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## Justin, Tatian and the Forging of a Christian Voice

**Abstract:** This article considers the construction of the speaking subject in Justin's *First Apology* and Tatian's *To the Greeks*, two interlocking texts (often associated with the problematic genre of Christian apologetics). Bracketing questions of biographical reality, it explores the fictionalising techniques Justin and Tatian adopt to magnify their own authority, co-opt well-known narrative models (including martyrologies and *imitatio Christi*) in the service of their own self-fashioning. I take their *autobiographies* as stylised self-dramatisations, rather than guides to historical realities. There are strong parallels with the kind of self-modelling that we see in the works of pagan sophists of the era, notably Dio Chrysostom. Reading these two authors in this way blurs the sharp distinctions they seek to draw between Christian and pagan. It also requires a reading of their texts — in line with recent scholarship — as generically complex, sophisticated and absorbent, open to the opportunistic appropriation of elements characteristic of pagan literature of the era. Foucault has argued that the voice of early Christianity was characterised by its confessional quality, which was new, confident and distinctive; this article argues, by contrast, that Justin and Tatian at any rate were intellectual bricoleurs and experimentalists, and had much more in common with their pagan peers.

**Keywords:** Justin, Tatian, Apologetics, Autobiography, Rhetoric

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The 2d century CE was a decisive period for early Christianity, when followers entered into dialogue with the Greek-speaking elite of the Roman Empire, and began to exploit the resources of their artful rhetorical culture. Our primary evidence for this phenomenon is a body of texts that directly address the competitive nature of the relationship between Christian, pagan and (sometimes) Jewish thought. The chief examples in Greek include the *First and Second Apologies* and *Dialogue with Trypho* of Justin, Tatian's *To the Greeks*, Athenagoras' *Embassy*, the *Epistle to Diognetus* and Theophilus' *To Autolycus*.<sup>1</sup> This material is markedly different from earlier non-evangelical Christian literature, which is largely epistolary, and addressed introvertedly to the community of the faithful. These texts by contrast appear to speak with a more confidently outward-facing Christian voice, presenting Christianity as a coherent system of thought that stands comparison with—and indeed will be proved superior to—pagan theologies and philosophies.

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief, informative overview see Frances Young, "Greek Apologists of the Second Century," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (ed. Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price; Oxford, 1999), 81-104; and more fully Wolfram Kinzig, "Der 'Sitz im Leben' der Apologie in der Alten Kirche," *ZKG* 100 (1989): 291-317; Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich, eds., *In Defense of Christianity: Early Christian Apologists* (Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 15; Frankfurt, 2014). I am grateful to James Corke-Webster, Ben Kolbeck and the anonymous reviewer for *ZAC* for their comments on this article. Translations are my own.

The texts mentioned above are often grouped together as “apologies,” a term that (for all its convenience) is not straightforward, carrying as it does a lot of ideological baggage, and creating as it does a false sense of generic unity.<sup>2</sup> We should be speaking of a “field” rather than a “genre”: a broad cultural space, opened up by the emergence of an educated Christian elite in an era when rhetoric and the display of educational παιδεία were paramount in pagan culture.<sup>3</sup> This space created room for creativity and experimentalism. Recent scholarship, indeed, has emphasised the multiple different generic appropriations brought into play by the different “apologists” (as we shall see further below). Individual texts are thus to be seen not as participants in a coherently defined genre but as *sui generis* displays of cultural bricolage. What unites much of this material in spite of its diversity is a shared imperative to create a culture-clashing dialogue of intellectual equals between reified voices of “Christians” and “pagans” (who are called “Greeks”) and Jews. At all times, individuals are seen as exemplary ambassadors of their religious systems, which are imagined as closed and unified. This reductive cultural essentialism is primarily a rhetorical projection: it is quite at odds with the historical reality that the religious and cultural commitments of many Jesus-followers in the 2d century were much messier. Eric Rebillard’s study of 2d-century north Africa has shown this decisively. “There was no separate Christian world,” he concludes; “Christianness was only one of the many affiliations that mattered in everyday life.”<sup>4</sup> Crucially, as Rebillard also shows, Christian sources tend to overestimate the degree to which Christians constituted a separate group.<sup>5</sup> We can apply that lesson to the so-called apologists: the forcefully polarising rhetoric they adopt, insisting on the absolute integrity and opposedness of Christian, Greco-Roman and (sometimes) Jewish communities, not only belies the tangled complexity of real Christian identities, but in a sense constitutes evidence for it.<sup>6</sup> Rhetoric, after all, tends to be Newtonian: the force with which it insists on its strategic simplifications marks the presence of an equal and opposite force, emanating from the tangled reality that it seeks to deny. To ask whether these texts were meant primarily for pagans or for Christians, then, is the wrong question, which buys too quickly into their polarising rhetoric. The aim of our texts was not to appeal to one sharply differentiated community or another but sharpen that differentiation at the level of discourse. They are crucial documents for the history of Christian identity—but less for what they say about identities than for what they do with them.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Neatly unpacked by Laura S. Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge, 2010), 45-48.

<sup>3</sup> For the field/genre distinction see Tim Whitmarsh, *Dirty Love: The Genealogy of the Ancient Greek Novel* (Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture; New York, 2018), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Rebillard, *Christians and their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca, 2012), 33.

<sup>5</sup> “We should not assume that the degree of groupness associated with the Christian category was as high, stable and consistent as Tertullian claims it should be” (Rebillard, *Christians and their Many Identities in Late Antiquity* [see note 4], 33).

<sup>6</sup> On the cultural essentialism of the “apologists,” and the need to resist them, see Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture* (see note 2), 21-50, and especially 48. Interestingly, Tatian nowhere explicitly mentions either Christians or Christ. This however may be more down to a resistance to the theological idea of earthly incarnation (Jörg Trelenberg, *Oratio ad Graecos / Rede an die Griechen* [BHTh 165; Tübingen, 2012], 219-224); certainly he has in mind a coherent movement, that can be set against “the Greeks.”

<sup>7</sup> Among the many studies of the formation of Christian identity in the period see especially Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford, 2004); Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New*

Rhetoric typically seeks to provoke strong feelings in an audience in order to mobilise group dynamics. It also depends upon constructing the speaker as an authoritative presence, one who commands its receivers' attention and respect. This feature has not received much attention in relation to the so-called "apologists." In this chapter, I explore the dramatization of the "speaking I" in two of the best known works in this field, which also happen to carry the most colourful characterizations of their speakers/authors: Justin's *First Apology* and Tatian's *To the Greeks*. (I refer briefly to Justin's *Second Apology* too, a difficult piece, whose relationship with the *First Apology* is unclear: one possibility is that the two texts were originally one.)<sup>8</sup> My reason for connecting Justin and Tatian lies not in any posited generic unity of the apologetic mode but because the fates of the two authors are bound together. Justin (ca. CE 100-165) was originally from Flavia Neapolis (modern Nablus, some 40 km north of Jerusalem), who relocated to Rome; his *Apology* probably dates to the 150s.<sup>9</sup> He is also the author of the extant *Dialogue with Trypho*. Tatian, who was a generation younger, came from "the land of the Assyrians,"<sup>10</sup> which is to say somewhere in northern Mesopotamia; having been educated in Greek literature and culture, apparently, he converted later in life.<sup>11</sup> He was a wide-ranging thinker and writer, associated also with the *Diatesseron* (a sophisticated and influential attempt to reconcile the four Gospels into one), and the Encratite movement preaching bodily continence. Later ancient Christians saw him as a Valentinian and a heretic; this characterisation has been challenged in recent scholarship.<sup>12</sup> Whether Tatian was Justin's student, as is often claimed, is not certain (nor is it clear what "student" would mean in this context); but it is evident that Tatian knew of Justin and his *Apologies*, which are frequently echoed in *To the Greeks*.<sup>13</sup> The voice of Justin is integral to the fashioning of Tatian's, and similarly the later reception of Justin's reputation depended on the mediation of Tatian. There are three other good reasons to focus on Justin and Tatian. The first is that if we are in search of the personal voice, they each offer very distinctive stylisations of the speaking self. Athenagoras' *Embassy*, by contrast, paints a very minimal picture of its author, speaking usually not of "I" but of "we." Second, Justin and Tatian occupy an interestingly junctural historical position, when it was not yet clear what a Christian voice sounded like (I come back

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*Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (Gender, Theory, and Religion; New York, 2005); Laura S. Nasrallah and Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, ed., *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (Minneapolis, 2009); Katherine M. Hockey and David G. Horrell, eds., *Ethnicity, Race, Religion: Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation* (London, 2018); and David G. Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities* (Grand Rapids, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> See Denis Minns and Paul M. Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (OECT; Oxford, 2009), 25-28; Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "The Literary Genre and Purpose of Justin's *Second Apology*: A Critical Review with Insights from Ancient Epistolography," *Harvard Theological Review* 105 (2012) 91-114; Brandon Cline, *Petition and Performance in Ancient Rome: The Apologies of Justin Martyr* (Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 75; Piscataway, 2020), 227-245; Jörg Ulrich, *Justin – Apologien* (Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 4/5; Freiburg, 2019), 56-58.

<sup>9</sup> Fuller details in Minns and Parvis, *Justin* (see note 8).

<sup>10</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 42,1 (SAPER, 112,7 Nesselrath).

<sup>11</sup> Fuller details in Trelenberg, *Oratio ad Graecos* (see note 6), 1-8, and Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, ed., *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung: Tatian, Rede an die Griechen* (SAPER 28; Tübingen, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> See e. g. Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London, 2003), 20-51; Trelenberg, *Oratio ad Graecos* (see note 6), 29-54, 204-219.

<sup>13</sup> Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century* (see note 12), 65-73, and especially Trelenberg, *Oratio ad Graecos* (see note 6), who notes that *Dialogue with Trypho* is also alluded to, albeit rather less.

to this point in conclusion). The third reason lies in the radical literary experimentalism they both employ, which combines aspects of Jewish/Christian homiletics, philosophy and rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> In particular, while the significance of the rhetorical tradition for these texts has been long understood, its wider implications have not been worked through: scholars have been reluctant to consider these texts in terms of artful persona-construction (the significance of which for pagan sophists of the era like Dio and Lucian is well understood).<sup>15</sup>

## 1 Genre?

Any utterance depends for its capacity to communicate on being recognised as a type of communication: a greeting, an insult, a warning and so forth. The question of voice is therefore intimately related to that of genre: what we say of ourselves depends on how we say it, i. e. the linguistic medium we adopt. As Mikhail Bakhtin notes, however, the “wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex.”<sup>16</sup> Until relatively recently, much of the analysis of both the *First Apology* and *To the Greeks* rested on the false assumption that they must belong to a single genre, and it is simply a question of identifying what that is.

Justin styles his work as an “address and an intercession” (προσφώνησιν καὶ ἔντευξιν)<sup>17</sup> addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, phrasing that identifies the text with a *libellus* (cf. βιβλίδιον),<sup>18</sup> i. e. a petition by a private individual seeking a favour or redress from a Roman official.<sup>19</sup> This generic self-identification should clearly not be taken at face value: the *First Apology* looks nothing like any other extant imperial petition. The latter are concise and

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<sup>14</sup> E. g. Peter Gemeinhardt, “Tatian und die antike Paideia: Ein Wanderer zwischen zwei (Bildungs-)Welten,” in Nesselrath, *Gegen falsche Götter* (see note 11), 247-266; Aaron P. Johnson, “Early Christianity and the Classical Tradition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic* (ed. William A. Johnson and Daniel S. Richter; Oxford, 2017), 625-638.

<sup>15</sup> Laura S. Nasrallah, “Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005): 283-314 (cf. *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture* [see note 2], 56-75), links Justin, Tatian and Lucian as educated cosmopolitans renegotiating their relationship to imperial space; see also Jared Secord, *Christian Intellectuals and the Roman Empire: From Justin Martyr to Origen* (Inventing Christianity; University Park PA, 2021), 5, arguing that both Justin et al. and non-Christian **παιδευμένοι** “were participating in the same debates that characterized intellectual culture in the period.” More generally on the alignment between Christian and non-Christian writers in the second century see e. g. Jason König, *Greek Literature in the Roman Empire* (Classical World Series; London, 2009); Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians* (Cambridge, 2012). On the role of persona-construction in Dio and Lucian see Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (trans. Vern W. McGee; ed. Carol Emerson and Michael Holquist; University of Texas Slavic Series 8; Austin, 1986; trans. of *Éstetika slovesnogo tvorcheestva* [Moscow, 1986]), 60.

<sup>17</sup> Justin, *1 Apologia* 1,1 (**OECT, 80,6 Minns/Parvis**).

<sup>18</sup> Justin, *1 Apologia* 69,1 (**266,10 M/P**).

<sup>19</sup> Minns and Parvis, *Justin* (see note 8), 24-25. ἔντευξις is also used in inscribed petitions from Skaptopara in Thrace (Tor Hauken, *Petition and Response: An Epigraphic Study of Petitions to Roman Emperors; 181–249* [Monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 2; Bergen, 1998], 91), and Dagis in Moesia (Hauken, *Petition and Response* [see above], 171). In the earliest manuscript tradition (*Parisinus Graecus*) the text that we call Justin’s *First Apology* is called *Apology on Behalf of Christians* (ἀπολογία ὑπὲρ Χριστιανῶν). This is probably not, however, the original title (though Plato’s *Apology of Socrates* is indeed an important intertext): arguments at Ulrich, *Justin, Apologien* (see note 8), 127-128.

specific in their demands, and “follow a common path by a uniform rhetorical structure”;<sup>20</sup> there was a precise form and process to be followed in the case of such legal appeals.<sup>21</sup> Justin’s text, by contrast, is a vague, prolix protest, running to over 14.500 words (even before we start considering the so-called *Second Apology*), which complains in general terms about unspecified “accusations” and “punishments” allegedly levelled at Christians as a group. A *libellus* that was intended to make an intervention in a legal decision would have a defined addressee; Justin by contrast addresses his to the emperor Antoninus Pius (and his son and adopted son), the Senate, and to the People of Rome.<sup>22</sup> Justin’s text, then, seems likely to have shared the same (distant) relationship to a real petition that, for example, Dio Chrysostom’s lengthy *Kingship Orations* held to genuine addresses to the emperor Trajan.<sup>23</sup> We should recall that the 2d century saw the peak of the vogue for “pseudo-documentarism”, i. e. affixing to texts peritexts that make them look official or genuine (often with knowing irony, and without any intention to deceive).<sup>24</sup>

The transmitted title of Tatian’s oration, meanwhile, is πρὸς Ἕλληνας: this could be translated either as *To the Greeks*, casting the Greeks as the addressees of a speech or an epistle, or *Against the Greeks*. Both valences are no doubt in play: the “men of Greece” ([ὧ] ἄνδρες Ἕλληνας)<sup>25</sup> are addressed in the vocative throughout, as if the text were simply “to” them; but in fact Tatian’s stance is mockingly pugilistic. But either way, this clearly is not a public address. Tatian does, for sure, evoke that world: the vocatives, notably, might be taken to resemble the phrase “o men of Athens” (ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι) that is so characteristic of the Attic orators. He summons “witnesses” in support of his argument,<sup>26</sup> in the manner of a classical orator, and refers to his “audience” (τοὺς ἀκούοντας;<sup>27</sup> cf. ἀκούετε<sup>28</sup>). Yet this is not borne out by the rest of the text. The addition of *Oration* to Tatian’s title in modern editions is unwarranted and misleading:<sup>29</sup> this is not a record of an oral performance, or even a sophistic mimesis of an orally delivered speech,<sup>30</sup> but a self-consciously written text that refers to itself as such on several occasions.<sup>31</sup> Tatian plays adeptly with different voices, sometimes provisionally adopting the fiction of oral performance, sometimes abandoning it. The text as a

<sup>20</sup> Hauken, *Petition and Response* (see note 19), iii.

<sup>21</sup> For examples see Hauken, *Petition and Response* (see note 19).

<sup>22</sup> Minns and Parvis, *Justin* (see note 8), 35, omit the address to the senate and the people from their text, primarily on the grounds that “neither Senate nor People is at home in the address of a petition”. This objection vanishes if, as I believe, this is not a real petition. They also perceive an “odd” overlap with *Justin, 1 Apologia 56,3 (228,6–9 M/P)*.

<sup>23</sup> On the strong likelihood that Dio’s speeches were never delivered before Trajan see Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire* (see note 15), 325–327.

<sup>24</sup> Karen ní Mheallaigh, “Pseudo-Documentarism and the Limits of Ancient Fiction,” *American Journal of Philology* 129 (2008): 403–431.

<sup>25</sup> Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 1,1 (38,1–2 N, where some MSS omit ὧ), 4, 1 (44,1 N); 12, 6 (60 5 N); 21,1 (76,28 N); 21, 5 (78,13 N); 25, 5 (84,24 N); 42,1 (112,6 N).

<sup>26</sup> Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 31,1; 36,1 (#Edition#).

<sup>27</sup> Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 36,1 (#Edition#).

<sup>28</sup> Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 5,2 (#Edition#).

<sup>29</sup> Trelenberg, *Oratio ad Graecos* (see note 6), 84 argues that the original title included the word λόγος, but that is far from self-evident from the sources; and in any case, λόγος can of course refer to written texts too.

<sup>30</sup> So e. g. Nesselrath, *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung* (see note 11), 17–19.

<sup>31</sup> τὴν ἀναγραφὴν συντάσσειν βούλομαι (“I want to compose this text”, Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 35,1 (102,17–18 N); γράφειν ... ἀρξάμενος (“having begun to write ...”, Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 35,2 (102,22 N); ταῦθ’ ὑμῖν ... συνέταξα (“I have composed this treatise for you”, Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 42, 1 (112,6–7 N).

whole, indeed, flits between invective, apologetic, protreptic and epideictic modes. Rather than attempting to nail *To the Greeks* down to one genre or another, recent scholarship has focused more on the “pluriform nature of the contents and modes of expression.”<sup>32</sup>

Both Justin and Tatian, then, should be seen not as writing within one particular (Christian or “pagan”) genre but as appropriating genre-specific features of the pagan literary heritage for their own experimental purposes. The dominant “feel,” for sure, is often that of rhetorical confrontation in an (imaginary) judicial setting, Justin on the defensive (speaking “for the Christians,” ὑπὲρ Χριστιανῶν)<sup>33</sup> and Tatian on the attack (speaking “against the Greeks,” πρὸς Ἑλληνας).<sup>34</sup> This court-room mimesis simultaneously grounds the texts in a familiar, prestigious Hellenic cultural idiom and buttresses the rhetorical construct of two communities at odds with each other. It is, however, indicative not of a coherent genre, but of a general framework within which other genres are mixed freely. We see the same kind of generic variegation (ποικιλία) within a wider frame, indeed, in multiple authors of the time: for example, the novelist Achilles Tatius, the satirist Lucian, and the biographer Philostratus.<sup>35</sup>

## 2 Rhetoric?

Justin’s *Apologies* and Tatian’s *To the Greeks* are rhetorical in that they are in the business of persuasion. I have argued that what they are seeking to persuade their readership of is not what it seems at first sight: Justin does not seek to sway the Emperor towards going easy on Christians, nor does Tatian seek to convince an international community of Greek-speakers about the superiority of the Christian message. The persuasive effort, rather, is devoted to creating the impression of two distinct communities, the Christian and the pagan, the relationship between which is defined by antipathy and conflict. This makes them *rhetorical* in a secondary sense, one that is characteristic of the Greek literary culture of the 2d and 3d centuries CE. In this period, as has often been noted, declamation has a strongly fictionalising aspect.<sup>36</sup> Sophists often performed in persona, acting out either historical/mythical themes (“Alexander before the battle of Granicus,” “The Embassy to Achilles” etc.) or imaginary courtroom scenarios.<sup>37</sup> Justin’s *First Apology* and Tatian’s *To the Greeks* clearly show some

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<sup>32</sup> Trelenberg, *Oratio ad Graecos* (see note 6), 230-240, at 238 (“der Pluriformität der präsentierten Inhalte und Ausdrucksformen”); also Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, “Tatians *Oratio ad Graecos* und der Diskurs über ‘Religion’ in der frühen Kaiserzeit,” in Nesselrath, *Gegen falsche Götter* (see note 11), (193-223) 204-205. For the older approach see e.g. Michael McGehee, “Why Tatian Never ‘Apologized’ to the Greeks,” *J ECS* 1 (1993): 143-158.

<sup>33</sup> Justin, *I Apologia* (title).

<sup>34</sup> Tatian, *Ad Graecos* (title).

<sup>35</sup> See (on Achilles) Tim Whitmarsh, *Achilles Tatius: Leucippe and Cleitophon Books I–II* (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics; Cambridge, 2020), 26-32; (on Lucian) Emeline Marquis and Alain Billault, ed., *Mixis: le mélange des genres chez Lucien de Samosate* (Quaero; Paris, 2017); (on Philostratus) Jaś Elsner, “Philostratus: A Protean Corpus,” in *Philostratus* (ed. Ewen Bowie and Jaś Elsner; Cambridge, 2009), 3-18 (with Adam M. Kemezis, *Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans: Cassius Dio, Philostratus and Herodian* [Greek Culture in the Roman World; Cambridge, 2014], 150-153, 196-197).

<sup>36</sup> See especially Danielle van Mal-Maeder, *La fiction des déclamations* (Mnemosyne Supplements 290; Leiden, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> The bibliography is vast: I mention only Donald A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Cambridge, 1983); Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, 1995); Thomas Schmitz, *Bildung und Macht: Zur sozialen und politischen Funktion der zweiten Sophistik in der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit* (Zetemata 97; Munich, 1997); Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (New Surveys in the Classics 35; Cambridge, 2005); William Guast, *Greek Declamation and the Roman Empire* (Greek and Culture in the Roman

kinship with the latter group, often referred to as *suasoriae*: we can imagine these texts as rooted in ethopoeic responses to prompts such as “what would an orator say to the Emperor to defend Christians against persecution?” and “what would an orator say to convince the Greeks that their philosophy was wrong?”

Clearly, neither text is *fully* fictionalised: there is in both a necessary link between the real, biographical author and the persona adopted and enacted in the work. They are not *suasoriae* in any narrow sense; as we have seen, they are generic experiments that operate within the broad field of rhetoric. A good parallel comes in the *Kingship Orations* of Dio Chrysostom: whether or not these were originally delivered to Trajan (which I strongly doubt), we know for certain that they were (also) circulated among a wider readership, for whom the scenario of a performance before the Emperor was purely imaginary.<sup>38</sup> In such cases, the speaker is *fictionalised*, in the sense that the *mise-en-scène* is constructed through verbal confabulation alone. The name of the real author/performer is also that of the *fictionalised* speaking subject, what is more, so that the drama enacted in the text by the latter also metaleptically enhances the authority of the former. More generally, this is a period when authors and readers of fiction take joy in exploiting the ambiguous gap between the narrating “I” of a text and that of the real author;<sup>39</sup> when a historian can refer to himself as “Xenophon,” as if he were fully inhabiting the persona of the classical Athenian historian;<sup>40</sup> and when an epic poet can self-consciously “perform” the poetic I of Homer.<sup>41</sup> The literary “I” in this era is even at its most straightforward highly stylised, and more commonly caught up in a complex process of oscillation between real and invented (or mimicked) personae.

Both authors, naturally, disavow rhetoric entirely—Tatian with a particular vehemence. At *Ad Graecos* 1,3 he associates ῥητορικὴ with corruption and vexatiousness (ἀδικία καὶ συκοφαντία);<sup>42</sup> at 40,1 he condemns Greek “sophists” (σοφισταί) for distorting and appropriating the more ancient wisdom of Moses, and for concealing what they did not understand with “some invented chicanery” (διὰ τινος ἐπιπλάστου ῥητολογίας).<sup>43</sup> The public disavowal of rhetoric is, however, the oldest trick in the rhetorical handbook: this is “the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric,” in Jonathan Hesk’s phrase.<sup>44</sup> The rejection of rhetoric, that is to say, is (or at least can be) a profoundly rhetorical act. Tatian certainly narrates his own biography

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World; Cambridge, 2023); Estelle Strazdins, *Fashioning the Future in Roman Greece: Memory, Monuments, Texts* (Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture & Representation; Oxford, 2023).

<sup>38</sup> Above, note 23.

<sup>39</sup> See further Tim Whitmarsh, *Beyond the Second Sophistic: Adventures in Greek Postclassicism* (Berkeley, 2013), 73–74.

<sup>40</sup> On Arrian’s self-presentation as Xenophon see most influentially Philip A. Stadter, “Flavius Arrianus: the New Xenophon,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8 (1967): 155–161 (arguing, controversially, that Arrian took on the cognomen Xenophon), and “Xenophon in Arrian’s *Cynegeticus*,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 17 (1976): 157–167.

<sup>41</sup> Emma Greensmith, *The Resurrection of Homer in Imperial Greek Epic: Quintus Smyrnaeus’ Posthomerica and the Poetics of Impersonation* (Greek Culture in the Roman World; Cambridge, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 1,5 (38, 32 N).

<sup>43</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 40,2 (108, 25 N). For other instances in which “sophist” and derived terms are used negatively see Justin, *I Apologia* 14,4; 14,5 (112,12; 112,17 M./P.); Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 12,9 (60,18 N.); 26,1 (86,3–4 N.); 35,1 (102,12) etc.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Hesk, *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2000), 202–241. In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin does not resist his interlocutor’s characterisation of him as a sophist (Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 3,3 [93,28 Goodspeed]).

in terms of “conversion” away from sophistry (he once “practised sophistry in your fashion”),<sup>45</sup> much as Dio Chrysostom did; but as with Dio, the biographical reality is hidden behind the sheen of manipulated self-representation, and (again as with Dio) the final impression is that sophistry is not so much rejected wholesale as tactically redeployed in a game of “fort-da”.<sup>46</sup> Both authors, what is more, push hard the idea that what they, and Christianity in general, have to offer is philosophy—an older and better form of philosophy than the Greeks ever had (though Justin at any rate concedes that the Greek philosophers glimpsed an intimation of Christian truth).<sup>47</sup> But to embrace philosophy was in this era not necessarily to reject rhetoric: the choice between the two no longer presented itself in the 2d century as a binary one. The idea of philosophers using rhetoric—“those who philosophise in the guise of sophistry” (τοὺς φιλοσοφῆσαντας ἐν δόξῃ τοῦ σοφιστεῦσαι), in Philostratus’ phrase<sup>48</sup>—is common in the era, a time when Athens had lost its institutional monopoly on philosophy, and when dogmatic schools were giving way to “pop-up” philosophies. From the 1st century onwards we see eclectic philosophers setting up shop all over the Empire, from Apollonius in Tyana (and beyond) to Plutarch in Delphi to Epictetus in Nicopolis. A “philosopher” was coming to be defined less by institutional badge-carrying than by the cultivation of public profile.<sup>49</sup> The effect of this was that Dio and his peers were only superstar sophists and philosophers if they could persuade their audiences they were; self-presentation was crucial. Nor was this phenomenon limited to rhetoric and philosophy: “similar struggles for disciplinary self-promotion ... were replayed in many different contexts across the Roman Mediterranean”.<sup>50</sup> The same is true of Justin and Tatian: there was in the 2d century no real church to define institutional roles for them, so that their authority had to be won competitively. Both Justin’s *Apology* and Tatian’s *To the Greeks* are the work of men on the make.<sup>51</sup> This is not to mark them out as social climbers or cynical manipulators, simply to note that they are products of their era, a time when rhetoric was a medium for creative first-person presentation was expected within the rhetorical culture of the time.<sup>52</sup> Their hybridisation of philosophy and rhetoric is entirely in keeping with the times.

<sup>45</sup> σοφιστεύσας τὰ ὑμέτερα, 35,1 (102,12 N.). Cf. 29-30 (90,12–92,15), and 1,3, where he claims to have turned away from “your wisdom” (τῇ παρ’ ὑμῖν σοφία, 38,29 N.), despite having once been eminent (σεμνός τις, 38,30 N.) in it.

<sup>46</sup> Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire* (see note 15), 186-200.

<sup>47</sup> Justin, *1 Apologia* 2,2; 4,8; 26,6 (80,12-14; 88,7-11; 150,5-7 M./P.); Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 31,1; 32,3; 35,2 etc. (#Edition#).

<sup>48</sup> Philostratus, *Vitae Sophistarum* 479 (1,1 OCT Stefec).

<sup>49</sup> This self-presentational aspect of philosophy is commonly the target of Lucian’s satire: see e. g. Johannes Hahn, *Der Philosoph und die Gesellschaft: Selbstverständnis, öffentliches Auftreten und populäre Erwartungen in der hohen Kaiserzeit* (Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien 7; Stuttgart, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> Jason König, “Conventions of Prefatory Self-Presentation in Galen’s *On the Order of my Own Books*,” in *Galen and the World of Knowledge* (ed. Christopher Gill, John Wilkins, and Tim Whitmarsh; Greek Culture in the Roman World; Cambridge, 2009), (35-58) 39.

<sup>51</sup> I allude to Maud Gleason’s justly famous *Making Men* (see note 37).

<sup>52</sup> On Justin, Tatian and 2d-century oratorical culture see Naomi Koltun-Fromm, “Re-imagining Tatian: The Damaging Effects of Polemical Rhetoric,” *J ECS* 16 (2008): 1-30; Nasrallah, “Mapping the World” (see note 15), and *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture* (see note 2); Matthew R. Crawford, “‘Reordering the Confusion’: Tatian, the Second Sophistic, and the so-called *Diatessaron*,” *ZAC* 19 (2015): 209-236. More generally on 2d-century Christianity and the “second sophistic” see Matthijs den Dulk and Andrew M. Langford, “Polycarp and Polem: Christianity at the Center of the Second Sophistic,” in *The History of Religions School Today: Essays on the New Testament and Related Ancient Mediterranean Texts* (ed. Thomas R. Blanton IV, Robert M. Calhoun, and Clare K. Rothschild; WUNT 340; Tübingen, 2014), 211-240.

### 3 The first person in Justin and Tatian

How do Justin and Tatian style themselves in the first person? First, both authors frequently intervene in their texts to add emphasis, usually while underlining speech acts. For example: “I tell you, our teacher predicted that all this would come to pass”;<sup>53</sup> “I boast that I could show you such men”;<sup>54</sup> “I call upon Eleusis for my witness”;<sup>55</sup> “let the far-shooter now tell me”.<sup>56</sup> Such passages are not at first sight especially distinctive, but nor are they superfluous: they do an important job of consolidating the didactic, assertive authority of the speaker. They echo, what is more, Jesus’ own habit (as recorded in the Gospels) of using illocutionary phrases such as “but I say to you” (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν).<sup>57</sup>

More colourful are those instances where the speaking “I” claims the power to ridicule. This mode is relatively subdued in Justin, though not absent: on one occasion he refers counterfactually to behaviour that would be “absurd” (γελοῖον) if enacted, and on another he calls the allegorical interpretation of Athena as “thought” (ἔννοια) “most laughable” (γελοιότατον).<sup>58</sup> Tatian, by contrast, fully embraces the gelastic. “His [the ancient philosopher’s] modern disciples too are good for a laugh”;<sup>59</sup> “I mock Pherecydes’ old wives’ tales”;<sup>60</sup> “Who would not find it ridiculous that ...?”;<sup>61</sup> “Who would not laugh at ...?”;<sup>62</sup> “I ridicule the skill of Mico.”<sup>63</sup> This tactic of Tatian’s does more than just embed his polemical stance, and seek to consolidate the Christian community through the shared experience of mockery. As Laura Nasrallah has argued, “Tatian’s over-the-top critique of the Greeks ... draws upon satirical conventions of the second sophistic”;<sup>64</sup> in particular, it invites comparison with his contemporary, the satirist Lucian, another self-professed Syrian outsider to Greek culture. Like Lucian, indeed, Tatian advertises his sophisticated grasp of recondite Greek material even as he distances himself from it: Pherecydes, after all, was not on the bedtime reading-table of many in the 2d century CE. Tatian’s laughter is thus more than just aggressive: it is also designed to portray him as distinctively wry and cultivated, his humour rooted in his bicultural expertise and status as participant-observer of mainstream Greek culture. The hostile

<sup>53</sup> Justin, *1 Apologia* 12,9 (106,4-5 M./P.): γενήσεσθαι ταῦτα πάντα προεῖπε, φημί, ὁ ἡμέτερος διδάσκαλος.

<sup>54</sup> Justin, *1 Apologia* 15,6 (114,10-11 M./P.): εὐχομαι ... τοιούτους δεῖξαι.

<sup>55</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 8,7 (52,4 N): μαρτυρήσει μοι νῦν Ἐλευσίς.

<sup>56</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 8,10 (52,11-12 N): λεγέτω μοι νῦν ὁ ἐκατηβόλος.

<sup>57</sup> Matt 5:22, 5:28, 5:32 etc.; Luke 16:9, 20:8 etc. A variant (ἐγὼ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω) is quoted at Justin, *1 Apologia* 15,9 (114,18-19 M./P.). This otiose use (i. e. without further qualification) of the phrase is rare in pre-Christian literature.

<sup>58</sup> Justin, *1 Apologia* 39,5 (184,2 M./P.); 64,4 (250,11 M./P.). See also *2 Apologia* 13,1 (320,8-9 M./P.): ψευδολογουμένων ταῦτα καὶ τοῦ περιβλήματος κατεγέλασα (“I laughed at those making false accusations and at their cloak”).

<sup>59</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 2,3 (40,19 N): γελάσαμεν δ’ ἂν καὶ τοὺς μέχρι νῦν τοῖς δόγμασιν αὐτοῦ καταχρωμένους.

<sup>60</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 3,5 (42,21 N): γελῶ καὶ τὴν Φερεκύδους γρασολογίαν.

<sup>61</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 9,6 (54,8 N): τίνι δὲ οὐ γελοῖον εἶναι δόξει.

<sup>62</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 32,5 (96,10 N): τίς δὲ οὐκ ἂν γελάσειεν. Tatian also flips the gelastic language: the Greeks may laugh at Christian doctrine now, but they will weep later (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 32,3 [96,3-4 N.]: γελάτε δὲ ὑμεῖς, ὥς καὶ κλαύσοντες).

<sup>63</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 33,8 (98,30): γελῶ καὶ τὴν Μίκωνος ἐπιστήμην. Some editors adopt Gesner’s conjecture Μύρωνος here (since the reference is to the sculptor of a cow).

<sup>64</sup> Nasrallah, “Mapping the World” (see note 15), 299.

stance he takes towards Greek culture is partly offset by his ostentatious display of his facility with it.

#### 4 Autobiographies of risk

A more forceful form of self-stylisation comes in the autobiographies that both writers, in different ways, construct for themselves, dramatising the riskiness of Christian expression. It is easy to be beguiled into taking these as realistic, especially given the theological significance of martyrdom narratives (I return to this below). But it is crucial to remember that narratives of risk also serve the rhetorical function of enacting the speaker's credentials as a free-speaker, an agent of what Greeks called *παρρησία*. As Michel Foucault emphasises, “somebody is said to use *parrēsia*, and deserves to be considered as a parrhesiast, if and only if there is a risk, there is a danger for him in telling the truth.”<sup>65</sup> We know of at least one case where an individual in the era of Justin and Tatian was accused of deliberately engineering conflict with Roman authorities, despite the indifference of the latter: “he was on everyone's lips, as ‘the philosopher driven into exile on account of his free-speaking and excessive frankness (τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὴν ἄγαν ἐλευθερίαν)’.”<sup>66</sup> Autobiographies of risk need not be fictional, but they are invariably — to return to the language used above—*fictionalising*, in that there is always an element of self-celebration.

In Justin's *Apologies*, it is the story of the conflict with the philosopher Crescens<sup>67</sup> that most vividly dramatizes the risk to the speaker:

And I anticipate that I will be plotted against and fixed onto wood by one of those mentioned, and in particular by Crescens, that lover of noise and bluster (τοῦ φιλοψόφου καὶ φιλοκόμπου). For it would not be proper to call the man a lover of wisdom (φιλόσοφον): after all, he bears public witness to things of which he has no understanding, claiming that the Christians are impious atheists, doing this to please and ingratiate himself with the misguided masses.<sup>68</sup>

The passage uses Crescens as a foil to Justin's own persona, creating a formal opposition between false and true philosophy (the form punningly labelled “philopsophy,” “love of noise”).<sup>69</sup> At the same time, it dramatizes the personal danger to Justin in challenging the false philosopher. Justin is even implicitly compared to Christ. The expression “fixed onto wood” is

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<sup>65</sup> Michel Foucault, “Discourse and Truth” and “Parrēsia” (trans. Nancy Luxon; ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini; Chicago, 2019), 42.

<sup>66</sup> Lucian, *De morte Peregrini* 18 (194,21-23 OCT MacLeod): διὰ στόματος ἦν ἅπασιν, ὁ φιλόσοφος διὰ τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὴν ἄγαν ἐλευθερίαν ἐξελαθείς.

<sup>67</sup> Otherwise unknown, except in Tatian (see below).

<sup>68</sup> Justin, 2 *Apologia* 8(3),1 (298, 13 M./P.): κἀγὼ οὖν προσδοκῶ ὑπὸ τινος τῶν ὀνομασμένων ἐπιβουλευθῆναι καὶ ξύλῳ ἐμπαγῆναι, ἢ κἂν ὑπὸ Κρίσκεντος τοῦ φιλοψόφου καὶ φιλοκόμπου. This sentence is beset by textual difficulties. I assume that “those mentioned” (τῶν ὀνομασμένων) who have plotted against Justin are real human beings mentioned in a now-missing passage, as opposed to the demons referred to at 1 *Apologia* 7,3 (298,4-7 M./P.); others take κἀγὼ as “I too,” suggesting that Justin is classing himself among those whom the demons have caused to be hated (so e. g. Ulrich, *Justin, Apologien* [see note 8], 600). κἀγὼ is commonly used in the *Dialogue with Trypho* with a simple transitional force (and taking καὶ as adverbial in our passage robs the sentence of its connective). I take it, furthermore, that κἂν is a hiatus-avoiding synonym for adverbial καί (as in other writers of the era: Whitmarsh, *Achilles Tatius: Leucippe and Cleitophon Books I–II* [see note 35], 50). Minns and Parvis, *Justin* (see note 8), 299, by contrast, translate ἢ κἂν ὑπὸ Κρίσκεντος as “or at least by Crescens”, suggesting he is not among τῶν ὀνομασμένων.

<sup>69</sup> Tatian recycles this pun (which is otherwise unattested in Greek) at *Oratio ad Graecos* 3,7 (42,25 N.)—another indication that he knows Justin's text well.

strangely vague, and could refer to any number of scenarios (stocks? Torture? Hanging from a plank [σκολοπισμός]); crucially, however, it does not rule out the suggestion that he might face a Christ-like death on the cross in the future.<sup>70</sup> The crucifixion, of course, is the hypotext for every martyrology.<sup>71</sup>

Crescens is also the pivot that connects Tatian to Justin. Tatian brings him in in the context of a discussion of the hypocrisy of philosophers:

For example, Crescens, who made his nest in the capital, outdid all others in his lust for boys, and was completely devoted to money-making. This man who claimed to hold death in contempt was himself so fearful of death that he arranged it so that death was inflicted on Justin, as it was on me,<sup>72</sup> as though it were an evil—because he [Justin] would preach the truth, and prove that the philosophers were greedy cheats.<sup>73</sup>

Once again the Christian voice is compared and contrast to that of the philosopher. In both Justin and Tatian, Crescens is presented as exemplifying and encapsulating all the vices of pagan philosophers as a general class. Tatian's account in particular is dominated by stereotypes, that occupy the negative poles of his binary rhetorical schema. Crescens indulges in the paradigmatic urban vice of pederasty; he is obsessed with money-making; he affects to despise death, but in reality considers it a "great evil." Crescens' role as the embodiment of all that is corrupt serves to offset the image of Justin (and by extension Christians in general). The effect is to describe a triangular relationship between Christians, philosophers and sophists: Christians and philosophers alike define themselves against sophists; philosophers notionally aim for the same truths as Christianity, but take the wrong route.

Of greater interest to us now, however, is Tatian's reminiscence of the alleged persecution of the pious Justin by Crescens. Not only does Tatian directly echo Justin's own account in the *Second Apology*; he also, apparently, claims that the same thing happened to Justin as has happened to himself (καθάπερ καὶ ἐμέ). "Tatian's reduplication", comments Candida Moss, "places himself in a literary mimetic relationship with the martyred Justin".<sup>74</sup> Crescens, then—the only contemporary pagan mentioned by name by Tatian in *To the Greeks* — serves as a foil to both authors' self-construction as paradoxical philosophers.

In the background of both authors' self-presentation lie not only the Jewish tradition of Maccabean martyrs (about which neither author has anything to say, in this anti-Jewish phase of early Christianity), but also the figure of Socrates, the dominant model (for many Christians, as for pagans alike) for the idea of the unwavering philosopher who rejected worldly misprision, and was put to death for holding true to his beliefs.<sup>75</sup> Crescens plays the role of

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<sup>70</sup> See Ulrich, *Justin, Apologien* (see note 8), 601.

<sup>71</sup> On the *imitatio Christi* motif in martyrology see Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> See below on the textual problems here.

<sup>73</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 19,2 (74,1–6 N.): Κρίσκης γοῦν ὁ ἐννεοττεύσας τῇ μεγάλῃ πόλει παιδεραστίᾳ μὲν πάντας ὑπερήνεγκεν, φιλαργυρίᾳ δὲ πάνυ προσεχὴς ἦν. θανάτου δὲ ὁ καταφρονῶν οὕτως αὐτὸς ἐδεδίδει τὸν θάνατον ὥς καὶ Ἰουστίνον καθάπερ καὶ ἐμὲ ὡς κακῶ τῷ θανάτῳ περιβαλεῖν πραγματεύσασθαι, διότι κηρύττων τὴν ἀλήθειαν λίχνους καὶ ἀπατεῶνας τοὺς φιλοσόφους συνήλεγχεν.

<sup>74</sup> Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library; Oxford, 2012), 89.

<sup>75</sup> On the divergent Christian views of Socrates in the era see Michael Frede, "The Early Christian Reception of Socrates," in *Remembering Socrates: Philosophical Essays* (ed. Lindsay Judson and Vassilis Karasmanis; Oxford, 2006), 188–202 (with 195–198 on Justin's *Apologies*); Mark Edwards, "Socrates and the Early Church," in

Anytus and Meletus, the jealous antagonists of Socrates who conspired to bring about his death. Justin, indeed, specifically identifies Socrates as a proto-Christian who “sought by true reason and examination to bring this [the fact that the Greek gods are really demons] to light, and to lead men away from demons”, and who was executed for that very reason,<sup>76</sup> and explicitly compares the situation of present-day Christians (the demons “act in the same way towards us.”<sup>77</sup> If Justin himself titled his text *Apology* (which is far from certain: see above), this will have strengthened his self-identification with Socrates. The figure of Socrates is thus important to both not just for his quasi-monotheistic beliefs but also for the idea of biographies of risk, which was so important to philosophical identity in the second century. In this respect both can be compared to Dio Chrysostom, whose self-aware adoption of Socratic and other personae to narrate the story of his alleged exile have been well discussed.<sup>78</sup>

These two passages have been heavily influential in the shaping of the reception particularly of Justin; his epiclesis “Martyr” depends upon them. Eusebius was a crucial conduit: his *Ecclesiastical History*<sup>79</sup> takes the two passages as testimony (the only testimony he mentions, which therefore presumably means it was the only testimony he knew)<sup>80</sup> for Justin’s martyrdom. From there, Justin’s reputation was born. There are, however, quite clearly problems with using these passages as evidence in this way. Justin cannot offer evidence for his own martyrdom—as indeed Eusebius knows full well (he has to take Justin’s words as a “prophecy,” *πρόρρησιν*).<sup>81</sup> Tatian’s claim that he himself has been killed in the way as Justin, meanwhile, is obviously bizarre.<sup>82</sup> Once again, however, textual problems get in the way. Nesselrath’s text of the passage quoted above states that Crescens arranged for death to befall Justin “as it did me, as though it were an evil (*καθάπερ καὶ ἐμὲ ὡς κακῶ*)”. This reading, however, reflects a mediaeval correction to the nonsensical text that is transmitted in the solitary extant manuscript (which originally read *καθάπερ καὶ ἐμὲ οὐς κακῶ*). We have no way of telling whether the corrector of the text had access to a better text of Tatian, or was simply

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*Socrates from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (ed. Michael B. Trapp; Publications Centre for Hellenic Studies London 9; Aldershot, 2007), 127-141 (with 128 on the *First Apology*); Christopher C. W. Taylor, “Socrates under the Severans,” in *Severan Culture* (ed. Simon Swain, Stephen Harrison, and Jaś Elsner; Cambridge, 2007), 500-511; also in *Pleasure, Mind, and Soul: Selected Papers in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 2008), 327-339. In the *Second Apology* Socrates is compared to Christ, on the grounds that both are ethical teachers (Justin, 2 *Apologia* 10,5-6 [310,4-312,1 M./P.]).

<sup>76</sup> Justin, 1 *Apologia* 5,3 (90,5-7 M./P.): *λόγω ἀληθεῖ καὶ ἐξεταστικῶς ταῦτα εἰς φανερόν ἐπειράτο φέρειν καὶ ἀπάγειν τῶν δαιμόνων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.*

<sup>77</sup> Justin, 1 *Apologia* 5,3 (90,9 M./P.): *ὁμοίως ἐφ’ ἡμῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἐνεργοῦσιν.*

<sup>78</sup> E. g. John L. Moles, “The Career and Conversion of Dio Chrysostom,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 98 (1978): (79-100) 97-98.

<sup>79</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4,16,3; 4,16,7-9 (191,10-192,5; 192,12-20 Editions du cerf Bardy).

<sup>80</sup> For these texts see Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Introduction, Texts and Translations* (OECT; Oxford, 1972), 43-61. These *acta* have sometimes been taken to preserve the records of a real-life trial (see especially Timothy D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* [Tria Corda 5; Tübingen, 2016], 63-64), but they were apparently not available to Eusebius, and presumably had not yet been composed. For further discussion see Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom* (see note 74), 89-96; Eric Rebillard, *The Early Martyr Narratives: Neither Authentic Accounts nor Forgeries* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religions; Philadelphia, 2021), 23.

<sup>81</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4,16,7 (192,6 B.).

<sup>82</sup> Whitaker translates the phrase *τῷ θανάτῳ περιβαλεῖν* as “involve in the death penalty,” presumably to mitigate the oddness of Tatian’s claim by making it more ambiguous. But the phrase must surely mean “ensure the execution of”: see *Diodorus Siculus* 3,5,2 (273,14 BT Vogel) for a parallel. Some commentators have taken *καθάπερ καὶ ἐμὲ* as an interpolation: see Nesselrath, *Gegen falsche Götter* (note 6), 150 for details.

guessing. Meanwhile our textual tradition of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, where the passage is quoted, uniformly transmits a different reading: Crescens arranged Justin's death "as though it were a *great* evil" (καθάπερ μεγάλῳ κακῷ).<sup>83</sup> This looks *prima facie* like a much more plausible reading: on this version, Tatian is not claiming to have been executed (!) at all. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the text is messy and poorly evidenced at this point. It is perfectly possible that Tatian made some kind of claim about his own prospects for martyrdom, or even that he had already been martyred (in the way that someone who steals from a crime boss might say "I am a dead man"). Nor, it must also be admitted, is he at all specific about how Crescens allegedly engineered Justin's death. Modern commentators tend to assume that he told the Roman authorities that Justin was a Christian, and this led to judicial trial and execution;<sup>84</sup> but this assumption imports a martyrology that is not explicit in the text (and, indeed, leans on martyrological theology). Tatian may have been deliberately vague: perhaps the explanation was mundane (Crescens failed to call for help when Justin was hit by a chariot, passed on a communicable illness to him, or accelerated his death through stress with his acerbic counterarguments). Or perhaps Crescens had nothing at all to do with Justin's death, and Tatian made it up. Perhaps Crescens never existed at all. The one thing we can say for sure is that Tatian, as Justin's self-appointed successor, felt himself bound to close the loop that Justin had opened up, by "fulfilling" his predecessor's prophecy of a Christ-like execution at the hands of Crescens; and this ramped up the fictionalisation of Justin's status.

This, then, is a case where analysing Justin and Tatian in terms of rhetorical role-playing bites hard. We have no way of telling whether the historical Justin deserves the surname "Martyr"; that is a conclusion that will be hard to swallow for some. What we can say with some confidence, however—and this will be even harder for those who cleave to the idea of "Justin Martyr"—is that that he fashioned an autobiographical narrative of martyrdom for himself, without knowing whether it would be fulfilled, in order to enhance his own self-projection as a free-speaking parrhesiast; and that Tatian, Eusebius and the late antique authors of the alleged martyr acts progressively rewrote his own autobiography of (imminent) risk.

## 5 I, Tatian

Let us turn, finally, to the end of Tatian's *To the Greeks*, where he offers the most vivid autobiography to be found anywhere in any of the so-called apologists:

All this that I have expounded I have learned not from any other (οὐ παρ' ἄλλου μαθὼν), but after travelling many a land (Tatian's πολλήν ... ἐπιφοιτήσας γῆν), first practising sophistry in your manner (σοφιστεύσας τὰ ὑμέτερα) and familiarising myself with many tricks and ideas, and then residing in the city of the Romans and learning about the subtleties of the statues which they took from you and brought to their land. I do not seek to fortify myself with the beliefs of others, as is the custom of most; no, I want the contents of the account that I have composed to be entirely things that I myself have apprehended. For that reason, I bade farewell to Roman arrogance and Athenian logic-chopping (incoherent belief systems) and dedicated myself to "barbarian philosophy," as you call it.<sup>85</sup> I started writing about how this is older than your disciplines, and then postponed because of the pressing nature of my account; but now that I

<sup>83</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4,16,9 (192, 18 B.).

<sup>84</sup> E. g. Ulrich, *Justin, Apologien* (see note 8), 601.

<sup>85</sup> καθ' ὑμᾶς, the reading of the MSS; some editors print καθ' ἡμᾶς, i. e. ... "the barbarian philosophy of our land."

have the time, I shall try to speak about its beliefs. But do not cavil at our learning, or contrive some counterargument full of scurrilous nonsense against us, saying “Tatian is trying to outdo the Greeks (ὕπερ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας) and the innumerable host of philosophers by fiddling around with his barbarian beliefs!”<sup>86</sup>

As Laura Nasrallah has stressed, this narrative of Christian *becoming* resembles that of Justin in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, where the author presents himself as having spent time with a Stoic, then a Peripatetic, then a Pythagorean, and finally a Platonist, before meeting a Christian, who was instrumental in his conversion. both present themselves as coming finally to Christianity after a journey testing out other doctrines.<sup>87</sup> As ever, Tatian binds his identity closely to that of Justin. As Nasrallah also points out, the idea of the personal philosophical quest is something of a topos in the era. Crucially, we should add, all such narratives ultimately allude to Socrates, and in particular to Plato’s *Apology* (the importance of which for both Justin and Tatian we have already noted). In Plato’s text, similarly, Socrates is said to have acquired his wisdom from personal experience, undertaking a “wandering” (πλάνην)<sup>88</sup> and studying with and testing out “those with a reputation for wisdom” (τῶν δοκούντων σοφῶν εἶναι).<sup>89</sup> Underlying the Socratic model, moreover, is that of Homer’s Odysseus, whose wanderings gave him a form of wisdom. The two personae are blended by Dio Chrysostom in his account of how he “converted” from rhetoric to philosophy;<sup>90</sup> and it is hard not to hear an Odyssean echo in Tatian’s claim to have “travelled many a land” (πολλὴν ... ἐπιφοιτήσας γῆν), too.<sup>91</sup> Paradoxically, then, Tatian’s presentation of himself as intellectually self-sufficient, and non-dependent on others, is expressed via a familiar form of literary mimesis. This gives a particular edge to the extraordinary ventriloquism with which the passage closes, wherein the author imagines his audience accusing him of trying to out-Greek the Greeks. That, arguably, is precisely what Tatian is trying to do, at multiple levels. The phrase “beyond the Greeks” (ὕπερ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας) might even be read as a conscious echo of the text’s title, *To the Greeks* (πρὸς Ἑλλήνας).

<sup>86</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 35,1-3 (102,11–28 N.): Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὐ παρ’ ἄλλου μαθὼν ἐξεθέμην, πολλὴν δὲ ἐπιφοιτήσας γῆν καὶ τοῦτο μὲν σοφιστεύσας τὰ ὑμέτερα, τοῦτο δὲ τέχναις καὶ ἐπινοίαις ἐγκυρήσας πολλαῖς, ἔσχατον δὲ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἐνδιατρίψας πόλει καὶ τὰς ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ὡς αὐτοὺς ἀνακομισθεῖσας ἀνδριάντων ποικιλίας καταμαθὼν. οὐ γάρ, ὡς ἔθος ἐστὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἀλλοτρίαις δόξαις τάμαντοῦ κρατύνειν πειρώμαι, πάντων δὲ ὧν <ἀν> αὐτὸς ποιήσωμαι τὴν κατάληψιν, τούτων καὶ τὴν ἀναγραφὴν συντάσσειν βούλομαι. διόπερ χαίρειν εἰπὼν καὶ τῇ Ῥωμαίων μεγαλαυχίᾳ καὶ τῇ Αθηναίων ψυχρολογίᾳ, δόγμασιν ἀσυναρτήτοις, τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς βαρβάρου φιλοσοφίας ἀντεποιήσαμην· ἥτις ὅν τρόπον ἐστὶ τῶν παρ’ ὑμῖν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἀρχαιοτέρα, γράφειν μὲν ἀρξάμενος, διὰ δὲ τὸ κατεπεῖγον τῆς ἐξηγήσεως ὑπερθέμενος, νῦν ὅτε καιρὸς περὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὴν δογμάτων λέγειν, <\*\*\*> πειράσομαι. μὴ γὰρ δυσχεράνητε τὴν ἡμετέραν παιδείαν μηδὲ φλυαρίας καὶ βωμολοχίας μεστήν ἀντιλογίαν καθ’ ἡμῶν πραγματεύσασθε λέγοντες· Τατιανὸς ὑπὲρ τοὺς Ἑλλήνας ὑπὲρ <τε> τὸ ἄπειρον τῶν φιλοσοφούντων πλῆθος καινοτομεῖ τὰ βαρβάρων δόγματα.

<sup>87</sup> Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 2,3-6 (92,9-93,7 Goodspeed); Nasrallah, “Mapping the World” (see note 15), 289.

<sup>88</sup> Plato, *Apologia* 22a7 (OCT Duke *et al.*).

<sup>89</sup> Plato, *Apologia* 21b9 (D. *et al.*).

<sup>90</sup> Dio Chrysostom, 13,12 (182,6–12 Von Arnim). See Moles, “The Career and Conversion of Dio Chrysostom” (see note 78), 99; Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire* (see note 15), 161-163.

<sup>91</sup> The themes of wandering, the acquisition and knowledge and multiplicity (πολύτροπον ... πολλὰ ... πολλῶν ... πολλὰ) in the opening lines of the poem are (and were) of course very well known. Might we also catch an echo in Tatian’s οὐ παρ’ ἄλλου μαθὼν of the self-reliance of Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, who in contrast to Teiresias relies on his own rationality (γνώμη κυρήσας οὐδ’ ἀπ’ οἰωνῶν μαθὼν, *Oedipus Rex* 398 (OCT, Lloyd-Jones/Wilson)? For similar phrasing see Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 858-860 (OCT, Page).

That final sentence is also striking for the prominence of Tatian's own name. This reappears in the text's coda:

Such, men of Greece, is the text I, Tatian, philosopher in the barbarian manner, have composed for you (Ταῦθ' ὑμῖν, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, ὁ κατὰ βαρβάρους φιλοσοφῶν Τατιανὸς συνέταξα). I was born in the land of the Assyrians (ἐν τῇ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων γῇ), and educated first in your doctrines (παιδευθεὶς ... πρῶτον μὲν τὰ ὑμέτερα), but later in the matters that I propose currently to proclaim. Well then, given that I know who god is and what he has created, I present myself to you: I present myself to you, prepared as I am for the examination of my beliefs (τὴν ἀνάκρισιν τῶν δογμάτων), though to my mind the existence of god's kingdom remains beyond denial.<sup>92</sup>

Tatian's use of this autobiographical σφραγίς, found elsewhere in historiography<sup>93</sup> and historicising romance,<sup>94</sup> performs several functions. First, it readvertises his name, adding in what Alexander Beecroft has called a "scene of authorship," which is to say a fleshing out of the author's background and how he came to write this text.<sup>95</sup> As Beecroft argues, successful ancient Greek texts were typically attached to an author, and authorship entailed not just a name but also a sense of self.<sup>96</sup> It is striking, indeed, that in the final sentence author and book become conflated, as Tatian "presents myself to you" for the examination of the readership. Second, this self-aggrandising spotlighting of Tatian's name draws together all of the threads to do with identity in the text as a whole. The only contemporary names mentioned in *To the Greeks* are those of Crescens, Justin and Tatian himself; the personalities of the first two are locked tightly to Tatian's own self-representation. The epilogue revives the polarities that structure the text as a whole, pugnaciously opposing Greek ("you") and barbarian ("we"), in an ostentatious reversal of conventions.<sup>97</sup> This reversal, of course, demonstrates an awareness and cunning subversion of Greek protocols, a point that reinforces his claim to have mastered Greek παιδεία in the past. The pretension to worldliness expressed in the journey from the "land of the Assyrians" to Greece and beyond undergirds his promotion of an allegedly universal wisdom that transcends the ethnocentric wisdom of the Greeks, and will survive their "examination." Even as he articulates this ambition, however, Tatian remains locked into Hellenocentric categories: the *barbarian* persona that he cultivates is, inevitably, structured by

<sup>92</sup> Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 42,1–2 (112,6–12 N.): Ταῦθ' ὑμῖν, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, ὁ κατὰ βαρβάρους φιλοσοφῶν Τατιανὸς συνέταξα, γεννηθεὶς μὲν ἐν τῇ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων γῇ, παιδευθεὶς δὲ πρῶτον μὲν τὰ ὑμέτερα, δεύτερον δὲ ἅτινα νῦν κηρύττειν ἐπαγγέλλομαι. γινώσκων δὲ λοιπὸν τίς ὁ θεὸς καὶ τίς ἡ κατ' αὐτὸν ποίησις, ἔτοιμον ἐμμαντὸν ὑμῖν πρὸς τὴν ἀνάκρισιν τῶν δογμάτων παρίστημι μενούσης μοι τῆς κατὰ θεὸν πολιτείας ἀνεξαρνήτου.

<sup>93</sup> τίς δὲ ὢν ταῦτα συνέγραψα, πολλοὶ μὲν ἴσασι καὶ αὐτὸς προέφηνα, σαφέστερον δ' εἰπεῖν, Ἀππιανὸς Ἀλεξανδρεὺς (Appian, *Historia Romana* pr. 62 [BT, Gabba/Roos/Viereck]).

<sup>94</sup> Τοσάδε περὶ Καλλιρόης συνέγραψα (Chariton, *Callirhoe* 8,8,16 [BT, Reardon]); Τοιόνδε πέρας ἔσχε τὸ σύνταγμα τῶν περὶ Θεαγένην καὶ Χαρίκλειαν Αἰθιοπικῶν· ὁ συνέταξεν ἀνὴρ Φοῖνιξ Ἑμισσηνός, τῶν ἀφ' Ἡλίου γένος, Θεοδοσίου παῖς Ἡλιόδωρος. (Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 10,41,4 [Budé, Rattenbury/Lumb]).

<sup>95</sup> Alexander Beecroft, *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China: Patterns of Literary Circulation* (Cambridge, 2010), 18.

<sup>96</sup> See also Reviel Netz, *Scale, Space and Canon in Ancient Literary Culture* (Cambridge, 2020), 96–114.

<sup>97</sup> On Tatian's Greek/barbarian discourse see Josef Lössl, " 'Bildung? Welche Bildung?' Zur Bedeutung der Ausdrücke 'Griechen' und 'Barbaren' in Tatians *Rede an die Griechen*," in *Frühchristentum und Kultur* (ed. Ferdinand R. Prostmeier; Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten; Ergänzungsband 2; Freiburg, 2007), 127–153; John Eugene Fojtik, "Tatian the Barbarian: Language, Education, and Identity in the *Oratio ad Graecos*," in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics* (ed. Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Majastina Kahlos; Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 5; Frankfurt am Main, 2009), 23–34.

Greek projections of alterity, and by the Greek models of the cosmopolitan *wandering philosopher*.

## 6 Conclusion: Confessions of a sophist

The publication in 2018 of the 4th volume of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* refocused attention onto the nature of the early Christian voice. According to Foucault, the emergence of Christian identity is intimately linked to a new way of speaking truth about the self: confession, the full exposure of the body's secrets to the scrutiny of God and his community on earth.<sup>98</sup> For Foucault, confession was the Christian version of Greco-Roman *παρρησία* ("freedom of speech"), the truth spoken by fearless philosophers to tyrannical power; but whereas *παρρησία* marked a bilateral relationship between the embodied self and the tyrant, confession indicated a wholly new understanding of the relationship between the self and the flesh, which was at once integral to selfhood and separate from it.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Foucault saw the invention of confession as a decisive break between antiquity and the post-antique world, the thread connecting the Christianisation of the Greco-Roman world with bourgeois modernity. Already in the 1st volume of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault had identified the "continuous incitement to discourse and to truth" that underpins modern European conceptions of sexual identity as rooted in an extension of Christian confession beyond the narrow confines of the Church.<sup>100</sup> "Western man," he wrote, "has become a confessing animal."<sup>101</sup>

Foucault's thoughts on confession have been influential, and indeed they themselves channel influential models for thinking about Christian voice. But they are not without their problems. As so often with Foucault's thought, the *genealogical* model he adopts is linear, unidirectional and teleological, as if there were but one (western) history, and as if the role of ancient history is simply to challenge, through varieties of reverse-engineering, the present. Beyond that, however, Foucault's readings privilege the earnestly normative,<sup>102</sup> and leave little room for the dynamism and complexity characteristic of many ancient texts. Finally, like all narratives insisting on "Christian invention," *Les aveux de la chair* overstates historical rupture in a way that always risks backsliding into theologically inflected successionism (or even supersessionism).

The voice of the so-called apologists Justin and Tatian, as we have seen, is not confessional, or at least not straightforwardly so (even if language that would later be used of confession is on occasion found).<sup>103</sup> The voice they adopt is, rather, is of the kind that we hear in 2d-century Greek culture as a whole: performative, mimetic, fractured and complex, rooted in rhetorical self-presentation but encompassing many other generic modes including fiction, invective and satire. This is not necessarily to doubt the earnestness of Justin's and Tatian's faith. Nor does

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<sup>98</sup> Michel Foucault *The History of Sexuality 4: Confessions of the Flesh* (trans. Robert Hurley; Harmondsworth, 2021; trans. of Michel Foucault, *Les aveux de la chair* [edited by Frédéric Gros; Paris, 2018]), 133, 145.

<sup>99</sup> Michel Foucault, "Discourse and Truth" (see note 65), especially 2-4.

<sup>100</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction* (trans. Robert Hurley; Harmondsworth, 1978; trans. of *La volonté de savoir* [Paris, 1976]), 56, 58-59.

<sup>101</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (see note 100), 59.

<sup>102</sup> Simon Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginité: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Stanford Memorial Lectures; Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>103</sup> E. g. Justin, *1 Apologia* 4,6 (88,1-2 M./P.): εἰς δὲ τις ὁμολογήσει εἶναι [sc. Christian] διὰ τὴν ὁμολογίαν κολάζεσθαι.

it mean that Justin and Tatian necessarily misrepresented the level of risk that attached to the expression of their message (though it seems likely to me that it was indeed overdramatised). Nor does it mean that they compromised the “purity” of their Christian voices by blending in “alien” elements drawn from Greek rhetoric. Christians did not *become* Greco-Roman in the 2d century, for Christianity was never *not* Greco-Roman. But Justin and Tatian negotiated their relationship with their intellectual peers in what was for Christianity a radically new way, taking onboard the new resources available at the time for impersonation, rhetorical role-playing, and indeed self-fictionalisation. Christianity prospered in this era not because it was rooted in deep theology—theology was a later development—but because it was nimble, resourceful and adaptive. For Justin and Tatian, the Christian voice was not confessional, in the sense of being summoned from the depths of the soul; it was, rather, lent authority by sophisticated, metaleptic transitions between different cultural idioms and different modes of self-presentation and self-fictionalisation.