



**"Mr. B" or Comforting Thoughts About the Bison:
A Critical Biography of Robert Benchley
(Contributions to the Study of Popular Culture)**

Wes D. Gehring

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With the cooperation of Benchley family members, and using diaries and correspondence and much archival material, Gehring has written a fresh and lively biography of humorist Robert Benchley. Known for his development of the comic anti-hero in essays, columns, film scripts, as a screen actor, and on stage and radio, Benchley emerges as a fascinating individual whose significance as a pivotal American humorist is fully documented.

Benchley's times and places--including New York's Algonquin Round-Table set of the 1920s and Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s--are colorfully depicted, and there are interesting glimpses of friends and colleagues such as Dorothy Parker, S. J. Perelman, Donald Ogdon Stewart, and Groucho Marx. The flavor of Benchley comes through not only in observations and anecdotes but in a section reprinting ten of his letters, six of his Life Drama columns, and a collage of his published comments on favorite comedians. Author Gehring also provides an annotated bibliography of Benchley's books and selected shorter works and a bibliography of books and articles about him, a chronology of events highlighting his life and career, an annotated filmography, and a selected discography. Illustrations include photographs spanning Benchley's career and reproductions of his own sketches and cartoons. Mindful of Benchley's warning not to get too serious over laughter, Gehring has produced a thorough critical and bibliographical examination of a comic persona, which is also a fond celebration of a great humorist.

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