* 101, no. 3 (1980): 304–13. See also *SHA Marc.* 8.1 and Barry Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), 19 for Lucian's freedom to lampoon the emperor.

Rome—consciously identifying himself with Roman imperial power.²⁷ Faced with these seeming incongruities, many scholars have chosen to simplify their characterizations of Lucian’s identity into “Greek” (an inheritor of the larger Hellenistic world) or “Syrian” (an individual from the eastern edge of the Mediterranean).

Thesis and Method

This thesis argues that these simplifications are insufficient. Despite the daunting challenges of such a task, this thesis will reexamine the complexities of identity within Lucian’s writings. At first glance, a thesis on Lucian’s identity seems better fit for a philological discussion than under the umbrella of ancient history. Lucian wrote fiction, and his only foray into history-writing (*Quomodo Historia Conscribenda Sit*) solely focused upon historiography. Nevertheless, even fictional works should not be discounted as historical sources, especially with an author like Lucian who regularly blurs the line between imagination and reality. As G.W. Bowersock noted, despite Lucian’s apparent falsehoods in works such as the *Verae Historiae*, “what Lucian describes inevitably reflects, all too obviously, the world in which he lives.”²⁸ A further critique could be raised that, as a satirist, Lucian’s narratorial voice was a fictional persona and thus unreliable for this historical study. Even if all of Lucian’s works are merely his personae, they are based upon very real identities of individuals in the second century CE, and on the reality of life under the Roman Empire. Lucian remains one of the best available witnesses to Roman power, both as a subject of it and as a member of the administrative elite. His writings make important

²⁷ Lucian, *Alex.* 48; *Hist. conscr.* 5, 17, 29, 31; see Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 89.

²⁸ G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*, Sather Classical Lectures, v. 58 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6.

historical contributions in addition to literary ones, especially as a case study of an individual who successfully navigated the complexities of identity in the eastern Roman provinces.

Accordingly, in contrast to scholarly tradition, Lucian's identity cannot (and should not) be reduced to a simple binary of "Syrian or Greek." Rather, any discussion of Lucian's identity should attempt to highlight his complex self-portrayal. Lucian could appear as Syrian, Greek, or Roman, or a combination of these in varying degrees, depending on his context. His shifting economic status, geographic location, occupation, and educational level relative to the local population all led to seemingly different perspectives in his work. In these scenarios, Lucian draws on different aspects of his identity to craft his perspective, depending on the demands of each text.

This multiform response to cultural factors is the essence of "discrepant identities," the "*heterogeneity* of the response to Rome, to culture change and to identity (re-) formation."²⁹ Individuals have multiple identities which manifest differently over time based on numerous internal and external factors including status, age, economic class, profession, and numerous other factors. This idea is expounded at length in David Mattingly's *Imperialism, Power, and Identity* (2013), which applied the theory to the Roman provinces of Britain and Africa. Lucian and the province of Syria are well-suited for this sort of lens as well; Syria was a complex milieu of local Semitic and Indo-European cultures, with an additional centuries-old presence of Greeks since the third-century BCE, and, more recently, the Romans since the first-century BCE. Indeed, these ideas have already been applied

²⁹ David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, Miriam S. Balmuth Lectures in Ancient History and Archaeology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 213.

broadly to Roman Syria by Nathanael Andrade citing the “discrepant experiences” of residents in the province.³⁰

Most importantly for understanding Lucian, Mattingly’s study allows for change over time. He comments, “There is obviously scope for individuals to emphasize different aspects of identity at different phases of their lives or in discrete social situations.”³¹ The variations of perspective within Lucian’s works present one of the biggest challenges to understanding his identity. At the risk of circularity, this study will gather evidence from Lucian’s texts to ascertain why his perspective and identities change from work to work, identifying factors such as his geographic location, socioeconomic status, employment, age, and relationship to the political and culture elite. Taken together, these indicators can help to explain why Lucian presents himself as he does in certain works.

This thesis seeks to advance the concept of discrepant identities even further. While Mattingly and Andrade focused mostly on residents and locations specifically within the provinces, the idea of discrepant identities can also be applied to provincials who spent much of their careers in the administrative centers of the empire. Indeed, an increasing number of low-level elites and administrators at Rome during the latter half of the second century CE came from Syria; whether or not these individuals could “pass” as Greek or Roman at any given time was imperative for maintaining their engagement in Roman sociopolitical spheres.³² Lucian offers an excellent case study for this Syrian expatriate population throughout the Roman Empire. He provides a model for how these individuals might have

³⁰ Nathanael J. Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 20–21.

³¹ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 217.

³² Barbara Levick, *Julia Domna, Syrian Empress*, Women of the Ancient World (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 20.

behaved in varying social contexts—he could appear with an entirely different persona as a response to changes in his social and political environment.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 will provide a historiography of the various conceptions of Lucian's identity, from the Renaissance to the present. Beginning in the Renaissance, scholars sought to defend Lucian's "Greekness." In the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a new generation of scholars found it expedient to castigate Lucian for his "Syrianness," nearly resulting in his removal from the canon of classical literature. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, by contrast, saw a renewal in Lucian's popularity; some scholars heralded Lucian as a postcolonial, indigenous "Syrian" voice, while others heralded him as an exemplar of "Greek" writing during the second century CE. Readers who attempt to push Lucian into one of these two identities risk missing the larger picture of Lucian's perspective on the ancient world. Concluding Chapter 1, this thesis will deconstruct the modern scholarly viewpoints that seek to define Lucian through a "Greek" or "Syrian" binary and will relate this issue to the larger problems of biographical criticism.

Chapter 2 will present an analysis of identity within the Lucianic texts themselves. The identities of Lucian's literary personae shifted to meet the context of each of his works. Thus, this chapter will include a discussion of Lucian's disputed *De Dea Syria*, arguably one of his most "Syrian" works, and his *Heracles*, which presents him as Greek. Additionally, it will explore two seemingly contradictory works which reflect Lucian's changing views on Rome. As a private citizen within the world of Greek *paideia* (education), Lucian exhibits hostility to Roman cultural attitudes, as shown by his polemic against the treatment of Greek tutors in Rome in *De Mercede Conductis*. After taking a position in the Roman imperial administration later in life, Lucian was accused of hypocrisy by his friends on account of this

work. Accordingly, his *Apologia* records a markedly different set of views reflective of his new status. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the *Patriae Encomium* (*In Praise of Homeland*), a less-cited Lucianic declamation regarding the author's relationship to his home in Samosata.

While Chapter 2 will define Lucian's identity through a series of case studies of his works, Chapter 3 will seek to explain *why* Lucian's works present such a complicated identity by drawing evidence from the contemporary province of Syria. Lucian's identity developed in response to the variety of societal pressures. In addition to the cultural milieu of Greek literature in the Second Sophistic and the politics of the Antonine Age, Lucian's own identity was affected by the anti-Syrian stereotypes which prevailed in the Roman Empire of the second century CE. Lucian's works reflect a conscious engagement with these stereotypes, as he sought to construct his identity in reaction to them.

Ultimately, this thesis has two goals: to reveal the contemporary problems surrounding the inadequate representations of Lucian's identity and literary personae and to examine Lucian's identity through a new framework of discrepant identities. While this thesis primarily focuses on Lucian's cultural identity for the sake of space, it is worth noting briefly that Lucian's other identities are equally important to gather a full picture of him as an individual. When viewing Lucian's ethnic and cultural identities, the reader should bear in mind that Lucian's primary identity in his writings was that of an author. While his cultural identity seems mutable and complex, his authorial persona remains constant: he was first and foremost a literary talent and a candid observer of society. His interest in the people and places around him, his deep knowledge of literature, and his fascination with art appear in

nearly every work. Before he was a Syrian, a Greek, or a Roman, Lucian was simply a good writer.

Moreover, the view of Lucian's identity presented here is not the be-all and end-all for understanding how Lucian presented himself and interacted with the Roman world, but rather offers one new lens with which to reexamine Lucian. Furthermore, the constraints of space dictate that this thesis unfortunately cannot explore every individual work of Lucian. Issues of literary style and textual criticism, too, are well beyond the scope of this work. Instead, it will set out to examine Lucian as a case study for other individuals who navigated the complexities of identity in the Roman world. As a figure with a large corpus attached to his name, Lucian, more than almost any other individual of the period, offers a window into how identity could adapt, shift, and become seemingly inconsistent as a result of Roman imperial power. As an individual, he can perhaps shed some light upon the complexities of modern identity as well. Like the modern situation for Syrians and the United States, the question of inclusion and belonging features prominently in Lucian's works. In this "laboratory" of ancient identity, we might not only gain a better understanding of Lucian's identity, but our own identities and concerns as well.

CHAPTER 1: SYRIAN OR GREEK? IDENTITY AND RECEPTION IN LUCIANIC SCHOLARSHIP

Throughout Lucian's writings, he only mentions the name of his hometown once, though his origins in Syria are easy to infer from his repeated references to the region. In *Quomodo Historia Conscribenda Sit* (*How History Ought to be Written*), Lucian's polemic against the faults of his contemporary historians turns to their lack of geographic knowledge.¹ Lucian complains of one particularly ignorant writer:

One man, for example, who had never met a Syrian nor even heard as they say 'barber-shop gossip' about such things, assembled his facts so carelessly that when speaking of Europus [Dura-Europos, a Hellenistic site on the Euphrates River] he said: 'Europus is situated in Mesopotamia, two days' journey from the Euphrates; it was colonized by men of Edessa.' Even this was not enough for him: My own birthplace, Samosata, this fine writer in the same book lifted, acropolis, walls and all, and transplanted it to Mesopotamia.²

The above passage represents the only definitive reference in Lucian's writings to his place of origin. Though this mention of Samosata only occurred in passing, it became the centerpiece of arguments for later scholars. Lucian's birth in the province of Syria proved a major stumbling block for Hellenocentric scholars in the Renaissance and the periods which followed, reflecting both the quality of his work and the anti-Syrian biases in European scholarship. How could such a talented writer come from a provincial town like Samosata and not a cultural center like Athens or Alexandria? After all, Lucian himself admitted that his homeland was not a particularly exceptional place.³ The cultural biases of Lucian's readers also turned scholarly attention toward Lucian's ethnicity, especially during the zenith

¹ For further discussion of *Quomodo Historia conscribenda sit* and the historiography of the Parthian war, see Adam M Kemezis, "Lucian, Fronto, and the Absence of Contemporary Historiography under the Antonines," *American Journal of Philology* 131, no. 2 (2010): 289 note 11.

² Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 24. Translations from K. Kilburn, *Lucian, Volume 6*, Loeb Classical Library 430 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 34–37.

³ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 2.

of scientific racism during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁴ Scholars who admired Lucian often went to great lengths to downplay or mitigate his Syrianness. Scholars who disliked him were quick to disregard his works as the product of an “Oriental” mind that had no place in the classical canon. This problem stemmed from a larger issue, as the lack of information surrounding Lucian’s life allowed biographers to cast Lucian in the image of their own times. Thus, Lucian could become a “self-made man” in the twentieth century, or a forebearer of postcolonial thought. These conceptions of Lucian merit closer critique.

Lucian’s Identity, 1500-Present

Beginning in the early modern period, scholars went out of their way to explain the apparent inconsistency within Lucian’s identity. The issue began with a seemingly honest mistake: the fifteenth-century commentator Filippo Beroaldo conflated Lucian with another figure, Lucius of Patras (a city in Greece).⁵ Thus, Beroaldo suggested that Lucian was born in Samosata, but his family originally came from Patras.⁶ This suggestion proved useful for scholars, as it left Lucian’s birth in Samosata while placing his ethnic origins on the Greek mainland. Accordingly, Lucian’s supposed origins in Patras were repeated by Francis Hickes (1634), John Dryden (1696), and Thomas Francklin (1780).⁷

Once the notion of Lucian’s Greek origins was dispelled, however, scholars looked for other ways to emphasize a fundamental Greekness within Lucian’s works. A more

⁴ Daniel Richter, “Lives and Afterlives of Lucian of Samosata,” *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 13, no. 1 (2005): 88–92.

⁵ For more on Beroaldo, Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, and Lucian, see Julia Haig Gaisser, *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the Golden Ass: A Study in Transmission and Reception* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁶ Filippo Beroaldo, *Commentarii a Philippo Beroaldo conditi in asinii aureu[m] Lucii Apuleii* (Venice: Bartolomeo Zani, 1504), 6. See Richter, “Lives and Afterlives of Lucian of Samosata,” 79.

⁷ Francis Hickes and Hickes, Thomas, “The Life of Lucian the Samosatenian,” in *Certain Select Dialogues of Lucian* (Oxford: William Turner, 1634), B2; John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden, Prose 1691-1698: De Arte Graphica and Shorter Works*, ed. A. E. Wallace Maurer et al., vol. 20 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Thomas Francklin, *The Works of Lucian, from the Greek* (London: T. Cadell, 1780), x. See also Richter, “Lives and Afterlives of Lucian of Samosata,” 78–79.

sophisticated conception appeared in Christoph Martin Wieland's *Über Lucians Lebensumstände, Charakter, und Schriften* in 1788, which suggested that Lucian was a native of Syria, but wanted to "extricate" himself from the region as quickly as possible:

What is the probability, that a man of Lucian's genius and character [...] could have so long endured to remain in a provincial town, so far from the chief seat of the muses, of refined taste and elegant manners, among such a mongrel race of Greeks and barbarians, as, in his *Double Indictment* [*Bis Accusatus*], he describes his countrymen to have been? And who can imagine, that an author like him, since it depended entirely on his own option where he would live, should pitch upon such a place as Samosata, merely because he was born there, and on his return found his next relations still amongst the lowest description of the inhabitants, to be the theatre of his celebrity, the place for composing and rehearsing his works?⁸

In order to make Lucian's works "Greek" enough for his own expectations, Wieland admitted that Lucian was born in Samosata, but suggested that he wrote his best works in the principal towns of the Roman Empire, especially Athens. This suggestion became even more popular throughout the nineteenth century. The early 1800s saw a series of German scholars, including August Pauly, Gottfried Wetzlar, and Adolph Planck debate the locus of composition for Lucian's work. They decided that he had written most of his works either in Athens or in Western Europe, especially Gaul.⁹

Lucian's popularity among readers declined during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, around the same time that scholars began to emphasize Lucian's Syrian identity. Scientific racism and anti-Semitic notions dominated the academy of this era, and these views naturally trickled down to Lucianic scholarship. Thus, in the minds of many turn-of-the-century writers, Lucian became an "Oriental without depth and character," and a

⁸ Christoph Martin Wieland, "On the Circumstances, Character, and Writings of Lucian," in *Lucian of Samosata from the Greek: With the Comments and Illustrations of Wieland and Others*, trans. William Tooke, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820).

⁹ Richter, "Lucian of Samosata," 83–88.

“thoughtless Syrian” with an “oriental mind.”¹⁰ Henry Hime’s remarks in *Lucian, the Syrian Satirist* (1900) are representative here: Hime’s Lucian lacked “constructive faculties,” and became a rhetorician because of the “glitter about rhetoric that naturally attracted the admiration of an Asiatic.”¹¹ According to Hime, Lucian could never have become a “true philosopher” due to his moral defects; he was a “fickle Syrian,” “entirely negative in [his] morality,” and had a “narrow Asiatic mind.”¹²

While these views did not completely expunge Lucian from the classical canon, they did cause a significant reduction in interest in his works. Those scholars who continued to study Lucian following the turn of the twentieth century largely sidestepped questions of Lucian’s identity, instead focusing on Lucian’s literary abilities. Francis Allinson’s 1927 work *Lucian, Satirist and Artist* exemplifies this spirit. Unlike his European contemporaries, the American scholar Allinson has much less to say about Lucian’s Syrian origins, thus crafting a more favorable view of Lucian than other scholars from prior decades. When Allinson does make a passing reference, however, even he repeats the typical anti-Syrian stereotypes of Lucian as a “deceitful Syrian.”¹³ Thus, even among scholars who viewed Lucian more favorably than Hime and his contemporaries, Lucian’s Syrian identity proved inescapable.

During the middle part of the twentieth century, Lucian received a favorable reception from a different source. While he received less attention from classicists during this period, his works were lauded in the emerging national historiography of Syria following the

¹⁰ Quotes taken from Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 1–3; Richter, “Lives and Afterlives of Lucian of Samosata,” 89–91; Nathanael J. Andrade, “Voices in the Margins: Classics’ Suppression of Ancient Roman Writers of Color,” *Eidolon*, 2019, <https://eidolon.pub/voices-in-the-margins-5f93acc0df6f>.

¹¹ Henry William Lovett Hime, *Lucian, the Syrian Satirist* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1900), 2.

¹² Hime, 10, 35, 39.

¹³ Francis G. Allinson, *Lucian, Satirist and Artist* (London: George G. Harrap, 1927), 31.

collapse of France's colonial empire and the creation of an independent Syrian nation-state in 1946. Thus, George M. Haddad (1949) and Philip K. Hitti (1951) both heralded Lucian's Syrian origins in positive terms.¹⁴ While Haddad tempered his ideas with a discussion of the Greek aspects of Lucian's work, Hitti was especially enthusiastic about Lucian's Syrian origins, especially in his account of Lucian's later literary influence. Such works represented a watershed moment in Lucian's reception. For centuries, scholars had viewed the Syrian aspect of Lucian's identity as unfavorable or blameworthy; now for the first time, the "Syrian" Lucian was an object of praise, a sentiment which would find even more adherents in the decades to come.

The arrival of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and the advent of postcolonial studies brought about renewed interest in the eastern provinces of Rome among classicists, and Lucian's reputation in scholarship benefited greatly from this shift in perspective.¹⁵ Some of the interest began a few years prior, with G.W. Bowersock's *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969), which represented an important step in rehabilitating Lucian's badly-damaged reputation by alluding to the value of his contemporary observations.¹⁶ A fuller view of Lucian's role in society appeared in C.P. Jones' *Culture and Society in Lucian* (1986), which sought to emphasize Lucian as an observer of Greco-Roman society, rather than merely an artist.¹⁷

Similarly, Simon Swain (1996) broke new ground by analyzing how Lucian's various identities—a Syrian religious identity, a Greek "cultural-cognitive" identity, and Roman

¹⁴ George M. Haddad, "Aspects of Social Life in Antioch in the Hellenistic-Roman Period" (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1949), 91–92; Philip K. Hitti, *History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine* (New York: MacMillan, 1951), 322–23.

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹⁶ G.W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1969), 114–16.

¹⁷ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, v.

political identity—interacted with each other. Still, in Swain’s view, a culturally-hybrid Lucian was irredeemably Greek: when faced with a conflict between Greek and Roman cultures, Lucian inevitably sided with the Greeks.¹⁸ By contrast, Tim Whitmarsh (2001) conceptualized Lucian’s identities as superficial, as “Lucian dons and doffs the masks of identity.”¹⁹ Nathanael Andrade (2013) presents Lucian as an “imitation Greek” who integrates, reimagines, and performs aspects of Greek culture within a Syrian context, especially in works such as *De Dea Syria*.²⁰

The viewpoints of Swain, Whitmarsh, and Andrade have greatly improved the general scholarly conceptions of Lucian’s identities, but there is still room for further improvement in the understanding of Lucian. The interaction between Lucian’s identities is decidedly more complex than the characterization presented in these works. Swain’s model of Lucian’s identity, for instance, can only go so far in understanding Lucian—assigning Lucian’s cognition as a source of his identity comes dangerously close to the circularity of biographical criticism. The opposing view, Whitmarsh’s comparison of Lucian’s identity to “masks” and performance, does not solve the problem either. There are clear tensions within Lucian’s works (like the conflict between Lucian’s views in *De Mercede Conductis* and the *Apologia*) for which a performative or hybrid conception simply cannot account. Finally, Andrade’s model works well insofar as Lucian exists in a Syrian context; in a work such as the *Heracles* (Chapter 2, below), Andrade’s ideas are better suited to Lucian’s Celtic interlocutor than to the “Greek” Lucian.²¹ While these arguments have certainly advanced the

¹⁸ Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 329.

¹⁹ Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 250.

²⁰ Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 15, 29, 261–313.

²¹ Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 303.

understandings of Lucian's identity, an enduring model of understanding Lucian has proven elusive.

In summary, western scholars prior to the late twentieth century had a (generally) positive view of ancient Greece and a (generally) negative view of ancient Syria. Thus, scholars would naturally gravitate towards one conception of Lucian or another based on their own biases regarding Greekness and Syrianness. Lucian, when viewed as fundamentally "Greek," was generally lauded by scholars; as in the early 20th century, the "Syrian" Lucian was nearly removed from the classical canon. Recent scholars have avoided some of these pitfalls and developed a more complex models of Lucian's identity, but have not yet managed to propose a view which fully encompasses Lucian's self-identification throughout all of his works.

Deconstructing the "Modern" Lucian

Despite the improvement in scholarship surrounding Lucian's identity, the more complex iterations of Lucian's identities have not always been heeded. Faced with the plurality of Lucian's identities, many scholars have constructed several different Lucians from one part of his works or another. As postcolonial discourse has developed over the past several decades, there has been a renewed emphasis on the Syrian aspects of Lucian's works.²² This shift is admittedly well deserved—Lucian, after all, declared that he was born in Syria, and consistently used Syrian characters throughout his works. Many of Lucian's literary personae are called "Syrian" or "Assyrian," and Lucian seemingly had a grasp of Aramaic—it may have even been his first language.²³

²² For a discussion of the renewed emphasis on Lucian as Syrian, see Adam Bartley, *A Lucian for Our Times* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), ix.

²³ Lucian, *Bis. acc.* 14, 25-34; *Ind.* 19, *Pisc.* 19, *Syr. D.* 1, 31-33. See Hitti, *History of Syria*, 322; Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 305-7; Adams, Janse, and Swain, *Bilingualism in Ancient Society*, 14-15..

Even in modern works that discuss Lucian's identity as "hybrid" or multifaceted, his underlying origins in the province of Syria have usually remained at the forefront. One writer, Robert Lebling, conceived of Lucian's ascendant "Syrianness" in these terms: "Though he wrote in flawless classical Greek, the literary language of the day, Lucian was a man of the Middle East. He was of Semitic Assyrian stock, and his native tongue was Syriac."²⁴ Thus, Lucian's "position as a Syrian barbarian" has become central to his observations of the larger Greek and Roman world, as stated by Inger Kuin.²⁵ These ideas were not entirely new; they had their origins in the national histories of Syria following the breakup of France's colonial empire. Thus, in Hitti's *History of Syria* (1951), "Lucian was a Syrian, as he took pains to point out in view of contemporary ethnic ignorance."²⁶ Such views have likely contributed to Lucian's rise in popularity in recent years: this conception of Lucian sees him as an outsider, a non-white witness to Greek culture and Roman imperialism in the eastern provinces.

Even so, not every scholar has been so quick to laud Lucian's Syrianness. Benjamin Isaac's work *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (2004) painted an entirely different picture of Lucian. According to Isaac, "Lucian was a Syrian in the sense of the Greeks who have settled in Syria, not one of the native ones [...] we do not know whether he would call himself a 'Syrian' if he was not writing satire. He was a Greek by choice."²⁷ Isaac's Lucian is Syrian only by the geographic location of his birth; in every other important way, this Lucian represents a fundamentally Greek individual. On matters of Syrian identity,

²⁴ Lebling, "What's so Funny about Lucian the Syrian?," 13.

²⁵ Inger Neeltje Irene Kuin, "Being a Barbarian: Lucian and Otherness in the Second Sophistic," *Groniek* 49, no. 211 (2017): 131–43.

²⁶ Hitti, *History of Syria*, 322.

²⁷ Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 342.

he is only to be approached with caution, more useful as an example of Hellenization than as a Syrian thinker.

Isaac was not the only scholar to express a similar opinion. An examination of the academic literature presents a counternarrative to the conception of Lucian as a Syrian. Thus, one scholar does not even mention Lucian's origins in Syria at all; he was merely

an outstanding *pepaideumenos* [i.e. a practitioner of Greek education] during an era in which being Greek was less a matter of political than of cultural definition, and in which membership in the upper administrative echelons was dependent on [...] conversancy with the literary heritage and language of Attic Greece – during this age, then, Lucian proved himself not only a worthy representative of such *paideia*, but also contributed with his literary works to its development and adaptation.²⁸

This conception holds that Lucian is merely one of many Greek rhetoricians during the Second Sophistic; there is little difference between Lucian and an inhabitant of Greece proper. It is his education that matters and not his origins. Even a nuanced viewer of Lucian's identity like Andrade has recently worried that Lucian only merits study for classicists in a Near Eastern context "because he talks like he's white."²⁹ Andrade is concerned that classicists have unduly championed Lucian as representative of Syrian culture by selecting an individual who "mastered the proper classical literary styles and conventions of Greek;" in so doing, they have inadvertently replicated the same biases that nearly eliminated Lucian from the canon in the first place.³⁰

Andrade certainly understands the complexities of Lucian's identity, and his apprehension over the celebration of Lucian's "Syrianness" indicates a serious and legitimate concern within the field. Moreover, a conception of Lucian as "Greek" or "Syrian" is not

²⁸ Peter von Möllendorff, "Frigid Enthusiasts: Lucian on Writing History," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 47 (2001): 117.

²⁹ Andrade, "Voices in the Margins: Classics' Suppression of Ancient Roman Writers of Color."

³⁰ Andrade, "Voices in the Margins."

necessarily wrong. In several of these cases, however, Lucian's identities have clearly been weaponized to support a particular argument, often about race in the ancient world. Scholars might reach similar conclusions about proto-racism in the Roman Empire, but one group calls Lucian a "Greek" while the other calls him a "Syrian;" one sees Lucian as a Greek outsider commenting on Syrian society, while the other sees Lucian as an insider looking outward, a subaltern voice from the fringes of Greek and Roman worlds.

There is plenty of room for debate and disagreement in scholarship on Lucian's identity and the varying degrees to which he can be characterized as "Syrian," "Greek," or even "Roman." The views enumerated above cannot coexist, however. Lucian cannot be both "fundamentally Greek" and "fundamentally Syrian." His identity can be construed in numerous ways, whether as multicultural, or hybridized, or performative; a simple binary that sees him as either "Greek" or "Syrian," however, is both reductive and ultimately unproductive. A holistic view of Lucian's texts does not allow for such simplified versions of his identity. As this thesis will show in Chapter 2, Lucian's multifaceted identity manifests differently in different contexts. Ignoring the complexities of Lucian's identity does little good for understanding his perspective on the Roman world.

One final critique remains regarding the scholarship on Lucian. Much of the scholarly output regarding Lucian's works has focused especially on biographical criticism, attempting to ascertain the details of Lucian's career from the few self-referential passages in his works. Such an approach is not without its value, especially in dating Lucian's works to a particular time period.³¹ As mentioned in the Introduction, however, biographical criticism presents a few major drawbacks. First, there is the obvious risk of circularity. In other words, drawing

³¹ See Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 167–69.

too many conclusions about Lucian's works based upon his biography is a fruitless exercise when nearly all of the biographic information about him comes from the aforementioned works. In other cases, critics have seemingly gone too far. In one instance, scholars have dubiously asserted that Lucian suffered from gout by stitching together a series of vague references in his writings, an ultimately baseless claim.³²

While circularity and excessive biographical analysis do pose a problem to Lucianic scholarship, there is a more pressing danger as scholars import their contemporary mores into interpretations of Lucian's biography. One of the most dramatic examples of this trend appears in Francis Allinson's *Lucian, Satirist and Artist* (1927) which describes Lucian's rise to prominence as that of a "self-made man."³³ The assertion says more about early twentieth-century American values than the realities of Lucian's education or social status. Far from an erudite *pepaideumenos*, Allinson's Lucian "picked up, here and there, such scraps as he could of technical knowledge but [...] his real disciplinary training was self-devised and eclectic."³⁴ This conception, of course, has no basis in the textual evidence. Instead, Allinson hoped to portray Lucian through contemporary ideals and thus ignored some details (i.e. the sophistication of Lucian's writings) to fit Lucian into his modern framework.

Allinson's conception of Lucian as a rags-to-riches story might seem quaint and dated to modern readers, but the same tendency to see Lucian's works through contemporary ideals has not abated. Thus, recent scholars have "discovered a post-colonial Lucian" whose works have a "striking postmodernity" to them.³⁵ Just as Lucian reflected the American ideal of a

³² This is the view of Richter, "Lucian of Samosata." cf. M.D. MacLeod, *Lucian, Volume 8*, Loeb Classical Library 432 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 321; Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian*, 9.

³³ Allinson, *Lucian Satirist And Artist*, 24–25.

³⁴ Allinson, 28.

³⁵ Richter, "Lives and Afterlives of Lucian of Samosata," 93; Karen ní Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

self-made man a century ago, now he has become a representative voice of the colonized in the ancient world, navigating elite and non-elite spheres while criticizing the imperial power. Accordingly, scholars have increasingly viewed him (and Roman Syria and the provinces as a whole) in terms of “Romanization,” “Hellenization,” and “hybridity,” among others.³⁶

This is not to say that the application of postcolonial theory to Lucian is misguided or incorrect. These ideas surely have benefitted the contemporary understanding of Lucian, reflected by the significant increase in publications on his writings in recent decades. Indeed, the present work has benefitted both from postcolonial theory and from its resultant application to Lucian. Yet, like any other new paradigm, it must be applied with caution. For instance, the notion of hybridity cannot fairly be applied to Lucian, considering how adept he appears in various cultural spaces, (see Chapter 2).

Notions such as “Hellenization” present additional problems when applied to Lucian. Kevin Butcher’s surprise that “we find Hellenized individuals like Lucian also taking an interest in promoting indigenous images [in *De Dea Syria*]” is illustrative.³⁷ Lucian might be “Hellenized” in the classic sense, but exceptions within his works represent a problem with the model of Hellenization and not a problem with Lucian himself. As referenced above in the Introduction, it is much more productive to understand Lucian’s acceptance of a Greek identity through acculturation. In this manner, Lucian took on all of the qualities of a Greek writer, without the erasure of his “indigenous” identity as implied by Hellenization.

University Press, 2014), xi–xii. cf. Andrade, “Voices in the Margins: Classics’ Suppression of Ancient Roman Writers of Color.”

³⁶ For a brief discussion of these terms and their application to ancient Syria, see Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 9–14.

³⁷ Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 336.

The reshaped conception of Lucian's identity within a binary of "Greek versus Syrian" also stems from this same trend. In the absence of significant historical data surrounding Lucian's life, scholars have mapped their own contemporary preconceptions onto him, a phenomenon stretching back to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century conceptions of Lucian through Renaissance ideals.³⁸ A number of factors contribute to this trend. Lucian's corpus is large enough to exhibit diverse content, while the paucity of available biographical information provides a blank slate for scholars to put forward their own views.

Conclusion

The passing reference to Samosata in one of Lucian's works ignited a lengthy scholarly debate over Lucian's origins. Scholars from 1500 onward tried to create some way to mitigate what they saw as a problem within Lucian's biography. By contrast, late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars baselessly attacked Lucian for his origins in the Roman East. Fortunately, the tide has turned again in Lucian's favor, but now a new set of problems has arisen, as some scholars attempt to fit Lucian into a mold of a "Syrian" or a "Greek." This tendency stems from the overuse of biographical criticism, which allowed scholars to import their own views onto Lucian. The next chapter will show the implications of such views through an analysis of Lucian's texts themselves.

³⁸ Robinson, *Lucian and His Influence in Europe*, 64–65.

CHAPTER 2: DISCREPANCY AND IDENTITY IN THE LUCIANIC CORPUS

As the previous chapter showed, Lucian's identity presents a complicated problem even today, as modern scholars continue to wrangle with the exact character of his self-presentation. The confusion and disagreement among scholars becomes understandable when reading Lucian's own writings. One early summation of the problem appears in the work of George M. Haddad (1949):

From [Lucian's] different writings, one can hardly decide if he considered himself Syrian or Greek [...] Lucian knows that he is a Syrian, and his *Praise of the Fatherland* [*Patriae Encomium*] shows a deep attachment to his native town, yet the feeling of a Greek education is as strong as the feeling of belonging to a race or a country; in fact it makes him speak of himself sometimes as a Greek. This is the reason why some modern biographers call him Syrian, others call him Greek, and still others call him a Greek writer but of Syrian parentage.¹

Haddad, unlike many who preceded and followed him, correctly notes the problem here: the confusion over Lucian's identity as Greek or Syrian stems from Lucian's own writings. Nevertheless, Haddad cannot offer more than a passing mention of Lucian's identity and does not even broach the topic of Lucian's relationship with Rome. Was Lucian really "at a loss to determine what he himself is" as Haddad suggests?² This chapter will seek to answer that question.

Lucian's texts paint a much more complicated picture of his identity than the binary of "Greek" or "Syrian." Lucian's identity was multifaceted and multiform; it shifted over time based upon audience, location, context, and a host of other circumstances. As such, the model of "discrepant identities" offers a better framework for understanding the interactions of Lucian's identities because it does not demand a single, static characterization. This

¹ Haddad, "Aspects of Social Life in Antioch in the Hellenistic-Roman Period," 91–92.

² Haddad, 92.

becomes especially important when dealing with Lucian's conception of Rome. Lucian was hardly quiet about his opinions of various aspects of the empire. As mentioned above, he wrote several works criticizing the city of Rome itself, but also wrote pieces aligned with elite Roman tastes.³ Moreover, Lucian personally worked as an imperial administrator in the latter part of his career, but at other times had no qualms about lampooning the Roman Emperor.⁴ Discrepant identities can help to untangle this web of seeming contradictions.

With this lens, this chapter will examine a series of Lucian's works as case studies within the larger context of his discrepant Syrian, Greek, and Roman identities. The first two sections will analyze two works which, at first glance, appear to offer wholly different conceptions of Lucian. *De Dea Syria (The Syrian Goddess)* presents Lucian as a Syrian tour-guide in a complex attempt to describe Syrian culture and religion for a primarily Greek audience. Lucian's *Heracles*, by contrast, casts Lucian as a Greek on his travels in the western provinces of the Roman Empire.

Moving to a discussion of Roman identities, this chapter will next turn to a pair of related pieces that exhibit two very different relationships between Lucian and the Roman governing elite. For a case study of Lucian's discrepant identities across his works, *De Mercede Conductis (On Salaried Posts in Great Houses)* and the *Apologia* seem a logical starting point; these two works are among the most explicitly linked of any in the Lucianic corpus, as Lucian states directly that the *Apologia* is his response to *De Mercede Conductis*.⁵

The chapter will close with a final work that has significant implications for an understanding of Lucian's discrepant identities. The *Patriae Encomium (In Praise of*

³ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 68; Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 329.

⁴ Lucian, *Deor. Conc.*; *Apol.* 12.

⁵ Lucian, *Apol.* 1.

Homeland) shows that Lucian himself was highly cognizant of his own identity. In this speech, Lucian discusses his feelings about his own home in Samosata, but deliberately keeps the location vague to reflect his own ambivalence and the complexity of his identity. Taken together, these works suggest that Lucian utilized his multiple identities as his circumstances dictated. Changes in Lucian's socio-economic status, geographic location, and purported relationship to the governing elite caused Lucian to shift his self-characterization from work to work and present a complex and seemingly contradictory set of discrepant identities.

De Dea Syria: The Syrian Lucian?

Lucian's *De Dea Syria* (*The Syrian Goddess*) is one of his most important and widely-read works.⁶ Prior to recent archaeological discoveries, and excluding a few minor papyri, it was the chief source for historical information about Syrian religion.⁷ The work presents itself as an eyewitness account of religious practices at the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis (modern Manbij) in present-day Syria. It was written sometime in the second or third century CE in a mock-Ionic Greek dialect, closely imitating the style of the Greek historian Herodotus from the fifth century BCE. The choice of dialect itself is significant, as Ionic was associated with Asia Minor and, by extension, the East as a whole.⁸ Though the manuscript tradition transmitted this work along with the other works of Lucian, some scholars have doubted the work's attribution. A growing consensus seems to view it as a

⁶ Jaś Elsner, "Describing Self in the Language of Other: Pseudo (?) Lucian at the Temple of Hierapolis," in *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 395; J. L. Lightfoot, *Lucian, On the Syrian Goddess: Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷ Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 289.

⁸ Elsner, "Self in the Language of Other," 132.

genuine Lucianic text.⁹ The only contemporary account of Lucian's life outside of his own writings (a brief passage by the physician Galen in the latter half of the second century CE) sees Lucian write mock-Ionic texts in the style of Heraclitus, a near contemporary of Herodotus.¹⁰ It would be entirely in character for Lucian, then, to write in this style. This section therefore assumes Lucian's authorship of this particular work.

The *De Dea Syria* begins like a travelogue. Lucian writes, "In Syria there is a city not far from the river Euphrates: it is called 'Holy,' and is sacred to the Assyrian Hera."¹¹ The guide (likely Lucian himself) claims to be an eyewitness to what goes on at the temple and has learned everything else from the accounts of the priests. From the beginning, the work functions as a transculturation of Syrian culture for a Greek-speaking audience. Lucian does his best to relate the religious activities at the temple to Greek religion. Thus, Atargatis—a protectorate and fertility goddess of Syria—becomes "the Assyrian Hera," which equates the Syrian goddess with a Greek goddess who similarly connotes marriage and childbirth.

The opening lines are specifically designed to emphasize the Syrian locale, forming a "geographical strategy of self-promotion" as Elsner puts it.¹² Almost immediately, however, Lucian's constructed mythological parallels between Syria and Greece begin to break down, as his sources, apparently, do not agree on certain equivalencies. He writes of another attribution, "I myself think that Astarte is Selene—but as one of the priests told me, it belongs to Europa the sister of Cadmus."¹³ Another debate arises over the ancient origins of the temple: was it founded by the Greek Deucalion (a Greek Noah-figure) or the Babylonian

⁹ The debate over the attribution of *De Dea Syria* is beyond the scope of this paper, but I follow Jones, Elsner, and Lightfoot in their acceptance of the work as Lucian's. See Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 41 n. 37; Elsner, "Self in the Language of Other," 153; Lightfoot, *Lucian, On the Syrian Goddess*, 184ff.

¹⁰ Wenkebach and Pfaff, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, Volume 10.1, 402.

¹¹ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 1. All translations of *De Dea Syria* are taken from Lightfoot's (2003) edition.

¹² Elsner, "Self in the Language of Other," 130.

¹³ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 4.

Semiramis (a legendary warrior queen)? Lucian believes it was the former, but still relates both stories.¹⁴ Lucian then turns to another important figure for the temple, a local man named Combabus. The lengthy backstory of Combabus—who castrated himself before founding the temple in order to stay pure before the gods—leads to more questions about the transculturation. How would Hera approve of castration, especially in a Greek context? Again, Lucian does not specify.¹⁵ A golden standard (the *sēmēion*) appears in the temple, which might represent Dionysus or Deucalion. Most people, however, attribute it to Semiramis, further complicating the interpretation.¹⁶

The issues of identity presented in *De Dea Syria* are thus, as Andrade puts it, complicated.¹⁷ On the one hand, this work undoubtedly shows Lucian at his most “Syrian.” He describes religious rites which would have sounded foreign to his Greek audience. On the other hand, to define Lucian’s persona in *De Dea Syria* as solely an eastern “barbarian” would fail to appreciate the text. The choice of Hierapolis itself as a subject is significant: as Laura Nasrallah comments, “the city [...] exhibits hybridity and ambiguity on multiple levels, and thus, the writer suggests, mirrors or produces his own complex identity and literary impulses.”¹⁸ As the narrator, Lucian operates in between Greek and eastern spaces—just as his use of Ionic dialect reflects the liminal space between the Greek world and the East.¹⁹ Moreover, he is equally fluent in both the Greek and Syrian mythological and religious traditions. Lucian here is a “self-defining ‘Assyrian’ narrator, while speaking as a

¹⁴ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 12-14.

¹⁵ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 27.

¹⁶ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 33.

¹⁷ Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 288.

¹⁸ Laura Nasrallah, “Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 03 (July 2005): 294.

¹⁹ Elsner, “Self in the Language of Other,” 132.

Greek *pepaideumenos*.”²⁰ Though Lucian presents a Syrian topic, he does so using the Greek language, Greek equivalent deities, and Greek motifs.

One of several concerns within the authorship question surrounding the *De Dea Syria* was Lucian’s favorable depiction of religion, despite his skepticism towards religious rites in his other works.²¹ Some scholars accordingly suggested that the work must be a parody, since the satirist Lucian could not have held any such religious affections.²² Lucian, however, was not under any obligation to maintain any consistency from work to work, even on matters of religion.²³ Moreover, even if Lucian himself did not actually believe in the cult of Atargatis (or the sweating statues, oracles, and disembodied cries from the locked sanctuary), his literary persona certainly did.²⁴ Lucian may have played up certain aspects of the text for his audience—especially the accounts of the castrated priests—but the work’s tone is, on the whole, a serious one. The reader learns in the final line that the guide himself has participated in the rites at Hierapolis: “I myself did this when I was young.”²⁵ Lucian’s parting words here present a challenge to his readers: if they do not believe him, they can travel to Hierapolis themselves and find the box with his name and lock of hair in the temple. In these final lines of *De Dea Syria*, Lucian’s role shifts from passive observer and ethnographer to an active participant, a true believer in the cult of the Syrian goddess.

Lucian’s discrepant identities have caused some of the problems of interpreting this work, but also hold some of the answers. Lucian’s audience here is Greek-speaking as

²⁰ Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 310.

²¹ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 36.

²² A.R. Harmon, iv. 337. This view is refuted in Elsner, “Self in the Language of Other,” 124. As Elsner points out, Harmon’s choice to translate *De Dea Syria* into the English of Sir John Mandeville (c. fourteenth century) reflects his lack of belief in the seriousness of Lucian’s work. cf. Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 335.

²³ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 41–43; Elsner, “Self in the Language of Other,” 124 n. 7.

²⁴ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 10.

²⁵ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 60.

always, but the work seems aimed at individuals outside of the province of Syria or those who have never seen the temple at Hierapolis. Accordingly, Lucian draws upon his Syrian background within the work. He can thus confidently assert that “all Assyrians have tattoos” or make other similar authoritative statements.²⁶ Lucian’s identity draws upon the audience (Greek outsiders) and the setting (his home region of Syria); accordingly, he presents himself here as a bridge between Syria and Greece, a learned Syrian writing in Greek to explain Syrian religion.

In *De Dea Syria*, Lucian hardly appears like a Greek *pepaideumenos* who has shunned Syrian culture, as the proponents of a “Greek” Lucian would have their readers believe. For example, Isaac asserts that Lucian “presumably did not live by Syrian customs.”

²⁷ However, Lucian must have been intimately familiar with the rites associated with Atargatis to speak so authoritatively. Nor can Lucian be fairly called “a Greek by choice” here. Furthermore, the text does not show any signs of the “ethnic self-hatred” ascribed to Lucian.²⁸ Rather, like other *pepaideumeno*i, Lucian’s Greek identity is subject to another “level of attachment” via his religious and ethnic ties to Syria.²⁹ Any reading of Lucian as fundamentally “Greek” is selective. This in turn leads to a rather one-sided description of Lucian’s perspective on larger Greek and Roman society, depriving him of the nuance present in the texts.

²⁶ Lucian, *Syr. D.* 59.

²⁷ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 342.

²⁸ Isaac, 342.

²⁹ C.P. Jones, “Multiple Identities in the Age of the Second Sophistic,” in *Paideia: The World of the Second Sophistic*, ed. Barbara Borg (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 14.

Heracles: The Greek Lucian?

While Lucian was adept in his self-presentation as a Syrian tour-guide in *De Dea Syria*, a different work shows him equally well-suited to fill the role of Greek tourist. Another account of religion in the broader Roman world, the *Heracles* begins with a speaker (presumably Lucian himself) examining a painting in Gaul which depicted the god Ogmios. Lucian considers Ogmios to be the Celtic version of the Greek demi-god Heracles, as he has all the accoutrements that one would expect including his club, his quiver and bow, and his lion skin. Lucian's opening line suggests that the two are one in the same: "The Celts call Heracles 'Ogmios' in their local language."³⁰ As Lucian continues, however, it becomes clear that Ogmios is in fact very different from the Greek conception of Heracles. Unlike the typically virile and young version in Greek portrayals, Ogmios-Heracles is instead depicted as a balding old man with weathered features. Even more strangely, he has a pierced tongue with chains attached, and these in turn are fastened to the ears of a large number of men, who are led along as Ogmios' captives.³¹

Lucian's surprise at the syncretism of Heracles with other deities is almost certainly feigned, as he was undoubtedly witness to similar depictions near his home in Syria. The mausoleum of Antiochus I of Commagene, who ruled around 70-36 BCE, stood several miles away from Samosata at the site of Nemrut Dağ. The most notable feature of the site is a series of colossal statues ranging from 8 to 10 meters tall, depicting the gods with a combination of Greek, Iranian, and local features.³² One of these gods is Heracles-Artagnes-Ares, combining Heracles with the Greek war god Ares and the Iranian deity Artagnes

³⁰ Lucian, *Herc.* 1. "τὸν Ἡρακλέα οἱ Κέλται Ὀγμιον ὀνομάζουσι φωνῇ τῇ ἐπιχωρίῳ."

³¹ Lucian, *Herc.* 3.

³² Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 310.

(Verathragna) associated with victory.³³ Reliefs found at the site, too, reflect this deep syncretism. In one image, Antiochus is depicted shaking hands with Heracles-Artagnes-Ares. While Heracles holds his club as expected in a Greek portrayal, he wears a Phrygian cap on his head and is crowned by a radiate halo, a set of features more commonly associated with eastern iconography.³⁴ Lucian's account of the heterogeneous Ogmios-Heracles in Gaul, then, should be understood by comparison with Heracles-Artagnes-Ares. Whether or not Lucian was aware of the syncretic Commagenean deity, he almost certainly had this sort of Syrian syncretism in mind when he wrote the *Heracles*.

This mixed identity of both Ogmios-Heracles and Heracles-Artagnes-Ares in one aspect reflects Lucian's own identity: the intermingling of normative, expected Greek features (like Heracles' club and lion pelt, or Lucian's Attic *paideia*) with features of a "barbarian other." Nevertheless, Lucian's narratorial person in the *Heracles* cannot grasp what he has seen. Fortunately, his plight is noticed by a local passerby, who strikes up a conversation with Lucian in Greek:

I had stood for a long time, looking, wondering, puzzling and fuming, when a Celt at my elbow, not unversed in Greek lore, as he showed by his excellent use of our language, and who had, apparently, studied our local traditions, said: 'I will read you the riddle of the picture, stranger, as you seem very much disturbed about it. We Celts do not agree with you Greeks in thinking that Hermes is Eloquence: we identify Heracles with it, because he is far more powerful than Hermes.'³⁵

The Celt himself presents one of the more intriguing figures in Lucian's texts, not only for the content of his speech (including an otherwise unattested line of Greek comedy) but for the background and perspective of this character. The man identifies himself as a Celt

³³ Theresa Goell and Friedrich Karl Doerner, "The Tomb of Antiochus I," *Scientific American* 195, no. 1 (1956): 38–45.

³⁴ Goell and Doerner, 44.

³⁵ Lucian, *Herc.* 4. Translations to follow adapted from A.M. Harmon, *Lucian, Volume 1*, Loeb Classical Library 14 (London; Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1913), 62–71.

but speaks excellent Greek and exhibits considerable knowledge of Greek customs. Moreover, he can quote Greek literature at length, with a series of allusions to Greek epic, tragedy, and comedy.³⁶ Importantly for Lucian, he repeatedly identifies Lucian as a Greek throughout his monologue through the repeated use of the second-person plural pronoun: “We Celts do not agree with *you* Greeks.”³⁷ Later, the Celt calls Homer and Euripides “*your* poets;” he learned a line of comedy “from *you*” (Harmon takes the translation a step further, and suggests that the Celt learned the line “in *your* country”); and “*you yourselves* admit that words are winged.”³⁸

If Lucian said anything to “correct” the Celt’s notion of Lucian’s Greek identity, he does not mention it in the *Heracles*. He instead seems to go along with the Celt’s identification. In fact, Lucian even refers to his self-identification with the Greek language as he mentions the Celt’s “excellent use of *our* language.”³⁹ Lucian’s perspective, too, is profoundly Greek: he identifies with Greek religion in recognizing the objects associated with Heracles, and makes a few references to older Greek literature later in the work, just as the Celt did.⁴⁰ *Heracles* could fairly be called a role reversal of *De Dea Syria*: Lucian is now the Greek-speaking audience, while the Celt is another provincial *pepaideumenos*, explaining local culture within Greek terminology.

Few scholars reference Lucian’s *Heracles* with regards to Lucian’s biography; those who do usually mention it as evidence for Lucian’s work in Gaul as a teacher of rhetoric in the early portion of his career, as part of a larger effort to date Lucian’s works, or as a

³⁶ Lucian, *Herc.* 4-5.

³⁷ Lucian, *Herc.* 4. Emphasis added.

³⁸ Lucian, *Herc.* 5-6.

³⁹ Lucian, *Herc.* 4.

⁴⁰ Lucian, *Herc.* 8.

broad discussion of art criticism.⁴¹ In one of the few instances where the work was included in a Lucianic biography, the author overlooked the obvious questions of identity to instead push forward the notion that Lucian suffered from gout.⁴² For scholars who favor a “Syrian” Lucian, the work is likely a problematic one: nowhere does Lucian indicate that he is anything other than a Greek rhetorician in Gaul. In this work, Lucian does not fit well within the conception of a Syrian “barbarian” observing the empire; instead, he seems to be part of the imperial elite observing the foreign other in Gaul.

This is not to say that Lucian has ceased to be Syrian. Within this Gallic context, however, Lucian’s Syrian identity mattered little. At this time, Syrians had made few inroads into the western provinces of the Roman Empire; only several centuries later would the anti-Syrian rhetoric of Greek and Latin literature begin to appear in texts from Gaul.⁴³ Moreover, the text represents a contextual shift from other works: he had relocated to a new province (Gaul), where he apparently found great success in his profession. In a later work, Lucian reminisces to a friend about his time in the province: “you knew me long ago when I was commanding the highest fees for the public practice of rhetoric, at the time when you went to see the land of the Celts and met me: my fees were as high as those of any professor.”⁴⁴

Moving to Gaul, Lucian has not only experienced a new geographic location (from the eastern provinces to the west), but an increased level of wealth, a new employment linked

⁴¹ e.g. Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian*; Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 14; Eleni Bozia, *Lucian and His Roman Voices: Cultural Exchanges and Conflicts in the Late Roman Empire*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015). Two particularly fruitful recent studies have connected this work with the *De Dea Syria*: Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality & Subjectivity in Art & Text* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 58–62; Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 303–4.

⁴² Baldwin, *Studies in Lucian*, 9.

⁴³ Salv. *Gub. Dei* 4.14. See also Edmund Spenser Bouchier, *Syria as a Roman Province* (London: B.H. Blackwell, 1916).

⁴⁴ Lucian, *Apol.* 15. Translation from Kilburn, *Lucian*, Vol. 6, 211.

to the imperial elite (teaching Greek rhetoric) and relatively high degree of Greek literary compared to his peers. All of these factors have been previously identified by Mattingly as components of discrepant identities.⁴⁵ By experiencing a change in these areas, it comes as no surprise that Lucian's self-characterization changes in this work, relative to his interlocutor (the Gaul) and to his new circumstances. Finding himself in a distant land with a sudden rise in his fortune, Lucian quickly began to identify himself with the Greek-speaking elites.

Despite this shift in identity, Lucian himself has not changed; his characteristic interest in the other, his obsession with art, and his love of an entertaining story remind the reader that this is the same Lucian who came from little Samosata after all.

Lucian takes on Rome: *De Mercede Conductis*

When placed against the backdrop of the city of Rome, Lucian's identity becomes even more complicated. Lucian's *De Mercede Conductis*, which warned a young acquaintance about the dangers of becoming a Greek teacher at Rome, contains some of Lucian's harshest criticisms of the city of Rome itself. Lucian frames *De Mercede Conductis* as a letter to an impressionable friend named Timocles, who later is referred to as a "student of philosophy."⁴⁶ Timocles apparently has been considering a career as a tutor for a rich family after hearing some other friends praise the quality of life one has while working for a Roman family. He naïvely hopes for all the trappings of life within the upper echelons of Roman society:

Then someone of the company praised this kind of wage-earning, saying that men were thrice happy when, besides having the noblest of the Romans for their friends, eating expensive dinners without paying any scot, living in a handsome

⁴⁵ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 217.

⁴⁶ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 4. Translations adapted from A.M. Harmon, *Lucian, Volume 3*, Loeb Classical Library 130 (London; Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann; Harvard University Press, 1921).

establishment, and travelling in all comfort and luxury, behind a span of white horses, perhaps, with their noses in the air, they could also get no inconsiderable amount of pay for the friendship which they enjoyed and the kindly treatment they received; really everything grew without sowing and ploughing for such as they.⁴⁷

The reader quickly learns that Lucian does not share this rosy opinion of working for the Romans. Instead, he describes individuals who have escaped such employment like shipwreck survivors and compares Timocles to a fish swallowing the Romans' "bait" hook, line, and sinker.⁴⁸ Lucian hopes to dissuade Timocles from pursuing such a career. The rest of the work describes in detail how he would be mistrusted, underpaid, abused, and then discarded by his Roman employers. *De Mercede Conductis* is not an autobiographical piece, or so Lucian would have his readers believe: "I myself have [never] tried anything of that kind, for it never became a necessity for me to try it, and, ye gods! I pray it never may."⁴⁹ The piece does, however, contain some of Lucian's most critical views of Roman society, and is rivaled only by the anti-Roman views in his *Nigrinus*. These accounts offer some of the most valuable insights available for Lucian's identity and his views on Rome.

Accordingly, Lucian constructs a hypothetical story of what will happen to Timocles if he enters into the employ of the Romans, in which the protagonist is abused, neglected, and eventually fired. At one point, Lucian's narrative turns to a dinner party hosted by Timocles' future employer. The other (Roman) dinner-guests are not so fond of the newcomer, who has possibly taken their position at the table; Lucian imagines them complaining that "it is only these Greeks who have the freedom of the city of Rome."⁵⁰ Lucian does not indicate whether Timocles hails from Greece proper or from the larger Hellenistic world as Lucian himself

⁴⁷ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 3.

⁴⁸ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 1, 3.

⁴⁹ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 1, 3.

⁵⁰ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 17.

does. This does not matter to the Roman viewers, who identify Timocles as a Greek foreigner who has already overstayed his welcome in the city.

Lucian's statement echoes the contemporary Roman treatment of Greeks and Easterners, which is illustrated by a particularly xenophobic character satirized by the second-century CE Roman satirist Juvenal. He complains of Greeks working in the city in a variety of professions: "grammarian, orator, geometrician; painter, trainer, or rope-dancer; augur, doctor or astrologer."⁵¹ While this example is usually cited in the context of anti-Syrian stereotypes among the Romans (see Chapter 3, below), it is also useful here in the discussion of Greek teachers at Rome. Lucian's *De Mercede Conductis* cites a similar list of professions that he hopes to dissuade from working for the Romans: "grammarians, rhetoricians, musicians, and in a word all who think fit to enter families and serve for hire as educators."⁵² Lucian's critical view of Rome, then, is not far-fetched.

Timocles' hypothetical employer, moreover, exhibits all of the bombastic Roman self-importance against which Lucian hopes to warn Timocles. At one point, the employer blusters to his new employee about the great honor of being invited into the "first household of the Roman Empire."⁵³ Entering into his service, however, the tutor is underpaid, overworked, and variously mistreated. His misfortunes include being "the only person in all that Roman throng who wears the incongruous cloak of a scholar and talks Latin with a villainous accent."⁵⁴ Here Lucian reinforces the notion of the Greek tutor as the "other" through his lack of Latin ability. This notion reappears throughout the work; the tutor is

⁵¹ Juv. 3.58ff. Translation adapted from G.G. Ramsay, *Juvenal and Persius*, Loeb Classical Library 91 (London; New York: William Heinemann; G.P Putnam's Sons, 1928), 29–30.

⁵² Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 4.

⁵³ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 20.

⁵⁴ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 24.

viewed by the Romans as a Greek outsider, and thus “prone to all sorts of wrong-doing.”⁵⁵

The end result is disastrous for the tutor; he is thrown out of the house under false pretenses as a worn-out, impoverished shell of his former self.

While Lucian suggests in the opening lines of *De Mercede Conductis* that he has not personally experienced any of the hardships of tutoring in Rome, it is hard to imagine that he has not had some negative experience of the city, given the harshness of his invective throughout the work. Such fiery anti-Roman sentiments reappear in *Nigrinus* as well: Rome’s

ever-flowing, turbid stream widens every street; it brings in adultery, avarice, perjury and the whole family of vices, and sweeps the flooded soul bare of self-respect, virtue, and righteousness; and then the ground which they have left a desert, ever parched with thirst, puts forth a rank, wild growth of lusts.⁵⁶

What exactly inspired Lucian’s polemic, including any possible relationship to Juvenal’s work, remains unclear.⁵⁷ Any suggestion of the reason behind his personal animus against Rome would be entirely speculative, and (as will be seen below) Lucian’s views were not always anti-Roman. In this case, Lucian certainly identifies himself in opposition to the Romans—but is this as a Greek or a Syrian? A few clues in the text suggest that Lucian has shifted his viewpoint to a Greek identity. Lucian always refers to the tutor as a “Greek,” though it should be noted that Timocles’ ethnicity and identity remain unclear, and this might have led to Lucian’s choice of words here. Further, the tutor is “subordinate to a door-man with a vile [*kakos*] Syrian accent and to a Libyan master of ceremonies.”⁵⁸ Lucian’s authorial position here is strange, since he simultaneously subverts the expected notion of Greek superiority to the Syrian slave and seemingly attacks another aspect of his own identity. The

⁵⁵ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 40.

⁵⁶ Lucian, *Nigr.* 16. Translation from Harmon, *Lucian*, Vol. 1.

⁵⁷ For a more detailed comparison of Lucian’s work to Juvenal’s satires, see Bozia, *Lucian and His Roman Voices*, 16–51.

⁵⁸ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 11.

Syrian slave can hardly be identified with Lucian; after all, his identifying feature is his lack of *paideia* (his *kakos* accent). Yet the tutor speaks Latin poor Latin too, as we learn later.⁵⁹

Whatever the case, the subjection to a slave is clearly intended as an indignity for the tutor, but meaningless to the Romans, and clears up any misconceptions about Lucian's perspective here. Lucian speaks as a Greek because his Syrian identity has been effectively erased by the Romans in this instance. In the economy of cultural imperialism described in Juvenal and in Lucian's *De Mercede Conductis*, the Romans value the Syrians as slaves and the Greeks as educators.⁶⁰ The protagonist of Lucian's story hopes to fit himself into the latter category by exhibiting a Greek identity, but is disappointed when he is mistreated, subjected to a situation worse than slavery, and ultimately thrown out of the house. This Roman attack on Greek culture and *paideia* forms the heart of Lucian's complaint, and lead him to pen his counterattack in *De Mercede Conductis*.

The *Apologia* for *De Mercede Conductis*: The Roman Lucian?

Lucian's literary sortie against Rome was short-lived. In the *Apologia*, Lucian recants his earlier position and shows Rome in a favorable light, as he has now become a member of the Imperial administration in Egypt. In *De Mercede Conductis*, Lucian hopes to portray himself as a Greek teacher, and he is naturally horrified by the treatment of teachers at Rome that he describes. By contrast, the Lucian of the *Apologia* must essentially retract his earlier criticisms of Rome, as he now praises Rome for its government in the provinces. Like *De Mercede Conductis*, Lucian frames his *Apologia* as a letter to a friend; this time, however, the recipient is likely a Roman, a man named Sabinus. Sabinus has apparently sent Lucian a

⁵⁹ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 24.

⁶⁰ Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 320.

letter filled with some good-natured ribbing over the contents of *De Mercede Conductis*.

Lucian imagines what Sabinus would say in person:

To think that anyone could write that and work up such a devastating indictment against that sort of life, then, when the die falls the other way up, completely forget it and himself of his own free will rush headlong into a slavery so manifest and conspicuous! [...] There is much inconsistency between his present life and his essay.⁶¹

Aside from the explicit reference to *De Mercede Conductis*, the reader is left wondering what has happened. Lucian makes it clear, however, that he has experienced some sort of material change in employment. He has “bid freedom good-bye” and accepted slavery: he apparently has taken a “salaried post,” just as he warned his friend Timocles not to do.⁶² Only later do we learn exactly what Lucian has done:

Realize this: there is a very great difference between entering a rich man’s house as a hireling, where one is a slave and endures what my essay describes, and entering public service, where one administers affairs as well as possible and is paid by the Emperor for doing it. [...] In public life I take a share and play my part in the mightiest of empires. If you consider the matter you will realize that my personal responsibility in this administration of Egypt is not the least important—the initiation of court-cases and their arrangement, the recording of all that is done and said, guiding counsel in their speeches, keeping the clearest and most accurate copy of the president’s decisions in all faithfulness and putting them on public record to be preserved for all time; and my salary not from any private person, but from the emperor, and it is no small one at that, many talents in fact. For the future I have no small hopes, if what is likely comes about—the supervision of a province or some other imperial service.⁶³

On this rare occasion, Lucian provides a detailed account of both his location at the time of writing and his occupation: he has joined the Roman imperial administration in Egypt as a low-ranking civil servant. This passage is rich, both for the relatively unrivalled level of detail that Lucian gives regarding his whereabouts and for his treatment of Rome as a whole.

⁶¹ Lucian, *Apol.* 1. Translations from Kilburn, *Lucian*, Vol. 6.

⁶² Lucian, *Apol.* 3.

⁶³ Lucian, *Apol.* 11-12.

Inherently, Lucian suggests that having the emperor as a source of pay is superior to other sources of wages. Moreover, Lucian seems excited to share in the project of the Roman Empire, an especially curious attitude given his previous hostility to the city of Rome and the Romans in *De Mercede Conductis*. Lucian's tone here certainly contains an element of satire. His "important" position is little more than a glorified scribe. The suggestion that Lucian will soon be granted "the supervision of a province" is risible and seems no more likely than his assertion that his salary constitutes "many talents."⁶⁴

Nevertheless, there does not seem to be any reason to doubt the sincerity of one aspect of the work: his support for the Roman system of government is apparent throughout. As his defense of his previous work continues, he cites the emperor himself as part of the argument:

Not even the emperor himself is unpaid. I do not mean tributes and taxes that come in every year from his subjects; no, the king's most important reward is praise, universal fame, reverence for his benefactions, statues and temples and shrines bestowed on him by his subjects—all these are payment for the thought and care which such men evidence in their continual watch over the common weal and its improvement.⁶⁵

Lucian's salary for his work here mirrors the reciprocity between the emperor and his subjects. The praise of the imperial system is clear: Lucian favors the imperial cult and takes it for granted that his Roman reader (Sabinus) will agree with him.⁶⁶ Lucian's earlier statement that he valued his place within the "mightiest of empires" is clarified here. Within this Roman context, Lucian can join in the glory of the Roman Empire. He has become a "component part" within the larger Roman system.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Lucian, *Apol.* 12.

⁶⁵ Lucian, *Apol.* 13.

⁶⁶ Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 323.

⁶⁷ Lucian, *Apol.* 13.

Scholars have debated the role of *De Mercede Conductis* and the *Apologia* in understanding Lucian's views of Rome. In Swain's view, the *Apologia* is ultimately inconsequential in light of the other, more impassioned critiques of Rome. Lucian's "adopted cultural identity as a Hellene" usually did not interfere with his views of Rome, but Lucian took a clear, pro-Greek stance when they did.⁶⁸ C.P. Jones, by contrast, suggested that *De Mercede Conductis* was not intended as an attack on Rome at all and that the *Apologia* reflected Lucian's "ease" with Roman institutions.⁶⁹ In respect to Lucian's other works, the *Apologia* does clearly represent a more pro-Roman stance than other writings.

Lucian's expressed views between *De Mercede Conductis* and the *Apologia* only partially explain the differences between the two works. Lucian's argument in the *Apologia* about the difference between public and private employment is believable enough, as Lucian seems pleased with his wages and his work. Moreover, Lucian seems sufficiently wealthy in both *De Mercede Conductis* and the *Apologia* that he does not need to stoop to worse employment.⁷⁰ Yet such a materialistic viewpoint does not fully explain the change. Another relatively simple answer to this incongruity is Lucian's position with respect to the Roman elite. Once Lucian accepted a role in the Roman government at the time of the *Apologia*, he was less inclined to criticize the Romans and their institutions. Thus, as Whitmarsh writes, "the Lucian of this later date is now complicit in the networks of Roman power."⁷¹

Several other factors joined to cause this dramatic shift in Lucian's views on Rome from *De Mercede Conductis* to the *Apologia*. Most prominent among these was his

⁶⁸ Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 329.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 83–84. For further discussion of these opposing views see Bozia, *Lucian and His Roman Voices*, 18–19.

⁷⁰ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 1; *Apol.* 15.

⁷¹ Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 293.

geographic location. The *Apologia* was written in Egypt, where his experience of Rome occurred through provincial administrative functions. By contrast, *Nigrinus* and *De Mercede Conductis* both focus on the city of Rome especially, and there is no indication that Lucian ever had a favorable opinion of that city. Moreover, *De Mercede Conductis* is exclusively written from the viewpoint of a Greek at Rome or an outsider in a relatively subservient position. The *Apologia*, by contrast, does not have a particularly Greek point of view, with the exception of the numerous allusions to Greek literature typical of Lucianic writing.⁷² Rather, the Lucian of the *Apologia* is versed in Greek literature, a practitioner of the Roman imperial cult, a civil servant, and a previous resident of the western part of the empire (Gaul).⁷³ Lucian in the *Apologia* is, for all intents and purposes, Roman.

Thus, Lucian's view of Rome shifted based upon his context. He was not afraid to criticize the city of Rome itself or its perceived cultural shortcomings in works such as *De Mercede Conductis* and *Nigrinus*, but was content to offer a pro-Roman perspective in his *Apologia*. This change resulted not only from a new employment in the imperial government, but also geographic concerns which brought about a difference of perspective and self-presentation. The Lucian of *De Mercede Conductis* was an indignant Greek, upset about the working conditions in the city of Rome; in the *Apologia*, he was an active participant in the Roman Empire. These varying conditions naturally lent themselves to different perceptions (negative and positive, respectively) of Rome and its empire. The model of discrepant identities can help identify the changes in Lucian's condition which brought about this shift in perspective.

⁷² Fred W. Householder, *Literary Quotation and Allusion in Lucian*, (New York: Crown Hill Press, 1941).

⁷³ Lucian, *Apol.* 15.

***Patriae Encomium*: Lucian's Ambivalence?**

Lucian's most direct references to life as an expatriate within the Roman Empire occur in his *Patriae Encomium*, a speech which praises life in one's native land and which Lucian probably gave at Samosata after a lengthy time away from the city. While Lucian praises people who live in their homeland, this work contains some implicit self-criticism about his own identity and raises the specter of Roman imperialism near the end. The work shows that Lucian's own identity has been complicated by his time away from Samosata.

Some editors and literary critics flagged the *Patriae Encomium* as a possible spurious work in the Lucianic corpus due to its vagueness: "If this piece had not come down to us among the works of Lucian, nobody would ever have thought of attributing it to him."⁷⁴ There is little reason to believe this, however; the style of the text is fundamentally Lucianic, and there is further internal evidence which obliquely references Samosata and reflects Lucianic authorship.⁷⁵

The text itself seems, at first glance, to be a relatively straightforward rhetorical piece intended for spoken delivery before an audience. Lucian argues that individuals love no place more than their homeland, mustering evidence both from observation and from Greek literary traditions. He makes heavy use of the etymological connection between *patēr* (father) and *patris* (homeland or fatherland) throughout the work and compares the relationship between homeland and citizens to fathers and their children.⁷⁶ Even the defining feature of Greek literature in the Second Sophistic—*paideia*, encompassing education and worldliness—is subverted here to Lucian's philopatry: "People get all of their education [*paideumata*] and

⁷⁴ Harmon, *Lucian*, Vol. 1, 209.

⁷⁵ The debate over the authorship of the *Patriae Encomium* is beyond the scope of this paper. For a defense of the *Patriae Encomium*'s authenticity, see Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 170.

⁷⁶ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 3-4, 9-10.

learning to make themselves more useful to their homeland.”⁷⁷ In this hyperbolic conception, love for one’s homeland is more important than anything else; nothing is “sweeter, [...] holier, or godlier” than one’s homeland.⁷⁸

The most striking feature of the text is its ambiguity, which is why the text is not usually cited in discussions of Lucian’s biography or identity.⁷⁹ Nowhere in the text does Lucian cite the name of any specific person or place, but instead only speaks in generalities about the *patris* and uses generalized pronouns for hypothetical individuals. Despite this lack of specificity, the text contains the most explicit discussion of identity found anywhere in Lucian’s works. The *Patriae Encomium* discusses what it means for an individual to have a homeland, and the effect this has upon an individual’s identity.

Though Lucian maintains this ambiguity throughout the text, he intends for the reader to recognize particular locations in the text. A reference to “islands” in which “tales are sung about the birth of gods in them” almost certainly alludes to the mythical birth of Aphrodite in Cyprus.⁸⁰ Elsewhere, he makes multiple allusions to Homer as he evokes Odysseus’ desire for Ithaca in Greece. The opening lines of the work quote the epic directly: “The saying ‘nothing is sweeter than your homeland’ has been common parlance for a long time.”⁸¹ Later in the work, Lucian makes another series of Homeric allusions. Lucian comments that people speak of their homelands as *kourotrophos* (“good for raising children”), a term that Odysseus uses to describe Ithaca in his speech to the Phaeacians.⁸² Another comment that “people hurry back to their homeland even though they live on an island” again evokes Odysseus’

⁷⁷ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 7. Translations of the *Patriae Encomium* are my own, unless otherwise noted.

⁷⁸ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 1.

⁷⁹ A rare exception is Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 7, but this biographical reference only occurs in passing.

⁸⁰ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 5.

⁸¹ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 1, citing Hom. *Od.* 9.34

⁸² Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 10; Hom. *Od.* 9.27

desire to return to Ithaca, an island of relative unimportance in the larger Greek world.⁸³ Like Odysseus, people long to see even the smoke rising from their homelands.⁸⁴

These references are important because they reveal that Lucian wanted his audience to imagine real geographic locations through his allusions, despite the initial lack of clear place designations in the text. More specifically, this demonstrated concern allows for further identification of Lucian's numerous allusions to his own hometown of Samosata. In one of the few points in the text where Lucian switches from generalizations to his own explicit views in the first person, he states that "it makes me happy to honor the name of 'homeland.'"⁸⁵ Elsewhere, Lucian comments that in his mind, "someone who is proud to be a citizen of a prosperous [*eudaimōn*] city doesn't know what it really means to honor their homeland."⁸⁶ The implication here is that Lucian has the perspective of someone who does not come from such a place, or can at least relate to that perspective. He adds that such a citizen "would certainly be put off if their lot had come up in a more average location."⁸⁷ Lucian's word choice of "more average" [*metriōteros*] is curious here; he does not contrast the *eudaimon* city to its direct opposite, but to something in the middle.

The choice of moderate language here seems strange considering the genre of the text. The *Patriae Encomium* originated as a speech, where a stronger contrast would have aided Lucian's rhetoric. If Lucian is referring here to Samosata, however, the choice makes much more sense. In Lucian's day, Samosata was a mid-sized town of regional importance, the principal city of the Roman province of Commagene.⁸⁸ It paled in comparison, however,

⁸³ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 11.

⁸⁴ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 11; Hom. *Od.* 1.57

⁸⁵ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 2.

⁸⁶ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 2.

⁸⁷ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 2.

⁸⁸ Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 299–303; Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 187–90.

to the great cities of the empire, however, like Rome and Athens, or the other cities of the Roman East like neighboring Antioch and Alexandria in Egypt. It lay in a peripheral location “on the edge of the Roman world,” primarily noteworthy as a provincial capital in the context of Rome’s ongoing conflicts against the Parthian civilization to the east.⁸⁹ The town cannot properly be described as a backwater, but it was not a metropolis either. Strabo’s *Geography* is similarly ambivalent about it, noting the fertile but limited territory in the environs of Samosata.⁹⁰ Lucian’s choice of language here seems well-suited for an autobiographical purpose; his words seem to reflect the status and perspective of a native of Samosata. If Lucian really did present the *Patriae Encomium* in his hometown, as multiple scholars have suggested, then the audience of his fellow Commageneans would have understood his references to the city.⁹¹

A close reading of this encomium equally suggests that Lucian’s conception of “hometown” has grown beyond Samosata. Such views are especially prominent in one satiric passage:

How much affection real, true citizens have for their native land can be learned only among a people sprung from the soil. Newcomers, being but bastard children, as it were, transfer their allegiance easily, since they neither know nor love the name of the native land, but expect to be well provided with the necessities of life wherever they may be, measuring happiness by their appetites!⁹²

Lest Lucian be accused of xenophobia here, the target of Lucian’s statement is most likely himself. Lucian had certainly gone abroad to continue his education, and as discussed above, Lucian had achieved a certain degree of fame and fortune elsewhere in the Roman

⁸⁹ Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 299.

⁹⁰ Strab. *Geog.* 16.2.3.

⁹¹ Haddad, “Aspects of Social Life in Antioch in the Hellenistic-Roman Period,” 91; Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 7; Bozia, *Lucian and His Roman Voices*, 10.

⁹² Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 10. Translation from A.R. Harmon, *Lucian* vol. 1.

Empire.⁹³ The *Patriae Encomium* thus highlights Lucian's own ambivalence towards his travels: by this point in his career, Lucian has seemingly become famous, but seemingly loathes (at the very least, jokingly) his identity as an immigrant.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, he owes his entire career to his departure from Samosata. Does Lucian now consider himself one of the "bastard children" who no longer know the name of their homeland? He does not say. Lucian claims love for his homeland, but then suggests that his undying love for his homeland may be tainted by his travels. Lucian's parting words in the *Patriae Encomium* only add to the confusion, if the *patris* he cites really is intended as Samosata. His final rallying cry of "You are fighting for your native land!" cannot refer to Commagene, or even to Greece, but only to Rome, or to some former polity that has fallen under Roman hegemony.⁹⁵ Even in this seemingly straightforward piece, then, Rome's political hegemony remains unavoidable; its effects are felt even in distant Samosata. Rome, not just Samosata, has become Lucian's homeland.

Any analysis of Lucian's internal condition from the *Patriae Encomium* can only be speculative. Nevertheless, the *Patriae Encomium* represents a clever subversion of the ideas that Lucian's speaking persona seems to posit. From one perspective, Lucian beautifully articulates the love of an individual for their *patris* in terms of familial relationships. From his remarks on illegitimacy and living as an expatriate, however, it remains unclear if Lucian can fully engage in the civic identity of his homeland. The work, then, exemplifies Lucian's ambivalence. On the one hand, he sings the praises of his homeland; on the other, his work exhibits internal tension over the effects of Lucian's long trip away from Samosata. The

⁹³ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 169.

⁹⁴ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 8.

⁹⁵ Lucian, *Patr. Enc.* 12.

Patriae Encomium is a Greek work dealing with a Syrian city under Roman rule, which places Lucian's identities at odds with one another. It is this internal discord between Lucian's identities that reflects his own discrepant identities, showcasing the ambivalence of his literary persona in this work.

Conclusion

Lucian's multiple identities are elusive and fleeting, shifting from work to work and context to context. *De Dea Syria* offers a generally "Syrian" portrayal of Lucian, but even this is complicated by his usage of the Greek language, mythology, and motifs in the work. The *Heracles*, by contrast, presents Lucian as uniformly Greek; however, he is faced with a provincial figure (the Celt) who speaks and acts in a very Lucianic manner, bridging the divide between the local Gallic and cosmopolitan Greek culture. *De Mercede Conductis* places Lucian's Syrian and Greek identities into conflict as he grapples with the cultural imperialism of Rome. The *Apologia* offers a pro-Roman perspective, but places that at odds with his previously-stated views of Rome. The *Patriae Encomium* seemingly avoids these problems, but upon closer inspection is even more entangled in Lucian's identities than the first two. It is a piece written by his expatriate about his home, a Greek text about a Syrian city which must tacitly acknowledge Roman rule.

If these case studies offer any guide to Lucian's identity, it is that Lucian cannot be boiled down to any one identity, even in his most seemingly straightforward texts. Lucian's works must be approached as they are, with all of their multivocality and sometimes-conflicting identities. Anything less would be a disservice to Lucian and his ability to relate complex problems of identity through his literary personae.

CHAPTER 3: LUCIAN IN CONTEXT: ROMAN SYRIA AND ANTI-SYRIAN STEREOTYPES

In the preface to his volume of Lucian's works, the eighteenth-century scholar and translator Thomas Francklin added a work of his own: a fictitious dialogue between Lucian and Francklin's friend George Lyttelton in the style of Lucian's *Dialogi Mortuorum* (*Dialogues of the Dead*). The imagined conversation between the two men eventually turned to Lucian's life and origins, as Lyttelton expressed surprise that Lucian seemed so proud of his birthplace in Syria:

LORD LYTTELTON: I have often, indeed, wonder'd to find you, in several parts of your works, mentioning, as if you were proud of it, the place of your nativity.

LUCIAN: I will tell you, my lord, why I did so: because I knew my enemies, of whom I had always a sufficient number, would certainly take notice of it, if I did not; would have talked perpetually of Syria, and thrown it in my teeth, that I was not a Grecian, but a Barbarian. I was resolved, therefore, to be before-hand with them, and to let them know, that a native of Samosata could write as well as the best of them.¹

While Francklin's Lucian is an entirely fanciful construction, Francklin does make an important point in this passage—though perhaps for a different reason than he intended. Lucian's beginnings in the province of Syria would indeed have presented an obstacle to his success within the larger Greek and Roman worlds. Lucian, for all of his wit and literary merit, was ignored by his contemporaries, and his works were only “discovered” during the Byzantine period, centuries after his death.²

As a non-Roman living under the Roman Empire, Lucian had to navigate a series of anti-Syrian prejudices and stereotypes which prevailed in second-century CE Greek and Roman thought. While these anti-Syrian, Orientalist conceptions had not yet evolved into the

¹ Francklin, *The Works of Lucian, from the Greek*, x–xi..

² Robinson, *Lucian and His Influence in Europe*, 68–81.

fully-fledged anti-Middle Eastern racism of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europeans colonialists, Greek and Roman writers conceived of the population of Syria in a profoundly negative manner and hardly disguised their animosity towards the province of Syria. Syrians were seen as shift, restless, extravagant, prone to excessive partying, effeminate, practitioners of strange religious rites, and only good as slaves.³ While it took centuries for these stereotypes to develop in Roman thought—indeed, such a negative conception only reached full bloom in Late Antiquity—these ideas had already taken root in Lucian’s day.

While the previous chapters largely focused on *how* Lucian’s identity shifted between works, this chapter will examine *why* Lucian’s identity was so complex and mutable. Lucian was forced to adapt as a result of the unfavorable Greek and Roman stereotypes against the province of Syria. Lucian altered his self-portrayal in opposition to the cultural imperialism which he faced. This chapter will begin with a brief outline of cultural exchange between Rome, the Hellenistic world, and Syria in the centuries prior to Lucian’s life and the resulting stereotypes which the Roman elite harbored against the Syrians. The chapter will then turn to several works in which Lucian himself navigates the literary stereotypes against Syrians, as his works simultaneously challenged and reaffirmed these anti-Syrian stereotypes.

Roman Rule and Anti-Syrian Stereotypes

What Roman writers and administrators referred to as the province of Syria can hardly be classified as an ethnically homogenous region. Rather, Syria in Lucian’s day was composed of diverse regions and ethnic groups, ranging from the coastal towns of Phoenicia, to the mountains and river valleys further inland, to the arid and sparsely-populated desert to

³ Bouchier, *Syria as a Roman Province*, 9; George M. Haddad, “Aspects of Social Life in Antioch in the Hellenistic-Roman Period” (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1949); Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 350–51.

the east.⁴ The linguistic diversity of the region reflects Syria's ethnic diversity. The region's inhabitants spoke Aramaic, Syriac, Hebrew, Old Arabic, and Phoenician in addition to Greek; in areas with an especially prominent Roman military presence, Latin made an appearance.⁵ Despite this diversity, the term "Syrian" itself was a catch-all for these various groups. The Latin term *Syri* was borrowed from the Greek *Syroi*, which in turn came from a Semitic term for (As)syrian, referring to a civilization centered in Mesopotamia and the Levant which had died out nearly a millennium earlier.⁶ The use of this outdated Seleucid term exemplifies the cultural imperialism which marked Roman rule in the province.⁷

While the Semitic element in the province of Syria was by far the oldest group in the region, the Greeks had also been present in the province for centuries. Syria came under Greek and Macedonian control during the campaign of Alexander in the fourth century BCE, and the region remained largely under the control of the Seleucids for the next several centuries. The Greeks brought with them Greek settlers, Greek institutions, and a series of new *poleis* founded throughout the East.⁸ The newest element, then, was the Roman government of the region, following Pompey's annexation of most of Syria in 64 BCE. Lucian's own home region of Commagene actually remained a semi-autonomous client state of Rome for the next century before its final annexation into the empire and the provincial system.⁹

⁴ Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 11–14.

⁵ Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria*, 134–38.

⁶ Maurice Sartre, *The Middle East Under Rome*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1–2; Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 6–8.

⁷ Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 6.

⁸ See Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*; Sartre, *The Middle East Under Rome*, 5–30.

⁹ Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 19–31.

The Romans' treatment of their provincial population and especially the local elite was, from one perspective, remarkably egalitarian. Unlike many other ancient societies, Rome did not have a myth of an autochthonous identity—the Romans believed that they were descended from the mythical Trojan king Aeneas from Asia Minor. The Romans themselves were an inherently hybrid people, although this hybridity was not always viewed favorably, as shown by Lucian's *De Mercede Conductis*.¹⁰ Further, the military and political needs of the empire presented ample opportunities for provincial elites to advance themselves within the Roman imperial system. Before Lucian's lifetime, the Iberian-born Trajan (ruled 98-117 CE) became the first Roman Emperor to hail from the provinces, followed by a number of other emperors born outside of Italy.¹¹ During Lucian's lifetime in the mid- to late second century CE, the city of Rome saw a growing number of provincial elites from the East, who found roles as imperial administrators, jurists, and even as senators.¹² Lucian himself benefitted from the opportunities resulting from Roman rule—his travels throughout the empire resulted from the relative stability of Rome during this period. It also allowed him to advance his career throughout the empire and join the ranks of the imperial administrators in Egypt.¹³

The crowning achievement of the Syrian provincial elite occurred in the decades following Lucian's death, as a series of Syrian rulers took control of the Roman Empire. Julia Domna, the wife of the Emperor Septimius Severus who ruled 193-211 CE, originally hailed from Emesa in Syria.¹⁴ The century to follow would see a series of Syrian emperors at Rome:

¹⁰ Nasrallah, "Mapping the World," 298.

¹¹ Mary Taliaferro Boatwright et al., *The Romans: From Village to Empire*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 362.

¹² Levick, *Julia Domna, Syrian Empress*, 22.

¹³ Lucian, *Apol.* 12, 15.

¹⁴ See Anthony Richard Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999); Levick, *Julia Domna, Syrian Empress*.

Severus and Julia Domna's sons Caracalla and Geta, Domna's grandnephews Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, and the mid-third century usurper Philip the Arab.¹⁵

Despite the rising influence of the Syrian elite at Rome, the political achievements of individual provincials do not imply that the Roman elite thought highly of the provincial population. Rather, as Rome's empire grew, Roman elites and authors began to develop unfavorable opinions of various provincial groups. Even as early as the Middle Republic, the Roman statesman Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE) resisted the perceived influence of the Greeks at Rome. In one instance, Cato prophesied that the Roman Empire would collapse when Rome became "infected" by Greek literature, a statement which sounds remarkably similar to modern anti-immigrant rhetoric.¹⁶

The expansion of Rome's empire under the Principate only served to increase Rome's contact with foreigners, spurring an interest—and pushback—against populations in and around the Roman world. Not all of the conceptions of individual foreign groups were necessarily negative, though some certainly were.¹⁷ This period saw the composition of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* and Tacitus' *Germania*, both of which contained detailed ethnological accounts of foreign groups. Both of these works represented a larger trend: non-Roman groups, in the Roman mind, could be distilled into a series of favorable and unfavorable stereotypes.

Syrians were not immune to these Roman constructions. Syrians began to appear in Roman literature with greater frequency after Rome's wars in the East, which had resulted in an influx of Syrian slaves in Italy. It comes as little surprise, then, that the first negative

¹⁵ Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁶ Plutarch, *Vit. Cat. Mai.* 23.2.

¹⁷ David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers*, Reprinted (London: Duckworth, 2000), 31; Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 169.

stereotypes of Syrians in Roman literature invoked Syrians' roles as slaves. The historian Livy recorded speeches of Roman generals which called the Syrians "not much better than slaves on account of their servile nature, rather than a nation of soldiers" and spoke of "Syrians and Asiatic Greeks, third-rate races of people born for slavery."¹⁸ The statesman Cicero, too, mentions "Judaicans and Syrians, nations that were born for slavery;" his grandfather supposedly opined that "our people [the Romans] are like Syrians who are sold as slaves: the more Greek they know, the more good-for-nothing they are."¹⁹ Admittedly, these notions of Syrian servility did not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Romans who were in Syria by the time of Livy.²⁰ Nevertheless, from the earliest indications, the Romans began to develop an unfavorable conception of Syrians.

As free Syrians, especially those of the upper classes, began to arrive at Rome in greater numbers by the early second century CE, Roman opinions of the Syrians evolved to meet the new immigrants. Rather than emphasizing the newcomers' servility, Roman stereotypes instead turned to other Syrian targets. Juvenal's famous remarks about Syrians, previously mentioned in Chapter 2, are again relevant:

And now let me speak at once of the race which is most dear to our rich men, and which I avoid above all others; no shyness shall stand in my way. I cannot abide, *Quirites*, a Rome of Greeks: and yet what fraction of our dregs comes from Greece? The Syrian Orontes has long since poured into the Tiber [...] what do you think that fellow there to be? He has brought with him any character you please; grammarian, orator, geometrician; painter, trainer, or rope-dancer; augur, doctor or astrologer.²¹

At the beginning of these lines, the speaker seems to be headed towards a mere recapitulation of Cato's mishellenism. The passage instead turns towards the Syrians: it is an

¹⁸ Liv. 35.49.8, 36.17.4-5. Translations here are my own.

¹⁹ Cic. *Prov. cons.* 5.10; *Orat.* 2.265ff. cf. Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 235; Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 338.

²⁰ Sartre, *The Middle East Under Rome*, 31-53.

²¹ Juv. 3.58ff. From Ramsay, *Juvenal and Persius*, 29-30.

influx of Syrians, not Greeks, that displeases the speaker. Several untrustworthy professions (e.g. trainers and rope-dancers) are cited along with the more legitimate position of a Greek tutor or other intellectual professionals. The implication here is that Syrians are shifty and untrustworthy. This conception endured even past Lucian's lifetime. For example, the historian Cassius Dio comments that the emperor Caracalla had inherited "Syrian craftiness" from his mother's side of the family, another clearly negative conception of Syrians.²² Around Lucian's time, then, Syrians were viewed as untrustworthy in both Greek and Latin literature. It seems likely that these views also spilled over into everyday life and may have hindered Lucian's employment at various points in his career, an experience often shared by Middle Easterners living in North America and Europe today. Indeed, the negative stereotypes which Lucian would have faced in his lifetime bear some marked similarities to modern Western depictions and characterizations of people from the Middle East.²³

Some events which Lucian may have witnessed also brought the province of Syria into ill-repute: the exploits of the emperor Lucius Verus at Antioch, where Lucian evidently spent some part of the years 163 and 164 CE.²⁴ Verus' misbehavior in Antioch became infamous: "he gave himself wholly to riotous living."²⁵ Syria, especially the city of Antioch, was known widely in antiquity for decadence and extravagance, and Verus' activities only served as further confirmation of this notion.²⁶ While these events are primarily recorded in a

²² Cass. Dio 78.6.1.

²³ See, for instance, Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2014), 8.

²⁴ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 68–77.

²⁵ *SHA Ver.* 7.1.

²⁶ See also Haddad, "Aspects of Social Life in Antioch in the Hellenistic-Roman Period."

late and generally unreliable source, the fourth-century CE *Historia Augusta*, the veracity of the accounts of the reigns prior to the third century CE are generally accepted.²⁷

Indeed, these concepts of Syrian decadence stemmed from earlier Greek literature. Writers had used the legendary Assyrian king Sardanapalus as a proverbial example of decadence since at least the fifth-century BCE, beginning with Aristophanes' comedy *Birds*.²⁸ Lucian himself used Sardanapalus in this manner at several points in the *Dialogi Mortuorum*.²⁹ Elsewhere, a near-contemporary of Lucian, Athenaeus of Naucratis, commented at length on the decadent feasting associated with the province of Syria.³⁰ Taken together, these stereotypes exhibit a clear development of anti-Syrian sentiment within Greek and Roman literature by the time of Lucian's career. These views combined separate strands of prejudice against Syrians, which had been developing across the Greco-Roman world over the past centuries.

Lucian and Anti-Syrian Stereotypes

Lucian's own acceptance of a Syrian identity was itself a result of Roman imperial rule in the East. One effect of Rome's influence was the erasure of certain ethnic identities which were localized around specific minor regions of the empire.³¹ By Lucian's day, his home region of Commagene had undergone such a change. "Commagenean" had effectively disappeared as a meaningful self-identification, replaced with the Greco-Roman identifier "Syrian" that could encompass the entire region. Thus, Lucian does not include Commagenean characters in his works, but "Syrians." Yet, in taking up his Syrian identity,

²⁷ Marcel van Ackeren, ed., *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Chichester, West Sussex, UK ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 18.

²⁸ Ar. Av. 1021

²⁹ Lucian, *D. Mort.* 2, 20.

³⁰ Ath. 12.8

³¹ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 8.

Lucian would have to face the negative conception of Syrians held by his Greek and Roman audiences. Within Lucian's writings, these views often appear merely in passing, comprising casual references within larger works. In some instances, like the *Piscator* (*The Fisherman*) and *Bis Accusatus* (*Twice Accused*), Lucian attempts to dispel the anti-Syrian notions that he faced, but this effort results in the reuse of several common anti-Syrian stereotypes.

Several times throughout his works, Lucian confronts the stereotypes surrounding the province of Syria. In the *Piscator*, the protagonist is a Syrian named Parrhesiades, a substitute for Lucian. Parrhesiades is being prosecuted for slandering the philosophers, an accusation which the real Lucian might have faced as well. In his defense, Parrhesiades cites his own Greek education:

I am a Syrian, [...] from the banks of the Euphrates. But what of that? I know that some of my opponents here are just as foreign-born as I: but in their manners and culture they are not like men of Soli or Cyprus or Babylon or Stageira. Yet as far as you are concerned it would make no difference even if a man's speech were foreign, if only his way of thinking were manifestly right and just.³²

In this work, Lucian's defense is his acceptance of Greek culture. His excellent *paideia* outweighs his birth outside of Greece. The character of Parrhesiades feels compelled to account somehow for his origins, and thus turns to his Greek education.³³ Parrhesiades' statement here reflects the negative stereotypes of Syrians that were present in his contemporary society; he immediately points out the foreign birth of his opponents, while elevating his own *paideia* above that of a typical Syrian.

Here, Lucian hints at the origin of his Greek self-identification evident in some of his other works already mentioned, like *Heracles* and *De Mercede Conductis*. Lucian's tendency towards his Greek identity stems directly from his aversion to the negative connotations of a

³² Lucian, *Pisc.* 19. Translation from Harmon, *Lucian*, Vol. 3, 30–31.

³³ Kuin, "Being a Barbarian," 136.

Syrian identity. This is especially clear in *De Mercede Conductis*, when Lucian comments on the Syrian slave and his barbarous accent.³⁴ As in *Piscator*, Lucian is preoccupied with speech and language as a signifier of identity; moreover, the mention of the Syrian slave reinforces the Roman stereotype connecting Syrians and slavery. The characterizations in *Piscator* and *De Mercede Conductis* represent a peculiar response to Syrian identity; Lucian defends his Syrianness by invoking his Greekness in its place.

A similar tactic appears in another work of Lucian featuring a surrogate for himself on trial, *Bis Accusatus*. This time, a character simply named “the Syrian” is accused by Rhetoric personified as having abandoned her for other pursuits. According to Rhetoric, when she initially found the Syrian, he was “still speaking with a foreign accent and I might almost say wearing a caftan in the Syrian style.”³⁵ Again, however, the Syrian manages to avoid the charges on the basis of his Greek identity. He informs the jury that, despite his Syrian origins, he has been “enfranchised as a Greek.”³⁶ It is the Syrian’s engagement with the Hellenistic world, as well as his rhetorical flourish, that allows him to escape unscathed. As Kuin comments, “the barbarian has shown himself to be the ‘Greekest’ by flawlessly displaying his skills in Greek legal oratory.”³⁷ Here again, in his defense of a Syrian identity, Lucian has consciously engaged anti-Syrian stereotypes while playing upon his Greekness to excuse his origins in the province of Syria. The Syrian appears in barbarian dress and must be educated into a Greek mode of life.³⁸

³⁴ Lucian, *Merc. cond.* 11.

³⁵ Lucian, *Bis. Acc.* 27.

³⁶ Lucian, *Bis. Acc.* 30.

³⁷ Kuin, “Being a Barbarian,” 135.

³⁸ Lucian, *Bis. Acc.* 27.

Conclusion

Lucian's discrepant identities were certainly influenced by the cultural milieu of Roman Syria in the second century CE, for Syria, like Lucian, contained a complex, heterogeneous assemblage of cultures and identities. Nevertheless, the driving force behind Lucian's shifting identity from work to work may well have been the negative stereotypes of individuals from the province of Syria that prevailed within the larger Roman Empire. This may well have led Lucian to become such an excellent *pepaideumenos*, in order to conceal his "barbarian" origins that he references in *Bis Accusatus*. From a purely literary perspective, he was successful. As one appraisal states, in his style and Atticism, Lucian was truly "an Asiatic who out-Greeked the Greeks."³⁹

Lucian's responses to the anti-Syrian stereotypes which he faced ultimately reflected his elevated social position, relative to some of his fellow Syrians within Roman society. Lucian had the luxury of a Greek education, which he used to elevate himself above the rest of his fellow Syrians in the eyes of his Greek and Roman audience. On the one hand, this served as an adequate defense of Lucian's own Syrian identity in *Piscator* and *Bis Accusatus*. On the other, this defense simultaneously subverts his Syrian identity; Lucian, for all of his repeated references to himself as a "Syrian," does not believe that his Syrian identity is able to stand on its own within a Greco-Roman context. Accordingly, Lucian's discrepant identities rise to prominence in this instance. Lucian's Syrianness necessitates his Greek identity, but his Greek identity is also necessary to maintain his Syrian self-portrayal in these works.

³⁹ Michael Grant, *The Antonines: The Roman Empire in Transition* (London: Routledge, 1994), 110.

CONCLUSION

Lucian's writings present a complex and elusive picture of the identity of the author, rhetorician, and satirist. From one perspective, Lucian operates within a set of elite groups. His creativity and his clever utilization of Greek and Hellenistic literary traditions are virtually unparalleled within his time period, marking him as a member of the Greek cultural elite. Moreover, Lucian saw much of the Roman Empire during his work as a teacher, and later managed to secure a position within the Roman government. Despite this, he cannot truly be classified as an elite. He came from a non-elite background on the periphery of the empire, his family was unimportant, and his writings were marginalized within his own time. His perspective was not properly "subaltern," but he cannot be easily classified within the Roman hierarchy either. His literary survival was due solely to the quality of his work; as an inhabitant of the Roman Empire, he was not very important at all.¹

As such, Lucian's works cannot be easily fit into a mold of a "Greek" or a "Syrian," as this thesis has shown. Lucian's works certainly reflect the zeitgeist of his time, with all of his emphasis on *paideia* and his expert imitation and adaptation of Greek literature. On other matters, however, he is much harder to pin down. Lucian exhibited whatever aspects of his identities were necessary for the situation in which he found himself, presenting his perspective through a series of literary personae. His self-representations ranged from the knowledgeable, Ionic-speaking Syrian narrator of the *De Dea Syria* to the wide-eyed Greek tourist in the *Heracles*. The same Lucian who offered diatribes against the city of Rome in *Nigrinus* and *De Mercede Conductis* could also praise Roman political institutions in the

¹ Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*, 114.

Apologia. All of these views represent the same Lucian in different contexts, responding to his situation with a different part of his identity.

Accordingly, scholars must proceed with caution when approaching Lucian's identity. Lucian's identity is far more complicated than a single epithet of Syrian, Greek, or Roman could ever encapsulate. The tendency for modern scholars to view Lucian as an early forebearer of postmodernism and postcolonial rhetoric, too, must be viewed with suspicion, just as readers today view the previous attempts to mold Lucian into a humanist of the Renaissance or a self-made man of the early twentieth century. Relegating Lucian's work to its relevance in one specific contemporary context willfully overlooks Lucian's merit as a writer. His importance goes beyond his perceived relevance to contemporary culture, and it is only with this in mind that Lucian can truly be appreciated.

Beyond the issues at stake in Lucian's own works, his discrepant identities present an interesting case study for the complex problems of identity within Syria and the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire as a whole. Like Lucian, many other individuals who lived in the Roman East had multiple identities and could shift their self-presentation from context to context. The early followers of Jesus in the century prior to Lucian exemplify this necessity; culturally and religiously Jewish, they were compelled to enter into numerous other cultural spheres, wrote in the *lingua franca* of Greek, and could even utilize Roman citizenship.

For example, the most prolific of the New Testament authors, Paul, offers a striking parallel to Lucian. Just as Lucian exhibited his knowledge of pagan Syrian religious practices and the cult of Atargatis in *De Dea Syria*, Paul's expertise in Jewish religion shows through his body of work. Both men were highly proficient in their second language of Greek, and

both held Roman citizenship, but do not elaborate on how they received it. Moreover, Paul, like Lucian, was more than willing to make use of different identities at different times in his career, often to escape unfavorable situations. Thus, he does not mention his Roman citizenship until an opportune time and later announces that he is a Pharisee to inflame sectarian divisions in the Sanhedrin.² As shown in the previous chapters, Lucian behaved in the same manner, shifting his identity based upon any number of factors within his context. He could appear as Syrian, Greek, Roman, a combination of the above, or even deliberately make his own identity ambiguous, as seen in the *Patriae Encomium*.

The application of discrepant identity to Lucian can also model the identities of Syrians about whom less is known of their self-presentation. The Syrian members of the Severan dynasty represent one such instance. With the exception of some scattered papyrological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence, modern historians are left primarily with the hostile historical accounts as their primary witnesses.³ Discrepant identities could help to clarify the rule of these figures in a key transitional period as the Roman Empire shifted towards Late Antiquity. Figures such as Julia Domna, Julia Maesa, and Severus Alexander seem to have navigated their various expected roles in both the East and West with reasonable dexterity; the less well-received figure of Elagabalus stands out precisely because he apparently refused to adapt to the Roman sphere.

Beyond these applications, discrepant identities and Lucian's model exemplifies how individuals who left less of a literary record in the Roman East might have presented themselves. Lucian was certainly not the only easterner who used multiple identities based

² Acts 22.24-23.10.

³ Birley, *Septimius Severus*; cf. John Rea, "A Letter of the Emperor Elagabalus," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 96 (1993): 127-32.

upon context. As the locus of Rome's repeated military efforts against the Parthians, for instance, Syrians were often connected in one way or another to the Roman military and, thus, to Roman imperial power. Syrian cities became the centers of Greek learning in their own right in Late Antiquity.⁴ Thus, Syrians likely behaved in a similar manner as Lucian in presenting whatever feature of their identity fit their given context. Many of them likely spoke one of the several local languages (Aramaic, Syriac, Hebrew, Old Arabic, etc.) and also likely understood at least some Greek; Latin was less widely understood, but important around military outposts and garrisons. In these regions on the edge of the Roman Empire, the concepts of "Romanization" and "Hellenization" ultimately do not seem to effectively describe the characteristics of the population. Instead, the model of discrepant identities, like Lucian's identity, offers a more dynamic account of the pressures on Rome's subjects and their responses to Roman imperialism.

Admittedly, such an analogy can only be taken so far, as Lucian's context was distinct from many of his contemporaries. Lucian spent much of his life away from Syria, working in other parts of the Roman Empire. His experience mirrors the Syrian expatriate population more closely than that of the individuals in the province. Moreover, Lucian was from Commagene, a peripheral region even within the province of Syria itself. Still, it is Lucian's willingness to present himself as Syrian, Greek, and Roman makes him so valuable in the discussion of discrepancy and as a model for other individuals and groups. Whether he presented himself as Greek or Syrian, Lucian ultimately had to come to grips with Roman hegemony, a problem which ultimately resulted in his role in the Egyptian provincial

⁴ e.g. Bouchier, *Syria as a Roman Province*, 116–17.

administration. He had to deal with the tensions between Greekness and Syrianness as well as handle the negative literary views of the province by Greeks and Romans.

Perhaps most importantly, Lucian redefined what it meant to be Syrian in the Roman Empire. Even in Lucian's day, "Syrian" identity was not a culturally unifying appellation. In opposition to the superior position of Rome, the native of Samosata clung to this imperialist designation placed upon the province by its Greek and Roman rulers and made it his own, emphasizing the Syrian aspects of his identity in his works on several occasions. Just as Lucian "became" a Greek through his educational experience, he construed himself as Syrian on his own volition, repurposing an imperial sobriquet to define himself. In so doing, he made himself uniquely adaptable to whatever situation he found.

Lucian's example challenges us to look beyond oversimplifications of identity. This study has suggested that Lucian's identity should not be pigeonholed into one category or another, but rather accepted with all of his complexities, foibles, and apparent contradictions. The same could be said of modern identities as well. Lucian provides a model not only for the discrepant identities of provincial Romans, but also for anyone who has navigated the entanglements of multiple identities and multiple contexts, whether ancient or modern. As a native of Syria working elsewhere in the Roman Empire, he reflects the immigrant identity that many modern Syrians have been forced to take up in modern times. Finally, he speaks across the centuries to the modern debates over who "belongs" and who is an "other," as his works reflect his own experience in both of these groups. Though Lucian's works reflect his second-century CE context, his own struggles, adaptations, and changing self-representations nevertheless seem timely for today's discussions of identity and belonging.

APPENDIX: ABBREVIATIONS

The following lists the abbreviations used in the footnotes and the English titles of Greek and Latin works, following the conventions of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th revised edition. I have cited Lucian's works by their Latin titles throughout for the sake of clarity: there is unfortunately no widely-accepted English translation for many of the titles of Lucian's works. I have provided an English translation of each title at its first mention in the text where applicable, in consultation with the translators of the Loeb Classical Library editions and C.P. Jones' *Culture and Society in Lucian* (1986).

Aristophanes (Ar.)

Av. *Aves (The Birds)*

Athenaeus (Ath.)

Deipnosophistae (Dinner of the Sophists)

Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio)

Historiae Romanae (Roman History)

Cicero (Cic.)

Or. *De Oratore (On the Orator)*

Prov. cons. *De Provinciis Consularibus (On the Consular Provinces)*

Historia Augusta (SHA)

Ver. *Vita Lucii Veri (Life of Lucius Verus)*

Marc. *Vita Marci (Life of Marcus Aurelius)*

Homer (Hom.)

Od. *Odyssey*

Juvenal (Juv.)

Satires

Livy (Liv.)

Ab Urbe Condita (History of Rome)

Lucian

Alex. *Alexander*

Apol. *Apologia (Apology)*

Asin. *Asinus (The Ass)*

Bis. acc. *Bis Accusatus (Twice Accused)*

D. Mort. *Dialogi Mortuorum (Dialogues of the Dead)*

Deor. Conc. *Deorum Concilium (Council of the Gods)*

Herc. *Heracles*

Hist. conscr. *Quomodo Historia Conscribenda Sit (How History Ought to be Written)*

Im. *Imagines (Portraits)*

Merc. cond. *De Mercede Conductis (On Salaried Posts in Great Houses)*

Nigr. *Nigrinus*

<i>Patr. Enc.</i>	<i>Patriae Encomium (In Praise of Homeland)</i>
<i>Salt.</i>	<i>De Saltatione (On the Dance)</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>Somnium sive vita Luciani (The Dream)</i>
<i>Syr. D.</i>	<i>De Dea Syria (On the Syrian Goddess)</i>
<i>VH</i>	<i>Verae Historiae (True Histories)</i>
<u>Plutarch</u> (Plut.)	
<i>Vit. Cat. Mai.</i>	<i>Vitae Parallelae: Vita Catonis Maioris (Life of Cato the Elder)</i>
<u>Salvian</u> (Salv.)	
<i>Gub. Dei</i>	<i>De Gubernatione Dei (On the Government of God)</i>
<u>Strabo</u> (Strab.)	
<i>Geog.</i>	<i>Geographica (Geography)</i>

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