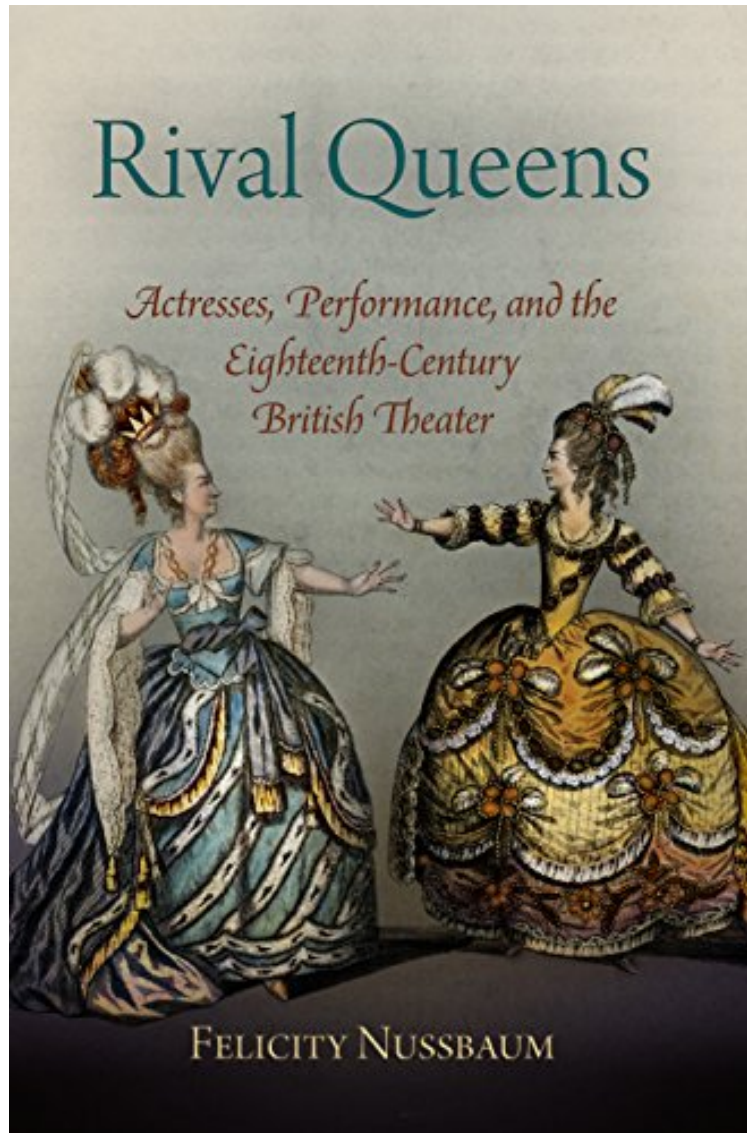


[Download free pdf] Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater

Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater

Felicity Nussbaum

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Felicity Nussbaum : Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater:

In eighteenth-century England, actresses were frequently dismissed as mere prostitutes trading on their sexual power

rather than their talents. Yet they were, Felicity Nussbaum argues, central to the success of a newly commercial theater. Urban, recently moneyed, and thoroughly engaged with their audiences, celebrated actresses were among the first women to achieve social mobility, cultural authority, and financial independence. In fact, Nussbaum contends, the eighteenth century might well be called the "age of the actress" in the British theater, given women's influence on the dramatic repertory and, through it, on the definition of femininity. Treating individual star actresses who helped spark a cult of celebrity—especially Anne Oldfield, Susannah Cibber, Catherine Clive, Margaret Woffington, Frances Abington, and George Anne Bellamy—*Rival Queens* reveals the way these women animated issues of national identity, property, patronage, and fashion in the context of their dramatic performances. Actresses intentionally heightened their commercial appeal by catapulting the rivalries among themselves to center stage. They also boldly challenged in importance the actor-managers who have long dominated eighteenth-century theater history and criticism. Felicity Nussbaum combines an emphasis on the actresses themselves with close analysis of their diverse roles in works by major playwrights, including George Farquhar, Nicholas Rowe, Colley Cibber, Arthur Murphy, David Garrick, Isaac Bickerstaff, and Richard Sheridan. Hers is a comprehensive and original argument about the importance of actresses as the first modern subjects, actively shaping their public identities to make themselves into celebrated properties.

"A pleasure to read, with a deft balance of anecdote and theory, statistical data and narrative. Nussbaum, an acknowledged expert on gender and literature in the long eighteenth century, demonstrates her facility with eighteenth-century theater as well. The book will certainly appeal to feminists, theater historians, and scholars looking for nuanced histories of acting."—*Theater Survey* Selected by *Choice* magazine as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2010 "Excellent."—*TLS* "Skillfully interweaving analysis of a breadth of biographical source materials with literary analysis of plays and understandings of the economic context in which these women worked, the author offers a compelling argument for the ways in which theatrical economics disrupted simple stagings of femininity."—*Theater Research International* "[*Rival Queens*] has vital ramifications not only for a renewed study of the eighteenth-century theater but also for our understandings of the performance of gender and, specifically, femininity across the period."—*Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* About the Author Felicity Nussbaum is Distinguished Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of numerous books, including *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century*.