



# **Actor as Anti-Character: Dionysus, the Devil, and the Boy Rosalind (Lontobyn Chronicle)**

*Lesley W. Soule*

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Working from the premise that the stage performer's primary functions derive from celebrative rituals, this book describes the figure of the actor as anti-character in premodern popular theatre. Particularly in plays belonging to the popular, performative tradition, the actor simultaneously impersonated and subverted the character of the playtext. By doing so, he affirmed the ritual-celebrative authority of the performer and audience over the ideological authority of the written text. Included are close analyses of three major playtexts in performance: Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the medieval mystery plays, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

The introduction briefly lays out the basic theatrical theory underlying the phenomenon of actor as anti-character. The book then explores three paradigmatic figures: the god Dionysus, archetypal model of the comic actor; the Devil, as both farcical individual and wild demonic chorus, who brought carnival disruption to medieval religious drama; and the Elizabethan boy player of Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* who, using the marketplace techniques of traditional popular performance, colluded with his rowdy audience to subvert a sophisticated character from a literary romance.

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