



Shakespeare's Language

Frank Kermode

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A magnum opus from our finest interpreter of The Bard

The true biography of Shakespeare--and the only one we need to care about--is in his plays. Frank Kermode, Britain's most distinguished scholar of sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century literature, has been thinking about Shakespeare's plays all his life. This book is a distillation of that lifetime of thinking. The finest tragedies written in English were all composed in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and it is generally accepted that the best ones were Shakespeare's. Their language is often difficult, and it must have been hard even for contemporaries to understand. How did this language develop? How did it happen that Shakespeare's audience could appreciate Hamlet at the beginning of the decade and Coriolanus near the end of it?

In this long-awaited work, Kermode argues that something extraordinary started to happen to Shakespeare's language at a date close to 1600, and he sets out to explore the nature and consequences of the dynamic transformation that followed. For it is in the magnificent, suggestive power of the poetic language itself that audiences have always found meaning and value. The originality of Kermode's argument, the elegance and humor of his prose, and the intelligence of his discussion make this a landmark in Shakespearean studies.

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