PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY IN THE CLASSICAL WORLD

*Performance and Identity in the Classical World* traces attitudes toward actors in Greek and Roman culture as a means of understanding ancient conceptions of, and anxieties about, the self. The actor’s ability to impersonate different characters might be considered a threat to a philosophical commitment to the stability of the self, or to a political commitment to the stability of the social order. Actors were thus often viewed as frauds and impostors, capable of deliberately fabricating their identities. Conversely, they were sometimes viewed as possessed by the characters that they played, or as merely playing themselves onstage. Numerous sources reveal an uneasy fascination with actors and acting, from the writings of elite intellectuals (philosophers, orators, biographers, historians) to the abundant theatrical anecdotes that can be read as a body of “popular performance theory.” *Performance and Identity in the Classical World* examines these sources, along with dramatic texts, and addresses the issue of impersonation from the late fifth century BCE to the early Roman Empire.

Anne Duncan is assistant professor of Classics in the Department of Languages and Literatures at Arizona State University. She has published articles on Greek and Roman comedy, Greek tragedy, and English Renaissance drama.
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ANNE DUNCAN
Arizona State University
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PREFACE


I am afraid I have followed no consistent principle in the transliteration of Greek names and words. Names and words that seemed too familiar in their Latinized version to change (Ajax, Plato) were kept in that form; less familiar names and words were transliterated more closely (*Thesmophoriazousai*, Kleon). All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

This book is dedicated to Eric Berger.