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Young Bess

“Re-Writing History!” September 8, 2001

Reviewer: nirvana-17 (A review from the Amazon.com web site.)

This is what happens when a film studio and a novelist place history on the big screen. Historical accuracy and truth takes second place when it comes to spinning a yarn. I just hope when kids watch this film, they do not rely on it as facts for their education. The real story itself was intriguing enough without having to bend the truth. So why did they?

The reason being that they wanted to make a romance film about Thomas Seymour and Elizabeth I, and her life while growing up in the Tudor Kingdom.

Anyway, in the film, Elizabeth I was madly in love with Thomas Seymour. From historical records, Thomas was supposedly the person who made advances on Elizabeth I but was unsuccessful. In the film, Edward Seymour (Ned) was portrayed as a callous power hungry puppeteer in the royal court. In history, he was a successful military man when he battled oppositions at Pinkie, Scotland (1547). Edward was also responsible for religious reforms and in relaxing heresy and treason laws.

In the film, he sent his brother Thomas to the scaffold (block, actually) because of his paranoia over power struggle threats. In history, the execution of Thomas by the council in 1549 was a significant blow to Ned and it weakened his power in England. The eventual arrest and execution of Ned in 1552 was conspired by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton to remove Seymour's protectorate power over his nephew, King Edward VI. Edward VI died at the age of 15 in 1553.

Of course, there's no way of knowing precisely what really happened in history. But... a person should not be defamed or condemned (as in the case of Ned Seymour) based on hearsay, idle gossip, a romantic novel, or a chick flick, even if they are dead a few centuries.

I did enjoy this film as pure entertainment. Walter Plunkett's costume design was magnificent and the whole cast was superb...Is it worth seeing? Yes, definitely! It's entertaining, well acted and beautifully produced.

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From Encyclopedia Americana:

About Ned Seymour:

“The king’s uncle, the Duke of Somerset (Ned Seymour), ruled as protector for just over two years. He favored innovation in religion and sought to solve the problems of the poor. But being overbearing, greedy, and incompetent, he failed to prevent or settle serious rebellions that broke out in 1549 in Norfolk and the west, and made enemies of all men of property.”

About Tom Seymour and Elizabeth:

“Thomas Seymour, the handsome brother of Protector Somerset (Ned Seymour), was disturbingly familiar with her (Elizabeth). This made a scandal of importance and may have reinforced a fear of sex aroused by the earlier executions of her mother and her cousin-stepmother Catherine Howard for adultery.”

The Encyclopedia Americana, Grolier Incorporated, Danbury, CT 1984