

THE CYNIC AND CHRISTIAN LIVES  
OF LUCIAN'S *PEREGRINUS*

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I

Lucian's work *On the Death of Peregrinus* both parodies and brilliantly manipulates biographical and autobiographical convention. The text is a satirical account of the suicide of the Cynic philosopher Peregrinus, who burned himself to death at the Olympic games of AD 165.<sup>1</sup> The first half is taken up with description of a speech in Elis several days before the beginning of the festival, by Peregrinus' sidekick Theagenes, who eulogizes Peregrinus extravagantly and advertises the forthcoming attraction of his self-immolation. An unnamed second speaker then denounces Peregrinus with a long account of his fraudulent career, during which Peregrinus has (allegedly)<sup>2</sup> taken on a number of different philosophical and religious identities, Cynicism and Christianity at most length. In the second half of the work we hear about the suicide itself – which turns out, on Lucian's account, to be a great anti-climax – and about the rumours which began to proliferate even within hours of Peregrinus' death, some of them started mischievously by the narrator himself.

Death is often a defining moment in ancient biographical literature, a moment which is emblematic of the subject's character, and a moment which brings in its wake the first glimpses of posthumous glory and immortality, in the funeral celebrations which follow. But in Peregrinus' case it brings only anti-climax. Even the title of the work signals Lucian's undermining of Peregrinus' autobiographical pretensions. Lucian makes this a 'Death' of Peregrinus, rather than a 'Life', as we would more naturally expect a biographical work to be entitled.<sup>3</sup> The text 'puts an end' to Peregrinus in unmasking the autobiographical deceptions on which his reputation is based, offering him only a mocking travesty of textual immortality, and dramatizing the narrator's own skills of manipulative self-presentation by contrast.

The title of the work thus immediately hints at Lucian's engagement with biographical convention. In what follows I wish to look a little more closely at the contours of that engagement in the rest of the work. In doing so, I have

two main aims, both of which, I hope, will have some relevance to the wider themes of this volume. First, I will argue that Lucian flaunts his ability to beat Peregrinus at his own game, in order to convey a characteristically Lucianic impression of the theatrical nature of all biographical and autobiographical representation, and of the difficulties of controlling such theatricality. Secondly, I wish to suggest that Christian and non-Christian biographical material are intertwined with each other throughout the work, especially in the description of the hours leading up to Peregrinus' death, in ways which contribute to the same effect.

The foregrounding of autobiographical theatricality is prominent from the beginning of the work. Peregrinus, Lucian suggests, has lurched from one piece of frantic self-promotion to the next throughout his career, trying out an opportunistic and often indiscriminate mixture of different personas and philosophical allegiances in an attempt to gain glory, and perverting all of the traditions he touches in the process. His glory-seeking suicide has similar characteristics. Peregrinus (allegedly) stages his own death for maximum publicity, and in doing so claims to be following a number of prestigious role models. And yet, despite the calculating nature of his self-advertisement, he is ultimately unable to claim full control over his own self-representation. Lucian's Peregrinus constructs his own life, autobiographizes himself, by imitating iconic philosophical and religious figures. But in Lucian's hands those imitations constantly threaten to spiral into absurdity. Similarly, Lucian satirizes the Cynic and Christian followers of Peregrinus, who perpetuate his self-dramatizations in their biographical accounts of him.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, Lucian – or at least the first-person narrator whose voice Lucian inhabits (more on that distinction in a moment) – manages the process of manipulative autobiography more successfully. We are often told that biography and autobiography are almost inevitably connected with each other.<sup>5</sup> That may have been the case particularly within the ancient world, when the writing of biography was related in many ways to the practices of eulogistic speech-making, where the speaker's own character was always on display together with that of his subject.<sup>6</sup> Lucian pushes that association to its limits throughout the *Peregrinus*. The author, like the narrator whose mask he hides behind, matches his subject's creative self-fashioning by his own more sophisticated manipulations of other people's perceptions, and his own more sophisticated ability to switch between a range of different personas. He repeatedly compares himself with the man he is satirizing, revelling in his ability to outdo Peregrinus. And he hints at the possibility that we, his readers, may be just as much at the mercy of his own narrative control as the gullible onlookers who fall for his invented rumours, so he claims, after Peregrinus' death.

In what follows I will use the name 'Lucian' to describe both Lucian the author and Lucian the first-person narrator, while trying as far as possible to flag the moments within the narrative where the possibility of divergence between the two is made most conspicuous. The text suggests that the narrator is a mouthpiece for the authentic and trustworthy voice of the author, and yet it never allows us to be fully confident of that voice's authenticity. How far are we to take the narrator's debunking of Peregrinus as a reflection of the author's own opinion? To what extent is the narrator himself to be suspected of untrustworthiness or ludicrity? Are we really meant to believe what he tells us about Peregrinus?

The difficulty of answering those questions contributes to the text's broader thematic preoccupation with the difficulties of finding any firm ground beneath the shifting surfaces of self-presentation. Peregrinus is an extreme example of fakery, but he may not be the only one. Lucian throughout his writing relies on techniques of mask-swapping and ironic role-playing, which make him an always-elusive figure, hard to pin down to any one set of opinions.<sup>7</sup> One effect of that strategy is to confront us repeatedly with the untrustworthy characteristics of any kind of self-description. In the *Peregrinus* that technique is pushed to its extreme. The text not only suggests that the real Lucian is to be linked with the narrator, and perhaps with the anonymous second-speaker who attacks the encomium of Peregrinus given by Theagenes, but also hints, more audaciously, that Lucian's true face may be not be so easily distinguishable from Peregrinus' own. 'Lucian', as he appears to us in this work, is always the product of rhetorical sleight of hand. The author is never reliably identifiable with the face he presents to us. The text draws attention to the constructedness of Lucian's masks as much as it does to those of Peregrinus.

My first aim, then, is to explore Lucian's representations of the processes of biographical theatricality, paying particular attention (especially in the final section of the article), to the ways in which both author and narrator, as far as they can be separated, are implicated in the techniques they expose. My second aim, in many ways connected with that, is to explore the ways in which Christian and non-Christian biographical traditions are intertwined with each other in this text. Christian and non-Christian biographical traditions are interwoven not only within the account of Peregrinus' Christian phase in the first half of the work, but also in the report of Peregrinus' death in the second half, which has a number of striking intertexts with the crucifixion narratives of the Gospels. Lucian compares Peregrinus with Jesus on the cross, while simultaneously ascribing to him a bewildering range of other biographical models, in order to foreground the opportunistic and indiscriminate nature of Peregrinus' self-dramatization. He represents Jesus



as a self-promoting sophist,<sup>8</sup> a judgement which may have contributed to the widespread criticism of Lucian by later Christian readers.<sup>9</sup> According to Lucian at least, Peregrinus' imitation of Jesus' self-dramatization (amongst other models) takes the strategy of opportunistic self-staging to an even more extreme level.

That argument may have some relevance for our wider understanding of the influence of Christian biography on non-Christian 'Lives', although it is extremely difficult to pin down the significance of this one example of self-conscious gospel imitation within any broader context. Glen Bowersock has recently drawn attention to the presence of 'Christian' motifs within non-Christian narrative of the first to third centuries AD, arguing from this evidence that the Gospels had a widespread influence on contemporary culture even very soon after they were written.<sup>10</sup> His overall argument is not implausible. It has, however, attracted some sceptical responses, especially in relation to many of his individual examples (of which the *Peregrinus* is one).<sup>11</sup>

I want to suggest here that there are several methodological problems which hold back this debate from any fruitful progress. For one thing, there is a tendency to assume a self-evident significance for 'allusions' to Christian texts, as if their very presence is significant enough not to require any further interrogation. Bowersock, for example, tends not to examine the question of how or why these Christian motifs may have been exploited within any particular text.<sup>12</sup> Close examination of that sort, I will suggest, is crucial for any attempt to approach a broad picture of how early Christian narrative was used and valued by contemporary non-Christian authors. Some authors have disputed the claim that there are Christian motifs in the second half of the *Peregrinus*,<sup>13</sup> but in this case Bowersock seems to me to be right to suggest that there are details which point to a degree of familiarity and engagement with Christian narrative. The fact that Lucian has discussed Christian practice explicitly and at length in the first half of the work, mentioning Christ's crucifixion twice, strengthens the likelihood that the Christian motifs of the second half would have played a thematically significant role for some readers. Bowersock, however, discusses these details without giving much attention to the rest of the work, and so leaves open the challenge of exploring the effects they achieve in their narrative context. Analysing those effects is one of the main aims of this article.

Even then, however, it is hard to extrapolate from this one example to a broad vision of contemporary opinion. Lucian's insistent linking of Christian narrative with Peregrinean trickery – albeit in a way which also signals some differences between them, as we shall see – may be a sign that some features of Christian narrative were more widely known than has usually been thought, not least through an association between the

Christian Gospels and theatrical techniques of biographical trickery of the kind discussed in the late second-century anti-Christian work of Celsus.<sup>14</sup> However, it would surely require a more detailed thematic analysis of the use of this material in all of the places it appears for us to begin to outline a broad view of the effects Christian narrative details commonly achieved in non-Christian narrative contexts.

The *Peregrinus*, then, offers a thematically consistent and sustained view of the significance of Christian narrative, in fact it is unusually explicit in marking out its relations with Christian narrative traditions. In that sense it offers, I will suggest, an important – though in some ways untypical – example of close relations between Christian and non-Christian narrative.

Moreover, despite my own argument in what follows that Lucian is at least to some degree in control of the Christian material he draws on, it also seems important to be suspicious of any rigid insistence on 'demonstrable' intentionality on Lucian's part as a necessary ingredient of 'authentic' intertextual reference<sup>15</sup> (an insistence which has been evident especially in the work of those who have disputed the possibility that the appearance of 'Christian' motifs in non-Christian works could be a sign of Christian 'influence' at this early stage in Christian history). A precise model of deliberate allusion seems particularly inappropriate for most of the appearances of Christian material that we find in the non-Christian literature of this period. In other words, the assumption that authors and (especially) readers of non-Christian writing must be engaging with Christian texts carefully and deliberately if they are to be taken as doing so at all seems to me to be unnecessarily restrictive. Christian story-telling – which was itself very far from uniform – participated in a wide network of narrative traditions, both drawing on and contributing to those traditions through oral as much as written communication. Half-remembered stories, imperfectly distinguished from each other, must have influenced non-Christian writers at least as often as closely recalled and easily identifiable Christian narrative traditions. The Christian nature of certain types of narrative material must often have been only half acknowledged by their readers (or even their authors), or else acknowledged only by a small proportion of their readers. Even within the *Peregrinus*, where Christian influence on the text seems more carefully controlled than it often is elsewhere, intertexts with Christian crucifixion narratives do not necessarily imply any exact or detailed knowledge of these texts on Lucian's part, or any required knowledge of the same on the part of his readers.

Moreover, the *Peregrinus* advertises its own conformity with precisely this kind of flexible intertextual model, in repeatedly and self-consciously hinting at the impossibility of controlling 'allusion'. Lucian's *paideia* refuses to proceed by any orderly, easily trackable method. Instead, he courts



an impression of deliberate indiscriminateness in his own ascription of biographical models to Peregrinus.<sup>16</sup> This ability to mix together a wide range of different sources is represented as a more successful version of Peregrinus' own indiscriminate appropriation of role models. The *Peregrinus*, in other words, is a text which knowingly undermines rigid models of intertextual exchange. The effects I outlined earlier in this section, whereby Lucian satirizes Peregrinus' attempts to control his own autobiographical 'imitations', themselves thematize precisely the point I have been making here in discussing the text's engagement with biographical tradition. We should surely be cautious about insisting on intentionality and close control over literary allusion in a text where Peregrinus' attempts at that kind of control within his own life are so ruthlessly subverted. The dizzying and deliberately chaotic proliferation of intertextual links that the text revels in is itself a metaphor for the techniques of multiple imitation which both Peregrinus and Lucian (author and narrator alike) use in their self-presentations.

## II

Peregrinus is remarkable above all for the great range of models he appropriates. His further name 'Proteus', which Lucian mentions in the work's opening lines, linking him with the shape-changing sea-god of the *Odyssey* (discussed further below), foregrounds that characteristic immediately. I wish to focus in everything that follows on the way in which Peregrinus, by Lucian's account, combines many different models for his own life in such a way as to elide the differences between them. Lucian pursues that impression partly in order to show how Peregrinus' glory-seeking has imposed itself on gullible victims (as Lucian represents them) in a uniform and indiscriminate way. Mark Edwards has demonstrated this effect convincingly for the first half of the text.<sup>17</sup>

In this section I want to discuss especially the way in which Lucian's Peregrinus superficially and distortingly accommodates himself with a range of different philosophical attitudes towards death and suicide. I will then argue, in section three, that Lucian's use of a gospel-narrative framework for Peregrinus' death in the second half – in combination with many other models – contributes to the same impression of blurring between different biographical models. In the final section I will turn to the author/narrator's own self-representation to reveal something of his own surprisingly close connections with Peregrinus.

One of the things which reinforces the impression of Peregrinus' opportunistic eclecticism is Lucian's engagement with contemporary debate about the value of Peregrinus' death. Peregrinus was a controversial figure. We have extensive evidence for both praise and criticism of him from many different

perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Some of these accounts contradict the impression we receive from Lucian's account. Many writers were apparently convinced of his philosophical credentials. Aulus Gellius, for example, describes him as 'serious and resolute' ('gravem et constantem'; *Noctes Atticae* 12.11), and records him saying that the wise man would not commit a sin even if he knew he would remain undetected. That portrait, of a man conspicuously not interested in surface appearances, is about as far removed from Lucian's version as one could imagine. Others give valuations of the suicide which are very different from Lucian's own. Lucian's text, I will argue, responds to those views by acknowledging that Peregrinus' suicide could in theory have been admired from a great range of philosophical perspectives, if it had been done with the right motives, but he also stresses the fact that Peregrinus (as this text describes him) was acting for the wrong reasons, that he perverted all of the potentially admirable philosophical viewpoints he got his hands on.

The ease with which Peregrinus is able to swap between different life stories within Lucian's version of his life is of course partly explained by the fact that there was a great deal of shared ground between the different philosophical groups of this period. That was true not least for Cynicism and Christianity, which seem to have had influence on each other, and which certainly shared a sufficient number of characteristics to be confused with each other by outsiders, although that shared ground often seems to have intensified rivalry between the two groups rather than the opposite.<sup>19</sup> We often see signs of a self-conscious eclecticism within the philosophical culture of the Roman Empire, in Cynicism perhaps more than anywhere. However, there may also have been commonly envisaged limits on the degree to which eclecticism was acceptable.<sup>20</sup> Lucian's representation of Peregrinus is certainly in line with that conclusion. He is firm about demonstrating that Peregrinus' eclecticism is of the wrong sort, opportunistic and absurd (as we shall see further in a moment in looking at the distinction between Peregrinus and Demonax, who is represented by Lucian as a more admirable model of philosophical eclecticism).

Theorization of death – especially suicide and resurrection – was one of the areas where the shared ground between different philosophical and religious groups was most apparent, but also, paradoxically, one of the most important and hotly contested focuses for religious boundary-definition.<sup>21</sup> Lucian's concentration on the moment of Peregrinus' death and on the many false starts leading up to it (for example, his failed Christian martyrdom and his many advertisements for the suicide), can be partly explained by his desire to exploit this background of doctrinal overlap in order to reflect on Peregrinus' boundary-blurring self-promotion.

How would Peregrinus' suicide (as Lucian describes it) have been viewed from the many different perspectives which the text hints at?



Lucian's Peregrinus had (allegedly) been living as a Cynic for some time when he died, and his decision to die need not have been incompatible with that purported allegiance, since Cynicism<sup>22</sup> – like Stoicism<sup>23</sup> – sanctioned suicide in cases where it was no longer possible to continue living a virtuous life. We hear of Cynics – including (according to some accounts) Diogenes himself, the founding father of Cynicism<sup>24</sup> – committing suicide under those circumstances. It was important not to kill oneself for the wrong reasons, however. The glory-seeking motives Lucian ascribes to Peregrinus are at odds with the requirement that one should only commit suicide when one is no longer capable of virtuous self-sufficiency.<sup>25</sup>

Suicide was also compatible with Epicurean belief but, again, only when carried out for the right reasons, when 'the prospects for an acceptably pleasant subsequent life are irretrievably slight'.<sup>26</sup> There are hints of an Epicurean perspective within Lucian's text. In 23, for example, we hear that Peregrinus *claimed* that he was attempting to banish the fear of death. Once again, however, the match is a very superficial one, not least because Peregrinus' deeply ingrained desire for worldly glory and for the 'immortality' of fame was one of the things Epicurean teaching most consistently condemned. Epicurean writing also warns of the way in which fear of death can paradoxically be a motive for suicide, and treats this as one of the least acceptable motives possible. Lucian's Peregrinus is afraid of death himself. In 43, for example, Lucian describes Peregrinus' fear during a storm at sea:

...he started to wail with the women, this admirable man who was thought to be superior to death. (Peregrinus 43)<sup>27</sup>

Freedom from fear is one of the prime goals of Epicurean *ataraxia*. That state is often described through the imagery of quiet seas after a storm.<sup>28</sup> By exposing Peregrinus' cowardliness, and his failure to conform to Epicurean demands for 'calm' in the face of the insignificant storms of life which threaten bodily harm, Lucian sabotages any claim on his part to be an Epicurean role model.

Platonic doctrine did allow for the possibility of suicide in certain limited circumstances, although it inclined towards prohibition of self-killing even more strongly than the schools I have already discussed.<sup>29</sup> The tendency to reject suicide intensified within later Platonic thinking, responding in part to Pythagorean doctrine (although that tendency is most striking in the centuries after Lucian was writing).<sup>30</sup> The classic Platonic discussion of suicide is in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates elucidates Pythagorean prohibitions of suicide, while nevertheless leaving open the possibility that suicide may sometimes be acceptable, if one is under divine compulsion.<sup>31</sup> Socrates is presumably under that kind of compulsion himself, since he seems to have

at least a hand in his own death (for example because of his famous refusal to escape from punishment by adopting a more compromising attitude during his trial), although the text stops short of describing the submission to execution (which requires him to drink hemlock by his own hand) as an act of self-killing. In Lucian's account, Peregrinus' followers, both Cynic and Christian, use Socrates as a model for his death; in fact the *Phaedo* – which was one of the most famous and influential models for later biographical writing, as well as later discussions of suicide – is twice evoked explicitly, in Lucian's description of the Christians gathering around Peregrinus in his prison cell (*Peregrinus* 12), and in his mockery of the Cynics who loiter around the pyre after Peregrinus has died, as if they are the companions of Socrates waiting for a painter to paint their portraits (37). Lucian's Peregrinus follows a Socratic model, then, but his unnecessary self-immolation is absurdly inconsistent with the possibilities for divinely sanctioned suicide which the *Phaedo* leaves open.<sup>32</sup>

There are also repeated suggestions in Lucian's account – as in the work of other contemporary commentators on Peregrinus – that he was imitating Brahmins who had famously burned themselves to death in public.<sup>33</sup> The beliefs which were ascribed to them as motives for self-immolation are much harder to reconstruct than they are for the philosophical positions I have outlined. Lucian himself gives the impression that he has no clear idea of the motives for Brahmanical suicide. Despite that imprecise knowledge, however, he is still keen to represent Peregrinus' imitation of their example as inadequate and superficial. In 25, for example, Lucian reminds us that even the Indians may have glory-seekers amongst them; but then contrasts the Brahmins' admirably impassive acceptance of pain and gradual death with Peregrinus' sensational and cowardly plan to leap into the pit in which his pyre was located, so that he would die within seconds.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, there was also debate about the value of suicide amongst Christians in this period.<sup>35</sup> The Christian prohibition of suicide, influenced by traditions of Platonizing Christianity, and partly in reaction to excessive enthusiasm for martyrdom, was crystallized only in the writing of Augustine.<sup>36</sup> Before Augustine we often find Christians speaking in praise of suicide in some contexts. Peregrinus' own death seems to have been compatible with Christian admiration from the perspective of some authors. Tertullian, for example, probably influenced by Stoic and Cynic traditions,<sup>37</sup> uses Peregrinus as an example of noble suicide in *Ad Martyras* 4. He includes Peregrinus in a long list of pagans who have had admirable deaths by suicide, and then says that it is *even more* noble to die like this for Christian principles.

Lucian exploits the Christian reputation for eye-catching martyrdom in his satire of Peregrinus,<sup>38</sup> associating him with stereotypical Christian



sensationalism. Strikingly, however, he chooses not to extend that criticism to Peregrinus' Christian followers, blaming instead their gullibility (as he represents it):

For the wretches have convinced themselves entirely that they will be immortal and live for ever, and for that reason they despise death and willingly give themselves into custody.  
(*Peregrinus* 13)<sup>39</sup>

He seems keen to exonerate the Christians themselves from the charge of glory-seeking, in order to enhance the impression of Peregrinus' manipulative nature by contrast. By comparison with him the Christians, those most spectacular of suicides, are innocents who have beguiled themselves into false belief. Peregrinus' appropriation of Christian identity, as Lucian describes it, thus follows the pattern I have argued for in relation to a number of other philosophical and religious influences on him, in the sense that his own motives are almost unconnected with the beliefs of those he purports to represent.

There are many different perspectives, then, from which Peregrinus' suicide might have been envisaged as admirable.<sup>40</sup> Peregrinus, however, on Lucian's account, is not a reliable representative of any of them. The debate between modern scholars about which of the philosophical and religious influences on Peregrinus were most significant at different times in his career has often ignored the fact that Lucian deliberately makes that difficult for us to judge. Peregrinus' Cynic and Christian followers, meanwhile, are mocked by Lucian for their naïveté, which allows their beliefs to be manipulated, so much so that they become in many ways indistinguishable from each other. They, too, in Lucian's account of them, fail to respect the boundaries between their own beliefs and those of rival groups, only in their case it is more from stupidity than calculation.<sup>41</sup>

Peregrinus' perversion of philosophical norms is implicitly connected in Lucian's text with the manipulation of biographical convention, both by Peregrinus himself and by his followers. Most significantly, Lucian exposes Peregrinus' perversion of the conventions of philosophical death within biographical writing. Philosophers, as they are described in their biographies, tend to die bravely but unobtrusively. Diogenes Laertius, in his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, repeatedly introduces brief descriptions of his subjects' deaths, deaths which often showcase the philosophers' bravery in the face of pain and misfortune, and in a number of cases are self-administered, but which are nearly always unobtrusive. In a few cases also he describes posthumous honours, especially widely-attended funeral processions which testify to the popularity of the deceased. And he often records epigrams composed to celebrate the life of the philosopher in question, regularly including

epigrams he has composed himself, with the implication that his own writing participates in the processes of commemoration and immortalization. Lucian's Peregrinus attempts to combine the defining moments of death and funeral commemoration into one, mixing the defining moment of his death with the moment of cremation, dying on his own funeral pyre. But he seems to have forgotten that his proclaimed philosophical allegiances should lead him to a less theatrical method of leaving the physical world.

In many ways Lucian's Peregrinus is closer to the biographical traditions applied to wonder-workers and holy-men like Apollonius of Tyana, whose lives end in a blaze of glory.<sup>42</sup> Even here, however, he falls short of his role models by the incompetence of his attempted sensationalism. His attempt to conjure up a glorious afterlife by orchestrating the moment of his own destruction falls flat. That anti-climactic combination does make a formative contribution to Peregrinus' self-definition, but it does so in ways he has failed to anticipate, contributing above all to the absurdity of his reputation, at least as Lucian paints it. One of the functions of biographical writing is to bring a kind of immortality to its subjects, by keeping alive the deeds of great men. Lucian's biography of Peregrinus offers him only an absurd travesty of literary commemoration.

For any reader who knows Lucian's other writing there is an implicit contrast between Peregrinus and Demonax, another Cynic philosopher, who was the subject of one of Lucian's other biographical texts.<sup>43</sup> The difference between them (which is signalled briefly in the *Demonax*, though not in the *Peregrinus*)<sup>44</sup> illustrates some of the distinctive problems involved in Peregrinus' overstepping of philosophical and autobiographical limits. Demonax, like Peregrinus, displays an eclectic kind of Cynicism, but his motives for doing so are represented as being very different. He makes no attempt to control his own self-representation, preferring to let his life emerge from disparate details, just as Lucian lets Demonax's life emerge from disparate details through the disjointed form of his biographical writing within the text, which consists of a loosely combined collection of anecdotes. Peregrinus, by contrast, tries to control too much, swinging very self-consciously between different labels and different ideals. His eclecticism, it seems, is flawed.<sup>45</sup> Demonax also provides an example of how a Cynic philosopher can commit suicide in a way which is compatible with philosophical principles, without the aim of self-glorification. He starves himself to death when he realizes he is no longer able to maintain his self-sufficiency, leaving instructions that no one should waste energy over his burial, in a scene which takes up only a few sentences at the end of Lucian's narrative. The Athenians insist on giving him a public funeral, however, which attracts many more people than are present at the pyre of Peregrinus.<sup>46</sup>



## III

I have argued, then, that Lucian shows Peregrinus making the boundaries between different groups (Cynics and Christians especially) irrelevant, as if his actions and his insidious influence (as Lucian represents it) are identical whichever group he claims to belong to (although he does not get away with this all the time, and there are occasions when his opportunistic attitude to these boundaries comes up against obstacles, for example when his otherwise gullible Christian followers object to his violation of their dietary laws and expel him; *Peregrinus* 16). I have also suggested that there are implicit links between the *Peregrinus* and Lucian's *Life of Demonax*. Demonax represents a more positive paradigm of some of the biographical and philosophical traditions Peregrinus perverts.

How does Lucian's *description* of the suicide itself help to articulate these impressions? And do the intertexts between Lucian's text and the Gospel crucifixion narratives play any role in fulfilling these wider aims? Christopher Jones has argued for a clear separation between Peregrinus' Cynic and Christian phases, listing a fascinating range of non-Christian parallels for Peregrinus' activity during the Cynic stage of his career.<sup>47</sup> However, he seems to me to overstate his case in arguing that reminiscences of Christian narrative within the account of Peregrinus' death should not be taken as such simply because they *can* be explained in purely 'pagan' terms.<sup>48</sup>

For one thing, as I have argued, the concept of deliberate and undeniable allusion may not be the only one which is relevant for intertextual study of this sort, especially for culturally 'marginal' narrative traditions like the far-from-uniform set of Christian stories which the Gospels arose from and perpetuated. The influence of Christian material on this account may be a sign of the gradual spread of familiarity with Christian narrative even if it is being used without careful planning by Lucian himself, and even if only a small proportion of his readers would have noticed it.

That said, it also seems likely, given the tendency to eclecticism which Peregrinus displays in relation to non-Christian traditions at this point in the story,<sup>49</sup> and in other parts of the text, and given the frequency with which Lucian refers to Christian narrative material at other points in his account, that Lucian is here exercising at least a degree of control over the Gospel reminiscences I will discuss, even if he does not choose to draw attention to that control in any precise terms. I will argue here that Lucian's comparisons between Peregrinus' suicide and Jesus' death on the cross potentially contribute to the impression that Peregrinus himself was still unable or unwilling to settle on one biographical model, even (or perhaps especially) at the moment of his death. They also suggest that Peregrinus loses control over his own self-portrayal, acting in ways which resemble inept versions of Jesus'

manipulation of gullible opinion (as Lucian portrays it) even when they are not intended to, if Lucian chooses to represent them as such.

In *Peregrinus* 32 the slanging match between Theagenes and his unnamed respondent with which the work has opened finally draws to a close, and the scene shifts to Olympia, where we see Peregrinus speaking on his own behalf in a scene which briefly replays the absurdity and turmoil of the previous exchange of speeches in Elis. Lucian tells us that he stayed on the edges of the crowd, preferring not to give Peregrinus too much of his attention. His strongest impulse is to laugh, not only at the indignity of Peregrinus' self-advertisement, but also at the ineptitude of it. Peregrinus, Lucian tells us, was so taken up with the temporary success of his self-publicization that he could not see how insignificant the crowds gathering around him really were:

...not knowing, poor fool, that even those who are being led away to the cross, or those who are in the power of the public executioner, have many more people following after them.  
(*Peregrinus* 34)<sup>50</sup>

On its own, of course, a reference to crucifixion need not be taken as a deliberate allusion to Christian precedents. In the context of Lucian's text, however, which twice mentions the crucifixion of Jesus outside the account of Peregrinus' suicide, the reference seems pointed. In 11, for example, we have heard that Peregrinus' Christian followers had worshipped him in second place, after 'that man who was crucified in Palestine'.<sup>51</sup> Later, in 13, Lucian notes Jesus' deception of his gullible followers, describing him scathingly as 'that crucified sophist',<sup>52</sup> an image which suggests a parallel between Jesus' manipulation of opinion (as Lucian portrays it) and Peregrinus' own deceitfulness. When read with these other passages in mind, it seems to me hard to avoid the conclusion that the passing reference to crucifixion in 34, immediately before the shift to the scene in front of Peregrinus' pyre, is likely to recall the Christian themes of the early part of the work for some of Lucian's contemporary readers. It sets up the crucifixion of Jesus – unobtrusively but artfully – as one of many models for the suicide description which follows. In the process it implies that Jesus' following was largely due to sensation-hunting crowds rather than anything more. Peregrinus exploits the same hunger for sensation (as Lucian portrays it), only far less successfully.

Similarly, after the death of Peregrinus has been described, in the very closing sentences of the work, Lucian mocks Peregrinus for his vanity in taking medication to improve his eyesight, even though he was planning to burn himself to death only a few days later:

it is as though a man about to go up on the cross should treat the bruise on his finger.  
(45)<sup>53</sup>



This echoes the tradition of mocking Jesus for his weakness before death, as Celsus did with reference to Jesus' prayer to be released from suffering.<sup>54</sup> Peregrinus had worried about death itself in similar terms, as we learn shortly before this passage, in 43–4, discussed above. Here, in this climactic image of vain complaints about a minor ailment, Peregrinus is doing something even more absurd than Jesus (as he is represented by Celsus and others), complaining over something very much more trivial. Once again, it seems, Lucian's Peregrinus not only reproduces the fraudulence and hypocrisy associated with Christian stories by critics like Celsus, but also intensifies it, carrying it to ridiculous extremes. This final return to Jesus as an implicit model for Peregrinus is a conspicuous concluding detail in a series of recurrent references to crucifixion. That recurrence echoes the way in which Peregrinus' own imitations of Christianity have a degree of consistency, reappearing even after he has renounced any explicit Christian allegiance. Such consistency may be partly a result of Peregrinus' calculating eclecticism, but it may not be entirely under Peregrinus' own control. In this case, at least, his imitation of Jesus' alleged weakness is presumably an unwitting one.

After the initial description of Peregrinus' speech-making in Olympia, Lucian moves on to the burning itself. This eventually takes place several days after the end of the festival. Lucian represents the delay as a result of Peregrinus' cowardly procrastination, although the same detail could equally well have been used to argue that Peregrinus was not interested in attracting a large crowd. The aggressive advertisement of Peregrinus' connections with distinguished role models who were mentioned in the speech of Theagenes is not continued here, as if Peregrinus and his companions are silenced by being finally confronted with the reality of the moment they have been imagining for so long. Even here, however, there are signs that Peregrinus is trying to play a great range of roles at the same time. In 36, for example, Lucian describes the way in which he removed his Cynic clothing before jumping, taking off his wallet and cloak, and laying aside the Herakles-club which he used to carry around with him. Herakles was an icon of Cynic virtue, not least because of the way he had burned himself to death when suffering unbearably, and Peregrinus' club-carrying is therefore an ostentatious reminder of his continued claim to Cynic identity. The allusion to Plato's *Phaedo* after the suicide, in 37, which I discussed above, reminds us of Peregrinus' Socratic pretensions. There is also a reference in 39 to the habits of the Brahmins (although it turns out that Peregrinus has failed to conform to these, having burned himself at the wrong time of day).<sup>55</sup>

That medley account of the moment of burning and of Peregrinus' preparation for it also contains one detail which might for some readers have given the impression of being a muddled imitation of the Christian crucifixion

stories. In 36, just before Peregrinus leaps on to the fire, we hear that he entrusts himself to the spirits of his mother and father:

'Spirits of my mother and my father, receive me with favour.' Having said that he jumped into the fire...<sup>56</sup>

That seems to echo the final words of Jesus on the cross, as reported by Luke:

and having cried out in a loud voice, Jesus said, 'Father, into your hands I shall commit my spirit.' And having said those words, he expired.  
(Luke 23.46)<sup>57</sup>

Jones downplays this possibility, pointing out that there are plenty of models for this sort of address to paternal and maternal *daimones* in non-Christian prayers to the underworld.<sup>58</sup> Once again, however, it seems likely, given the depth of reference to Christian practice and narrative tradition elsewhere in the text, that these Christian and non-Christian influences could have stood together, at least for some readers, in a way which is consistent with the effects of blurring between different religious and philosophical influences that Lucian is trying to achieve throughout the work.

As we read on we find more examples. On his way back from the pyre, the narrator meets people who have got the time of the firework display wrong, and describes everything to them:

If I saw a man of taste, I would recount everything which happened without embellishment (*ψιλά*), as I have to you. But for the stupid people, those who listened open-mouthed to any story they heard, I made up my own tragedy (*ἐτραγῶδουν τι παρ' ἑμαυτοῦ*), saying that when the fire was kindled, and Peregrinus went up to it and threw himself in, there was first of all a great earthquake, and a bellowing of the earth, and then a vulture flying out of the middle of the fire went up to the sky, saying in a human voice, 'I have finished with the earth, and I'm going to Olympus.'  
(39)<sup>59</sup>

The claim to be offering a narrative which is unembellished, bare, accurate (*ψιλά*) is one we might be suspicious of, given our experience in the preceding chapters of this narrator's manipulative story-telling style (more on that in the next section). Later he meets an old man (40) who looks trustworthy on the surface, but ends up repeating the invented detail of the vulture back to him, claiming to have seen it himself, and combining that claim with an entirely different story of Peregrinus' resurrection:

...how he had seen Peregrinus after the burning in white clothing, only a little while ago, and had only just left him wandering around in the Stoa of the Seven Voices, shining and crowned with an olive crown.<sup>60</sup>



It is tempting to feel that Lucian's choice of the Stoa of Seven Voices as the venue for this imaginary reappearance – a building on the east side of the Olympic sanctuary which was famous for its echoes – is intended to add to a sense of the multiplicity of voices contributing to Peregrinus' 'immortality', partly in the sense that there are many different people making up their own stories, but perhaps also in the sense that these stories have arisen from a very wide range of sources.

Clearly many of these details again have 'pagan' precedents. Jones gives most of his attention to these, suggesting that there is no need to posit Christian influence. In Plutarch's *Life of Romulus* 28.1 and 28.3, for example, Romulus appears after death dressed in armour with an olive crown. The olive crown is also reminiscent of the traditional garland for Olympic victors, drawing on a long tradition of representing philosophical prowess by athletic imagery. In foregrounding these intertexts Jones rejects the possibility that there is any reference to the 24 elders who are described in Revelation 4.4 wearing gold crowns and dressed in white.<sup>61</sup> The non-Christian influences are strong, and Jones is no doubt right to suggest that we cannot be sure that Lucian has this passage from Revelation in mind. Nevertheless, it seems wrong to assume that the existence of adequate non-Christian parallels in itself precludes the possibility that some readers would have sensed Christian overtones at this point. The likelihood that these intertexts with Christian narrative would have been conspicuous for some readers surely gains force from the weight of Christian material elsewhere within the work.<sup>62</sup> And if these references were ever thought of as significantly related to New Testament texts, they would – once again – clearly have been appropriate to the wider aims of the work as a whole.

In some cases the parallels with Christian narrative are more sustained than the links with pagan material which Jones cites. I am not suggesting that they outweigh those references, rather that the two potentially work together, offering a variety of shades of significance which different readers would have responded to in different ways. Matthew 27, for example, contains details – of an earthquake and of the reappearance of bodies from the grave – which are similar to those in *Peregrinus* 39–40, in a combination which is not present within any of the non-Christian parallels usually cited for that passage:

And look, the veil of the Temple was torn into two from the top to the bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were torn apart; and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of holy men who had died were awoken; and coming out of the tombs, after his resurrection, they went into the holy city, and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27.51–3)<sup>63</sup>

The credulous bystanders react to Peregrinus, the text suggests, not only by swallowing his self-fabrications, but also by replaying and extending them. The narrator himself does something similar, although more knowingly and ironically, exposing the charlatanism of Peregrinus' self-presentation by mockingly colluding with his strategy of imitating an indiscriminate mixture of philosophical and religious role models, Christian role models included.

#### IV

I hope to have shown, then, that the frequency of Lucian's (at times superficial) engagement with Christian ideas elsewhere in this text – most importantly his two explicit references to Jesus' crucifixion in *Peregrinus* 11 and 13 – makes it likely that the Gospel reminiscences within the account of Peregrinus' suicide could have been seen as significant by readers with some – even vague – knowledge of Christian narrative. These reminiscences potentially play an important role within Lucian's portrayal of Peregrinus' boundary-traversing theatricality.

How, finally, does Lucian, whether as author or as narrator, situate 'himself' in relation to the imagery of deceptiveness which is applied to Peregrinus?

The actions of Peregrinus, as we have seen, are repeatedly described in theatrical terms,<sup>64</sup> but that imagery is also implicitly associated with the narrator. Immediately after his introductory remarks, for example, Lucian describes Peregrinus' death as the latest act in a long drama:

The complete staging (διασκευή) of the event was as follows. You know what the playwright (τὸν ποιητήν) [i.e. Peregrinus] was like, of course, and what great performances he put on (ἡλίκαι ἐτραγῶδει) throughout his life, surpassing Sophocles and Aeschylus'. (*Peregrinus* 3)<sup>65</sup>

The phrase 'throughout his life' (παρ' ὅλον τὸν βίον) is perhaps meant to remind us that Peregrinus' theatricality has been directed in particular at manipulation of biographical convention, imitating the lives of famous figures as they are described in biographical texts. The sentence as a whole has a sarcastic tone, as if Lucian the narrator is sharing a private joke with his friend from a position of superiority. But does it also deliberately flirt with the impression of grudging admiration, lying behind its sarcastic surface? Certainly it suggests that Lucian and Kronios have a long familiarity with Peregrinus' trickery, and that they have taken a certain pleasure from their observation of it. It also hints at an equation between Lucian and Peregrinus by its references to the processes of scene-setting. Lucian's Peregrinus stage-manages the incident itself, just as Lucian stage-manages his telling of it within the text. The transferability of Peregrinean theatricality to the narrator himself



is even more conspicuous later, for example in 39, where Lucian claims to have made up his own tragedy (ἐτραγῳδοῦν τι παρ' ἑμάντοῦ).<sup>66</sup>

There are also moments when Lucian the narrator seems more closely associated with the companions of Peregrinus than he pretends to be. That dissonance between implicit association and ostensible dissociation may be a deliberate attempt on Lucian's part to draw attention to the skill with which he has disguised the connections between them. It is as though he cannot resist the opportunity to show his own Peregrinean qualities peeping out from beneath their irreproachable disguise. He declares his own lack of interest in Peregrinus at several points. In 32, for example, he claims that he left halfway through the speech of Peregrinus in Olympia. Similarly, in 35 he claims that he stayed at Olympia beyond the end of the festival only because he could not get any transport. He praises the contests he has just witnessed as the best of the four Olympics he has seen, suggesting that this was the spectacle he was really interested in, whereas he went to watch Peregrinus simply to fill in some spare time. This ostentatious parade of lack of interest is compromised, however, by an increasing impression that he and Peregrinus have been dogging each other's footsteps for some time. For example, the mention of the narrator's three previous visits to the Olympics in 35 might remind us of Peregrinus' notorious exploits at previous occurrences of the festival, mentioned in 19–20, reinforcing the impression that he and Peregrinus have come across each other many times before. That effect is intensified in 43–4, where he describes a ship journey they once shared across the Aegean. Even the imagery used to describe Peregrinus' deranged followers in the opening paragraphs of the work slyly suggests that Lucian himself is related to them. In 2, for example, he explains:

I was nearly torn apart by the Cynics (Κυνικῶν), like Aktaion by his dogs (κυνῶν), or like his nephew Pentheus by the Maenads.<sup>67</sup>

The imagery of destruction at the hands of one's own people has disturbing implications. Is the narrator like Pentheus, at risk of being torn apart by his own relatives? Is Lucian threatened by the dog-like Cynics in the same way as Aktaion by his dogs, both of them menaced by their own creatures? We cannot discount the possibility – so the similes seem to be warning us – that Lucian is, deep down, one of them.

Peregrinus' capacity to switch between different allegiances is also relevant to Lucian's self-representation, both as narrator, in this text, and also as author, through its similarity with the characteristics Lucian displays throughout his work. Peregrinus named himself Proteus in imitation of Homer's shape-changing and prophetic sea-god, as if claiming divine status for himself, as Lucian reminds us repeatedly within his account.<sup>68</sup> In

Lucian's hands, however, the image comes to have less complimentary effects. Menelaus, in *Odyssey* 4, following the instructions of Proteus' daughter, holds on to the god as he changes himself into many different forms, until finally Proteus' repertoire is exhausted and he reveals what Menelaus has come to demand. Lucian, similarly, holds on to Peregrinus through all of his different incarnations, until finally the underlying truth of his identity is revealed, except that in Peregrinus' case that true image is very much less flattering.

Perhaps we are to imagine that it is only the narrator's own greater mastery of Peregrinean skills of trickery which allows him to unmask the impostor, just as he is able to detect and unmask the fraudulent prophet Alexander, according to his own account, because of his own greater control over the skills on which Alexander relies.<sup>69</sup> That possibility is made more likely by the fact that the imagery of shape-changing and disguise is also applicable to Lucian himself – both in this incarnation as narrator and in the other works of Lucian the author – in a variety of ways.<sup>70</sup> I have suggested already that Lucian in other works matches Peregrinus' refashionings by his own strategy of inhabiting a range of different masks within his own texts, and that the anonymous respondent to Theagenes in Elis fits in with that pattern.<sup>71</sup> He also takes on a great range of different philosophical viewpoints in his work, using a Cynic voice perhaps most often of all.<sup>72</sup> The eclectic Cynic Demonax, discussed above, is one of the figures he links himself with most strongly.<sup>73</sup> Lucian thus risks association with Peregrinus through their shared strategy of switching between different philosophical viewpoints. And yet he distances himself from that model, partly – in the *Demonax* – by implying a contrast between Peregrinus and Demonax, and by his own association with the latter, casting Peregrinus' shape-changing as an absurd perversion of his own more valuable philosophical selectiveness.

There are times, then, when Lucian – both as narrator and author – seems to be suggesting a clear separation between himself and his subject, despite superficial resemblances, because of the crucial contrast between Peregrinus' self-advertising charlatanism and his own integrity and lack of interest in worldly glory. I have also suggested, however, that the text constantly makes such a separation difficult to maintain. It is hard to avoid the impression that the difference between them is one of competence, not of morality; that the important distinction between them lies not in their different motives, but simply in the fact that Lucian himself is *better* at manipulating perceptions than his rival is. Certainly the narrator's retiring self-presentation is (deliberately?) unconvincing. He presents the *Peregrinus* as a private letter to his friend Kronios, as if he is keen to suggest that he has no interest in public opinion, or in debating Peregrinus' reputation openly. However, the text also exposes the disingenuousness of that claim as soon as any reader



other than Kronios begins to read it. The very fact that we are reading it implies that it is not as private as it purports to be. In many ways, Lucian is an Odyssean figure, flaunting his own control over the narrative, and maintaining a cunning anonymity in a way which allows him to survive beyond the death of Peregrinus, to the end of the story.<sup>74</sup> Peregrinus seems to have been worshipped as a cult figure after his death, an outcome which Lucian pretends to anticipate, representing his own after-the-event knowledge as prophetic. Lucian subverts the immortality which that cult implies, replacing it with a very different, and less flattering, kind of immortality for Peregrinus, determined by his own narrative priorities. He revels in his own ability to manipulate Peregrinus' reputation, and his own. Unlike Peregrinus, who (as we hear in 42), is not even able to profit from his notoriety, Lucian himself is alive to enjoy his glory. He can recreate himself, and his rivals, repeatedly, as often as he wishes, in his speech and in his writing.

It is tempting to sidestep the disturbing implications of Lucian's cunning self-representation by assuming that we, at least, are not subject to his deception. However, even that consolation is hard to maintain, and there are repeated hints that Lucian's readers risk being just as much under his spell as the ignorant men he mocks. The description of Lucian's fabrications after the suicide is a good example. In 39, he explains that he told the true story to men of taste, and deceived only those who looked stupid. In 40, he then comes across the gossiping old man whose claims I discussed in the previous section.

When I had returned to the festival I met a grey-haired man who looked trustworthy, to judge by his face, and by his beard and his general air of respectability.<sup>75</sup>

The old man is reliable and dignified on the surface, but turns out to be just as gullible and incompetently deceptive as the other men Lucian has criticized. Is the old man an image for Peregrinus, who hides his disreputable aims beneath a mask of respectability? Or does Lucian include him here to warn us that the honesty he had proclaimed towards men of taste in 39 (and, implicitly, towards his readers) may not be what it seems? Why should he tell the truth to anyone, us included, if men who look reliable turn out to be no better than the worst of the gossiping bystanders? And if that is the case, could the old man even be an image for Lucian himself (as far as we can locate him at all), who, like Peregrinus, hides deep-rooted manipulations of the truth beneath a trustworthy facade?

I have suggested, then, that Lucian's text is largely dedicated to exposure of Peregrinus' theatrical deceptions, and that he achieves that effect in part by the technique of linking Peregrinus' biography with the traditions of Christian

life-telling. That effect is compromised, however, by the way in which he flirts – in his narratorial voice – with an association between those deceptive forms and his own narrative techniques, which at times even allows a note of admiration for Peregrinus' self-fashioning to creep through. Ultimately, Lucian's scorn for Peregrinus is not about his fraudulence, but about his incompetent application of that fraudulence, which can never come close, he suggests, to the brilliance of his own biographical and autobiographical control. Lucian decries love of glory and the exploitation of gullibility while indulging in it, all the time daring us to side with Peregrinus and his stupid followers in order to accuse him of such indulgence. He demands our collusion in his almost irresistible mockery of Peregrinus. And yet at the same time the authority of the narrator's voice is questionable. We are continually prompted to suspect that the presiding genius of the work may himself be beyond capture, always receding behind new layers of deceptive and dubious self-dramatization.

## V

This chapter has been centred around two main arguments. First, I have suggested that the material Lucian presents in his description of Peregrinus' final hours is closely in dialogue with the Gospel narratives of the crucifixion, in a way which at least some of his contemporary readers might have sensed, prompted perhaps by more explicit references to Christian practice and Christian biography elsewhere in the text, although the degree of Lucian's own knowledge of these things is hard to judge given the deliberate impression of indiscriminate eclecticism with which the work is imbued. I have argued that these fleeting intertexts with Christian narrative traditions enhance the impression of Peregrinus' fleeting association with a wide and inconsistently applied range of biographical paradigms. Through that deliberately jumbled mixture Lucian represents biographical writing and autobiographical self-presentation, Christian and otherwise, as processes which are always open to opportunistic manipulation, albeit manipulation whose effects may be hard to control.

Whether that conclusion has implications for our understanding of the use of Christian narrative material by other non-Christian authors is less clear. There are many texts from this period which contain what look like 'Christian' motifs. Moreover, some non-Christian writing, like the work of Celsus, shares the preoccupation with Christian theatricality and deception which we find in the *Peregrinus*. However, that evidence on its own is not enough to prove a widespread knowledge of the Gospels or a widespread association of Christian narrative traditions with connotations of biographical trickery, not least because in other cases the thematic significance of these 'gospel motifs' does not obviously match those patterns. The *Peregrinus*



may in fact be unusual in the depth of its engagement with Christian storytelling. It seems to me that progress can be made in uncovering the complex contours of non-Christian attitudes to Christian narrative only by paying close attention to the themes and agendas which inform the texts in which these motifs are found, as I have tried to do here for the *Peregrinus*.

My second point is that Lucian weaves his own self-presentation in with the scathing biography of his subject, in a way which makes his criticism of Peregrinus far from straightforward. In doing so, he exposes, once again, the theatricality of all self-presentation, and satirizes, but also exploits, the reliance on role models which is central to so much of the rhetorical self-promotion and biographical writing of the ancient world. He represents himself – through his narratorial voice, whose own authenticity and authority are never quite guaranteed – as someone who has very far outdone Peregrinus' opportunistic and parasitic self-fashioning, and Jesus' (as Lucian represents it) slightly less incompetent version of that. He revels in the possibility that he may have even us, his readers, under his control, hinting at the enormity of his own manipulation of the truth without ever giving us enough evidence to accuse him of it. In that sense, Lucian, for one, represents Christian biographical tradition, like the other traditions on which Peregrinus has drawn in his life and his death, not as an alien narrative form of which he happens to be aware, but rather as something familiar, as another version of the much larger system of fictionalization and self-fictionalization over which he repeatedly and ironically proclaims his mastery.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful especially to Tim Whitmarsh and Alice Weeks for comments on recent drafts of this article; and to James Warren and Lucy Grig for discussion of a much earlier version.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> On the date of Peregrinus' death, see Jones 1986, 124–5, esp. n. 34.

<sup>2</sup> I hope it will be clear in everything that follows that my discussion of Peregrinus and his followers is intended primarily as a discussion of Lucian's representation of them, not of the historical reality lying behind that representation, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>3</sup> See Edwards 1997, 230–31 on the title βίος in this period, with a number of examples, although he notes that the word was much less common as a generic marker of biographical writing in this period than it was in late antiquity.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Theagenes (who later seems to have preached Peregrinus' virtues in Rome) eulogizes Peregrinus in *Peregrinus* 4–6, comparing him with an absurdly extravagant range of philosophical and even divine figures; see Jones 1986, 131 on Theagenes, and on the *Apologies of Peregrinus* which were written after Peregrinus' death (whether

by Theagenes or others is not clear).

<sup>5</sup> e.g. see Marcus 1994, 273–4.

<sup>6</sup> Hägg and Rousseau (eds.) 2000, 2–5 discuss the way in which a spoken panegyric involves enhancement of the speaker's reputation as well as eulogy of its subject. They take written biography and panegyric as separate (though related) genres. They also suggest that biography is paradoxically even more likely than panegyric to involve authorial self-projection, and distortion of the truth, because the author's own presence is more easily disguised: '...without our noticing it, the biographical subject often merges with the biographer's own persona and agenda into one ideal whole...' (3).

<sup>7</sup> e.g. see Branham 1989, e.g. 209–10 on the common Lucianic strategy of 'ironic impersonation of a didactic voice' (210). That quotation comes from his concluding remarks on the *Alexander*, a text which has a great deal in common with the *Peregrinus*, in the sense that both works are dedicated to the exposure of a fraudulent philosopher, and both of them draw similar links between manipulative author and manipulative subject; for that point see Clay 1992, 3430–8 and (especially) 3445–8, who provides the best analysis of the complexities of Lucian's self-representation in the *Peregrinus*; by contrast, Branham 1989, 193–5 underestimates the extent to which the *Peregrinus*, like the *Alexander*, problematizes the character of its narrator, and parodies traditional biographical forms in the process. On Lucian's role-playing, see also Whitmarsh 2001, 247–94; Saïd 1993.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. at *Peregrinus* 13, discussed further below.

<sup>9</sup> e.g., see Clay 1992, 3437, n. 74; Baldwin 1973, 97–103.

<sup>10</sup> See Bowersock 1994, esp. 115–16 on the *Peregrinus*.

<sup>11</sup> e.g., see Demandt 1997, esp. 742–3.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. in his concluding remarks (ibid. p. 143) he suggests that '[t]he stories of Jesus inspired the polytheists to create a wholly new genre that we might call romantic scripture'; this may well be right (although it may be only a part of the story), but it still leaves open the challenge of explaining what was at stake within such manipulations of Christian material, taken both individually and collectively.

<sup>13</sup> Most forcefully Jones 1993.

<sup>14</sup> e.g., see Bowersock 1994, esp. 2–3 on Celsus' criticism of Christian mendacity; Bowersock compares Celsus' preoccupations with Lucian's obsessive interest in the fictionality of all ostensibly reliable narrative; that comparison seems especially important in the context of Lucian's explicit engagement with Christian ideas in the *Peregrinus*. It has sometimes been argued (e.g. by Baldwin 1973, 29–30, following the claims of the scholiast to Lucian's *Alexander*) that the Celsus against whom Origen defended Christian belief is the Celsus to whom Lucian addressed his *Alexander* (another work which juxtaposes a fraudulent philosopher with Christians, who are portrayed as surprisingly right-minded by comparison); for an opposing argument see Chadwick (ed.) 1953, xxiv–xxvi.

<sup>15</sup> As Hinds 1998, and many others, have recently pointed out for a great range of other texts and genres.

<sup>16</sup> However, see Jones 1986, 122 and Betz 1959 on signs of surprisingly detailed knowledge of early Christian practice within the first half of the work; they contradict Bagnani 1955, who over-emphasizes Lucian's ignorance of Christianity.

<sup>17</sup> Edwards 1989. Jones 1986, 123 (following Schwartz 1963, 98 and others) notes the fact that Peregrinus is described wearing Cynic clothes while he was still a Christian (in



*Peregrinus* 15), and explains this anomaly by the suggestion that Lucian has twisted the order of events, delaying his account of Peregrinus' apostasy 'in order to give an unflattering motive for...Peregrinus' quarrel with his home city'. The 'anomaly' might equally be explained as a deliberately planted sign of Peregrinus' disrespect for philosophical boundaries; those two explanations seem entirely compatible with each other.

<sup>18</sup> See Jones 1986, 130–2 for a good overview, with the observation that 'contemporary references to Peregrinus almost always have a combative tone, as if their authors were touching on a sensitive topic' (131).

<sup>19</sup> e.g. see Branham 1996, 19 for an overview of that ambivalent relationship; Downing 1993 and 1992, who argues for Cynicism as a crucial influence on early Christianity; Dorival 1993, who charts (mainly but not exclusively critical) attitudes towards Cynicism in the writing of the Church Fathers; cf. Goulet-Cazé 1990, 2806–18 on Cynicism's similar relations of mutual borrowing and resistance with other philosophical schools.

<sup>20</sup> See the essay of John Moles in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> e.g., see Davies 1999, esp. 1 on distinctive Christian attitudes: '...it was on matters to do with death that "Christianity" successfully defined an identity for itself that was both distinctive and, at the same time, sufficiently eclectic as to enable it to relate to aspects of some of the other religious cultures within which it found itself'.

<sup>22</sup> See Droge and Tabor 1992, 23–6; van Hooff 1990, 188–9.

<sup>23</sup> See Cooper 1999, 531–6; Droge and Tabor 1992, 29–39; van Hooff 1990, 189–91.

<sup>24</sup> See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 6.76–7.

<sup>25</sup> On Peregrinus' perversion of respectable Cynicism, see Branham 1996, 17, n. 56; Niehues-Pröbsting 1979, 201–12. Hornsby 1933, discusses Peregrinus' misapplication of Cynic doctrine, but also collects evidence which suggests that some elements of his death (for example its mystical overtones, and the attribution of divine status to Peregrinus) may have been more widely paralleled within Cynic tradition than at first sight seems likely.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper 1999, 537; cf. Droge and Tabor 1992, 26–9; van Hooff 1990, 189.

<sup>27</sup> ...ἐκώκυε μετὰ τῶν γυναικῶν ὁ θαυμαστός καὶ θανάτου κρείττων εἶναι δοκῶν. Similarly, in 44, Lucian describes Peregrinus' illness several days before the suicide, and his terror at the prospect of dying without achieving the notoriety he had planned.

<sup>28</sup> e.g. see Epicurus *Ep. Men.* 128; Diogenes Laertius 9.45, on Democritus; cf. 9.68 on Pyrrho's calm during a storm at sea; I am grateful to James Warren for this point.

<sup>29</sup> See Cooper 1999, 520–6; Droge and Tabor 1992, 20–2; van Hooff 1990, 191–2.

<sup>30</sup> See Cooper 1999 537–40; Droge and Tabor 1992, 39–42; van Hooff 1990, 192–3.

<sup>31</sup> *Phaedo* 61c–62c, discussed by Cooper 1999, 520–3; Droge and Tabor 1992, 20–2.

<sup>32</sup> Lucian's addressee, Kronios, was probably a Platonist himself (see Jones 1986, 20); any Socratic pretensions Peregrinus and his followers may have had must have seemed particularly absurd to a reader who was aware of that.

<sup>33</sup> On these Brahman suicides, see van Hooff 1990, 37–8, with reference to Strabo 15.1.73 and Cassius Dio 54.9.10.

<sup>34</sup> The same contrast is implied at *Runaways* 6–7.

<sup>35</sup> Jones 1993, 314 underestimates this.

<sup>36</sup> e.g. see Bowersock 1995, 59–74; Droge and Tabor 1992; van Hooff 1990, 193–7.

<sup>37</sup> See Bowersock 1995, 63–4 on Stoic influences on Tertullian's views about suicide;

cf. Downing 1993, 295–7, who discusses Cynic influences on Tertullian's work more broadly.

<sup>38</sup> e.g. see Perkins 1995, 20–2, who argues that 'if Christianity was known at all, it was known for its adherents' attitude toward death and suffering' (20), using the *Peregrinus* as one of her main illustrations of that.

<sup>39</sup> πεπείκασι γὰρ αὐτοὺς οἱ κακοδαίμονες τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἀθάνατοι ἔσσεσθαι καὶ βιώσεσθαι τὸν αἰὲ χρόνον, παρ' ὃ καὶ καταφρονοῦσιν τοῦ θανάτου καὶ ἐκόντες αὐτοὺς ἐπιτιθέσθαι οἱ πολλοί.

<sup>40</sup> Empedocles' suicide – committed by jumping into the crater of Mount Etna – is another important model for Peregrinus, according to Lucian's account, and is mentioned in *Peregrinus* 1 and 4; in the first of those passages Lucian reminds us that Empedocles (unlike Peregrinus) killed himself without anyone watching. See also Pack 1946 on the possibility that Peregrinus and his followers were influenced by 'contemporary speculation on the ascent of the soul' from a Neoplatonic and Pythagorean perspective; neither of these schools, however, sanctioned suicide as a direct means of achieving that ascent, as I have already suggested.

<sup>41</sup> Schwartz 1963, 61–7 suggests that the sensationalism of public opinion is Lucian's main target in this work, and that his unfair distortions of Peregrinus' reputation are a side-effect of that project (the latter point seems to me to be an overstatement).

<sup>42</sup> e.g., see Anderson 1994, 108–12.

<sup>43</sup> On the Cynicism of Demonax, see Clay 1992, 3425–9; Branham 1989, 57–63.

<sup>44</sup> Peregrinus makes an appearance in *Demonax* 21, criticizing Demonax for laughing too much and for not being dog-like enough, in other words not being enough of a Cynic. Demonax rejects that criticism and rebukes Peregrinus in turn for being inhuman; that response may imply that Peregrinus is wearing his Cynic mask too uncompromisingly, in line with the inflexible nature of his role-playing in the *Peregrinus*; cf. Branham 1989, 62–3 for the point that Demonax is criticizing Peregrinus here for his lack of humour.

<sup>45</sup> Lucian praises Demonax's eclecticism explicitly in *Demonax* 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Demonax* 65–7.

<sup>47</sup> Jones 1993, expanding on some aspects of his reading in Jones 1986, 117–32.

<sup>48</sup> e.g., see Jones 1993, 315, concluding his analysis of *Peregrinus* 40 (discussed further below), where Lucian invents the story that Peregrinus appeared after death wearing an olive crown: 'La couronne de Pérégérinus héroïque s'explique donc par une tradition purement grecque'.

<sup>49</sup> Eclecticism which Jones himself draws attention to: see Jones 1993, 316.

<sup>50</sup> οὐκ εἰδώς ὁ ἄθλιος ὅτι καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ἀπαγομένους ἢ ὑπὸ τοῦ δημίου ἐχομένοις πολλῶ πλείους ἔπονται.

<sup>51</sup> τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ἀνασκοπολιθέντα.

<sup>52</sup> τὸν...ἀνεσκοπολιζόμενον ἐκείνον σοφιστήν.

<sup>53</sup> ὅμοιον ὥς εἴ τις ἐπὶ σταυρὸν ἀναβήσεται μέλλον τὸ ἐν τῷ δακτύλῳ πρόσπταισμα θεραπεύει.

<sup>54</sup> e.g., see Bowersock 1994, 74–5, on Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.24.

<sup>55</sup> See Jones 1993, 311–12 on Lucian's references to Brahmanic practice, which may, he suggests, reflect real-life eastern influences on Peregrinus.

<sup>56</sup> Δαίμονες μητρῷοι καὶ πατρῷοι, δέξασθαι με εὐμενεῖς. ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἐπήδησεν ἐς τὸ πῦρ.

<sup>57</sup> καὶ φωνήσας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεμαι τὸ



πνευμά μου. τοῦτο δὲ εἰπὼν ἐξέπνευσεν.

<sup>58</sup> Jones 1986, 128.

<sup>59</sup> εἰ μὲν οὖν ἴδοιμί τινα χαρίεντα, ψιλὰ ἂν ὥσπερ σοὶ τὰ πραχθέντα διηγούμην, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς βλάκας καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀκρόασιν κεχηνότας ἐτραγώδουν τι παρ' ἑμαντοῦ, ὡς ἐπειδὴ ἀνήφθη μὲν ἡ πυρά, ἐνέβαλεν δὲ φέρων ἑαυτὸν ὁ Πρωτεύς, σεισμοῦ πρότερον μεγάλου γενομένου σὺν μυκηθμῷ τῆς γῆς, γῆψ ἀναπτάμενος ἐκ μέσης τῆς φλογὸς οἴχοιτο ἐς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνθρωπιστὶ μεγάλην τῇ φωνῇ λέγων, "Ἐλιπον γὰρ, βαίνω δ' ἐς Ὀλυμπον.

<sup>60</sup> καὶ ὡς μετὰ τὸ καυθῆναι θεάσαιο αὐτὸν ἐν λευκῇ ἐσθῆτι μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν, καὶ νῦν ἀπολίποι περιπατοῦντα φαιδρὸν ἐν τῇ ἐπαφῶνῳ στοᾷ κοτίνῳ τε ἐσπεμμένον.

<sup>61</sup> Jones 1993, 314–15.

<sup>62</sup> For brief acknowledgement of the significance of the Christian intertexts within this part of the narrative, see Clay 1992, 3437 (with reference to Matthew 28.3 and Luke 24.4, which parallel the detail of Peregrinus' white clothing); cf. Bowersock 1994, 115–16.

<sup>63</sup> καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη ἀπ' ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐσειόθη, καὶ αἱ πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν, καὶ τὰ μνημεῖα ἀνέωχθησαν καὶ πολλὰ σώματα τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἁγίων ἠγέρθησαν· καὶ ἐξεληθόντες ἐκ τῶν μνημείων μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν, καὶ ἐξεφανίσθησαν πολλοῖς.

<sup>64</sup> For examples other than those discussed in the main text, see *Peregrinus* 15 and 36; cf. Clay 1992, 3415–17.

<sup>65</sup> Ἡ δὲ πᾶσα τοῦ πράγματος διασκευὴ τοιαύτη ἦν. τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν οἶσθα οἷός τε ἦν καὶ ἡλικία ἐτραγώδει παρ' ὅλον τὸν βίον, ὑπὲρ τὸν Σοφοκλέα καὶ τὸν Αἰσχύλον.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Peregrinus* 37, where Lucian imagines his friend laughing at the last act of the play (τὴν καταστροφὴν τοῦ δράματος); he is deliberately unclear about whether the play is Peregrinus' or his own; cf. Whitmarsh 2001, 247–94 (esp. 254–65) on Lucian's preoccupation with the imagery of theatre and spectacle elsewhere in his work.

<sup>67</sup> ἀλλ' ὀλίγου δεῖν ὑπὸ τῶν Κυνικῶν ἐγὼ σοὶ διεσπᾶσθην ὥσπερ ὁ Ἀκταίων ὑπὸ τῶν κυνῶν ἢ ὁ ἀνειμένος αὐτοῦ ὁ Πενθεὺς ὑπὸ τῶν Μαινάδων.

<sup>68</sup> Philostratus *VA* 1.4 reports a similar story that Apollonius of Tyana was a reincarnation of Proteus; that may be another sign that Lucian wishes to represent Peregrinus as someone who perverts images which in other contexts could have more positive connotations; and it may even be a sign of the importance of Apollonius as yet another role model for the historical Peregrinus, or at least a sign that Lucian is keen to suggest similarities between them.

<sup>69</sup> On the *Alexander*, see Branham 1989, 181–210.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Whitmarsh 2001, 122–8, amongst many others, on Lucian's preoccupation with the theme of cultural hybridity.

<sup>71</sup> See Jones 1986, 118–19.

<sup>72</sup> See Branham, 1996, 16–19.

<sup>73</sup> See Jones 1986, 98 on Demonax as a model for Lucian.

<sup>74</sup> The Odyssean parallel is not one which the text marks in many places. However, the phrase μυρίας τροπὰς τραπόμενος ('having turned thousands of turns', 'having made thousands of changes'), applied to Peregrinus in the opening lines of the work (*Peregrinus* 1), echoes the Odyssean epithet πολύτροπος ('versatile', 'much-travelled'), with the implication that Peregrinus has attempted, with absurd extravagance, to imitate and surpass Odyssean multi-facetedness.

<sup>75</sup> ἀπελθὼν δὲ ἐς τὴν πανήγυριν ἐπέστην τινὶ πολὺν ἀνδρὶ καὶ νῆ τὸν Δί' ἀξιόπιστον τὸ πρόσωπον ἐπὶ τῷ πώγωνι καὶ τῇ λοιπῇ σεμνότητι.

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## BREAKING THE BOUNDS: WRITING ABOUT JULIUS CAESAR

Christopher Pelling

### I. Introductory: person and genre

Caesar was a bounder: a person who operated on, and broke, the boundaries of his world. He broke through the boundaries of the physical world, bridging the Rhine, crossing the Ocean to get to Britain and 'advancing Rome's empire outside the human world'.<sup>1</sup> He broke through the more figurative bounds as well, changing the rules of Roman public life: if Sulla had not understood the political ABC,<sup>2</sup> Caesar changed it to make a language all his own. And at the end he was pressing on the bounds of mortality itself.

This paper will explore the way in which this 'boundary-breaking' affects not only Caesar the historical figure, but also the people who came to write about him. The relevant boundaries now will be those of genre. Just as the historical Caesar changed the rules of his world, so writing about Caesar forces the writer to change the rules as well: so it is no surprise that generic questions frequently become so difficult when we look at Caesar-literature. If you are writing history, you find yourself having to write biography instead; if you are writing biography, you find yourself writing history. Something like that may already be true of his own *commentarii*. Are they really, in any sense at all, only a draft for later, 'proper' historians to come to and elaborate? Or are they already playing for the verdict that Cicero and Hirtius swiftly give them, that they take away rather than offer an opportunity to later writers (*Brut.* 262, Hirt. *B.G.* 8 proem 5)?<sup>3</sup> Do Caesar's acts themselves have a 'finish' – so complete, so polished, so definitive – such that Caesar's own writing about them is equally a sort of last word, with the rhetorical simplicity to give a simple message, 'job done, nothing more to say'? Then there is Velleius; and for Velleius it is Caesar's consulship which 'grabs the writer and, eager though he may be to hurry on, forces him to delay and to talk about him' ('scribenti manum inicit et quamlibet festinantem in se morari cogit', 2.41.1); this is what changes<sup>4</sup> these 'hurrying', summary *Historiae* into a sequence of 'Caesarian', 'Augustan', and 'Tiberian' narratives.<sup>5</sup>