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### Title

Double Shakespeares: Emotional-Realist Acting and Contemporary Performance. By Cary M. Mazer . Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015; pp. xii + 201, 6 illustrations. \$70 cloth, \$69.99 e-book.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/70p5t6sw>

### Journal

Theatre Survey, 57(3)

### ISSN

0040-5574

### Author

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### Publication Date

2016-09-01

### DOI

10.1017/s004055741600051x

Peer reviewed

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***Double Shakespeares: Emotional-Realist Acting and Contemporary Performance.* By Cary M. Mazer. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015; pp. xii + 201, 6 illustrations. \ \$70 cloth, \ \$69.99 e-book.**

Katherine Steele Brokaw

Theatre Survey / Volume 57 / Issue 03 / September 2016, pp 473 - 475

DOI: 10.1017/S004055741600051X, Published online: 10 August 2016

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S004055741600051X](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S004055741600051X)

**How to cite this article:**

Katherine Steele Brokaw (2016). Theatre Survey, 57, pp 473-475 doi:10.1017/S004055741600051X

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Reviewed by Katherine Steele Brokaw, *University of California, Merced*

“The Method,” the emotional-realist acting paradigm ushered in by Stanislavsky and perpetuated by Strasberg and his disciples, is derided by theatre scholars and in popular culture, often in ways that betray little understanding of its continuing pervasiveness. Cary Mazer’s book argues that, for more than a century, techniques of emotional realism have inexorably influenced the way actors on both sides of the Atlantic have approached Shakespearean acting, and the ways audiences have received it. As such, this phenomenon is worth examining, which Mazer does in this insightful book. He posits that in emotional-realist acting, the audience simultaneously experiences the phenomenological realness of the actor and the fictional reality of the character, creating a “doubleness” (9). Mazer brings the important voice of a scholar-practitioner to the subject: insights gleaned from his own work in the theatre spur some of the book’s best arguments. *Double Shakespeares* engages with practical books on how to act Shakespeare (e.g., by Cicely Berry), collections that compile actors’ thoughts on doing Shakespeare (e.g., Jonathan Holmes’s *Merely Players?*), and scholarly work on early modern acting (e.g., by Tiffany Stern), synthesizing these materials with performance theories, New Historicist accounts of early modern subjectivity, and theatre histories and fashioning a wide-ranging exploration of emotional realism’s crucial role in the acting and interpretation of Shakespeare over the past century.

Chapter 1 gives a prehistory of Stanislavskian emotional realism, detailing everything from eyewitness accounts of Edmund Kean’s acting to representations of acting in novels. Mazer argues that the Victorian anxiety about doubleness is morally judgmental, displaying a concern that actors emote with their “real selves” too much (35). The second chapter limns twentieth-century discussions of acting that are more specifically Shakespearean, such as critiques of naturalism by director John Barton and playwright David Mamet, who respectively emphasize a character’s reality and the author’s text over an actor’s authority. Mazer points out that these practitioners “believe that they are completely rejecting (or at least significantly modifying) Stanislavski while continuing to operate within a paradigm of emotional realism” (53). Similarly, emotional-realist orthodoxies are far more pervasive among those who espouse so-called Original Practices—a method prioritizing the conditions of early modern playacting—than those practitioners admit. Mazer ends by proposing “Stanislavski 2.0,” based on Declan Donnellan’s notion of external “targets” (63–4), which allows Shakespearean theatre to be both representational (in a Brechtian sense) and emotionally grounded.

Analyzing productions like Cheek by Jowl’s *As You Like It* in Chapter 3, Mazer suggests that theories of performativity, camp, and queerness potentially distract from the intrinsic doubleness of performance. Against postmodern critiques of emotional realism and New Historicism’s skepticism about the

personhood of early modern subjects and characters, Mazer conjectures that it is possible to represent destabilized early modern dramatic characters using emotional realism, for example, through actorly cross-dressing or audience interaction. He posits that such performances may have wide political and social implications, allowing productions to explore “the way gender, behavior, and identity are constructed” (84).

Part II of the book looks at narratives of acting. In analyzing films like *Stage Beauty* and the television series *Slings and Arrows*, Mazer argues in Chapter 4 that films depicting Shakespeare in rehearsal “both enable and neutralize the doubleness inherent in the actors’ performances,” creating stories of struggling actors being redeemed as they find their character (95). Such stories of transformation condition the expectations of practitioners and audiences alike. This chapter ends with Mazer’s critique of the documentary *Shakespeare behind Bars*, which he derides as “pander[ing] to this myth of Shakespearean redemption” (109). Although all documentaries are artfully constructed, this film is perhaps unfairly lumped with the fictional material discussed in the chapter; some readers may not share Mazer’s skepticism as to theatre’s transformative power. The next chapter looks at the tropes of rehearsal journals and their aesthetic and narratological agendas: here Mazer is less interested in the “truth” of these accounts than in the way these narratives get crafted to perpetuate master narratives of actors making discoveries and being transformed. Mazer ends with his account of dramaturging *Merchant of Venice* while he and his wife went through the painful process of two failed adoptions, one of which was prompted by anti-Semitism. He explains how personal experience helped him understand and experience *Merchant* in new ways while also overdetermining how he crafted his rehearsal journal.

Mazer is most persuasive when close reading productions, as he does in the two chapters of Part III. Chapter 6 gives a longer history of frame productions, analyzing the way this format sometimes heightens and sometimes sidesteps questions of gender, race, and early modern subjectivity. The book’s final chapter looks closely at three productions: the National Theatre of Scotland’s *Macbeth*, starring Alan Cumming and set in a mental ward; the Donmar Warehouse’s all-female *Julius Caesar*, starring Harriet Walter and set in a prison; and an all-female production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* that Mazer himself directed at Penn and set in a gym. He argues that productions like the *Macbeth* and *Caesar* tend to answer questions about the story created for the frame-play characters (e.g., the inmates in the Donmar *Caesar*) but that they don’t bring new insight to the Shakespearean characters. He offers his *Two Gents* as a model for productions that focus explicitly on actor–role doubleness. Although he began his production process thinking he was going to create a Brecht-inspired alienation effect, he realized that emotional realism was the way to unlock the sexual politics of Shakespeare’s play and that the “emphatic link that lies at the very center of the emotional-realist project lies at the heart of Shakespeare’s characters” (181).

The book’s key insight, which I wish had been better foregrounded, is that empathy—the ability for characters and actors and audiences to understand each other—is paramount to successful Shakespearean theatre, and that such empathy is the link between early modern scripts and contemporary performance. That

he comes to this insight through experience is in and of itself an important revelation of this thought-provoking book on the practices of today's Shakespearean theatre.

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**Actresses, Gender, and the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Playing Women.** By Helen E. M. Brooks. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; pp. x + 201, 8 illustrations. \$95 cloth.

**Women and Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century.** By Fiona Ritchie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; pp. x + 256, 6 illustrations, 5 tables. \$99.99 cloth, \$80 e-book.

doi:10.1017/S0040557416000521

Reviewed by Kristina Straub, *Carnegie Mellon University*

The two books reviewed in this essay are recovery projects that engage in methodological innovation in order to meet their feminist goals. Helen E. M. Brooks's *Actresses, Gender, and the Eighteenth-Century Stage* crosses over disciplinary boundaries for a historically grounded reading of actresses, whereas Fiona Ritchie's *Women and Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* expands upon what counts as evidence in literary study. Both books are satisfyingly feminist as well as being good examples of the best kinds of work in eighteenth-century theatre studies.

Brooks points out the tendency of feminist work to reduce the ragged outline of domestic ideology to a monolith, thereby relegating actresses to transgressive versus normative binaries. Her historical narrative is deliberately uneven and irreducible to a clear, developmental arch. Brooks describes her methodology as "speculative" (9), that is, reading together sources that are rarely studied in conjunction because they belong to different disciplines in order to construct histories of subjects, including women, difficult to find in the archives.

Chapter 1 investigates the economic status of actresses. Although certainly suffering from a gender gap, actresses could earn substantial salaries, and even the middling range could claim wages that were above average for other types of labor open to women. Brooks makes a strong case for actresses as businesswomen who emerge as members of a growing class based on wealth rather than birth. In Chapter 2, "Playing the Passions," Brooks combines a close reading of the she-tragedy *Jane Shore* with eighteenth-century theories of acting and commentaries on actresses to point out a contradiction in female theatrical performance: women were understood as unable to control their passions, yet the actress's success in theatrical representations of the passions depended upon an exceptional degree of control. Positioning the female performer between a one-sex model that resists binary gender and an emergent two-sex model, Brooks shows us how the actress demonstrated her supposedly masculine professional control even as she acted out the feminine loss of that control. Brooks does not seek to resolve this contradiction, but rather sees it as part of the actress's performative power.