downshift mark moments in narrative when speech as a narratological category becomes elusive and the tripartite division of speech modes (direct discourse, indirect discourse and reported speech acts) reaches its limits. In these and similar contexts, engagement with perspectives from cognitive narratology (addressing the fuzzy borders of speech and consciousness) would enrich this volume's original analysis of speech modes.

Overall, SAGN 5 has successfully reacted to earlier criticism of the series by further broadening its scope. With its mostly traditional narratological perspective, this book offers a disciplinary starting point for students and scholars interested in a particular author or text, as well as a useful springboard for experts in the field to dive deeper, conceptually and diachronically, into the study of Greek narrative.

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DIXON (D.W.) and GARRISON (J.S.) **Performing Gods in Classical Antiquity and the Age of Shakespeare**. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021. Pp. 197, illus. £85. 9781350098145. doi:10.1017/S0075426923000460

What do we see when we watch actors playing gods onstage? In *Performing Gods in Classical Antiquity and the Age of Shakespeare*, Dustin W. Dixon and John S. Garrison argue that staging gods is intrinsically metatheatrical: when human actors present themselves as immortals, they highlight the uncanny power of performance to effect radical transformations. Observing that 'actors playing gods must transcend both identity and mortal ontology' (2), the authors assert that dramatists 'depict the gods as evocative metaphors for theatrical power' (3). After a lively introduction, the first chapter offers a broad survey of 'gods as focal points for exploring metatheatricality' (15), through examples of the *deus ex machina* and its variations in plays by Euripides, Aristophanes, Shakespeare and others. The second chapter examines staging Helen of Troy in Euripides' *Helen* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The third explores actors' transformations in plays including Daniel's *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, Beaumont's *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* and Plautus' *Amphitruo.* The fourth chapter looks at the influence of the *Oresteia* on *Hamlet*, and the fifth considers theatre as conferring a kind of immortality on authors and players. The book closes with an afterword on Mary Zimmerman's 1996 play *Metamorphoses.*

Dixon and Garrison develop some compelling and persuasive arguments about gods' theatrical effects. In Chapter One, attention to the privileged power of gods' speech acts leads to strong readings of Athena in Sophocles' *Ajax*, Mercury in Robert Wilson's *The Cobbler's Prophesy* and Apollo's oracle in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. In Chapter Three, a discussion of Jupiter's impersonation of a mortal in *Amphitruo* leads to a useful analysis of his intervention in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, when 'we see a classical god on the Renaissance stage being instrumental to raising someone's status' (90). Alongside these illuminating readings, there are also some missed opportunities. Although the book's stated focus is the metatheatrical resonance of immortals onstage, in practice most of its chapters do not actually explore staging gods. The chapter on Helen of Troy develops the claim that her beauty and semi-divine parentage make her like a god, and the discussion of *Hamlet* similarly rests on the idea that 'Via simile King Hamlet is given the position of a classical god' (106). As the authors observe elsewhere, however, 'gods and humans do differ starkly. One possesses immortality and supernatural powers. The other is marked by fragility in the face of impending death and limited autonomy' (117). King Hamlet, in

particular, is starkly defined by his mortality; blurring this distinction dilutes the force of the book's central argument. The same is true of sections that omit gods altogether, including a discussion of friendship in *Hamlet* and the *Libation Bearers*, and the final chapter's argument that 'actors can achieve a complex form of immortality' (126). The fading of the book's central focus is especially a pity because so many actual onstage gods go unexplored: Marlowe's comic portrait of the squabbling Juno and Venus in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, and the outrageous escapades of Olympians in Heywood's *Ages* plays, are just a few that call out for attention.

The book's juxtaposition of classical and early modern plays similarly has both strengths and weaknesses. Its comparative perspective usefully highlights the many classical gods crowding early modern stages, and opens a door to important conversations about influence, reception and the particular attractions and challenges offered by pagan deities to (largely) Protestant English playwrights. In rapidly shuttling between periods, however, the authors do not always attend sufficiently to their differences; and when they do, they sometimes make errors. After discussing Jupiter's dalliance with Ganymede in Marlowe's *Dido*, for instance, they write that playgoers would 'both recall and forget that Aeneas and Dido are played by an adult man and a boy, displaying the very same erotic dynamic that we have seen the gods display' (39). In fact, because Marlowe's *Dido* was written for and staged by the Children of the Chapel, both these characters were played by boys, as were both Jove and Ganymede. The authors are right that the actors' bodies highlight 'the double-work of mimetic representation of gender on the early modern stage' (39), but watching children portray adult men and male gods generates very different effects than the adult-child hierarchy they suggest.

The afterword leaves behind both classical antiquity and the age of Shakespeare to discuss Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*, a retelling of Ovid showing 'that actors have the same power as the gods to transform into new shapes' (140). The play usefully reflects key themes from earlier chapters, but jumping to a new period extends the book's departure from the classical and early modern performances of gods introduced so persuasively in the introduction and first chapter. *Performing Gods* offers a provocative argument, with richly rewarding implications for a wide range of plays. While a more consistent focus would have been welcome, the book does a valuable service in opening a conversation on this important topic.

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DUBEL (S.), FAVREAU-LINDER (A.-M.) and OUDOT (E.) (eds) **Homère rhétorique: études de réception antique** (Recherches sur les rhétoriques religieuses 28). Turnhout: Brepols, 2018. Pp. 256. €75. 9782503580814.
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From the Hellenistic period, rhetoric became a branch of knowledge which addressed all forms of literary discourse, prose and poetry alike, and thus the only branch of knowledge specializing in the exegesis of poetry. For a number of reasons, Aristotle's theory of mimetic fiction exerted no significant influence on the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine literary culture, and it is not before the High Renaissance that poetics re-emerged as a self-contained discipline approaching literature on its own terms. This supremacy of rhetoric or, as Pierre Chiron puts it in this volume, 'l'impérialisme de la