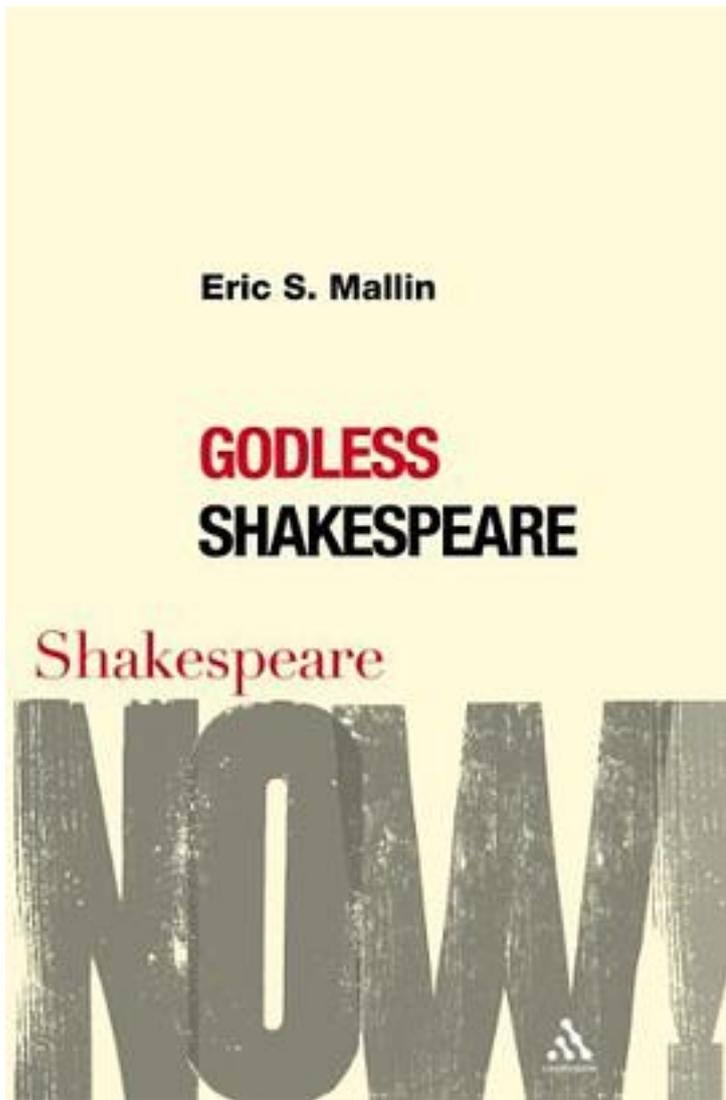


Godless Shakespeare



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出版者:Continuum Intl Pub Group

出版时间:2007-3

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780826490421

"Shakespeare Now!" is a series of short books of truly vital literary scholarship, each with its own distinctive form. "Shakespeare Now!" recaptures the excitement of Shakespeare; it doesn't assume we know him already, or that we know the best methods for approaching his plays. "Shakespeare Now!" is a new generation of critics, unafraid of risk, on a series of intellectual adventures. Above all - it is a new Shakespeare, freshly present in each volume. In "Godless Shakespeare", Mallin argues that there is a profound absence of, or hostility to, God in Shakespeare's plays. It is clear that Shakespeare engaged with and deployed much of his culture's broadly religious interests: his language is shot through with biblical quotations, priestly sermonizing, Christian imagery and miracle-play style allegory. However, he claims that a counter-discourse also emerges in the works, arguing against God, or the idea of God. This is a polemical account of the absence of God and of belief in the plays, and of how this absence functions in theatrical moments of crux and crisis. Following Dante's three part structure for the "Divine Comedy" - the first part (Inferno) represents expressions of religious faith in Shakespeare's plays, the second (Purgatorio) sets out more sceptical positions, and the last (Paradiso) articulations of godlessness. The discussion focuses on the moral and spiritual dilemmas of major characters, developing the often subtle transitions between belief, scepticism and atheism and suggesting that there is a liberating potential in unbelief.

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