

MOTIFS AND TECHNIQUES IN LUCIAN'S *DE PARASITO*

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THE *περὶ παρασίτου* OCCUPIES A CURIOUS POSITION on the fringe of the *Corpus Lucianicum*; it is felt to be an eccentric work on a *recherché* subject in an uncharacteristic style. The alleged differences from Lucianic usage listed by J. Bieler¹ have now been adequately refuted,² and most scholars would assume that any such departures are due to parody of Plato's *Gorgias*.³ But Harmon found the humour of this piece un-Lucianic (235), and Helm⁴ drew attention to the lack of Lucianic themes and the unusually articulated divisions of the argument. Lucian was certainly not the only rhetorical writer to produce imitations of Plato⁵ or interest himself in parasites,⁶ nor did he have a monopoly of Comic Dialogue, as the occasional essays by Dio or Plutarch⁷ serve to show; it is still worthwhile to answer the objections of Harmon and Helm in full, by showing that this dialogue does in fact illustrate Lucian's characteristic methods of applying his usual motifs and dialogue-structure to a *recondite* subject.

(a) *Lucianic Themes*

Like *de Dea Syria*, *de Parasito* fills a gap in Lucian's repertoire. *DS* shows what he could achieve by way of extended parody of a favourite author. It could be argued that *Hermotimus* was Lucian's way of writing a corresponding parody on Plato—a full-scale dialogue to convert a dupe from philosophy; but this pastiche is overloaded and serious. *De Parasito* would offer us a humorous counterpart, where the author uses Platonic form and mannerisms at considerable length to condemn philosophy. The work also fits Lucian's description of Satiric Dialogue itself in

¹The following are cited by author's name: J. Bieler, *Ueber die Echtheit des Lucianischen Dialogs de Parasito* (Progr. Hildesheim 1890); J. Bompaigne, *Lucien écrivain* (Paris 1958); J. Hall, *Lucian's Satire* (diss. Cambridge 1967); A. M. Harmon, *Lucian* (London 1927 [Loeb]); R. Helm, *Lukian und Menipp* (Leipzig 1906); and my *Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic* (Leiden 1976 [*Mnemosyne* Supp. 41]).

²By Hall 262–265.

³See R. Hirzel, *Der Dialog* (Leipzig 1895) 2.289 f.; A. Giese, *De parasiti persona capita selecta* (diss. Kiel 1908) 24; Bompaigne 607 f.; for the (convergent) parody of rhetorical treatises, K. Münscher, *Buῖb* 149 (1910) 64 ff.; J. Mesk, *BPhW* 34 (1914) 157 ff.

⁴Helm 357–364 (recanting the views in *NJPP* 9 [1902] 197 n. 2) and *RE* 13.2 (1927) 1753 f.

⁵For literary Platonizing in the second sophistic period, see now P. de Lacy, "Plato and the Intellectual Life of the Second Century A.D.," in *Approaches to the Second Sophistic*, ed. G. W. Bowersock (University Park, Pa. 1974) 4–10.

⁶Athanasius 6.234–248.

⁷For Dio of Prusa's *Or.* 2 and Plutarch's *Gryllus* (*Mor.* 985d ff.), see Anderson 167–173.

Prom. es 6. Elsewhere Lucian tends to use the two types of dialogue technique separately: rapid cross-examination in *Vit. Auct.*, *Bis Acc.* 22; more extended Platonic speeches elsewhere. The *de Parasito* would have given him an opportunity to combine them as Plato himself normally did.

Helm argued that there are too few cross-references between *Paras.* and the rest of the *Corpus* (361 ff.), but his list is very far from complete. The author makes much of the paradox that philosophers and rhetoricians are incompetent parasites, and so demonstrates in theory what Lucian frequently presents in practice: in *Timon* the rhetorician Demeas and the philosopher Thrasyclus both join the *κόλακες* and are beaten off (49 ff., 54 ff.); Hetoemocles writes a long *ἐσχηματισμένη* letter which reveals that he is both parasite and philosopher (*Conv.* 22–27), and makes a fool of himself in the process; and Lucian offers the same material once more in *Merc. Cond.* to warn the philosopher how difficult it is to make a living at the rich man's table (cf. *Paras.* 31 ff.). The contacts with *Gallus* are prominent: the parasite enjoys many of the same advantages as Lucian's pauper Micyllus; he has no worries in wartime (*Paras.* 49, *Gall.* 21); no material cares or desires (*Paras.* 54, *Gall.* 21 ff., 26); and no need to be afraid of burglary (*Paras.* 55, cf. *Gall.* 22). Thus far the stock material of mock-encomium, but both Simon and Micyllus also show the same individual touch with their ecstatic quotations about dinners (*Paras.* 10) or gold (*Gall.* 7, 14), and both dialogues contain subtle presentations of the death of Patroclus: in *Paras.* 46 he is so robust a parasite that it takes a god and two men to kill him; in *Gall.* 17 the cock, transmigrated from Euphorbus, tries to pretend that it was all his own work!

But the dialogue can also be linked with a much wider range of Lucian's work:

- 2: Simon is more devoted to his profession than Phidias to his Zeus. Cf. *Somnium* 9, 18; Paideia claims to produce Demosthenes when sculpture can only produce Phidias.
- 3: The parasite makes a pretence of speaking extempore, cf. *Nigr.* 10.
- 4: Parody of Stoic jargon, cf. *Vit. Auct.* 22–25.
The parasite has to distinguish between the true and the counterfeit, like the philosopher in *Herm.* 68.
- 8: The steersman simile, *Ἰ. Trag.* 46, cf. *Navig.* 9 (Bompaire 440).
- 10: Odysseus changes his philosophy from Stoic to Epicurean when he lives with Calypso. Lucian makes fun of Dionysius' volte-face in the same direction, *Bis. Acc.* 19 ff. (cf. Diogenes, *VH* 2.18); and cf. Odysseus' changing his mind and wanting to escape from Penelope to Calypso (*VH* 2.36).
- 11: Epicurus wastes time on irrelevant physics, cf. *Icar.* 8.
- 13: Parasitic, unlike philosophy, can be learned without uphill work, cf. *Herm.* 3; *Rh. Pr.* 8, 14.
- 22: Friendship as *τὸ θρυλούμενον τοῦτο τῆς φιλίας ὄνομα*, cf. *Toxaris passim*.
- 31: Philosophers love Parasitic even to this day: Lucian has set *Merc. Cond.* as contemporary satire of philosophic spongers (cf. in particular *Merc. Cond.* 31).

- 34: Plato as parasite in Sicily, cf. *Hermotimus* 34.
 40: The true test is to strip to the skin, cf. *Anach.* 24 (athletes); *Katapl.* 24, *D. Mort.* 10.8 (philosophers).
 43: Most philosophers have never been at the front, nor has the military historian, *Hist.* 29; cf. Socrates, *VH* 2.23 (Helm).
 50: The philosopher's corpse on the field is puny compared to the parasite's, cf. *Anach.* 36, where the athlete's performance is compared to the Scythians; and *Pisc.* 1, where Aristippus and Epicurus relax their efforts in the attack on Parrhesiades.
 51: ἐν συμποσίῳ φιλόσοφος ... οἶον ἐν βαλαναίῳ κύνων: for the proverb, cf. *Adv. Ind.* 5 (Helm).
 52: For the paid philosophic tutor, cf. *Merc. Cond.* 23 (Helm 363 n. 1).
 57: A new hostile view of Socrates' death, cf. *D. Mort.* 21.
 58: Wealth is only relative, cf. *Saturn.* 35, *Prom. Cauc.* 15.

Helm condemned *Paras.* as spurious before he discussed *de Saltatione*,⁸ and so lost the opportunity to make a comparison. The tone and literary quality of the two works could scarcely be further apart, but there are enough similarities in the actual material to suggest a connection: a single author could have worked out a skilful parody and a perfunctory encomium from the same stock. Both parasite and dancer have Meriones as their Homeric "authority" (47/*Salt.* 8), and can hold their own against Phidias (2/*Salt.* 35); they are also less encumbered than other artists (17/*Salt.* 27). The same paradoxes are also pressed: both are arts (8/*Salt. passim*), with pleasure as an end (9/*Salt.* 71) and Platonic "sanction" (5/*Salt.* 34). They are superior to the established arts: Parasitic surpasses philosophy and rhetoric, while dancing draws on both as part of a more complex synthesis of arts (27/*Salt.* 35); and dancing is preferable to tragedy and comedy (*Salt.* 26 ff.). Both fulfil philosophic tenets (11 f./*Salt.* 70) and enjoy universal recognition: dancing is world-wide (*Salt.* 17 ff.), while parasitic has no regional variation (30). Both are better than athletics (8/*Salt.* 71) and are associated with superb physique (50/*Salt.* 75); and they are useful to society (51/*Salt.* 64) even in war (40 f./*Salt.* 10, 18). Other parallels are less useful. Sinko⁹ compares the "conversion" scene at the end of both dialogues: but Lycinus wins over Crates in an entirely conventional way (*Salt.* 85), whereas Tychiades decides to take up Parasitic—at the parasite Simon's own expense (*Paras.* 61), so that once more the latter emerges as a much more sophisticated dialogue. Hall links *de Salt.* with *Paras.*, *Phalaris*, and *Musc. Enc.* (19), but the four ἄδοξα are too dissimilar to make the grouping worthwhile. There is, how-

⁸I accept this work as genuine, in company with most scholars following D. S. Robertson, "The Authenticity and Date of Lucian's *de Saltatione*," in *Essays and Studies presented to William Ridgeway* (Cambridge 1913) 181–185 (despite Bompaigne 356 f.; the subject may be un-Hellenic, but the material is in fact thoroughly "classicising"). See Anderson, "Lucian and the Authorship of *de Saltatione*," *GRBS* 18 (1977) 275–286.

⁹*Symbolae Chronologicae ad Scripta Luciani et Plutarchi* (Cracow 1947) 47.

ever, an additional point of contact between *Musc. Enc.* and *Paras.*: the fly is itself portrayed as a parasite (*Musc. Enc.* 4); and it takes precedence over kings at table (8), as the parasite takes precedence over the rich (*Paras.* 59).

Not all the clichés which Lucian regards as Platonic "effects" are found in *Paras.* It is a surprise, for example, to find no appeals to friendship when Tychiades wants information from Simon;¹⁰ nor is there the usual comparison to the bite of a mad dog when he is finally converted, as in *Nigr.* 38 and *Philops.* 40, cf. *Herm.* 86. But it is possible that if Lucian is the author, he has set out to develop those features of Platonic dialogue too elaborate for use in his usual "Platonic" introductions. In the same way there is no hint of Lucian's favourite episode from Herodotus—the story of Croesus—in *DS.*

(b) "Lucianic" humour?

Thus far the material itself. But Harmon suggested that even the humour of this work has a different quality from Lucian's (235), and illustrates his case with 'Αριστοτέλης δὲ τῆς παρασιτικῆς ἤρξατο μόνον ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τεχνῶν (36). It would certainly have been rather more characteristic for Lucian to say that Aristippus had been a diligent parasite (cf. *Vit. Auct.* 12, *VH* 2.18, *Neky.* 13) than that Aristotle had not. In general Lucian has no interest in Peripatetic learning, but he does caricature its most superficial aspects (*Vit. Auct.* 26), and Alexander does condemn Aristotle as a κόλαξ at *D. Mort.* 13.5. Given that for the purposes of Simon's argument Aristotle has to be a failure of some sort, it is difficult to see how else the author could have manipulated the material.

Some of the humour does, however, have a subtle nuance, but this follows from the initial *ἔδοξον* by which the writer presents the philosopher through the eyes of a contemptible person. And this species of humour does certainly occur in Lucian: he presents philosophers in *Bis. Acc.* 11 through the eyes of Pan, so that the rustic musician sees their beards in terms of his own. Such a nuance is far removed from the usual level of Lucian's jokes about the philosopher's beard (*Merc. Cond.* 34; *Icar.* 29; *Philops.* 5; *J. Trag.* 16).

This novel presentation affects all the writer's illustrations. The cliché that philosophers disagree (*Paras.* 28) is bound to be different in the mouth of the parasite (compare Lucian's "normal" satire of this topic as voiced by Menippus in *Neky.* 4 f.). But there is just as great a difference between this latter passage and *Icar.* 20, where the same complaints come from the "*conscia Luna*;" or *Herm.* 14, where Lucian presents them as "serious" philosophical argument. Simon's attitude in *Paras.* 27 f. is that there are no Stoics or Epicureans to divide the unity of parasites. But this

¹⁰For Lucian's excessive use of this ornament, Bompaire 312.

is merely a normal topos of the *ἄδοξον*: compare *Gall.* 27, where the cock assures Micyllus that there are no informers or other immoral characters among animals! And in any case Lucian himself is capable of a wide range of humour: *Neky.* is far removed from *D. Mar.*, and the latter in turn from *Anacharsis* or *Toxaris*; and *DS*, thanks to the *ἑσχηματισμένη* presentation, has its own type of humour. We can allow Lucian the same degree of latitude here.

In one detail the dialogue does depart from Lucian's normal procedure: Simon quotes no fewer than seven lines of Homer at once, when Lucian normally allows himself only one or two at a time (*Paras.* 10).¹¹ He does depart from this limit on several occasions to indulge in Homeric pastiche (five lines, *J. Trag.* 1, *Charon* 22; six, *J. Trag.* 6, *Fugit.* 30), and each of these is carefully introduced as an exceptional event. Here the author has been no less careful: the parasite is so carried away by his "set text" that he recaps two snatches again, and justifies himself for doing so. Lucian quotes a tag from three lines after the end of the extract (*Od.* 9. 5–11/14) at *Merc. Cond.* 1 so that one expects him to know this passage. But there is another point here. In the midst of his attack on Homer, which Lucian has zealously exploited throughout his work, Plato quotes 9.8 ff. as despicable lines for the wisest of men to say (*Resp.* 490a–b). The parasite is obliged to retaliate by approving the passage and quoting it entire.

(c) *Structure*

Arguments based on structure can often help in determining the authenticity of works in the Lucianic *corpus*. Time and again he tends to fall back on a flexible outline within which to organise his satire: he is particularly fond of two introductory panels, followed by three main phases of argument, leading to a final exposure scene in which charlatans are undone. *Timon* is a particularly clear example, where Lucian's scheme converges to some extent with the shape of an Old Comedy (see Anderson 143 ff., 183). In the case of *de Parasito* there are some differences from this outline,¹² but they can readily be explained in terms of the author's model:

1: Simon turns out to be a practitioner of "Parasitic."	
2–3: Tychiades condemns his claim as absurd.	<i>Introduction</i> I, II
3–12: But Parasitic is an art and its end is pleasure.	<i>Argument</i> I
13–25: It is better than all the other arts put together;	II
26–57: – than philosophy and rhetoric in particular.	III
58–59: The parasite is a help to his patron,	
60–61: and the term itself is respectable.	
61: Therefore Tychiades will apprentice himself to Simon!	<i>Exposure-Scene</i>

¹¹Cf. F. W. Householder, *Literary quotation and allusion in Lucian* (diss. Columbia 1941) 70.

¹²Müller (*Eos* 32 [1930] 567) marks off three divisions but the second occupies forty-

In the context one can scarcely expect an elaborate exposure-scene of the type Lucian develops in *Timon* and *Piscator*. But within the limitations of Platonic dialogue the author has turned the tables on Simon. So far the latter has won every round with his absurd demonstrations; he applies the same glib solutions to two further questions (58 ff.), only to find that his false reasoning has brought him a parasite at his own expense! We are reminded of the final sentence of *Navigium*, where Lucian gives the argument a final twist, revealing that Lycinus' silly opponents are philosophers who should know better.

The last division of the main argument (26–57) is much longer than the other two, so that in itself it contains a version of Lucian's usual scheme—three separate sections, this time each a self-contained *synchysis*:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|
| 27–30: Philosophers have no art of their own. | } |
| 31–38: Most of them are parasites <i>manqué</i> . | |
| 39–50: They are inferior to parasites in war, | |
| 51: – and peace; | |
| 52–56: As in life, | |
| 57: – and death. | } |

Here the author has used demonstrative argument in the outer sections, but the middle section is in effect a comic interlude—an absurd battle where Simon's candidate is the unexpected winner. This is the layout which Lucian used in *Anacharsis*: the two sections of argument proper are separated by the Scythian's curious victory on the palaestra—with his dagger (*Anach.* 31–33)! Bompaire gives a formal analysis of *Paras.* 39 ff. under the customary topics of the encomia, but Lucian is well able to adjust such headings into line with any given design of his own.¹³ But would he have allowed the variation we find here, this “scheme within a scheme”? There is no difficulty if we regard it as part of the writer's studious imitation of the mannerisms of Plato's *Gorgias*. The linguistic idiom, especially the frequent pompous abstracts in *-ukós*, clearly points to this source; but the *Gorgias* also contains three progressively longer sections of argument:¹⁴

<i>Gorgias</i> : 449C–461B/461B–481B/482C–527C		
(12)	(20)	(45)
<i>Paras.</i> : 4–12 / 13–25 / 26–57		
(8)	(12)	(32)

four paragraphs and the third two! It is much easier to take these (58–59) closely with the similar question which follows them, as a concluding frame to balance the equally ludicrous introduction; they are not covered in Simon's own outline of the arguments to come (13).

¹³In *Prometheus* he uses the three counts of the argument; in *Navigium* the three day-dreams; in *Timon* and *Fugit*, three scenes in heaven/mid-air/earth.

¹⁴E. R. Dodds, *Commentary* (Oxford 1959) 3.

This arrangement would be consistent with Lucian's practice elsewhere: in *Timon* he mimics some of the features of Old Comic layout, but still retains his threefold division for the argument.¹⁵ Here he would be using his threefold argument to correspond to Plato's main section, but adding two shorter sections to correspond to Plato's preliminary demonstrations. In the first section he dwells on bogus terminology, as in some of the interviews of *Vit. Auct.* (3–6, 13 f.);¹⁶ in the second he assembles a motley collection of sophistic paradoxes, as in *Musc. Enc. passim*.

(d) *Purpose*

Scholars who accept *Paras.* still find it difficult to agree on what precisely Lucian intended to ridicule. Mesk (above, note 3) saw it as primarily an attack on rhetoric; Helm¹⁷ followed Wieland in taking it as an attack on philosophic dialogue as such; Hall prefers to emphasize the satire of disputes between philosophy and rhetoric. Bompaire tries to make Simon a parody of Socrates (609); but this seems less likely when he himself explicitly attacks Socrates (43). Even in *Philopseudes*, where Eucrates' name is similar to that of Socrates, and the dialogue scenery suggests *Phaedo* 60b, Lucian does not attempt to press the parallel very far. Hall recognised that Lucian might intend to parody more than one feature at a time, but maintains that he is not attacking Platonic dialogue on this occasion. But Simon fondly repeats a text which Plato has specifically condemned as the rallying-cry of Parasites, and the author has realigned the forces in the *Gorgias* in a ludicrous way: Socrates had classified Rhetoric and Cookery as parts of Flattery (463b) (against Philosophy); in effect Simon combines the praise of Flattery and Cookery against Rhetoric and Philosophy, using the same apparatus of dialogue. In so doing he makes fun of both the subject and the means. In *Pisc.* 7 Plato accuses Lycinus of precisely this technique: *παρ' ἡμῶν τὰ τοξεύματα, ὡς φῆς, λαβὼν καθ' ἡμῶν ἐτόξευες*, and Dialogue herself complains that she is being combined with discreditable company (*Bis. Acc.* 33): this was Lucian's opportunity to illustrate such a charge in the clearest possible way.

Two of the dialogues which most closely resemble *Paras.* can throw light here. Both *Gallus* and *Anacharsis* contain an element of *ἄδοξον*: in *Gall.* a cock turns out to be Pythagoras, has a glib command of rhetorical illustration, but can be caught out and is even forced to admit that he was once a parasite; in *Anach.* a Scythian turns up in a "Platonic" dialogue, is able to outmanoeuvre a philosopher, and "proves" that Greek culture is a sham. In *Paras.* Lucian has combined all these elements: the parasite is a

¹⁵*Timon* 11–19; 20–30; 34–40.

¹⁶See the commentary by Thérèse Beaupère, Paris 1967, *ad loc.*

¹⁷*RE* 13.2 (1927) 1753.

menial and makes fun of philosophy; he is occasionally caught out, but takes command of the situation. With so many facets for Lucian to combine, it is scarcely profitable to look for any specific emphasis: he takes his opportunities as they come.

The specialised subject, then, would have offered Lucian an opportunity to develop a slightly elusive type of humour and yet another type of pretentious language, but the writer is also working with Lucian's materials and techniques of arrangement. Who else could have written it? The *παράδοξον* against philosophers is not confined to Lucian: Philostratus (*VA* 7.3) is able to cite similar absurd arguments against the philosophers who rebuked tyrants, and Athenaeus' section on parasites (6.234c–248c) testifies to the enormous bulk of material on the subject and its ready appeal to the sophisticated reader, while Dio of Prusa comes close to the nuance of this dialogue when he allows Alexander the Great to make Homer an authority on the royal gourmet (*Or.* 2). I doubt, however, if Dio could have sustained this kind of entertainment effectively for long, and there is nothing to connect the work with anyone other than Lucian. An additional argument comes from Alciphron's *Letters of Parasites*:¹⁸ if *Paras.* were already circulating under Lucian's name, his faithful imitator would be all the more likely to make systematic and intensive use of the subject.

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¹⁸Book 3 Schepers.