

Manuel BAUMBACH, Peter von MÖLLENDORFF, *Ein literarischer Prometheus. Lukian aus Samosata und die Zweite Sophistik*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017, 269 pp., ISBN 978-3-8253-6460-1, €26.00.

This handy volume appears in the series “Heidelberger Studienhefte zur Altertumswissenschaft”, which aims to provide students, teachers, and scholars of related disciplines with introductions to assorted authors and subjects that are both concise and well-grounded in current scholarship. The series seems to lean mostly towards Latin authors (with several volumes authored by Michael von ALBRECHT), which makes this book on a Greek writer a particularly welcome addition.

In the opening section, the authors make their purpose explicit: to provide readers of Lucian with an aid to support them in interpreting this entertaining, yet complex author. The book is not a comprehensive scholarly treatment of Lucian, but aims to illuminate essential problems encountered by a non-specialist audience, though one most likely familiar with ancient literature. The book is therefore resolutely selective and focuses on several well-chosen themes. The format, likewise, has been determined with this intended audience in mind: representative, frequently long passages from Lucian are quoted with an accompanying translation, the scholarly apparatus is limited, and suggestions for further reading are placed at the end of chapters. The book begins, pleasantly, with, “statt eines Vorworts”, a Lucian-style dialogue between Charon, Lucian, Hermes, and Menippos. It is followed by five chapters discussing Lucian’s biography, cultural and intellectual environment, and his works, including their genres, formats, and reception.

The first chapter, “Masken und Wahre Geschichten: Lukians Biographie”, focuses on Lucian’s biography. After discussing the limited external evidence we have (Eunapios, Suda, Galen), the authors focus first on autobiographical aspects of his works and then on Lucian’s self-presentation (“masks”) and the multiplicity of his literary alter egos. In a useful and detailed exposition, they go over the *personae* (“auktorial konnotierten Figuren”) of Loukianos, Tychiades, Parrhesiades, Syrus, Lykinos, Menippos, comparing them, pointing out differences, and clearly laying out the elusiveness of the authorial figure.

Chapter 2, “Ein Traum von Bildung: *paideia*-Diskurse in der Zweiten Sophistik”, contextualises Lucian’s literary activity, presenting it against the cultural, social, and literary backdrop of the Second Sophistic. After discussing the provenance of the term “Second Sophistic”, borrowed by scholars from Philostratos, the authors focus on the key significance of the cultural notion of *paideia*. They elucidate this crucial concept by placing a spotlight on figures in Lucian’s works whose identity is based on their specific relation to *paideia*: a teacher of orators, a student of philosophy, an uneducated person, an educated reader, a charlatan, etc. Mimetic literary practices characteristic of Greek literature of the period are discussed, as well as the complex issue of Greek identity at the fringes of the empire and the figures of “foreigners”.

Chapter 3, “Λουκιανὸς τὰδ’ ἔγραφα... Eine Werkschau”, contains a discussion of Lucian’s literary art, and his use of various formats that were in popular use in the imperial period (declamation, diatribe, treatise, polemic, prolatia, letter; the authors duly note that Lucian treats existing formats freely, and that a comprehensive generic typology of his works is not possible), as well as typical literary strategies a reader encounters in them (such as personification, allegory, ekphrasis, anecdote...). What is perhaps missing from the chapter is some acknowledgement of the problematic nature of some generic labels (diatribe in particular); still, this part of the book offers a very accessible introduction to the diversity and fluidity of the formats in the *corpus*. The chapter is supplemented with a nice overview of recurrent Lucianic *Leitmotifs* such as the trial, the journey, and the dream, as well as metaphorically applied medical images of illness and healing.

The absence of the dialogue-genre in chapter 3 is due to it being the focus of the subsequent section (“*Der doppelt Angeklagte* und seine Hippokentauren”), which is wholly devoted to the

comic dialogue, a genre that Lucian claimed to have invented. Comic dialogue is considered as an example of generic hybridity which provided readers with a new aesthetic experience. The authors focus on the inherent fluidity of this format, paralleled by a shifting authorial voice. The comic dialogue is characterised as an unstable generic mixture of philosophical dialogue and comedy, with some recurrent features such as a philosophical theme, a laughter-orientation, a plot and other elements characteristic of drama, and a setting in public space. Such a definition allows one to identify a segment of related works that best fit the definition, including texts such as the *Double Accused*, the *Fisherman*, and *Philosophies for Sale*, as well as *Icaromenippus*, *Menippus or Descent to Hades*, and the *Runaways*. On the other hand, the definition permits one to more clearly articulate differences between these texts and other works in the dialogue-format, such as *Dialogues of the Dead*, which lack a plot and a philosophical component. The latter collection of miniature dialogues, together with three related writings – *Dialogues of the Gods*, *Dialogues of the Sea-Gods*, and *Dialogues of the Courtesans* – are characterised as a “diluted mixture of ingredients of the philosophical dialogue and comedy”, in some cases, with mere traces left of the constitutive elements of the dialogue and the comedy. The question of whether Lucian’s dialogues could have been staged is also discussed, with the authors arguing in the affirmative.

The last section (“Bücher sammeln: Lukians Überlieferung”) asks difficult questions about the relationship between the oral presentation and written publication of Lucian’s works, as well as about their circulation and transmission. The formation of the Lucianic *corpus* is also discussed, including the question of the inauthenticity of some works included in it. A useful appendix provides short summaries of all of Lucian’s works.

This well-designed and thoughtful book provides a rich and enjoyable introduction to the Lucianic *corpus*. It reflects the preoccupations of recent scholarship, discusses a considerable range of problems and a wide array of texts, and illuminates Lucian’s literary practices in an ingenious, accessible way without oversimplifying the subject. While it is necessarily selective in its treatment – the historical reality of the Roman Empire is given little treatment, as is Lucian’s creative use of earlier Greek literature – the material covered is well chosen and well organised. One particular merit of the book is its detailed readings: substantial excerpts of Lucian’s texts are quoted and then used to exemplify interpretative techniques. While the book may be somewhat challenging for a reader not well versed in Lucian’s extensive *corpus* because of its ambitious inclusion of numerous texts in its discussion, the reader’s efforts will certainly pay off not only in terms of a better understanding of Lucian, but also in terms of developing reading strategies expedient for any reader of imperial period prose.

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