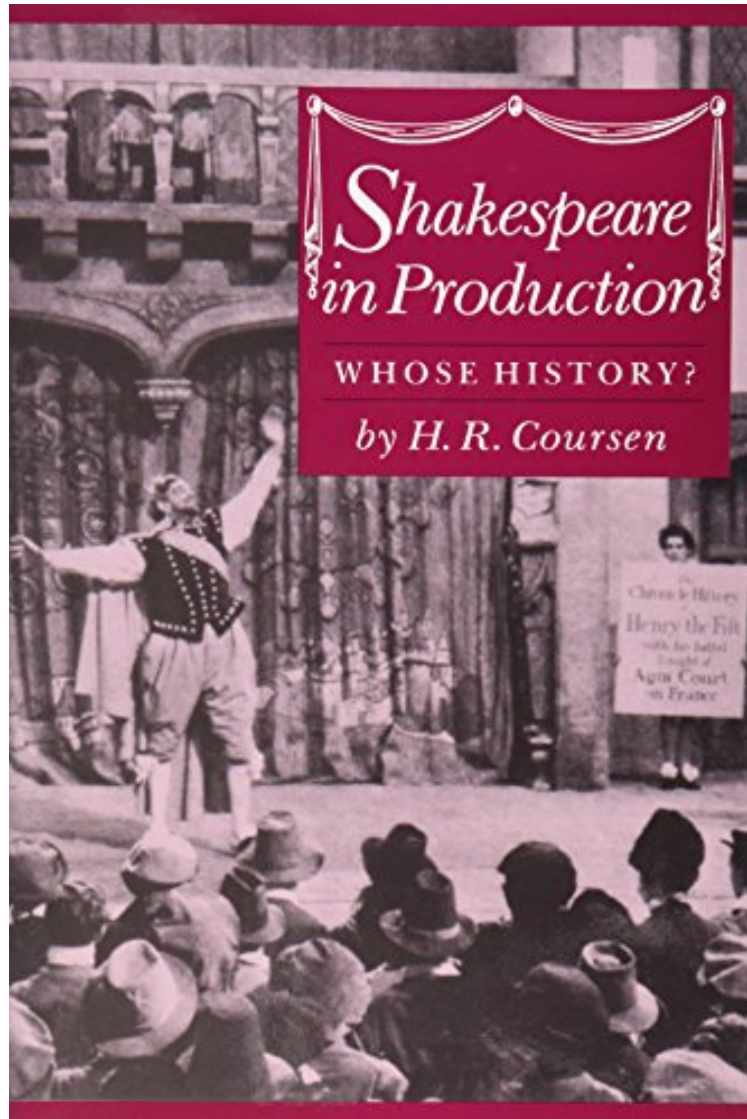


(Ebook free) Shakespeare In Production: Whose History?

Shakespeare In Production: Whose History?

H.R. Coursen

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H.R. Coursen : Shakespeare In Production: Whose History? before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shakespeare In Production: Whose History?:

Shakespeare in Production examines a number of plays in context. Included are the 1936 Romeo and Juliet, unpopular with critics of filmed Shakespeare, but very much a photoplay if its time; the opening sequences of filmed Hamlets which span more than seventy years; The Comedy of Errors on television, where production of this script is almost

impossible; and the Branagh *Much Ado About Nothing*, a popular film discussed in the context of comedy as a genre. In considering *Henry V*, this study looks at fifty years of *Pistol* on film and television to illustrate how changing times shape the character, and then includes the Branagh film in discussions of recent interpretations of history as reflected by productions of Shakespeare's history plays. An examination of late twentieth-century production of *Hamlet* suggests what the script has lost and gained as it has moved toward in time. A discussion of designer's theater in Great Britain, where all the elements of the production are dominated by concept, argues that the actors work within a restricting rather than a liberating artistic environment. Whose history? inevitably turns out to be that of the individual observer, for regardless of the criteria deployed criticism is an intensely subjective activity, and is meant to be when it deals with drama. In this discussion of Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, the contemporary response to the film becomes the subject of the chapter. For, although the film is much more than what is said about it, it is also less, in that the critical response is part of the overall creative activity involved in a Shakespeare production.

From the Back Cover
The New Historicism "contextualizes" the literature it examines. It sees literature as one aspect of the energies and anxieties characteristic of a given culture, neither independent nor superior to it. While some may quarrel with these premises, it is not necessary to agree with them, or even to be a New Historicist, in order to put their techniques to use. *Shakespeare in Production* examines a number of plays in context. Included are the 1936 *Romeo and Juliet*, unpopular with critics of filmed Shakespeare, but very much a "photoplay" of its time; the opening sequences of filmed *Hamlets* which span more than seventy years; *The Comedy of Errors* on television, where production of this script is almost impossible; and the Branagh *Much Ado About Nothing*, a "popular" film discussed in the context of comedy as genre. "Whose history?" inevitably turns out to be that of the individual observer, for regardless of the criteria deployed, criticism is an intensely subjective activity, and is meant to be when it deals with drama. In this discussion of Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, the contemporary response to the film becomes the subject of the chapter. For, although the film is much more than what is said about it, it is also less, in that the critical response is part of the overall creative activity involved in a Shakespeare production.

About the Author
H.R. Coursen is Director of Education in Northeastern US for the Shakespeare Globe Centre (London) and teaches at the University of Maine, Augusta. His most recent critical work is *Reading Shakespeare on Stage* (University of Delaware Press, 1995).