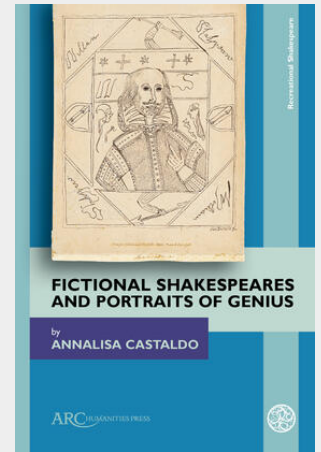


Castaldo

FICTIONAL SHAKESPEARES & PORTR

This study is the first to investigate how cultural interpretations of "genius" influence, and are reflected in, fictional portraits of Shakespeare. It explores the wide range of portraits (including children's books, romance novels, graphic novels, and film) that bring Shakespeare to life, and suggests that different portrayals present different conceptions of genius. How does Shakespeare become a genius? How does being a genius affect his life? In some portraits Shakespeare is a man in love with life, fully immersed in the world around him and therefore able to transform the richness of the world into words. But other portrayals present a man cut off from the world, unable to connect to anyone because his creations are more real to him than people, while others suggest that Shakespeare's genius can only be understood as a supernatural or magical gift. In each portrait, Shakespeare mirrors back to us what we believe about what it means to be a genius.

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