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Circumstantial Shakespeare (Paperback)

By Lorna Hutson

Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2018. Paperback. Condition: New. Reprint. Language: English . Brand New Book. Shakespeare's characters are thought to be his greatest achievement--imaginatively autonomous, possessed of depth and individuality, while his plots are said to be second-hand and careless of details of time and place. This view has survived the assaults of various literary theories and has even, surprisingly, been revitalized by the recent emphasis on the collaborative nature of early modern theatre. But belief in the autonomous imaginative life of Shakespeare's characters depends on another unexamined myth: the myth that Shakespeare rejected neoclassicism, playing freely with theatrical time and place. Circumstantial Shakespeare explodes these venerable critical commonplaces. Drawing on sixteenth-century rhetorical pedagogy, it reveals the importance of topics of circumstance (of Time, Place, and Motive, etc.) in the conjuring of compelling narratives and vivid mental images. Circumstances which we now think of as incalculable contingencies were originally topics of forensic inquiry into human intention or passion. In drawing on the Roman forensic tradition of circumstantial proof, Shakespeare did not ignore time and place. His brilliant innovation was to use the topics of circumstance to imply offstage actions, times and places in terms of the motives and...



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