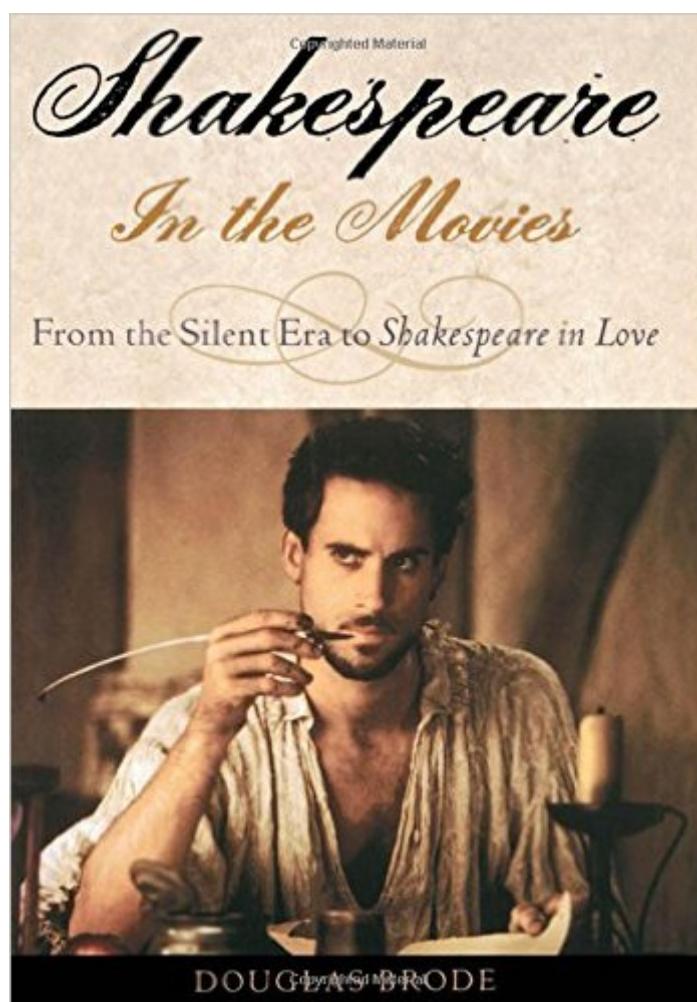


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Shakespeare In The Movies: From The Silent Era To Shakespeare In Love (Literary Artist's Representatives)



Synopsis

Shakespeare is now enjoying perhaps his most glorious--certainly his most popular--filmic incarnation. Indeed, the Bard has been splashed across the big screen to great effect in recent adaptations of Hamlet, Henry V, Othello, Twelfth Night, Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, Richard II, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and of course in the hugely successful Shakespeare in Love. Unlike previous studies of Shakespeare's cinematic history, Shakespeare in the Movies proceeds chronologically, in the order that plays were written, allowing the reader to trace the development of Shakespeare as an author--and an auteur--and to see how the changing cultural climate of the Elizabethans flowered into film centuries later. Prolific film writer Douglas Brode provides historical background, production details, contemporary critical reactions, and his own incisive analysis, covering everything from the acting of Marlon Brando, Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, and Gwyneth Paltrow, to the direction of Orson Welles, Kenneth Branagh, and others. Brode also considers the many films which, though not strict adaptations, contain significant Shakespearean content, such as West Side Story and Kurosawa's Ran and Throne of Blood. Nor does Brode ignore the ignoble treatment the master has sometimes received. We learn, for instance, that the 1929 version of The Taming of the Shrew (which featured the eyebrow-raising writing credit: "By William Shakespeare, with additional dialogue by Sam Taylor"), opens not so trippingly on the tongue--PETRUCHIO: "Howdy Kate." KATE: "Katherine to you, mug." For anyone wishing to cast a backward glance over the poet's film career and to better understand his current big-screen popularity, Shakespeare in the Movies is a delightful and definitive guide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This could have been such an interesting and informative book if only it had been written by someone with a real knowledge of Shakespeare. Brode rails against academics and their stranglehold on Shakespeare and is punished for his reverse snobbery by his ignorance. He seems to have studied Shakespeare at an English boy's school in the 1940s and casually skipped the last several decades' scholarship. This shows in his repeated attempts to tie individual plays in a simple-minded fashion to events in Shakespeare's life, claiming, for instance, that Shakespeare wrote "Othello" out of his feelings of jealousy regarding Anne Hathaway, a claim that has precisely nothing beyond Brode's own theatrical imagination to support it. He also repeatedly harps on Shakespeare's optimism even in his darkest plays, seeing them as unmediated revelations of the playwright's philosophy of life. He doesn't consider that Shakespeare as an artist might simply have been working within the conventions that govern tragedy as a genre. Few tragedies have ever ended in a vision of total nihilism; some sense of human dignity is almost always saved from the ruins. In effect, Brode is interpreting Shakespeare through the critical presuppositions of the Romantics rather than the Renaissance, reducing the plays to exercises in self-expression. Brode reveals a stiff conservatism in what he accepts as legitimate film Shakespeare, generally trashing more experimental films, such as "Titus," on grounds that seem less aesthetic than merely crabby. On the one hand, he celebrates the film director's power to free Shakespeare from the stage to the screen with all its unique resources; on the other hand, he quickly gets prickly and sarcastic when directors push beyond a fairly staid presentation.

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