



## Viata si opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter

*Matei Calinescu*

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A biography of the anti-charismatic prophet Zacharias Lichter, written as a collection of essays (about courage, poetry, women, responsibility, liberty, etc.) bound together by brief poems written by Zacharias Lichter.

## Viata si opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter Details

Date : Published 1969 by Editura Pentru Literatura

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Author : Matei C?linescu

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# From Reader Review Viata si opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter for online ebook

## Lauren Davis says

I may simply not have been the right frame of mind for a Romanian novel. The voice failed to capture me, or perhaps it was just a little too philosophically bleak. This is a picaresque novel of an imagined philosopher who speaks 'in torrent and trades in absurdity' (Kirkus). Perhaps when The Trumpery is no longer in power I will try it again.

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## Declan says

A lengthy discussion of the book here:  
[https://www.goodreads.com/read\\_status...](https://www.goodreads.com/read_status...)

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## Kasa Cotugno says

Originally written in 1969 in the age of Ceau?escu, this dense treatise of thought gained a cult following when its author left Rumania for the United States. Very thoughtful, but I did not find many of the ideas here original. The conditions of its longevity were its most interesting aspects.

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## Wm says

Just odd enough and funny enough and perceptive to still be worthwhile even though it's outdated in attitudes towards women and (somewhat) Jewish people.

The takedowns of psychiatry and literary pomposity are trenchant and funny. May be thought-provoking for both believers and agnostics/atheists, but it really depends on if you're open to this type of philosophizing.

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## Ian says

Bizarre philosophy from middle Europe, Lichter is layabout who begs, gives away what he has, stays nears nudist beaches and generally acts the ragamuffin.

At only 120 pages and with around 30 chapters, each providing his view "On something " with the somethings including: lying, imagination, mirrors, God, old people, reticence, suicide. It is structured as a series of short essays which gradually provide a picture of Lichter and his friends - Poldy, the drunk, Doctor S - trying to put him in an asylum, W the mathematician whose theory took 8 years to develop and no-one has checked it yet etc...

Not sure I learnt much from it, but at least it was short !

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### **Lisajean says**

Less than a month into the year, I've already found what I'm sure will be the best book I read in 2019. Not only is *The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter* objectively good, it is also perfectly aligned with my personal taste and philosophical leanings.

This book is without any plot and has almost no character development, but I don't mind. I find that plot-driven books tend to fall short stylistically and I don't need relatable characters to connect to a story. Mimetic literature represents the surface reality, but it takes something different, something experimental to depict the deeper truths underlying the world of appearances. *The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter* is such a book and it feels true and relevant even to a reader in a different time and culture.

It is not a novel in the traditional sense- it simply presents disconnected stories and musings from the life and philosophy of a homely beggar attempting to live his life according to the "Platonic ideal of poverty." Lichter is an ugly, impoverished fool who befriends the drunk, the senile, and the disillusioned while avoiding the cold probing of psychoanalysis. He struggles to live authentically in a corrupt, materialistic world and finds that the best approach is a determinedly anti-rational pursuit of absurdism and "true perplexity." A person in true perplexity rejects sense-perception, social conventions, and other false impositions of meaning onto an illogical world and, through his awareness of the impossibility of meaningful action, becomes immersed in pure potentiality and oneness with God.

This book was a bizarre mix of fiction, philosophy, and poetry, but its disparate parts coalesce to send a clear message- one must search for truth in a world that doesn't make sense, behave ethically in an unjust universe, and strive to live as an individual in a society that sees nonconformity as a sign of madness and stupidity.

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### **Jazmin says**

Part of Book Riot's Read Harder Challenge: a translated book written by/translated by a woman.

Fucking dull, esoteric, ridiculously technical and just an excuse to show off a university education.

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### **Michael Scott says**

Viata si Opiniile lui Zacharias Lichter is the romanced biography of the eternal anti-charismatic eponymous hero: Zacharias Lichter is the new-age Roaming Jew and prophet, in search of trivial truths in a fast-paced world, and refusing commiseration and modern society. Structured as a collection of short essays sutured by even shorter poems by Lichter and written in an ironic tone (to escape censorship--the book was published in Communist Romania and became one of the underground's important books), the book is about everything and nothing. Lichter is defined in relationship with women, children, freedom, procrastination, traveling, wearing masks, etc.--a manual of opposition to the Communist system or an interesting read. The writing style is convoluted, but thought-provoking for this reader. Overall, a difficult read but a thoroughly enjoyable

book, particularly for people knowledgeable of the situation in Communist Romania.

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### **Taylor Lee says**

Magnificent, mind-bending, and spewing all manner of subversive philosophical perspective— let's call it an intellectual upheaval braced into small chapters for masticating ease. Fundamentally Taoist, straight off, seems a' me, some pastoral mountains and rivers landscape tucked away as protest against a monolith of Chinese imperial corruption, yet placed instead in his tiny, urban, European setting, the character Zacharias Lichter couldn't be more perfectly human. What more do you want from us, woebegone creatures caught plainly in a pitiful, consumptive materialistic existence, this so-dubbed pervasive illness, capitalism? It is there to be marveled at, the magnificent brilliance lattice-like latent in Lichter's fictional, fabulous fabrications. Go forth and be melt, minds of the masses, massive minds melting, of their own, a'neath this shower for thought and play.

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### **Brooke Salaz says**

I'm not sure exactly what I thought of this. Maybe it's profundity will sink in later and I will think of it more as 4 stars but for now it's a 3. Zacharias Lichter is a societal dropout on the streets of Bucharest. He is an aficionado of the biblical Job and seems to aspire to that kind of abasement and suffering in the name of sainthood. He contrasts the proper approach to this self abnegation to mere "gymnasts" maybe yogis or other spiritual athletes but I'm not sure I fully grasped the distinction. He identifies "perplexity" as the highest level of mindset preceding his version of "enlightenment" I guess although I don't recall him using that term. He values what others scorn, extreme ugliness, drunken silence, poverty. I admit to my own perplexity through much of this work.

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### **Robert Wechsler says**

The best thing about this incredible book is the translation by the author's widow, Adriana Calinescu, and the great German-to-English translator Breon Mitchell. The translation is pitch perfect, keeping the wildness under control while making the dryness enjoyable. Short chapters get across the protagonist's ideas in a wide variety of ways, and keep the reader on her toes by never making it clear how seriously one is supposed to take any statement or idea. The book is brilliant, thought-provoking, humorous, and short.

If you enjoy philosophy (especially existential) and don't require plot, characters interacting in common ways, or other things one expects from a novel, you should find this a fine, very fresh reading experience. Ignore the stuff about the time and place this book was written: it is timeless.

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### **peg says**

I read this book as part of the 2019 PEN AMERICA PRIZE for translated works Longlist.

<https://pen.org/2019longlists/>

It was originally published in Communist Romania in 1989 and was quickly suppressed by the govt., causing

the author to immigrate to the US.

It is written in the form of short essays by the eponymous narrator, a hermit-type character who purposely lives in poverty. Many of the chapters were too philosophical for my taste (and understanding!) but I particularly enjoyed those on BEGGING, TRAVEL, SUICIDE, OLD PEOPLE, INNOCENCE and GUILT. I am sure that rereading it would be a good thing, which I will do if it makes the Shortlist!

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### **Tom Scott says**

Written in Romanian in 1969 and translated in English in (I think) 2018 this is a faux biography of a (probably) mentally disturbed prophet in 1930s Romania. My head hurts. It's funny and confounding. I didn't get most of the philosophy but I did laugh out loud. I had to ask Alexa many times what a certain word meant. I'm punching above my weight here. I'm flailing.

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### **Jordan West says**

3.5; fascinating and frustrating, often in equal measure.

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### **Therese says**

I am unsure how to rate this book. Written during the Romanian Communist dictatorship, this book was viewed as quite important, a commentary conformity.

The main character, Zacharias Lichter, is a crazy holy fool whose poems and reflections on life are collected in this book. All the chapters are very short, usually one to three pages. While some of the chapters, especially on old age and psychiatry, were very enlightening, others left me with a "so what" feeling.

This could be a book that was best suited being read during a particular time and place.

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