



Shakespeare: The Last Plays (Longman Critical Readers)

Kiernan Ryan

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This is the first collection of criticism on Shakespeare's romances to register the impact of modern literary theory on interpretations of these plays. Kiernan Ryan brings together the most important recent essays on *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, the greatest of the 'last plays', staging a dynamic debate between feminist, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and new historicist views of the masterpieces Shakespeare wrote at the close of his career.

The book aims not only to anthologise accounts of the last plays by leading Shakespearean critics, including Stephen Greenblatt, Janet Adelman, Leah Marcus, Howard Felperin and Steven Mullaney, but also to dramatise what is at stake in the choice of a particular critical approach. It allows the student to compare the strengths and limitations of a deconstructive and a feminist reading of the same romance, or to test the plausibility of one psychoanalytic angle on the last plays against another. The headnotes that preface the essays highlight their distinctive slants on Shakespearean romance, unpack the theoretical assumptions that steer their interpretations, and throw into relief the key points at which their authors collide or converge.

The editor's introduction places the essays in the context of twentieth-century criticism of the last plays and makes a powerful case for a fundamental reappraisal of Shakespearean romance. The comprehensive, fully annotated bibliography provides an unrivalled guide to further reading on all four plays.

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