

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.

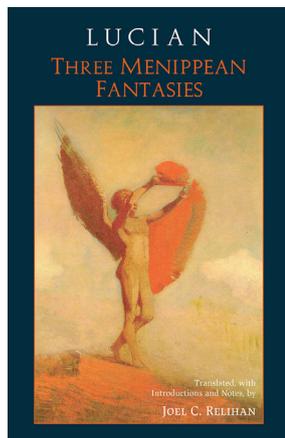
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## Lucian: Three Menippean Fantasies

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.

There is some uncertainty about the order of the dialogues – different orders are found in different sources. Relihan follows the version which groups almost all the dialogues involving Menippus at the beginning. This makes a coherent progression, following on from the two previous works, in the development of Menippus' character and his acquisition of wisdom, notably the encouragement of sympathy rather than scorn for suffering mortals.

The dialogues themselves certainly are amusing and witty, and Relihan's translation is eminently performable. The usual Underworld characters appear, along with famous men (not many women) from history. Recurrent themes include the equality of all after death and the vanity of human pretension; humour derives from the twisting of traditional details (Menippus can't afford to pay Charon an obol as, being a Cynic, he is too poor) or typical human situations (legacy hunting, attitudes to death).

The book concludes with an Afterword on the term 'Menippean satire' (not used until 1581 AD by one Justus Lipsius). Lucian is a major source, but his role seems to obscure rather than illuminate the historical Menippus. We need to consider the Menippus dialogues as a whole in order to retrieve the true character of Menippus.

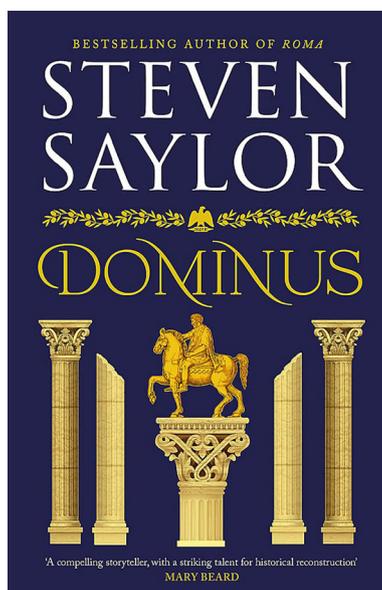
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## Dominus

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*Dominus* is the third part of Steven Saylor's ambitious trilogy of novels in which he has attempted to tackle the story of Rome from its pre-history to the fourth century CE, culminating in Constantine's conversion to Christianity. This is a fascinating book, very much in the tradition of Edward Rutherford's novels *Sarum* and *London*, and one which would be invaluable for a student or teacher wanting to gain a broad overview of a period of history with which they might be unfamiliar.

*Dominus* begins in CE 165 in the reign of Marcus Aurelius and moves at a cracking pace through the subsequent events down to 326 CE and the reign of Constantine the Great. Initially this book

did not hook me in the same way that some of Saylor's *Roma Sub Rosa* detective novels have. This is the downside to such an ambitious and epic project, as the speed of travel can be a little bewildering. However, it is well worth persevering with and, overall, this reviewer enjoyed it immensely. The story of Rome is told from the perspective of a series of members of the Pinarii, a patrician family whose roots can be traced back to the beginning of Rome's history. Saylor has modelled his leading family on real characters from the historical record, though it is clear that he has relied upon much invention to flesh out the bones of their story. The Pinarii are a family of craftsmen and writers and this puts them into close contact with a series of imperial regimes. Thus, Saylor is able to explore key political and social events from the viewpoint of his leading characters. The broad scope of the book does make it a little difficult to truly connect with the various members of the Pinarii, but Saylor does a good job of representing their ambitions, worries and achievements.

One of the best parts of this book is the way in which Saylor explores some of the more eccentric and famous figures from Roman history. The physician Galen is a prominent character and it is clear that Saylor has researched widely, using the extensive records that we have of Galen's writings, to construct a believable and enjoyable character. One thing which prospective readers should be aware of is that this book will take time to read as it will spark lots of questions and you will undoubtedly find yourself needing to look up lots of the references to find out what really did happen and what is Saylor's invention. He weaves these two things seamlessly, making it difficult to judge without checking. I won't ruin the story, but I especially enjoyed his account of Galen's ultimate demise at a grand old age. Saylor's presentation of the emperors Commodus, Caracalla and Elagabalus are especially chilling – the sense of fear and unease felt by the various members of the Pinarii is communicated very effectively and, even though I knew how the stories of these emperors would end, it was interesting to experience through the eyes of a prominent Roman with much to lose, rather than from a sterile 21st century perspective.

One area of Roman history which has long confused me is the third century crisis, following the death of Alexander Severus. Saylor does a superb job of conveying the confusing series of events, choosing particular vignettes to focus on in detail, whilst not labouring any of his points. I was lucky to have read this book in hard copy; I do think a Kindle version might be more difficult as I did spend time flicking to the maps and family trees provided, as well as double checking which year we were now in. However, this is an issue with e-books generally, rather than a criticism of this work in particular. This would be an excellent summer reading task for a student or teacher who wanted to gain a good oversight of this period of history before embarking upon some more academic research. Helpfully, Saylor has provided detailed notes at the end explaining which sources he used in researching his book and this would be a great place to begin any further reading.

The final thing which I enjoyed was the descriptions of the artworks supposedly created by the Pinarii family throughout the book. I found the account of the Arch of Constantine especially interesting, given the well-known academic debate about whether it represents a decline in artistic standards within Rome in the 4th century. Saylor's take on this is that this was thanks to Constantine himself who demanded 'can't you just reuse bits and pieces of old sculpture...use the bric-a-brac that's lying all about the city'. The presentation of Constantine overall is not especially generous, which makes a refreshing change from reading some of the more contemporary accounts of his reign given by early Christian