

# A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen

Edited by Diana E. Henderson



A Concise Companion to  
**Shakespeare on Screen**

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# Notes on Contributors

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**Barbara Hodgdon**, Adjunct Professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (1991), *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth: Texts and Contexts* (1997), and *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (1998). She served as guest editor for a special issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly* on Shakespeare films, is editing the Arden 3 *The Taming of the Shrew*, and co-edited, with William B. Worthen, the *Blackwell Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*.

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# Bibliographical Note

In order to avoid redundancy, works cited in multiple essays are listed in the Select Bibliography at the end of the volume. Films and videos are listed within the following chronological chart rather than in a separate filmography/videography, for ease of historical contextualization. For most entries, fuller production information is most readily available online through the Internet Movie Database: [www.imdb.com/](http://www.imdb.com/).

# Chronology

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
1898	Zola's "J'accuse." Spanish–American War		
1899	Dreyfus Affair ends; Boer War begins	Georges Méliès' <i>L'Affaire Dreyfus</i> . Marconi sends radiowaves across the English Channel	Film of Herbert Beerbohm Tree's <i>King John</i>
1900	Freud publishes <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i>		
1901	Queen Victoria dies; Edward VII king. Theodore Roosevelt elected President. US war in the Philippines ends	Marconi sends radiowaves across the Atlantic	
1902	Boer War ends. Education Act subsidizes secondary education in Britain	Alfred Steiglitz begins publication of the journal <i>Camera Work</i>	
1903	Wright Brothers fly first powered airplane at Kitty Hawk	Edwin S. Porter's <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> creates a sensation	
1905	St. Petersburg Massacre. Einstein publishes the Special Theory of Relativity	Charles Tait's <i>The Story of the Kelly Gang</i> , first feature-length film	

1906		Fessenden's north Atlantic voice broadcast (AM radio)	
1907			Méliès' <i>Hamlet</i> ; Méliès' <i>Shakespeare Writing Julius Caesar</i>
1908		D. W. Griffith begins his career at Biograph Studios	D. W. Griffith's <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
1910	Edward VII dies; George V becomes king. Union of South Africa		
1911			William Barker's film of Tree's <i>Henry VIII</i> ; film of F. R. Benson's <i>Richard III</i>
1913		Max Reinhardt's <i>Die Insel der Seligen</i> and stage production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; Parliamentary debates regarding a British national theater	Hanns Heitz Ewers and Stellan Rye's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1914	World War I begins	Reinhardt's <i>Venezianische Nacht</i>	
1915		Griffith's <i>The Birth of a Nation</i>	
1916	Easter uprising in Ireland		
1917	Russian Revolution. US enters World War I. Balfour declaration		
1918	End of World War I. Formation of independent Irish Parliament. (Limited) women's suffrage in Britain		

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
1919	League of Nations established	Shortwave radio invented. RCA established	
1920	Government of Ireland Act. 19th amendment to the US Constitution allows women's suffrage	Robert Wiene's <i>The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari</i>	Sven Gade's <i>Hamlet</i>
1921	Establishment of Irish Free State; Irish civil war	Newbolt report on "The Teaching of English in England"	
1922	Mussolini's Fascists invited to form government in Italy	40 million cinema tickets sold per week in the US; BBC begins radio broadcasting	
1923	Ceasefire in Ireland	Experimental wireless television broadcasts begin	
1924	Death of Lenin	Leopold and Loeb trial	
1925		Sergei Eisenstein's <i>The Battleship Potemkin</i> ; Scopes' "Monkey" trial	Hans Neumann's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1926		NBC begins radio broadcasting; Alan Crosland's <i>Don Juan</i> , the first publicly shown talkie, screened in New York	<i>Shakespeare's Country</i> , in <i>Wonderful Britain</i> series
1927	Charles Lindbergh makes first non-stop solo trans-Atlantic flight	Cinematograph Films Act passes in UK Parliament	



1928	Amelia Earhart first woman to fly across the Atlantic	Crosland's <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (released October 1927) consolidates interest in sound film; GE begins (limited) regular network television broadcasting; <i>Amos and Andy</i> begins on radio; completion of the Oxford English Dictionary	
1929	Stock Market Crash, leading to the Great Depression. Stalin to power in the Soviet Union	BBC begins test television broadcasts	Sam Taylor's (Pickfair) <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
1930		Hays' Production Code formalized	
1931		James Whale's <i>Frankenstein</i> ; CBS begins regular television broadcasting	
1932	Franklin Roosevelt elected President	Opening of the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford; BBC first broadcast to the Empire (forerunner of the world service); Herbert Kalmus perfects 3-color Technicolor process; Lindbergh baby kidnapping	
1933	Hitler and Nazi party to power in Germany		
1934	Beginning of the Long March in China	Breen office enforcement of Hays' Production Code; F.D.R. begins his radio "fireside chats"	

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
1935	Establishment of the WPA (US)	<i>Fibber, McGee and Molly</i> begins 15-year radio run; Germany begins regularly daily television broadcasting (until 1944)	Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1936	George V dies; Edward VIII's abdication, George VI becomes king. Beginning of the Spanish Civil War	BBC begins regular television broadcasting (until 1939); the Berlin Olympic Games; Berlin begins cable television	George Cukor's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ; Paul Czinner's <i>As You Like It</i>
1937	Sino-Japanese war	Tyrone Guthrie's Old Vic <i>Hamlet</i> starring Laurence Olivier; Amelia Earhart's disappearance	
1938	Kristallnacht	80 million cinema tickets sold per week in US; second Cinematograph Films Act passes in UK Parliament	
1939	Spanish Civil War ends with Franco in power. Germany invades Poland; beginning of World War II	Victor Fleming (et al.)'s <i>Gone With the Wind</i> ; BBC television closed for duration of the war	
1940		Cukor's <i>The Philadelphia Story</i>	
1941	Bombing of Pearl Harbor; US enters World War II. Genocidal policies of the Holocaust begun in Germany	Orson Welles' <i>Citizen Kane</i> ; Federal Communications Commission issues first commercial television station licenses in US	

1944			Laurence Olivier's <i>Henry V</i>
1945	End of war in Europe. Death of Roosevelt. United Nations established		
1946	US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japan surrenders. Ho Chi Minh leads offensive against French in Vietnam	Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger's <i>A Matter of Life and Death</i> ; Olivier's King Lear stage performance at the Old Vic; formation of the British Arts Council	
1947	Indian independence and partition	Dalton duty on US films (UK)	Cukor's <i>A Double Life</i>
1948	State of Israel established	Anglo-American Film Agreement; Powell and Pressberger's <i>The Red Shoes</i> and David Lean's <i>Oliver Twist</i> ; Ed Sullivan's <i>The Toast of the Town</i> begins, becomes <i>The Ed Sullivan Show</i> in 1955, and goes on to be the longest-running variety television show in history (running until 1971)	Olivier's <i>Hamlet</i> ; Orson Welles' <i>Macbeth</i>
1949	Fall of Chiang Kai-Shek and establishment of the People's Republic of China under Mao Tse-Tung; China invades Tibet	Renewed Parliamentary debates regarding British national theater; MIT introduces "Whirlwind," the first real-time computer	
1950	Korean War begins: UN resolution to assist South Korean government		

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
1951		CBS temporarily begins color television broadcasts; stopped due to the Korean War; video tape invented	
1952	George VI dies; Elizabeth II becomes queen. Mau Mau uprising begins	Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen's <i>Singin' in the Rain</i>	Welles' <i>Othello</i>
1953	End of the Korean War. Death of Stalin	<i>The Robe</i> , first Hollywood Cinemascope film, released; coronation of Queen Elizabeth II televised	George Sidney's <i>Kiss Me, Kate</i>
1954	French defeat at Dien Bien Phu; Vietnamese independence from France negotiated, split of North and South Vietnam	Akira Kurosawa's <i>The Seven Samurai</i> ; the Army–McCarthy hearings televised; François Truffaut's "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema"	
1955			Sergei Yutkevich's <i>Othello</i> ; Olivier's <i>Richard III</i>
1956	Suez crisis. Hungarian revolution	John Osborne's <i>Look Back in Anger</i> on stage at the Royal Court, London	
1957	European Economic Community (Common Market) established. Soviet Union launches Sputnik I	Ingmar Bergman's <i>The Seventh Seal</i>	Kurosawa's <i>Throne of Blood</i> ( <i>The Castle of the Spider's Web</i> )
1958	Creation of NASA	Tony Richardson's film of <i>Look Back in Anger</i>	

1959	Fidel Castro to power in Cuba		
1960	Sixteen newly independent African states join the UN	Karel Reisz's <i>Saturday Night and Sunday Morning</i> ; John Sturges' <i>The Magnificent Seven</i> ; Resolution 42 of British Trade Unions Conference leads to Centre Fortytwo; Peter Hall's formation of the modern Royal Shakespeare Company	Kurosawa's <i>The Bad Sleep Well</i>
1961	US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba	Telstar used to broadcast trans-Atlantic television; Bernstein and Sondheim's <i>West Side Story</i> on Broadway; Richardson's <i>A Taste of Honey</i>	
1962	Cuban Missile Crisis. India–China conflict	Richardson's <i>The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner</i>	
1963	President Kennedy assassinated		
1964	Harold Wilson's Labour government begins (UK). Civil Rights Act signed by US President Johnson	English translation of Jan Kott's <i>Shakespeare Our Contemporary</i> ; The Beatles appear on <i>The Ed Sullivan Show</i>	Grigori Kozintsev's <i>Hamlet</i> ; Gielgud's <i>Hamlet</i> (rehearsal footage)
1965	President Johnson sends US troops to Vietnam. Second Kashmir War		Stuart Burge's <i>Othello</i> ; Welles' <i>Chimes at Midnight</i> ; James Ivory's <i>Shakespeare Wallah</i>
1966	Cultural Revolution in China. Escalation of the war in Vietnam	<i>Star Trek</i> begins its first season	

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
1967	Six-day war in the Middle East. Decriminalization of homosexuality in UK		Franco Zeffirelli's <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
1968	Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinated. Civil rights campaign begins in Northern Ireland. Tet offensive in Vietnam. Richard Nixon elected President	20 million cinema tickets sold per week in US	Zeffirelli's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ; Peter Hall's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1969	End of the Cultural Revolution. Woodstock festival	John Schlesinger's <i>Midnight Cowboy</i>	Richardson's <i>Hamlet</i> ; Kozintsev's <i>King Lear</i>
1970	Edward Heath's Conservative government to power in UK		
1971	India-Pakistan war leads to independent Bangladesh. People's Republic of China seated at the UN	First microprocessor chip developed	Peter Brook's <i>King Lear</i> ; Roman Polanski's <i>The Tragedy of Macbeth</i>
1972	Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland; "The Troubles" lead to direct British rule. Nixon to China	HBO launched on cable television	
1973	Britain enters the European Community	IBM introduces Ethernet	
1974	Watergate scandal leads to resignation of President Nixon	First small computers developed	

1975	US pulls out of Vietnam, resulting in reunification under communist rule	Bill Gates and Paul Allen start up Microsoft; Steven Spielberg's first "blockbuster," <i>Jaws</i>	
1976	Death of Mao	US extends copyright protection to 50 years	
1977		George Lucas' <i>Star Wars</i>	
1978	UK "Winter of Discontent" begins, with high unemployment and labor strikes	Michael Cimino's <i>The Deer Hunter</i> ; Hal Ashby's <i>Coming Home</i>	
1979	Margaret Thatcher becomes first female Prime Minister of Great Britain. Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua		Welles' <i>Filming Othello</i>
1980	Ronald Reagan elected President. War in El Salvador begins	CNN begins operation	Derek Jarman's <i>The Tempest</i>
1981		IBM begins selling personal computers	
1982	Falklands War between UK and Argentina	Ted Kotcheff's <i>First Blood</i> [Rambo I]	Paul Mazursky's <i>Tempest</i>
1983		Compact discs introduced	
1984	UK miners' strike begins	Pat O'Connor's <i>Cal</i> ; Apple introduces first Macintosh computer	
1985	Mikhail Gorbachev to power in the Soviet Union	<i>EastEnders</i> begins run on BBC	Kurosawa's <i>Ran</i>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
1986	Soviet policies of <i>glasnost</i> and <i>perestroika</i>		
1987	Beginning of the Palestinian intifadah	Oliver Stone's <i>Wall Street</i>	
1989	Fall of the Berlin Wall. Soviets complete their troop withdrawal from Afghanistan	Peter Weir's <i>Dead Poets Society</i> ; first HDTV standards established (digital v. analogue); invention of the World Wide Web	Kenneth Branagh's <i>Henry V</i>
1990	Nelson Mandela released from prison in South Africa. Thatcher falls from power, replaced by John Major. Iraq invades Kuwait	Michael Almereyda's <i>Twister</i>	Zeffirelli's <i>Hamlet</i>
1991	The First Gulf War. Maastricht Treaty, leading to the creation of the EU. Boris Yeltsin becomes President of Russia; dissolution of the Soviet Union	HTML mark-up language created	Peter Greenaway's <i>Prospero's Books</i> ; William Reilly's <i>Men of Respect</i> ; Gus Van Sant's <i>My Own Private Idaho</i>
1992	UK Stock Market crisis, "Black Wednesday." El Salvador peace agreement. Bosnia/Herzegovina declare independence; armed resistance by Bosnian Serbs. Bill Clinton elected President	Almereyda's <i>Another Girl, Another Planet</i> ; Sadie Benning's <i>It Wasn't Love</i>	Christine Edzard's <i>As You Like It</i>
1993	Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO signed, ends first intifadah	First versions of DVDs developed; pentium chip introduced	Branagh's <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> ; John McTiernan's <i>The Last Action Hero</i>



1994	Genocidal massacres in Rwanda. Mandela elected President of South Africa	DIRECTV	Penny Marshall's <i>Renaissance Man</i>
1995	Dayton Agreement regarding Bosnian independence signed	O. J. Simpson's 37-week murder trial; Amazon.com online	Oliver Parker's <i>Othello</i> ; Loncraine's <i>Richard III</i> ; Branagh's <i>In the Bleak Midwinter/A Midwinter's Tale</i> (US 1996)
1996		Kyle Cassidy's <i>Toy Soldiers</i> ; DISH Network; first DVD players on sale in Japan	Branagh's <i>Hamlet</i> ; Al Pacino's <i>Looking for Richard</i> ; Baz Luhrmann's <i>William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet</i> ; Adrian Noble's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; Trevor Nunn's <i>Twelfth Night</i> ; Lloyd Kaufman's <i>Tromeo and Juliet</i>
1997	Tony Blair's "New" Labour government to power. Hong Kong returned to China	Death of Diana, Princess of Wales	Jocelyn Morehouse's <i>A Thousand Acres</i> ; Richard Eyre's <i>King Lear</i> ; Jeremy Freeston's <i>Macbeth</i>
1998	"Good Friday" peace agreement and referendum in Northern Ireland. Fighting in Kosovo	Bill Viola retrospective at the Whitney Museum; <i>Shakespeare in Love</i> wins Best Picture Oscar	John Madden's <i>Shakespeare in Love</i> ; Michael Bogdanov's <i>Macbeth</i>
1999	NATO attacks Serbia	Zeffirelli's <i>Tea With Mussolini</i>	Julie Taymor's <i>Titus</i> ; Michael Hoffman's <i>William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; Gil Junger's <i>10 Things I Hate About You</i> ; Dunne's <i>Titus Andronicus</i> ; Raja Gosnell's <i>Never Been Kissed</i> ; BFI release of <i>Silent Shakespeare</i>

<i>Year</i>	<i>Historical events</i>	<i>Media events</i>	<i>Shakespeare on screen</i>
2000	George W. Bush becomes President	Mary Harron's <i>American Psycho</i>	Michael Almereyda's <i>Hamlet</i> ; Branagh's <i>Love's Labor's Lost</i> ; Kristian Levring's <i>The King is Alive</i> ; Cheah Chee Kong's <i>Chicken Rice War</i> ; Campbell Scott and Eric Simonson's <i>Hamlet</i> (DVD release 2001)
2001	"9/11": Al-Qaeda attack on NYC World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. US removes Taliban from power in Afghanistan		Tim Blake Nelson's <i>O</i> ; Edzard's <i>The Children's Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; <i>The Glass House</i> ; Tommy O'Haver's <i>Get Over It</i> ; Klaus Knoesel's <i>Rave Macbeth</i> ; Gregory Doran's <i>Macbeth</i> ; Billy Morrissette's <i>Scotland, PA</i>
2002			BBC's <i>Great Britons</i> , Shakespeare episode; James Gavin Bedford's <i>The Street King</i>
2003	US-led invasion of Iraq		Michael Wood's <i>In Search of Shakespeare</i> (BBC); Gary Hardwick's <i>Deliver Us from Eva</i>
2004	Massacres in Darfur region of Sudan. Massive earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean	Michael Moore's <i>Fahrenheit 911</i> ; Mel Gibson's <i>The Passion of the Christ</i>	
2005			Michael Radford's <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> ; Stephen Cavanagh's <i>Hamlet</i> completed

## INTRODUCTION

# Through a Camera, Darkly

*Diana E. Henderson*

We live in a screen era like never before: big screens, small screens, computer screens vie for our attention. My memory of the past years will be haunted by screen images that both capture and fail to capture the magnitude of world events: still images of torture at Abu Ghraib prison televised; beheadings broadcast on the Internet; devastating footage within Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 911* projected in packed movie halls; and, dwarfing everything in the sheer scale of inexplicable destruction, the moments when more than 226,000 souls were swept to their deaths by the Indian Ocean, captured on digital cameras and videotapes. Then, going on with my life amidst such unfathomable suffering and loss, I see Michael Radford's *The Merchant of Venice* and turn back to Shakespeare on screen.

The art of the camera is all about perspective, but it is difficult not to sound glib when invoking the word here, seeking a proper perspective to introduce this *Companion* within its historical moment. It would be easier just to bracket the world and get on to the excellent essays that follow, which demonstrate the rich variety of possible roads into the study and interpretation of Shakespeare on screen. Yet they too refuse the ease of bracketing history, of ignoring either their own critical location or that of the screen events they analyze. At a time when education is increasingly driven by the logic of the international marketplace and the role of the humanities is much in debate, we cannot afford that luxury of ignorance – nor does it strike me as either ethically desirable or intellectually productive that we should.

It is not coincidental, then, that a number of essays examine, from different perspectives, recent films that place Shakespeare's words in contemporary contexts, films that wrestle self-consciously with what his stories "do" in our times; it may also not be coincidental that so many of the contributors have chosen to focus upon tragedy.

Tragedy in art has the compensation of giving shape and meaning to suffering, and in the aftermath of many recent horrors, a similar desire to find meaning came to the fore: most cynically in the pressure to shape news stories for commercial broadcast so that they ended with rays of hope, but also in the more troubling invocations of (competing) religions to "justify" others' deaths. Undoubtedly, the unprecedented outpouring of disaster relief after the tsunami confirmed what media-watchers and relief workers have said for years: that, be it good or ill, television cameras have become crucial in creating political change, social action, and communal responsibility. Blurring the line with fiction, screen images evoke powerful emotional responses, and challenge those who theorize the inauthenticity or absence of collective experience among putatively passive viewers of mass media.

Never has it been so urgent and important, then, that we as students, consumers, and producers of screen images comprehend and convey the skills needed to analyze and interpret them well. And just as Shakespeare's plays, over the centuries, have provided occasions for thought and argument about human society, character, and experience – and at the same time have provided great pleasure – so too Shakespeare on screen presents a rich territory for developing these skills as well as taking delight. For those interested in literary adaptations, the (relative) familiarity of Shakespeare's words and stories within English-speaking culture allows greater attention to the formal and sensory components of screen media: because so many of his plays have provided the basic narratives for multiple films and television shows, one can contrast how words, themes, and images function in different visual and conceptual contexts. For those interested in the role of Shakespeare's works in conserving or challenging societal values, screen representations again demonstrate the wide range of possibilities, and testify to changes in dominant attitudes towards authorship, gender, war, and national identity (to name a few enduringly current topics addressed herein) over the past eleven decades. The wider reach and potentially democratic possibilities of screen media broaden access to Shakespeare, but also raise questions about the appropriateness of reiterating centuries-old and often dated political

or moral assumptions. The complex play between mediation and immediacy, past and present, aesthetics and politics, imagination and realism: all these and more can be explored through the study of Shakespeare on screen.

The essays here seek meaning in a variety of locations. But humility about truth claims is also in order, even if the consequences of our over- or mis-interpretations pale when compared to those of public policymakers. Within the scholarly field, some have voiced skepticism about the appropriateness of seeking “deep” meanings in popular entertainments, reminding us that a joke can be just that. Such reasonable critiques are never amiss in academia, where we sometimes do underrate the pleasures of mindlessness, sensory stimulation, and making money. But conversely, it does not follow that all films aiming to amuse and amass capital (monetary, personal, or cultural) lack other dimensions, including ones worthy of critical interpretation. If nothing else, the destructive behavior of those who claim a personal hotline to God’s will should make us wary of asserting single, definitive interpretations of an event’s significance, be the event artistic or commercial, the “reading” symbolic or sociological. Moreover, films such as Radford’s *Merchant* serve as reminders that the demise of more “traditional” forms of adaptation has been greatly exaggerated. For all the critical interest in recent films such as Almerayda’s *Hamlet* or Taymor’s *Titus* that demonstrate overtly postmodern techniques and aesthetics (see DONALDSON and AEBISCHER in this volume), the producers and audiences for Shakespeare on screen are a more eclectic lot. No single theory, perspective, or judgment will suffice to describe this ever-growing phenomenon.

Such a recognition in no way disables or undermines our project of describing accurately and contextualizing carefully what we see, hear, think, and feel. The humanities have always aspired to distinguish between the trivial and the significant in analyzing human creations, and this continues to be an important, if difficult, endeavor. From its origins, theater, and especially Elizabethan theater, has defied easy categorizations, be they of genre, taste, morality, reality, or value. Like our modern screen media, Shakespeare’s plays mix crassness with subtlety, the visceral with the intellectual, schlock with art. Only with the rise of English as a nineteenth-century academic discipline did Shakespeare (arguably) become associated first and foremost with words on a page – and even as that mode of interpretation developed, so did the technologies that have led to “his” further relocation (meanwhile, back on the stage, the plays continued to hold their own). The