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BRYN MAWR CLASSICAL REVIEW

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Sandrine Dubel (ed.), *Lucien de Samosate, Portrait du sophiste en amateur d'art. Études de littérature ancienne, 22*. Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2014. Pp. 264. ISBN 9782728805068. €25.00 (pb).

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This volume is a collection of Lucian of Samosata's writings on art, translated into French, bookended by a short preface by Dubel and a concluding essay by Jackie Pigeaud. These texts are supplemented by a map of the Roman Empire in the second century, a list of artists and artworks mentioned by Lucian, a bibliography, and an index.

Translations of Lucian's work are adapted from those of Eugène Talbot (1857) in accordance with Macleod's critical edition.

At first look this book would seem to be simply a sourcebook composed of Lucian's writings on Greek art and artists, aimed at students interested in the history of writing about art. However, the focus on Lucian implies other ends, as well as a more diffuse (perhaps more elusive) audience. Lucian's self-presentation as a sophist and orator cannot easily be divorced from his praise of visual artists, and the *paideia* of the so-called Second Sophistic includes, as Dubel argues in the preface, appreciation of art, particularly that of the classical past. Moreover, the rhetoric of memory often depends on artistic metaphors. Lucian presents himself as a true *connaisseur* of art, one who can see beyond the value of the material or the choice of subject matter and appreciate fine details of form, precision, and color. This trait, according to Dubel, distinguishes Lucian from other writers of ekphrases (her overview of ancient ekphrasis as a rhetorical exercise is helpful), who prefer to praise the subject matter rather than the artist.

Each excerpt is accompanied by an introduction and copious explanatory footnotes. In three instances the editor also provides other

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primary sources to illuminate the main text. For example, *Zeuxis* is accompanied by writings on centaur art by Philostratus and Callistratus. Seven of Lucian's works are published in their entirety, with extracts from another ten. The text is supplemented with 21 black-and-white illustrations; photographs and reconstructions of ancient artworks and architecture are interspersed among reproductions of Renaissance paintings, which underscore Lucian's importance over time as a *connoisseur*. For instance, *Herodotus or Aëtion*, with its ekphrasis on Aëtion's painting of the marriage of Alexander and Roxane, is illustrated with the fresco from the House of the Golden Bracelet as well as Raphael's drawing. Although they are helpful as quick references or memory aids, the quality of the illustrations reinforces the point that this book aims to say more about Lucian than about the works of art he describes.

As a principle for selecting works of Lucian to present in translation, a focus on art and connoisseurship is not unprecedented, but here it seems to drive interest in Lucian rather than art.¹ Taken together, the excerpts and the accompanying material portray Lucian as an *amateur* of art in more detail than most scholarship tends to do. This portrayal is informative for readers interested in Lucian or his period, adding to the numerous facets of identity that Lucian has presented to scholarly scrutiny, but one wonders if a sourcebook is likely to be a top priority for such an audience. Still, the notes accompanying each excerpt and the bibliography, which is broken down by category, will be helpful to both novice and expert in undertaking research on any of the works herein.

The final essay by Jackie Pigeaud, "Lucien et l'*ekphrasis*," sheds some light on the project of the preceding selection, moving blithely from one primary source to another under unremarkable subject headings. It is difficult to follow a coherent argument, as Pigeaud intersperses brief analyses of Lucian's works with discussions of comparanda from the age. One point here, that for Lucian and his contemporaries the ideas behind art, medicine, and rhetoric are deeply enmeshed, is not new or surprising for anyone who has kept abreast of scholarship on Greek culture in the Roman empire.² Pigeaud fleshes out the importance of *harmogē* (Latin *junctura*, French *greffe*) and proper arrangement through bodies, sculpture, painting, speech, poetry, metamorphosis, and hybridity. There is some food for thought here, particularly in the assemblage of primary sources, but readers looking for a clear argument based on the rich preceding material may not be satisfied.

Notes:

1. A noteworthy precedent is S. Maffei, *Luciano di Samosata. Descrizioni di opere d'arte* (Turin 1994).

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2. See, for example, the recent volume of J. Elsner and M. Meyer, eds.,

Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture (Cambridge 2014).