

RELIHAN (J.C.) (trans.) *Lucian: Three Menippean Fantasies. Translated, with Introductions and Notes.* Pp. xviii + 166. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2021. Paper, US\$15 (Cased, US\$49). ISBN: 978-1-64792-000-5 (978-1-64792-026-5 hbk).
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This volume contains, in addition to new translations of Lucian's Menippus pieces, a rich sample of a career's worth of reflecting on what Menippean satire is and what translations of ancient Greek and Latin literature ought to be. In the foreword R. explains that he had thought to write 'a universal history of Menippean satire' and become 'the sort of critic that Menippean satire derides' with 'opinions about everything and everybody' from Varro to David Foster Wallace. But if 'it can spring up anywhere at any time', it becomes impossible to write a history of Menippean satire, which in the modern world 'with its lack of a culturally dominant mode of thought' can no longer be defined as reacting against whatever is dominant. Instead, it has become 'a deconstructive assembling of the structures of meaning, a contemplation of the inability of words to convey truth, a way to get into and behind the pretensions of a text ... an objection to genre itself' (pp. ix–xi). For these reasons R. restricts himself to translating the only works surviving from antiquity where Menippus appears as a character: *Necyomantia*, *Icaromenippus* and *Dialogues of the Dead*.

Included are a general introduction, introductions for each piece, explanatory footnotes with the translations, an afterword and a small bibliography. As announced by R., the footnotes do not provide much historical background; rather they highlight connections between the three pieces and with other Lucianic works, and they pose questions that open up avenues of investigation for readers. R.'s aim is not to make Lucian easy to read, but to render fully his Greek prose style, including word order, in English. These translations, he adds, should be read aloud. Doing so reproduces the liveliness of Lucian's verbal stagecraft, but R.'s texts resist casual reading. Consider this section from *Menippus*: 'When I got there I made the acquaintance of one of the Chaldaeans, a wise man and god-inspired in his art: his hair was gray; his beard, distinguished and full; his name, Mithrobarzanes. After I asked him, and even begged him, I got him, with difficulty, to be my guide for that journey – I let him name his price.' (p. 14). R. uses 13 punctuation marks to A.M. Harmon's five in the Loeb translation. For fast readers this may feel choppy, but it helpfully paces the reciter (or the attentive quiet reader).

R. seeks to unify the three pieces into what he views as Lucian's myth of Menippus, a narrative of 'rise and fall'. Spatially *Necyomantia* is a *katabasis*-narrative, in *Icaromenippus* the protagonist goes up to the heavens, and in *Dialogues of the Dead* he is back in the underworld. Intellectually, R. sees philosophical courage in the first piece, madness in the second one and retribution in the last – that is to say, Lucian punishes Menippus before discarding him. Anyone with a research focus on Lucian, Menippean satire, ancient Cynicism or eschatology will find this volume of interest, and I would not hesitate to use this translation with students. It is much more modern than other available translations, and it does justice to the details that make Lucian's language and thought exciting.

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