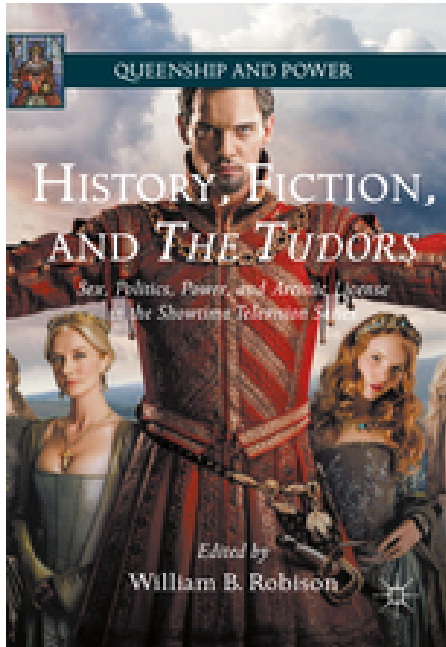


William B. Robison, ed. *History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex, Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series*



William B. Robison, ed. *History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex, Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. *Queenship and Power*. xiii, 384 p. ISBN 9781137438812. € 103.99 (hardcover).

History, Fiction, and The Tudors: Sex, Politics, Power, and Artistic License in the Showtime Television Series is a collection of essays dedicated to the now cancelled Showtime television series *The Tudors*. The show, which was cancelled after four seasons in 2009, aired its final episode in 2010. Dedicated to providing a sensational view of the reign of King Henry VIII, it was relatively successful in its time, earning high ratings for its network, Showtime, while garnering awards and attention for its stars. This collection of essays sheds light on the artistic license taken by the show and its relationship with narrative history, each essay focusing on a different character or theme. “The goal of this volume,” writes editor William B. Robison, “is not merely to do a ‘hatchet job’ on *The Tudors* but to assess it as a work of art, as a representation of history, as a reflection of modern and perhaps postmodern concerns, and as a potential tool for teaching” (7).

The first three of twenty-one essays are taken up by Robison, who notes that Chapter 2, which focuses on Henry himself, “is twice as long as the others not as the result of editorial self-indulgence but because it incorporates warfare and diplomacy. Henry’s legacy and his place in historical memory - both real and imagined - occupy all contributors to this volume” (7). Other essays follow on Anne Boleyn, Henry’s other wives, the court, kingship, religion,



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conspiracy, humanism, costumes, gender, and medicine as treated in the show. The later thematic essays, like Krista J. Kesselring's "Crime, Punishment, and Violence in *The Tudors*," are the stronger portions of the collection, and are more effective in their analysis of the show than the earlier essays cataloguing historical inaccuracies of individual characters. A strong reflection on the relationship between history, cinematography, and the physical space of the court, as portrayed on the show and in contemporary poetry, is Thomas Betteridge's "*The Tudors* and the Tudor Court: Know Your Symptom." It draws a comparison between *The Tudors* and the smash hit *Game of Thrones*, asking "if *Game of Thrones* would have been so confident in its portrayal of its various and varied courts without the example set by *The Tudors*" (207). It is comparisons like these that draw the show, which has been cancelled now for close to ten years, into the present day and prove its continued relevance. From the perspective of SHARP readership, this work falls more within the scope of media studies than traditional studies of book history, readership, or publishing. Those who are interested in media studies or cultural studies as an extension of the concept of *text* will probably find this work most relevant. Undergraduates looking to learn about media studies and media criticism or enthusiasts of *The Tudors* will also benefit from this volume.

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