



Screen Performance and the Shakespeare Film Canon in the Spotlight of Archivision

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Without exception, existing studies of cinematic Shakespeare adaptations conform to the long-established paradigm of the descriptive history. Even comprehensive studies of segments of this vast and diverse grouping of films (by Robert H. Ball, Jeremy Sams, Mark T. Burnett, Luke McKernan, et al.) focus on readily available screening prints of films with nary an acknowledgement of the textual uncertainties of films subject to editorial intervention and the vicissitudes of material history; lost, damaged, fragmentary or censored films barely creep within range of critical radars, and even when they do seem only to merit passing consideration. As a consequence, historical accounts of Shakespearean film production are skewed in the direction of conformity, and the dominant perspectives – chronological narrative, intermittent contributions to adaptation studies and episodes in genre history – rely on the assumption of a relatively stable canon of Shakespeare films (that can on occasion be supplemented by rediscoveries). The present work explodes this mythology and explores the underlying assumptions behind the mask of critical convenience. No less significantly, it marshals the research of ten years into a coherent, cumulative, chapter-by-chapter argument that proposes methodologies that will not only herald a comprehensive revision of the Shakespeare film canon, but also establish a standard methodology that redirects attention to “hidden” aspects of even the most widely discussed of these texts, thereby making significant methodological contributions to a number of emerging fields of study.

Contents

Introduction: Microcinemahistory as an alternative to Shakespeare as Historical Relic, Scientific Curiosity and Ideological Battleground; Chapter 1: Going, Going, Gone: On film as a Self-Consuming Medium and the Historical Consequences to Shakespeare Studies; Chapter 2: The Better Angels of Rediscovery: Digitization, Restoration, and Evolving Archival Practices; Chapter 3: The Forces of Fragmentation: Commercial Imperatives and National Policies; Chapter 4: The Greatest Shakespeare Film Never Made: A Bare-Bones Approach to Paratexts and Preservation; Chapter 5: Cold Wars and Genre Wars: Understanding Mediation, Remediation, and Intermediation; Chapter 6: Out of the Shadows: Messages from Many Margins; Hopeful Conclusion: Reanimating a Discourse; Defining a Paradigm; Establishing a True Canon; Notes; Works Cited; Index.

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Anthony Guneratne’s books, articles, conference presentations and event programming foreground Shakespeare’s increasing role in media innovation and archival research and practice.

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