DESCRIPTION

This book explores the history of the idea of genius from its origins in classical antiquity to its deconstruction in postmodernist criticism. Focusing mainly on the creative arts, the book examines certain key points in the development of the idea, and also addresses the problem of what constitutes genius in specific subject areas. Experts in different fields have contributed chapters on literature, art, music, mathematics, philosophy and psychiatry to produce a volume which illuminates an abiding obsession throughout the history of European culture.

The contributors to this volume show how the ancient image of the inspired poet and the Renaissance conception of the divino artista both anticipate later notions of genius, developed into the 18th century around the central figures of Homer, Shakespeare and Goethe. Romantic definitions of genius are analysed, as are the implications of Nietzsche's pronouncements on 'human greatness'. The historic conjunction of genius and madness is explored from the early belief in divine possession through the Renaissance notion of melancholy to the age of psychoanalysis.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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