Genius and Monologue

KEN FRIEDEN
Genius and Monologue
Ken Frieden

"This is a subtle and rich study of a significant issue, not just for literary analysis, but for our understanding of Western culture."

—Donald G. Marshall,
Department of English,
University of Iowa

"Genius is the intellectual obsession of our time," Ken Frieden writes, "and monologue is one symptom of the disorder." From ancient, spiritual conceptions of genius to modern notions of the extraordinary mind, Frieden traces associated philosophic and literary expressions of inspiration and individuality.

Frieden juxtaposes the evolving forms of genius with traditions of monologue in pre-Shakespearean and Shakespearean drama, Romantic poetry, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction. He delineates the linguistic mechanisms that have shaped the dominant ideology of genius, showing that while literary monologues typically break the conventions of dialogue, aesthetics ultimately identifies originality with deviance and madness. The successive guises of genius have gradually displaced divine intervention, and language has usurped the role of external inspiration.

Ken Frieden's provocative and wide-ranging study revises some traditional assumptions of literary theory and intellectual history and sheds light on the fictions of divinity and subjectivity in literature. It will interest scholars and students of literary theory as well as comparativists, intellectual and literary historians, and philosophers.
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