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Reviews

Berenice Verhelst, *Direct Speech in Nonnus'* Dionysiaca: *Narrative and Rhetorical Functions of the Characters' "Varied" and "Many-Faceted" Words*. (Mnemosyne Supplements 397), Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017. XI + 330 pp. ISBN: 9789004325890

The epic poem *Dionysiaca*, written by Nonnus of Panopolis sometime in the fifth century CE in 48 books, is the longest surviving poem from antiquity. It relays the god Dionysus's childhood and youth, his expedition to India and his eventually triumphant return to Europe, in a sprawling, extremely discursive narrative. It is a notoriously difficult work to get a handle on, and Verhelst does her readers a real service by including a summary of the poem in an appendix to the book under review (pp. 302–7). Amidst a recent upsurge of scholarly interest in Nonnus (the main fruits of which are ably reviewed in the introduction), Verhelst—in her first monograph—seeks to deepen our understanding of the special character of the *Dionysiaca* and the literary culture from which it sprang by focusing on a single prominent aspect of the poem, namely the form and function of its 305 directly reported speeches. Taken together, these speeches comprise 7,573 of the poem's 21,286 lines. Her hunch that an analysis of the speeches is a productive way to approach Nonnus's ποικιλία on the whole pays off handsomely. Verhelst has written a book that is in many ways illuminating and will be essential reading for anyone interested in Nonnus and late-antique literature more generally as well as in the interaction between rhetorical theory and literary practice.

A lengthy introduction globally compares Nonnus's strategies of speech representation to those of Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, and Quintus of Smyrna. It shows that Nonnus's speeches both occur with a higher frequency and are on average significantly longer than those of his predecessors. In addition, Nonnus displays a marked preference for giving speeches to relatively minor characters, who also only speak once, and for representing monologues over dialogues. 78% of speeches stand alone, as opposed to only 14% in the *Iliad*, for instance. Both these initial observations raise questions about the nature and function of represented speeches in the *Dionysiaca*, as they appear to run counter to the idea, often found in scholarship on earlier Greek epics, that speeches serve to show how characters interact with one another and how they develop through

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successive speeches. The body of Verhelst's book is divided into two parts, each with three chapters. The first part aims to show that Nonnus's speeches are the product of a refined interplay between the conventions governing speech representation in the earlier literary tradition and the overtly formalistic rhetorical "bent" of late-antique culture. The second homes in on the narrative functions of the set speeches in the *Dionysiaca*. Except for Chapter 6, which contains an in-depth analysis of the speeches in the Beroe episode (*Dionysiaca* 41–43), each chapter combines a survey of the topic under discussion (e.g. "τις-speeches" in Chapter 3, or "persuasive speeches" in Chapter 4) with a number of more specific case studies.

The strength of Verhelst's treatment throughout is that she fruitfully uses the speeches to synthesize and to confirm or modify emerging strands in recent scholarship on Nonnus and to suggest further lines of inquiry. For example, while scattered publications have focused on particular intertexts of the *Dionysiaca*, Verhelst makes a convincing case that, in order truly to understand the texture of Nonnus's poetry, we need to be aware of how he is constantly conscious of and playing with essentially the whole Greek tradition, including not only epic, but also tragedy, lyric, the novel, historiography, rhetorical theory, and even the visual arts. A focus on the speeches turns out to be an excellent way to reaffirm and further entrench Nonnus's epic as a culmination point of classical Greek literature. A second take-away point from the first part of the study is Verhelst's apt characterization of Nonnus's practice as an (often playful) "rhetorical transformation" of epic conventions; she thus makes more precise Chuvin's claim that Nonnus's work represents a "déconstruction de l'épopée."[1] The overtly rhetorical nature of the speeches uttered by characters, often irrespective of their status or mood, may not be to the taste of all modern audiences, but it is an essential aspect of Nonnus's project, and one that Verhelst demonstrates has its own attractions. A third major point, which emerges from the second part of the book, is that the speeches are crucial in creating dramatic irony and spurring on the reader to further intellectual reflections on the nature of poetic truth and falsehood. I found Chapter 5, on characters verbalizing the visual scenes they see in front of them, particularly stimulating here.

Verhelst brings an enviably broad frame of reference to the task (the result of her impressively wide reading) and is a level-headed guide throughout. However, the material has not always been digested very well. Some of the material need not have survived the transition from thesis to book. This can be said fairly, I think, of the long survey of secondary literature on exhortative speeches (παρακλητικοὶ λόγοι) in Chapter 2 (pp. 82–7). The structure of the chapters also sometimes leaves something to be desired; in particular, the relation between the general surveys and the case studies that make up most chapters is not always clear. To stick to Chapter 2, Verhelst starts out by

[1]Pierre Chuvin, "Nonnos de Panopolis et la 'déconstruction' de l'épopée," in B. Grange, F. Montanari, and A. Rengakos, eds, *La poésie épique grecque* (Geneva / Vandœuvres: Fondation Hardt, 2006), 249–68.

demonstrating that Nonnus was thoroughly at home in the *topoi* that belong to παρακλητικοὶ λόγοι. The case studies that follow, however, home in on exceptional instances, such as that of Typhon addressing his own limbs as if they were soldiers (*Dionysiaca* 2.258–355). This way of proceeding leaves unclear whether Nonnus's handling of *topoi* can really be characterized in terms of him "inverting and parodying these traditional elements" (p. 296); for the most part, he seems quite conventional here. The structure of Chapter 5 means that the discussion of the speech by an Achaean sailor looking at Europa (*Dionysiaca* 1.93–124; discussed on pp. 236–42) is widely separated from Hera's speech about the same event (*Dionysiaca* 1.326–43; discussed on pp. 262–4), so that bringing out the purposeful connections between the two involves a good deal of repetition. In general, Verhelst occasionally has a tendency to paraphrase and summarize in cases where more analysis is required—but some of this is perhaps inevitable when dealing with the *Dionysiaca*, which is not a book that is very familiar even to scholars specializing in late antiquity. And Verhelst is to be applauded for her efforts to make her book appeal to a wider community of classicists; she certainly succeeds in making Nonnus sound more interesting than the picture of him in the standard handbooks would suggest.

The book is on the whole free from blemishes, give or take a few typos (e.g., for "248" in the title on p. 306, read "48.248"), unidiomatic expressions (e.g. the Dutchism "hunting for effect" on p. X) and minor mistakes (e.g. on p. 103, where the exhortative *topoi* concerning τὸ συμφέρον and τὸ ἐκβησόμενον are strangely equated with the consequences of "victory" and "defeat," respectively). Unfortunately (and due to no mistake of the author), the book is set in accordance with the bizarre editorial decision taken some time ago by Brill (also in evidence in other recent publications) to print all single-letter and unpunctuated abbreviations in small caps, so that one finds side by side references to, say, Nonnus's *Par*. and D. (instead of *D*.), Euripides's *Bacch*. and IA (instead of *IA*) or, in bibliographical references, "Ann Arbor (Mich.)" and "Cambridge (UK)." It is to be hoped that Brill will soon abandon this silly convention.

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Brian Gogan, *Jean Baudrillard: The Rhetoric of Symbolic Exchange*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2017. 234 pp. ISBN: 9780809336258

Baudrillard has always been difficult to categorize. He began life as a German studies scholar and translator, taught sociology as well as philosophy, and later in life became a general commentator on culture, politics, and society. He was a photographer, a theory pop star, an aphorist and

a provocateur. Brian Gogan argues that he is best understood as a rhetorical theorist. He offers a serviceable compact overview of Baudrillard's vast oeuvre in this book. He writes clearly and signposts his argument abundantly. He often relies more on citation of secondary sources than a close reading of Baudrillard's texts.

Baudrillard's most famous concept is the "simulacrum." While difficult, the simulacrum is perhaps best understood as a likeness without a referent. In the era of "fake news" and "alternative facts," this idea is perhaps easier to accept than it was when introduced in the seventies and eighties. While the proliferation of simulacra has been accelerated by social media and our ability to simulate and disseminate anything imaginable, simulacra, like the poor, have always been with us.

Gogan asks us to understand the concept of the simulacrum in terms of three central motifs that make up Baudrillard's rhetorical theory: the art of appearance, the art of disappearance, and symbolic exchange. The art of appearance is the production of a simulacrum that need not be tied to any pre-existing object. Nonetheless, the simulacrum rhetorically functions in the world as if it were a representation, and it can be reproduced endlessly creating its own functional economy. We might think of certain forms of advertising or even internet myths like Pizzagate. Such simulacra take on a life of their own. "This point reveals Baudrillard's commitment to studying discursive effects and perceptual appearances as general systems of circulation" (58), Gogan writes. He argues that the art of appearance can best be understood in terms of the use Plato and Aristotle make of the term *phantasia* in the *Sophist* and the *Rhetoric*. We will return to this point at the end.

The art of disappearance is really a corollary of the art of appearance. When things are made to appear, other things are obscured. Gogan is right to underline that Baudrillard insists this process should not be understood as a form of Hegelian negation, but in fact the resemblance is strong. The fact that Baudrillard feels he must insist leads one to believe he recognizes the affinity. Every appearance is simultaneously a disappearance. In the multiplication of appearances, there is an emptying out of meaning. There is a necessary ambivalence created as simulacra both exist and do not exist and come to occupy the place of previously circulating representations. The result is not the expansion of meaning but its radical reduction.

The interaction of these two arts of appearance and disappearance in discourse is referred to as symbolic exchange. This is a process of the creation and circulation of simulacra to both posit and deplete meaning through social interactions. If we think of the Trump campaign we can see where certain tropes were created that seemed to have meaning, were circulated through the mediasphere, and were then turned against themselves to empty themselves of meaning. The very appearances that produced meaning simultaneously produced meaninglessness. Think of notions such as "fake news" or "the swamp" or "the waves of immigrant rapists sweeping across the southern border." These tropes only produce their effects to the extent that they become the objects of general exchange, part of a symbolic economy that in the very process of positing meaning makes it disappear.

Following Baudrillard, Gogan asserts throughout the book that "perception itself is rhetorical" (8). He means that "language use brings about perception" (8). Here is where I think many a materialist, but also many a more traditional scholar, will have a hard time following. For if the claim were simply that tropes and the use of language shapes human perception, there could be no argument. What you perceive as the just, the normal, or even—more concretely—the sexual is inevitably affected by the categories and images through which you process your perceptions. Moreover, even the object world itself is created as a set of distinct identifiable objects through the existence, elaboration, and circulation of linguistic categories. There was a world in which oxygen did not exist, gravity was not a concept, and in which the atoms of Lucretius were very different from those of Einstein or Niels Bohr.

In the end, however, these observations do not establish the claim that "language use brings about perception." The prelinguistic infant has perception. My dog, whose language use is minimal, perceives. And this elementary recognition is important. While there may be no human perception worthy of entering into symbolic exchange not shaped by language use (i.e., rhetoric), that is very different from saying "perception is rhetorical." The latter asserts there is no necessary referent of perception. It asserts that all perceptions are merely simulacra and in no sense representations. *Phantasia*, on this level, is triumphant, and meaning has disappeared.

Nonetheless, Aristotle's position, which Gogan quotes approvingly, is very different. For Aristotle, *phantasia* ("appearance") is what mediates between perception and judgment (144). Thus, while there may be no judgment without rhetoric, *aisthēsis* ("perception") exists and so differential judgements can be made. Indeed, the appearance on which judgment is predicated must be rigorously separated from perception itself. In a world of "alternative facts" and of "fake news," a world in which climate science is a matter of opinion, the imperative not to reduce experience to the exchange of interchangeable simulacra, all equally unmoored from perception, has never been more urgent. Baudrillard was masterful in predicting and analyzing the rhetoric of our post-truth society, but we will need something more to survive it.

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Michele Kennerly and Damien Smith Pfister, eds., *Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks*, Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2018. 328 pp. ISBN: 9780817359041

When Edward Corbett first published his didactic volume *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, the context was mid-century television culture, and many of Corbett's examples, which were intended to demonstrate the continuing applicability of traditional tropes from ancient Athens, relied on familiarity with mass media. Since that time – when Corbett marveled at the introduction of the data-rich medium of microfilm – much in information

technology has changed dramatically, including the advent of personal computing, the rise of social media platforms, and the ubiquity of access to distributed networks.

Of course, there were significant works published on classical rhetoric and digital communication during the nineties, including Richard Lanham's *The Electronic Word* and Kathleen Welch's *Electric Rhetoric* during the Web 1.0 era. Although Lanham and Welch are not contributors to *Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks*, this new volume is a notable achievement in representing a very broad range of perspectives from classical rhetoric – including concepts from Aristotle, Plato, Protagoras, Isocrates, and Gorgias – and applying them to seemingly ephemeral online phenomena expressed in networked publics.

The introduction to *Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks* outlines the case for understanding the ancients through contemporary digital practices and vice versa; at the same time, it resists simplistic or arbitrary "cutting and pasting" (2) of heterogeneous sources without sufficient justification. It observes that the texts in the collection represent a range of possible linkages between present and past: historical antecedents, analogues for practices, heuristics for theoretical framing, and cues to conventions such as social customs and moral orientations, as well as relations of renewal.

Many of the essays outline broad theories to explain internet infrastructures, epistemological categories, and patterns of replication, while demonstrating that the authors are participant observers with active online lives in essays that are rich with detail. For example, Carolyn R. Miller's essay argues that the vast multiplicity of endless and ever more obscure internet subgenres is related to the interdependencies of *imitatio* and *inventio* in user-generated online content creation, thus explaining today's hyperawareness of genre in a wide range of media. Mari Lee Mifsud's contribution to the collection emphasizes how "network" functions as a verb as well as a noun and that the many possible terms for networked activity in ancient Greek should remind readers of contemporary conditions of feminized labor. In recounting the *copia* of mythological stories of weaving women, Mifsud argues that "to forget this connection between weaving and coding constrains living well together" (40), so that exploitative entanglements are willfully ignored. Volume editors Michele Kennerly and Damien Smith Pfister challenge the notion of the meme as "selfish" and question the assumptions of Richard Dawkins, who coined the term, to emphasize how memes exhibit generosity, which can be explained by their qualities of *poiēsis*, *genesis*, and *mimesis*. Thus "memes are made and done, memes are generative, and memes are mimetic" (208).

The book also tries to present a more global vision of the history of rhetorical traditions, largely successfully and with an appreciation for approaches in comparative rhetoric that avoid the Orientalism of old paradigms of contrastive rhetoric. Moreover, the three essays that apply ancient rhetorics from outside the Mediterranean world do much more than merely challenge Eurocentrism. An essay by Scott R. Stroud concerned with Jaina attitudes about nonviolence applied to online crowd shaming offers useful

ways to think about the kind of violence that does not obviously harm others as nonetheless ethically compromised. Stroud counsels a culture of "calling in" rather than "calling out." Arabella Lyon's essay, which interprets the use of tactical media in the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong as an enactment of Confucian principles, explains how resistance and deference to authority are not necessarily binary opposites. Even the seemingly less disciplined argument in Scott Haden Church's "Remix, Śūnyatā, and Prosōpopoeia: Projecting Voice in the Digital Age" can itself be appreciated as a kind of theoretically dense cross-cultural remix.

Fortunately, the essays that take risks in this volume often bring the reader rewards. For example, the essay by Rosa A. Eberly and Jeremy David Johnson might initially seem to be a more off-topic, even sycophantic account of the virtuosity of Harry Shearer as a non-digital radio performer. Ultimately, however, it makes a compelling argument that questions the notion of a stable *ethos* online by considering the *tropos* of multiple twists and turns in the case of the notorious Reddit troll Violentacrez.

The only serious drawback of the book is that it doesn't seem to be in dialogue with many scholars of rhetoric who are emphasizing the media specificity of the current moment. For example, there is a notable absence of substantive engagement with contemporary digital rhetoric scholars, such as Annette Vee, Douglas Eyman, James J. Brown Jr., Thomas Rickert, and David Rieder, even as some of these names are inserted in passing or cited in notes. Ian Bogost's work on procedural rhetoric in new media scholarship is only briefly mentioned despite its importance. Certainly, arguments concerned with media-specific topics such as platform governance or code literacy might have been helpful to develop some of the arguments in this volume. At the very least, this seems like a missed opportunity to promote meaningful discussions about the canon of delivery. Furthermore, because this collection largely focuses on human rhetorical agents rather than non-human ones and because it says relatively little about artificial intelligence technologies, machine vision algorithms, or media infrastructures, thinking through all the non-anthropocentric components of the contemporary rhetorical situation using classical frameworks would likely benefit from more interchange between scholarly camps.

Nonetheless, *Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks* is a valuable addition to scholarly conversations about digital rhetoric. The terms and concepts from ancient rhetorics are thoroughly unpacked for non-classicists, and the relevance of the interesting and thought-provoking case studies is established with clear connections between the past and the present. Overall, it is an excellent addition to the digital rhetoric bookshelf, even to the scholar who might identify as a critic concerned primarily with non-human agency or media-specific interpretive approaches.

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Haixia W. Lan. *Aristotle and Confucius on Rhetoric and Truth: The Form and the Way*. Routledge, 2017. 228 pp. ISBN 9781472487360

At a 2013 Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute seminar on comparative rhetoric, twenty-five scholars spent a week together reading scholarship on comparative rhetoric of the recent past and charting out possible paths for the future. In their culminating statement, "A Manifesto: The What and How of Comparative Rhetoric," which appeared in *Rhetoric Review* in 2015 (34.3), they outlined best practices in the subfield, underscoring both the imperative to speak for and with the other and the need to cultivate self-reflexivity and accountability for such engagement. They further called on comparative rhetoric scholars to search for "simultaneity, heterogeneity, and interdependence" both within and between different rhetorical traditions and practices. Haixia Lan's *Aristotle and Confucius on Rhetoric and Truth: The Form and the Way* provides an example of what such best practices actually can look like and of how best to center comparative rhetorical studies on simultaneity, heterogeneity, and interdependence.

Lan's monograph, consisting of five chapters together with an introduction and an epilogue, offers an in-depth comparative study of Aristotle (384–322 BCE) and Confucius (551–479 BCE), two pivotal figures hailing from Greek and Chinese ancient cultures, respectively. While plenty of studies have focused on Aristotle and Confucius in the past, they tend to be informed by a philosophical and literary framework. Meanwhile, comparative rhetoric scholars have also studied Aristotle and Confucius, but none, in my view, has offered such a comprehensive study of these two thinkers as Lan has done, for which she must be commended.

The introduction provides a succinct overview, laying out both its object of study (focusing on the similarities and differences in Aristotle and Confucius's rhetorical thinking) and its method of study (deploying a relational and contextualized approach that traverses disciplinary boundaries). Such a study, for Lan, not only presents comparative rhetoricians with a better opportunity to understand these two thinkers' singular contributions to the development of rhetoric but also enhances the prospect of a more felicitous exchange between the two cultures they represent and continue to influence and, better still, between East and West in the global contact zones of the twenty-first century. No less important, Lan's study also counters sticky binaries that pit, for example, Aristotle's purported discourse of abstraction and linearity against Confucius's alleged discourse of pragmatism and circularity. It further problematizes past studies that focus exclusively on either differences or similarities but not both or that are long in overgeneralizations and short on contextualized or recontextualized engagements and discussions.

Each of the five subsequent chapters provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of one central aspect of Aristotle and Confucius's rhetorical thinking. They together contribute to a portrait of two individuals being separated by time and space but joined by an unfailing insistence on hylomorphic thinking that Truth or *tianming* (the cosmic order) is enmattered in, and can be

actualized through, rhetorical practices; on engaging self, other, and the cosmos with an inclusive vision; and on conceptualizing ultimate realities with analogy, be it form (by Aristotle) or the way (by Confucius).

For example, in Chapter One, Lan takes up rhetorical invention or the dynamic and mutually entailing relationship between language-in-use and knowledge-making. She characterizes Aristotle's views on *episteme* as knowledge of certainty, *techne* as knowledge of probability, and rhetoric as *techne* that intersects with *episteme*. In other words, Aristotle's rhetoric dwells in this in-between space where certainty and unpredictability join hands and dialectic and sophistical reasoning mingle with each other. Chapter Two, "Interpreting the *Analects*," takes its readers to Confucius, to the *Analects*, a collection of conversations between the Master and his students compiled by the latter after his death, and to the rhetorical dimension of his ways of knowing and speaking, the latter of which manifests itself in Confucius's complex understanding of rhetorical invention, of the role language, audience, and context play in the making of probable or local knowledge. For Lan, developing an historical and interdisciplinary understanding of rhetorical invention becomes key to advancing comparative rhetorical studies of the *Analects* and to studying both similarities and differences within the same rhetorical tradition(s) and among different rhetorical traditions. This kind of emphasis *both* parts company with a tendency in comparative rhetoric to exclusively pivot toward either similarity or difference *and* helps to move away from a Platonic (philosophical) conception of rhetoric that robs Confucian rhetoric of its creative and transformative character.

In each of the next three chapters, Lan analyzes the specific concepts and metaphors used and developed by Aristotle and Confucius. Chapter Three focuses on the concepts of rhetorical probability; Chapters Four and Five, on the concepts of rhetorical reasoning and of rhetorical education, respectively. So, in Chapter Three, Lan takes on Aristotle's form and *eikos* (probable knowledge) alongside Confucius's *tianming* and *rendao* (the way of the people). Putting her relational and interdisciplinary method to work again, Lan places Aristotle's *aletheia* (truth) and *nous* (intelligence) in direct dialogue with his *logos* and his rhetoric as *energeia* (actualizing activities), on the one hand, and Confucius's *tianming* and *rendao* within the larger context of his view of language in use and of learning, acting, and living in the world, on the other. Out of her comparative analysis emerges two individuals who both see rhetoric as a dynamic and transformative process that connects being to becoming and certitude to probability. At the same time, readers also see the same two individuals go their separate ways in the conceptual metaphors they each use for describing truth or realities. That is, by appealing to form, Aristotle enacts a rhetoric the process of which always bends toward progress, toward that which is attainable. Meanwhile, by dedicating himself to learning and walking *dao*-the-way throughout his life, Confucius enacts a rhetoric in which the center of gravity is marked and indeed constituted by human *dao,* by moving with it with deference, with humility.

Chapters Four and Five follow the same pattern. Chapter Four directs the reader's attention to rhetorical reasoning, to *epieikeia* (equity) and *kairos* in Aristotle and *ren* (loving others) and *li* (appropriate timing) in Confucius. Chapter Five deals with rhetorical education, focusing on topoi and stases in Aristotle and *li* (ritual propriety) and *yue* (music) in Confucius. Once again, Lan demonstrates the same level of depth and scope evident in the previous chapters as she deftly shuttles between Aristotle and Confucius, between their different concepts or between what they each signify in their own contexts and what they signify to one another between their contexts. Once again, readers will come away with a fresh understanding of both Aristotle's rhetorical reasoning (as enthymematic) and Confucius's *yinyang*-thinking (as both linear and recursive). They will also gain a better appreciation of how both men deploy the art of rhetorical invention in the construction and dissemination of probable or local knowledge.

Lan concludes her study with a brief epilogue, further calling on comparative rhetoric scholars to cross disciplinary boundaries, to move into larger contexts or cultural matrixes, and to take on heterogeneity, uncertainty, and even incongruity in the context of studying similarity. I cannot agree more with her call as comparative rhetoric scholars continue to advance comparative rhetoric studies with an even higher level of humility, self-reflexivity, and accountability.

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