The Elizabethan history play was one of the most prevalent dramatic genres of the 1590s, and so was a major contribution to Elizabethan historical culture. The genre has been well served by critical studies that emphasize politics and ideology; however, there has been less interest in the way history is interrogated as an idea in these plays. Drawing in period-sensitive ways on the exciting field of contemporary performance theory, this study looks at the Shakespearean history play from a fresh angle, by first analyzing the foundational work of the Queen’s Men, the playing company that invented the popular history play. Through innovative readings of their plays The Famous Victories of Henry V and The True Tragedy of Richard III, before moving on to Shakespeare’s 1 Henry VI, Richard III, and Henry V, this book investigates how the Queen’s Men’s self-consciousness about performance helped to shape Shakespeare’s dramatic and historical imagination.

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SHAKESPEARE,
The Queen’s Men,
and The Elizabethan Performance of History

BRIAN WALSH
Contents

Acknowledgments  vi

Introduction  1

1 Dialogues with the dead: history, performance, and Elizabethan theater  10

2 Theatrical time and historical time: the temporality of the past in The Famous Victories of Henry V  48


4 “Unkind division”: the double absence of performing history in 1 Henry VI  108

5 Richard III and Theatrum Historiae  139

6 Henry V and the extra-theatrical historical imagination  178

Conclusion: traces of Henry/traces of history  214

Bibliography  221

Index  235
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