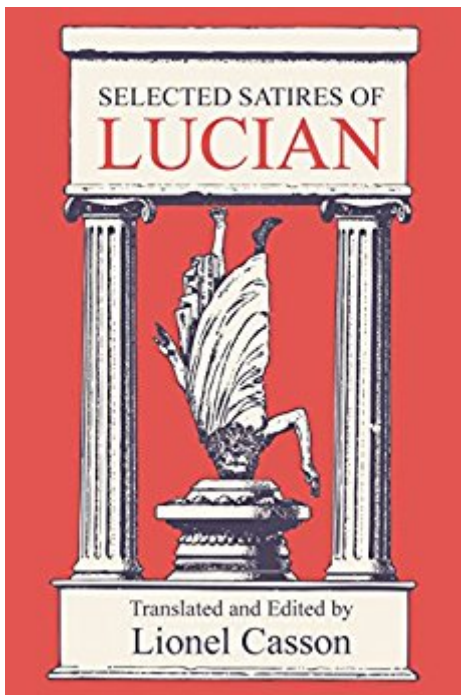


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Selected Satires Of Lucian



Synopsis

The unsurpassed satirist of the ancient era was a young Syrian named Lucian, who, writing in Greek in the second century a.d., combined wit, irony, fearless candor, and exuberant comic fantasy to create the triumphantly irreverent dialogues and stories contained in this book. His genial mockery, aimed at man's omnipresent feelings, has never gone out of date. The jabs he gave the hypocrites; grandstanders, fakers and boobs of the ancient world can just as appropriately be administered to their counterparts in the modern world. Lucian's most typical genre is a parody of a Platonic dialogue, in which Zeus, Hermes, Eros, and other Olympians jabber in undivine harassment as some clever mortal (who very much resembles Lucian) is about to make scandalous fools of them. He also excelled at straight narrative, his two most famous tales being the elaborate science fiction spoof; "A True Story," and an old folk tale retold outrageously, "Lucius the Ass." His works were the product of an unrelentingly rational and skeptical mind, and have had an incalculable effect on writers and painters through the ages. Until this volume, the English language reader of today to appreciate the importance and intelligence of Lucian. No volume of representative selections in translation is in print. There are satisfactory versions of the complete works, but the reader who takes this long will most likely lose a good deal of the sting of Lucian's needle. Lionel Cassen also illustrates the full range of Lucian's subject matter and various literary forms and when translating tried to focus on the Greek spirit as opposed to the literal meaning.

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Customer Reviews

i've purchased several recent editions of lucian, and this seems to me the best selection in the best (least mannered) translation. we get the "true story", precursor to all modern science fiction; "alexander the false prophet," a magnificent secular takedown of religious gullibility, and a wealth of sarcasms directed at fatuous fashions, authoritarian pretensions and superstitious idiocies that have not changed much across the centuries. lucian's innovation of applying the solemn form of the philosophical dialog to the purposes of scathing and riotous satire seems to arise from the epicurean belief that most philosophy is absurd fantasy and most social norms are unjustified habits. epicurean philosophy always aimed by rational explanation of the physical world to relieve mankind of the anxieties that belief in the supernatural seems to feed, and in these works lucian adds to reason the sparkling antidote of laughter and lighthearted parody.

If you ever get in a mood where you're suspecting that philosophy rots the brain, take a break and dip into this wonderful book. Others have noted that Lucian influenced Erasmus. I would reply, "Not enough!" I have never been able to read more than two pages of the supposedly hilarious "In Praise of Folly," but I can read anything and everything by Lucian, including his great satire, "Philosophies For Sale," where Zeus tries to raise a little cash by auctioning off philosophers, beginning with "that long-haired guy over there," Pythagoras. His little dialogue, "Timon," has volumes to say about Wealth, and says it all in about fifteen pages. Lucian loves to poke fun at Socrates, as well, openly doubting the "purity" of Socrates' love for handsome young men. "Alexander the Quack Prophet" may be Lucian's best piece. It's based upon a real person who lived at the same time as Lucian. I think the most memorable character is one Rutilianus, who is a mature, sensible Roman who has served Rome well in many important functions, but has a serious screw loose when it comes to religious gullibility. The satire is really deadly, especially if you have ever known someone who fits "the Rutilianus Profile." :-) It's fun reading, but, like most satire, it's making some serious points during all the fun.

This is an edited work and is well worth the purchase. Especially the dialog between Hermotimus

and Lycurgis. (sp?) Check it out.

Lucian, the second century (AD) satirist from Syria, was a master storyteller with a peculiar talent for wit and sarcasm. He had a profound impact upon Desiderius Erasmus' writings, such as the "Praise of Folly" and the "Colloquies." Even St Thomas More was greatly indebted to Lucian, whose works More translated and admired. These works are a collection of short stories in narrative and dialogue form. They are very telling of life in the second century of our era, pointing mostly to the philosophical and religious milieu of the Hellenistic world. He attacks sophists and displays his disdain for the priests of the Mystery Cults through the use of fierce rhetorical invective. The dialogues with the gods, also, are entertaining bits of literary genius, which will be useful to anyone seeking knowledge of the personality and background of the traditional gods of the Hellenistic world. The Norton edition of Lucian's satires is authoritative, reliable, and will ultimately be a prize for anyone interested in the literature of classical times

Lucian lived in the 2nd century A.C. He was a travelling orator. In those days people liked to listen to the witty language skills of those orators. Their speeches served no purpose, it was only meant to show off and to amuse. Besides his work as an orator, Lucian wrote a lot of 'Dialogues' or 'Satires', a kind of conversation in which he mocked several aspects of the society in those days. The most famous are 'Dialogues of the Gods', 'Dialogues of the Dead' and 'Dialogues of the courtesans'. One of my favourite satires is 'The judgement of Paris' (from Dialogues of the Gods). Athena, Hera and Aphrodite want Paris to decide which of them is the most beautiful goddess. In the manner of a real beauty contest, the three goddesses try to sell their merchandise to Paris. Finally he chooses Aphrodite and in return she promises that the most beautiful woman on earth, Helen, will be his. (It will start the Trojan War but that's another matter). If you read this book you will have a good idea of what the people in Antiquity called humour

I purchased this book based on a reference in another book that suggested that I might gain some understanding of society in the early centuries when the Christian Gospels were being written. From that perspective I have been disappointed.

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