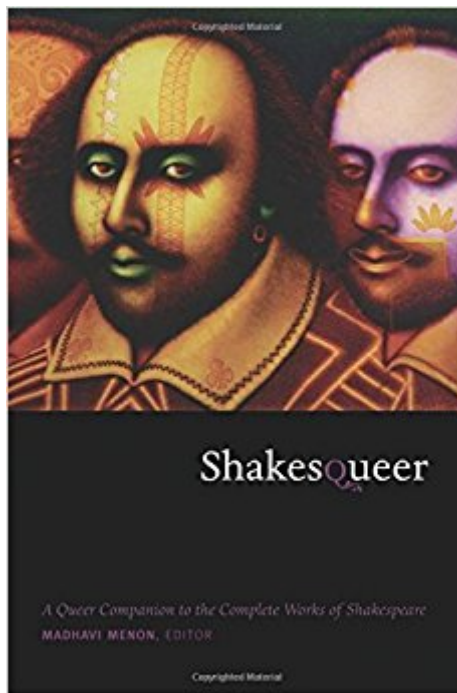


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# Shakespeare: A Queer Companion To The Complete Works Of Shakespeare (Series Q)



## Synopsis

Shakespeare puts the most exciting queer theorists in conversation with the complete works of William Shakespeare. Exploring what is odd, eccentric, and unexpected in the Bard's plays and poems, these theorists highlight not only the many ways that Shakespeare can be queered but also the many ways that Shakespeare can enrich queer theory. This innovative anthology reveals an early modern playwright insistently returning to questions of language, identity, and temporality, themes central to contemporary queer theory. Since many of the contributors do not study early modern literature, Shakespeare takes queer theory back and brings Shakespeare forward, challenging the chronological confinement of queer theory to the last two hundred years. The book also challenges conceptual certainties that have narrowly equated queerness with homosexuality. Chasing all manner of stray desires through every one of Shakespeare's plays and poems, the contributors cross temporal, animal, theoretical, and sexual boundaries with abandon. Claiming adherence to no one school of thought, the essays consider *The Winter's Tale* alongside network TV, *Hamlet* in relation to the death drive, *King John* as a history of queer theory, and *Much Ado About Nothing* in tune with a Sondheim musical. Together they expand the reach of queerness and queer critique across chronologies, methodologies, and bodies.

Contributors: Matt Bell, Amanda Berry, Daniel Boyarin, Judith Brown, Steven Bruhm, Peter Coviello, Julie Crawford, Drew Daniel, Mario DiGangi, Lee Edelman, Jason Edwards, Aranye Fradenburg, Carla Freccero, Daniel Juan Gil, Jonathan Goldberg, Jody Greene, Stephen Guy-Bray, Ellis Hanson, Sharon Holland, Cary Howie, Lynne Huffer, Barbara Johnson, Hector Kollias, James Kuzner, Arthur L. Little Jr., Philip Lorenz, Heather Love, Jeffrey Masten, Robert McRuer, Madhavi Menon, Michael Moon, Paul Morrison, Andrew Nicholls, Kevin Ohi, Patrick R. O'Malley, Ann Pellegrini, Richard Rambuss, Valerie Rohy, Bethany Schneider, Kathryn Schwarz, Laurie Shannon, Ashley T. Sheldon, Alan Sinfield, Bruce Smith, Karl Steel, Kathryn Bond Stockton, Amy Villarejo, Julian Yates

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## Customer Reviews

“The adventurous essays in Shakesqueer demonstrate that queer theory does indeed need Shakespeare, if only to defy rumors of its own demise: the essays show what is vital about a queer studies that might have been thought by this point too domesticated or reified or

fixed to be intellectually vibrant.” —Carolyn Dinshaw, author of *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* “What happens when queer theory gets into bed with Shakespeare? A play in forty-eight acts, this spirited group production never ceases to entertain and surprise with its queer cast of characters: virgins, eunuchs, and lechers; queens, kings, and pageboys; tyrants, assassins, and killjoys; lions, tigers, and bears oh my! Full of toil and trouble, wit and wisdom, Shakesqueer succeeds where few other edited collections do: it puts the play back in playwright, and the fun back in theory.” —Diana Fuss, Princeton University “In the end, this book is a big, glorious mess, full of playful juxtapositions and frightening possibilities. It is thrilling. Theatre scholars, queer theorists, actors, directors, and dramaturges will all find something useful and interesting.” (Michael Cramer *Sixteenth Century Journal*) “When studying endless Shakespeare plays on English Literature courses, we always had a hunch there were some exceptionally queer goings on beyond some same sex sonnets and this collection of essays proves us right. Earl on earl analysis sits beside complex queer theories on the bard.” (Gay Times) “Few works of literary criticism deserve the descriptor monumental, but this one does. . . . The book is both readable and witty. It is also important, for it drives the final nail into the coffin of 20th-century Shakespearean studies. . . . No hierarchies survive this book. Every play and poem receives a fresh new reading. . . . Essential. All readers.” (M. J. Emery *Choice*) “If you’re looking for clues to Romeo and Mercutio’s secret romance in the new academic volume *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Madhavi Menon (Duke), you’re barking up the wrong yew tree. American University professor Menon and her queer-theorist contributors find queerness in Shakespeare in that term’s most all-encompassing meaning of oddball, unusual, or

non-normative. But when you come to think of it, fairy queen Titania falling in love with an ass named Bottom is pretty queer, in all senses of the word. (Roberto Friedman Bay Area Reporter) "It is rare to see a volume that does so much, and does it with such consistent wit, thoughtfulness, and creativity. . . . In putting together this volume, Menon has done scholars from all fields and periods an immense service. Shakesqueer gives us a very queer new reading companion friend, helpmeet, comrade-in-arms that makes us exquisitely aware of the need for the perverse and disruptive critical practice its essays so pleasurably model. (Melissa E. Sanchez Renaissance Quarterly) "There's something for every queer scholar and Bard-lover in the anthology; from bears in Henry VIII to eunuchs in Antony and Cleopatra, from the death drive in Hamlet to precariously heterosexual marriages in All's Well that Ends Well, the contributing authors chart Shakespeare's varied engagements with queerness, putting pressure on assumptions that Shakespeare has nothing to offer to contemporary queer theory. . . . The assorted essays assert that Shakespeare has as much to offer queer theory as queer theory can contribute to understanding and deconstructing the Bard's texts. This book belongs on every bookish queer's shelf, right where the leather-bound Complete Works of William Shakespeare butts up against Butler and Foucault. (Kestryl Cael Lowrey Lambda Literary Review) "This fascinating collection of essays explores the queer elements within all of Shakespeare's works. With contributions from scholars of both queer studies and Shakespeare, the volume represents a joining of the two fields rarely attempted before. (Charles Green Gay and Lesbian Review/Worldwide) "[Shakesqueer] manages to put the fun back into academic research. Shakesqueer is a highly entertaining collection of essays, which all focus on the strange, the unusual, that is, the queer element in the Shakespearean oeuvre. (Veronika Schandl European Journal of English Studies) "For 'insider experts' those who are Shakespeareans, queer theorists, or both (always, already, at once) Shakesqueer provides a garden of delights between its covers. . . . Shakesqueer extends, enriches, and strengthens the vocabulary of Shakespeare criticism in concert with queer theory." (Stephen F. Evans Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching 2017-06-01)

Madhavi Menon is Associate Professor of Literature at American University. She is the author of *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* and *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*.

Assigned reading in school. Did not care for the book, but the shipping was quick and the item came in condition as described by the seller. Very good service

Frustrating! I opened this book with eager anticipation, expecting insights into (pre-)gay aspects of sexuality in Shakespeare's work and life. Alas it was not to be so. "Queer theory" is apparently only peripherally related to gay studies, and the articles here are often rather tenuously connected to either Shakespeare or gayness: we find an analysis of a Doctor Who episode, for example, and a discussion of John Wilkes Booth and his brothers. Some of the titles are witty and amusing (my favorite was "Putting the Anus Back into Coriolanus"), but the contents are so mired in postmodern jargon and theory that they are likely to leave all but the specialist in queer theory mystified. "Shakespeareer" studies seem to have mushroomed from a small roundtable at the 2007 MLA convention into a popular field of study, and these essays will no doubt contribute to tenure or promotion for their authors, but the target audience is really other academic "queer theorists" (and their graduate students). If my experience is any guide, most educated general readers (gay or straight) will not find very much of interest. A personal note: I started reading this just after reading the latest issue of Funny Times newspaper, and found myself wondering if some or all of the articles were intended to be academic parodies. Perhaps that's the essence of the postmodern: you can't tell scholarship from parody.

If you still think that Queer Theory is the same as Gay and Lesbian Studies this is definitely not the book for you. You should buy this book only if you are familiar with contemporary Shakespeare Studies and non-sexual Queer Theory. Anachronistic in appearance but congruent in its logic, Madhavi Menon's *Shakespeareer* is a detailed exercise on how Queer Theory can be performed in literary studies of the English Renaissance. In this book you will not find neither deep analysis of the Shakespeare's text nor an extended theorization on the queer, but a powerful invitation to enter the obscure realm of queer thinking in action. This book covers a wide range of queer perspectives ranging from gender and performance, to disability and time. To some extent, this is a continuation to Jonathan Goldberg's *Queering the Renaissance* (Series Q)

This book makes a good, queer companion to Richard Burt's book, *Unspeakable Shakespeare* and his essay "New Shakesesqueer Cinema" in *ShUnspeakable Shakespeare*, Revised Edition: *Queer Theory and American Kiddie Culture* *Shakespeare the Movie*.

As an older gay man who intensely dislikes the current fashionable use of the previously derogatory word "queer" I was completely turned off by the very title of this silly conglomeration of utter piffle. There is no possibility of my ever having anything good to say about Queer Theory, and this book is a howling example of Queer Theory at its very worst. The contributors to the delinquency of this minor book obviously have a lot of time on their hands. They should be sent out into the real world and forced to come into contact with ordinary reality.

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