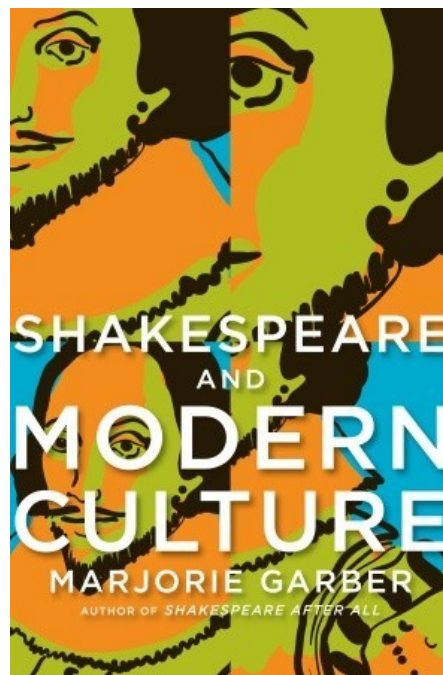




Shakespeare and Modern Culture

Marjorie Garber

Download now

Read Online ➔

Shakespeare and Modern Culture

Marjorie Garber

Shakespeare and Modern Culture Marjorie Garber

From one of the world's premier Shakespeare scholars, author of *Shakespeare After All* ("the indispensable introduction to the indispensable writer" –Newsweek): a magisterial new study whose premise is that Shakespeare makes modern culture and that modern culture makes Shakespeare.

Shakespeare has determined many of the ideas that we think of as "naturally" our own and even as "naturally" true — ideas about human character, individuality and selfhood, government, leadership, love and jealousy, men and women, youth and age. Yet many of these ideas, timely as ever, have been reimagined (indeed, are often now first encountered) not only in modern fiction, theater, film, and the news but also in the literature of psychology, sociology, political theory, business, medicine, and law.

Marjorie Garber delves into ten plays to explore the interrelationships between Shakespeare and twentieth century and contemporary culture — from James Joyce's *Ulysses* to George W. Bush's reading list. In *The Merchant of Venice*, she looks at the question of intention; in *Hamlet*, the matter of character; in *King Lear*, the dream of sublimity; in *Othello*, the persistence of difference; and in *Macbeth*, the necessity of interpretation. She discusses the conundrum of man in *The Tempest*; the quest for exemplarity in *Henry V*; the problem of fact in *Richard III*; the estrangement of self in *Coriolanus*; and the untimeliness of youth in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Shakespeare and Modern Culture is a tour de force reimagining of our own mental and emotional landscape as refracted through the prism of protean "Shakespeare."

Shakespeare and Modern Culture Details

Date : Published December 9th 2008 by Pantheon (first published 2008)

ISBN : 9780307377678

Author : Marjorie Garber

Format : Hardcover 368 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Criticism, Literary Criticism, History

 [Download Shakespeare and Modern Culture ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Shakespeare and Modern Culture ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Shakespeare and Modern Culture Marjorie Garber

From Reader Review Shakespeare and Modern Culture for online ebook

Patricia says

Does anyone ever read straight through a collection of essays? I generally wander and sample, so it may not be fair to rate this book yet. Given the title, I maybe shouldn't have been surprized and irked when, at one point, Shakespeare is described as postmodern before modern. Overall, though, the book makes readers more conscious of how Shakespeare has been read through the lenses of critical, political, or moral agendas. The essays on the *Tempest* and *Merchant* usefully and thoughtfully map out trends in reading Shylock, Prospero, and Caliban. The passage on exemplarity in *Henry V* was also thought-provoking. The breadth of the topic works against a totally satisfying exploration of many interesting ideas and observations, though.

Ed says

If there was a star between 3 and 4 on the goodreads ratings that is where this book would fall. Marjorie Garber does her usual impeccable job of explicating Shakespeare's text without paraphrasing or talking down to her readers. She knows her subject extremely well and seems to enjoy writing about Shakespeare. Her discussions of how we see Shakespeare through the prism of modern culture is terrific but some of her comparisons/parallels between specific plays and more current events are facile.

Catherine says

I really enjoyed this book, particularly the chapters on *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Garber looks at the plays from all sorts of angles including performance history, editing history, how the plays have been quoted and in what contexts, and contemporary parallels of the characters or situations. I know I will return to the book.

Dana says

Read my review of *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* .

I student gave me this book, and when I couldn't decide which book to read next, Maggie helped me out by selecting this one.

My first suggestion if a new edition is ever written is that Garber introduce each chapter with a quick summary of each play she discusses. I am familiar with the plots of the plays I've read recently, but I read plays like *The Tempest* and *Coriolanus* (or did I read it? can't remember!) too long ago for me to remember some of the plot.

Scottsdale Public Library says

Garber looks at the dramatist's major works from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merchant of Venice* to *Macbeth* and *Othello*, just to name a few. From politics to popular culture and media, Shakespeare can be found everywhere. This is an entertaining and insightful read on how Shakespeare has been interpreted over time and how it is entrenched in our cultural psyche. I highly recommend it! –Amy O

Ethan Campbell says

Great book, though it needs an update!

Mike Jensen says

The last sentence begins, "The timelessness of Shakespeare is achieved by his recurrent timeliness." Absolutely right. The problem is that the previous 272 pages do not lead to this statement. Worse, Garber fails to address the many times when Shakespeare is not "universal." Marlowe's *EDWARD II* has more to say to our time than *TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA*, and what can be less universal than the word "honorificabilitudinitatibus"? Garber's thesis is that Shakespeare creates modern culture and modern culture creates Shakespeare, which she fails to prove, and so settles for this short meditation of timelessness. As to the part of her thesis that Shakespeare created modern culture, this is only partly demonstrated (there are many influences, which she does not really acknowledge), but that modern culture also creates Shakespeare is only occasionally demonstrated, and then not convincingly. Do we create Shakespeare or interpret him? These are not the same, but too often the answer Garber goes to the latter. Very occasionally she muddies everything so effectively that while we can't say that now culture creates Shakespeare, we wonder if it might. The chapter of *MV* is a case in point. Garber is at her best when she shows how writers such as Joyce, Stoppard, and even the writers of business books have appropriated Shakespeare in their work, though she admits the business writers get Shakespeare wrong undermining her thesis that modern culture creates Shakespeare. She is at her best 90% of the time. The 10% wrong with this book is the dots she so often fails to connect as described above, and perhaps a dozen statements that are just silly. This is a good book, but it should have been better.

Terence says

Shakespeare and Modern Culture is a related series of essays focusing on ten of the Bard's plays. Garber argues "Shakespeare was...a writer and thinker who changed the fundamental was in which people write, read, and think." (p. 270) A relatively uncontroversial position, at least in Anglophone literature and culture. Where Garber goes beyond that is in her position that Shakespeare, having created the framework by which we interpret the world, has been continually reinterpreted by subsequent generations (along with his plays) within those constraints. His purported "timelessness" is a result of his "timeliness."

It is the chief fault of this author's writing that this thesis isn't clearly expressed until the final four pages.

There were two things that marred my enjoyment of the book. The first was a personal failing - I don't have much of a literary/literature background and was often unable to fully grasp and appreciate Garber's points.

The second thing lay squarely in the author's lap. Garber tends to write in a highly elliptical style, heavily laced with academic jargon. Too often a chore to read. If her prose had been a tad more user friendly, I could bring this book into the 4-star range (regardless of my personal ignorance).

Before moving on to mention some of the interesting points I found in the essays, I do want to mention that a good feature of Garber's writing is that she has an almost unerring knack for picking just the right quote to illustrate her point.

In the first essay, "The Tempest: The Conundrum of Man," one of the points that most struck me (probably because of my history/poli-sci background) was that "Ariel" was the character originally adopted by Latin American philosophers and statesmen as it represented the superiority of rationality and feeling over irrationality. A symbol of transformation from chaos to order and freedom. It's only in the last 60+ years that "Caliban," the native oppressed by colonialism, has come to dominate the symbolic discourse. (p. 21f.)

The third essay, "Coriolanus," is an example of the jargon-laden, opaque writing that ruined some of the readings for me. Garber gets into a deep, extended riff involving Bertold Brecht and Gunter Grass, hardly mentioning Shakespeare or his play at all. It only ever gets this "bad" in the final essays on "Hamlet" and "King Lear," thankfully.

In "Macbeth: The Necessity of Interpretation," I found Garber's chief point to be that the play is a reflection of the unending cycle of corruption, betrayal and guilt. In addition to her eagle-eye for the apt quote, Garber also pointed out a scene from Roman Polanski's version (w/ excellent performances from Jon Finch and Francesca Annis) that I remember but which now has new meaning: The final scene of the movie is not Malcolm proclaiming his coronation at Scone but is of Donalbain, the younger brother, returning to the heath where Macbeth met the witches.

The essay "Othello: The Persistence of Difference" is interesting in its charting of peoples' reactions to the play - the "race" question has not always been the central one.

In "Henry V: The Quest for Exemplarity," there's a quote that I especially enjoyed: "...*language is treacherous*, meanings shift, all speech is dangerous and not always under the control of the speaker." (p. 187) (emphasis mine)

I also enjoyed Garber's taking to task the recent trend in self-help/business publishing to co-opt Shakespearean figures - in this case "Henry" as the paragon of "Leadership" - missing all but the surface qualities of the character. In Henry's case, Garber argues (I believe correctly) that the spate of leadership books ignores the ambiguities of command and that events are often beyond one's control (never more so than in war).

As I mentioned earlier, the last two essays - "Hamlet: The Master of Character" and "King Lear: The Dream of Sublimity" - lost me about half-way through in each but I did net some interesting fish. For example, the oddest interpretation of Hamlet I learned of was Edward Vining's argument that Hamlet was a woman. (pp. 202-03) In "King Lear," Garber makes the significant point that, until 1838, no one saw the original play - they were watching Nahum Tate's "improved" version (the one where Cordelia and Edgar are secret lovers and she lives...I shudder at the very idea).

Despite its flaws, I enjoyed this book and did gain an even, ever deeper appreciation of Shakespeare's work and importance. I can easily recommend this book to anyone interested in the subject.

Maryjulia says

"He was not of an age, but for all time!"

Ben Jonson (1573-1637), Preface to the First Folio

Author Marjorie Garber's premise is this:

Shakespeare's plays almost always seem to coincide with the times in which they are read or produced. They are eternally "modern". How can that be? How has each age seen Shakespeare as speaking for that time, right up to today? And as we change, how can Shakespeare's works continue to change right along with us?

The author chooses 10 plays in which to explore these questions as well as others that specifically pertain to the individual play.

I found the questions raised about race in Othello, the female sensibilities of the character of Hamlet, and the changing and emerging role of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice especially compelling.

We will be hearing a lot about Shakespeare with the approaching 400th anniversary of his death in April 2016. This book adds a lot to the conversation.

Carl says

I remember finding Garber an extremely entertaining and thought-provoking professor, and so it was no surprise that I liked this book. But she also struck me as a bit of a loose cannon, in the best way: let's toss this borderline-loopy thesis out there and see if it has traction (done with an eager smile, not an arrogant stake in the ground)...so it was no surprise that I didn't buy it all.

All of her ventures into implementations of Shakespeare over the last 400 years entertain and enlighten; unfortunately, her thesis thread wears pretty thin at times. Her chapters on The Tempest and Coriolanus hold up well; her Macbeth and Henry V and Hamlet are based on provocative ideas that totter a bit for me, but more than anything I wanted to see *more* about those. Her Othello and King Lear seem to range unsuccessfully far afield.

The book has some great commentary about post-modernism and Brecht, and does a wonderful job showing her enthusiastic breadth of knowledge about Shakespeare performances, movies, and allusions into pop culture. As a whole, it falls short of great, although I really enjoyed the read.

amy says

The back-cover blurb calling this "the best seminar on Shakespeare" or similar is right on: Garber brings up a lot of interesting points and connections, but doesn't always follow through on them. Lots of new threads to pursue – and of course am moved to read / re-read the plays themselves – but I was occasionally reminded of this Onion bit. Also quite self-conscious about "studying up on" Shakespeare at age 30, as if prefiguring the "senior" or "life-long learner" who typically revisits the Great Books post-retirement.

John Fredrickson says

This was a very good read, though there are parts that get difficult to follow. This is in part because the author's range of material is so broad that she ends up exploring territory that is probably foreign to many of her readers.

The book is an exploration of how our modern culture (and notably, cultures and authors before us) approaches some of Shakespeare's plays. It is very interesting to see that our culture reacts to and experiences plays like Macbeth or King Lear differently than others have. This cannot help but broaden one's appreciation for the dynamics inherent in a Shakespeare play. I have personally always struggled with how to read or appreciate Lear, and this book's exploration of the play absolutely helps me to see and appreciate it in some new ways.

Moira Mccarthy says

This one is very much a work in progress. I take it a chapter or two at a time and then read something else and come back to it. Each chapter takes a Shakespeare masterpiece, dissects it and then traces it all the way to today -- finding evidence of it in films, music, television, even commercials. I've been re-reading each Shakespeare piece before I read the chapter on it. Really interesting . . . I mean I took something like eight semesters of Shakespeare in college, but this book is showing me even more what a master - no, what a REVOLUTIONARY WSS was. It IS work to read it . . . but well worth it. BTW my kids gave me this book for Christmas!

Abby says

I liked Garber's analysis of Shakespeare and Modern Culture overall, even if most of the book was awash in lit crit jargon. Her insights are most relevant when performing close readings of humanities texts; when she attempts to critique business or mathematical readings of Shakespeare, then Garber reveals herself to be out of her depth.

Caroline says

A whirlwind tour through some of the most prominent plays in the Shakespearean canon, and how they're reflected in modern (mostly 20th century to the present) life and literature. The argument got a little repetitive and circular at times, but I felt like I gained some new insights into all of the plays. The chapter on 'Henry V' is particularly good. Nice stretching of the brain muscles. I might have preferred a more detailed exploration of fewer topics, but the broad survey feel of the book is probably necessary for publication by a major (non-scholarly) press.

The book is pretty well footnoted, but I'm not sure how useful it would be as a research source. Not really for beginners, either; I'd think you have to be fairly well versed either in Shakespeare or in modernist literature/theater to get a lot out of it.

