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978-0-521-76692-0 - Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History

Brian Walsh

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SHAKESPEARE,
THE QUEEN'S MEN,
AND THE ELIZABETHAN
PERFORMANCE OF HISTORY

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.

Brian Walsh is Assistant Professor in the English Department at Yale University. He has been the recipient of awards from the American Society for Theater Research and the National Endowment for the Arts. His essays have appeared in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Studies in English Literature*, *Performing Arts Journal*, and *Theatre Journal*, and he has authored book and theatre reviews in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, and *Sixteenth-Century Journal*.

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