

Shakespeare and social dialogue : dramatic language and Elizabethan letters

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Abstrak

Shakespeare and Social Dialogue opens up a new approach to Shakespeare's language and the rhetoric of Elizabethan letters. Moving beyond claims about the language of individual Shakespearean characters, Magnusson develops a rhetoric of social exchange to analyze dialogue, conversation, sonnets, and particularly letters of the period, which are normally read as historical documents. The verbal negotiation of social and power relations such as service or friendship is explored in texts as diverse as Sidney family letters and Shakespeare's sonnets, merchant correspondence and Timon of Athens, Burghley's state letters and Henry IV Part . The book draws on ideas from discourse analysis and linguistic pragmatics, especially "politeness theory", relating these to key ideas in epistolary handbooks of the period, including those by Erasmus and Angel Day. Chapters on Henry VIII, King Lear, Much Ado About Nothing, and Othello demonstrate that Shakespeare's dialogic art is deeply rooted in the everyday language of Elizabethan culture. Magnusson creates a way of reading both literary texts and historical documents which bridges the gap between the methods of new historicism and linguistic criticism.