



Performance and Identity in the Classical World

Anne Duncan

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Performance and Identity in the Classical World traces attitudes towards actors in Greek and Roman culture as a means of understanding ancient conceptions of, and anxieties about, the self. Actors were 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'. This 2005 text examines these sources, along with dramatic texts and addresses the issue of impersonation, from the late fifth century BCE to the early Roman Empire.

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