

elderly Homer, and sees envy behind all the critique: 'Homer had undeniable cachet. But with cachet comes envy ... and even hostility' (p.91). Homer also provoked competition and emulation: most obviously in Virgil, but also in writers such as Dictys and Dares under the Roman Empire who tried to discredit him with their own accounts of the Trojan War. Other Greek and Roman poets used Homeric tropes, paying him the compliment of assuming that their readers would recognise the references. Was Homer a divinely inspired and godlike figure or else a godless and highly flawed poet? The jury stayed out.

Chapter four (What did Homer see?) shows how Homer made Troy and Troy made Homer. The Trojan War was the 'ground-zero of recorded human history' (p.151), the last time when gods and men intermingled. It marked the end of the heroic age and the bridge between myth and history. The archaeology of Troy is neatly summarised (pp.152–4) and illustrated with a diagram, but then has its importance qualified: 'any or all of these phases before 700 BCE could have contributed to the image or memory of Troy in its former glory and later demise' (p.155). Troy vanished while the texts lived on, and Troy became a 'theme-park-cum-museum' as historians and archaeologists clambered over the sites and struggled to locate the poet's topography on Turkish soil, wanting proof that the poet was somehow an eyewitness.

The final chapter (Why war?) looks at the problematic violence in the *Iliad* and its 'PTSD offspring' the *Odyssey*. Is Homer condemning or celebrating brutality? The jingoistic reading of Homer as a naive philhellene celebrating the victory of the west over eastern barbarism is neatly smashed (p.180). What Homer loathes is not 'the east' but rather war itself. Can we justify the violence with the aesthetic pleasure of the poetry? Porter adduces two examples from the *Iliad* to illustrate Homer's 'self-resistant poetics of war': 3.371–2 where the lovely chinstrap is strangling Paris, and 9.186–9 where Achilles has a lovely lyre which was taken as spoils of brutal warfare. Is value found in 'deathless fame' or Vernant's 'beautiful death'? Sarpedon's death (16.638–44) is hardly beautiful and Achilles himself (9.308–429) takes down the 'everlasting fame' point in what Jasper Griffin once called 'the most splendid speech in Homer'. Porter takes us through several versions of the quest to justify the content from the form: Nietzsche showing the Apollonian gloss on Dionysian darkness, Simone Weil's essay on the centrality of force, and Auerbach's work on similes seeing the poems as unruffled surfaces which exist to divert the eye from the grim reality underneath. The book ends with a refusal to accept more modern 'reparative' readings in which the poetry conveys the pathos of vain human effort.

Porter's tone is strident in places and many of his assertions will provoke dispute, not least because many of his arguments need more development to carry conviction: this is especially so in his discussion of the philosophers (ancient and modern). There are also gaping holes in the texture: why does Porter barely mention Greek Tragedy, which made enormous (and challenging) use of Homeric material? Why does he not compare Homer with the many other cases where history becomes literature within a few generations? The book is inexpensive, well produced and proof-read, and has a useful timeline, a guide to further reading, a full bibliography and a general index. Quotations from Homer are given in Lattimore's translation and the style is brisk and energetic. Students (and teachers) will find much here to provoke thought and argument about the literary, cultural and moral issues which find expression and exploration via the pages of this most enigmatic of poets.

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## Rome: An Empire of Many Nations: New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity

Price (J. J.), Finkelberg (M.) and Shahar (Y.) (eds.)  
Pp. xiv + 410, b/w & colour ills, colour maps.  
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ROME: AN EMPIRE  
OF MANY NATIONS  
NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNIC  
DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY  
EDITED BY JONATHAN J. PRICE,  
MARGALIT FINKELBERG  
AND YUVAL SHAHAR



As the blurb of the book claims, scholarship about the Roman world has been moving away from a highly centralised discussion of the role of the emperor and the Eternal City, to a more holistic engagement with the provinces and the ideas around identity. The deep dive into the relationship between Rome and the Jewish people, their religion and culture that forms the third part of the book is a particular highlight. The exploration of the topic of Jewish identity through different periods within Roman history on a macro

and micro level, and through different source material, is effective and captivating.

For teachers, chapters of this book are of particular usefulness when delivering content ahead of national exams in Key Stage 4 and 5. Finkelberg's chapter on the 'Roman Reception of the Trojan War' and Brelaz's chapter on 'Claiming Roman Origins: Greek Cities and the Roman Colonial Pattern' provided supplementary information and perspectives for some modules within the Latin and Classical Civilisation GCSEs and A Levels; however, they cannot be described as essential reading for those courses. Nonetheless, the book as a whole can provide teachers with excellent materials and topics for discussion to stretch students of all ages beyond what the curriculum can offer. The relevance to contemporary debates around identity in all its forms, including ethnicity, nationality, race, culture and religion, can be found throughout all of the contributions. This central theme gives the reader a strong sense of connectedness and continuity throughout the whole collection.

With students being more engaged with the broader movement around decolonisation and diversity within scholarship, in particular engaging with their subjects from different perspectives, this book presents them with the opportunity to do so effectively. While written in an academic register perhaps inaccessible to Key Stage 3 students, those interested in the Roman world, and looking

to engage in discussions around identity and cultural diversity, will feel incredibly satisfied having read this particular text. Dueck's chapter on 'Ethnic Types and Stereotypes in Ancient Latin Idioms' provides ample food for thought on how language holds enormous amounts of power, and direct parallels can be drawn with how we use language today. Additionally, the chapter by Shaw on 'Ethnicity and Empire' provides an insight into how identity around ethnicity developed and was displayed and worn. Classicists will also gain an appreciation of how, with so many different cultures, ethnicities and beliefs coming into contact with each other, individuals and communities chose to exhibit their own culture, as well as how Romanisation affected those identities.

This fantastic book, with beautiful figures concentrated in the final two chapters which look more in depth at the archaeological aspects of two legionary bases, would be a welcome addition to any library.

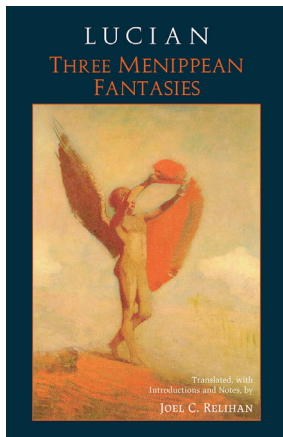
doi: 10.1017/S2058631022000368

## Lucian: Three Menippean Fantasies

Relihan (J.C.) (ed. trans.) Pp. xviii + 166.  
Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 2021.  
Paper, US\$15. ISBN: 978-1-64792-000-5.

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Relihan's scholarly career, as described in the Foreword, has been dominated by Menippus and Menippean Satire. His book on the subject was published in 1993, followed by works on later authors writing in the Menippean tradition: Boethius, Apuleius, Thomas Love Peacock, etc. Relihan originally planned a 'universal history of Menippean satire' over 2,300 years, making himself 'the sort of critic that Menippean satire derides'. However, Relihan concluded that Menippean satire is so diverse and wide-ranging that it would be

impossible to write a history of it. So he has turned instead to the only three surviving works in which Menippus appears as a character: Lucian's *Menippus or Necromantia* (*The Consultation of the Corpses*), *Icaromenippus or A Man above the Clouds* and *The Colloquies of the Corpses* (*Dialogues of the Dead*). He provides an introduction to and translation of each of these.

A brief disquisition on the art of translation follows, where Relihan hopes that the versions that he has provided will be read aloud.

The introduction to the *Necromantia* includes a sketch of what we know of the historical Menippus (not much). He lived in the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, was associated with the Cynic

movement, but there are no anecdotes or philosophical quotations attributed to him. He was instead a literary man; even so, all that remains of his writings are 'meagre fragments', yet his literary influence has been 'lasting' and 'subversive'.

Two pieces of information about Menippus are cited. The *Suda* describes him as going about dressed as a Fury, threatening sinners with retribution in the afterlife. Diogenes Laertius reports that he wrote a *Necyia*. From this Relihan postulates that Lucian's *Necromantia* is an adaptation of Menippus' work – an attractive theory as so little of his writings remains.

The translation of the *Necromantia* is lively and readable. It comprises a dialogue between Menippus and a friend. Menippus emerges from Hades quoting Euripides and Homer (since he has met them in the Underworld). He describes his dilemma: as a child he loved the stories of the gods, but as an adult he realised that their behaviour was immoral, so he turned to philosophy for an explanation. However, there were many contradictory philosophies and many philosophers were hypocritical and did not follow their own precepts. So Menippus found a Babylonian guide, descended to the Underworld and sought out Tiresias for advice on how to live. Menippus observes sinners being punished, and especially the rich whose arrogance in life led them to believe that they were superior to others; in fact, all are equal in death. An assembly of the dead passes a decree that millionaires should be reincarnated as asses for 250,000 years working for and being beaten by the poor. Menippus is finally able to consult Tiresias, who tells him that 'the way of life of ordinary people is best'.

The second dialogue, *Icaromenippus or A Man above the Clouds*, provides a companion piece to the first, as this story takes Menippus upwards to the Moon and then on to Olympus instead of down to Hades. Relihan suggests that these two dialogues should be seen as early in Menippus' career, helping to form him as a Cynic philosopher. Menippus begins by puzzling about the cosmos and astronomy, then moves to considering the immoral behaviour of mankind; this dialogue, as in the *Necromantia*, shares Menippus' disgust at immoral behaviour and the inadequacy of philosophy.

Menippus' ridiculous method of reaching the heavens (catching an eagle and a vulture and cutting off one wing from each) is described in some length. On the way he rests on the Moon and takes the opportunity to look down on mortals, needing advice from Empedocles, who arrives charred and blackened from his death in Mount Etna, to help him see men on earth, as tiny as ants. Menippus then continues his journey and reaches Olympus, where he joins the gods in their feasting and then in an assembly. Here the gods decide to destroy the race of philosophers completely, but not until the following spring.

The third section examines the status of *The Colloquies of the Corpses* (*Dialogues of the Dead*) as 'one of Lucian's masterpieces'. Relihan notes that this may be more because of their vast influence on subsequent literature rather than their own literary merit. They seem to have fallen out of favour in recent years compared to Lucian's other dialogues (*Of the Gods*, *Of the Sea Gods*, *Of the Courtesans*); they have not been included in full in the most recent anthologies of Lucian's work. However, Relihan feels that post Covid there may be more interest in the work as a whole.

Relihan acknowledges that the quality of the dialogues is patchy – some are brilliant, some can be 'repellent' because over-clever, pitiless or too tainted by a 'heartless Cynic superiority to the world of ordinary mortals'. They can be repetitive, and other works of Lucian may more attractively deal with some themes. Nevertheless, as a body of work the *Dialogues* are worth spending time on.