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Lucian's Learned *Barbaros*: Parodying Diatribe in the *Adversus Indoctum*

In *The Ignorant Book Collector* (*Adversus Indoctum*), Lucian of Samosata attacks the pretensions to *paideia* of an unnamed Syrian whose large collection of books only draws attention to his actual ignorance. Scholars have long assumed that the object of this little diatribe was in fact a real person and that the "speaker" is Lucian himself [Anderson 1982:86, Hall 1981:38, Harmon 1921:173]. Furthermore, the way in which the *Adversus Indoctum* opposes barbarian ignorance to Greek learning has been used to support claims for Lucian's strong, Hellenocentric allegiances [Anderson 1982:66]. In this paper, I argue that the "speaker" of the *Adversus Indoctum* is in fact not Lucian *qua* Lucian but rather, a carefully constructed speaking *persona*. I suggest that this text should be read not as a diatribe against the pretensions to learning of an unnamed Syrian, but understood as a parody of a diatribe whose object is the Greek, cultural chauvinism of the speaker. That the *Adversus Indoctum* is a "*hypothesis eschematismene*," and that the speaker is not in fact to be identified with the "author Lucian," seems clear from one of the initial taunts which the speaker levels at this Syrian book collector:

Helicon, which the goddesses are said to haunt, you never even heard of, I take it, and your haunts in your boyhood were not the same as ours (*oude tas autas diatribas hemin en paisin epoiou*)...in the name of your lady of Lebanon, dispense me for the present from giving a full description of you in plain language. [A.I. 3]

The mountain of Helicon here mentioned is not simply metaphorical; the point is that in a very real way, these two figures grew up in totally distinct cultural *milieux*. The speaker of this text is in fact meant to be understood as a Greek who looks disparagingly towards the Euphrates and the goddess Astarte whom his Syrian victim presumably worships (for Lucian's account of his own childhood in Syrian Samosata, see *The Dream*). As one proceeds through this text, it becomes clear that this opening gambit indicates a programmatic, mutually exclusive dichotomy between things Greek and things Syrian (i.e. barbarian). In contrast to the hellenizing power of *paideia* which Lucian elsewhere advocates, the speaker of the *Adversus Indoctum* categorically excludes the possibility of a *barbaros* with *paideia*. The Hellenic, chauvinistic claims of this speaker must thus be read in light of the numerous, very sophisticated passages in which Lucian explores the paradox of his own identity as a Syrian "*barbaros*" who is in fact deeply imbued with Greek *paideia* (cf. *Double Indictment* 27; *Scythian* 9; *Fisherman* 19; *False Critic* 1,11; *A Slip of the Tongue*, *passim*). The text of the *Adversus Indoctum* itself is in fact a meditation on this theme in a fairly subtle way; for this is an exceptionally allusive text (even for the Second Sophistic) whose wealth of reference spans the entirety of Greek classical literature. Thus our Syrian author and his text are object lessons which directly contradict the claims of his narrator. A proper understanding of the irony of the speaking "voice" of the *Adversus Indoctum* is essential to an understanding of Lucian's own marginal status in the Greek world and his ambivalent relationship to the idea of "Hellas".