



Silent Eloquence: Lucian and Pantomime Dancing

Ismene Lada-Richards

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One of the greatest aesthetic attractions in the ancient world was pantomime dancing, a ballet-style entertainment in which a silent, solo dancer incarnated a series of mythological characters to the accompaniment of music and sung narrative. Looking at a multitude of texts and particularly Lucian's "On the Dance", a dialogue written at the height of pantomime's popularity, this innovative cultural study of the genre offers a radical reassessment of its importance in the symbolic economy of imperial and later antiquity. Rather than being trivial or lowbrow, pantomime was thoroughly enmeshed in wider social discourses on morality and sexuality, gender and desire and a key player in the fierce battles about education and culture that raged in the ancient world. A close reading of primary sources, judiciously interlaced with a wealth of interdisciplinary perspectives, makes this challenging book essential for anyone interested in the performance culture of the Greek and Roman world.

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