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A Green Reading of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

BIPASHA MAJUMDER (DE)

Abstract: The present paper proposes to re-read the representation of nature in William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It* from an ecocritical perspective. Shakespeare did not write in response to our present-day environmental crisis. The explicitly activist position of Silko, Abbey or Thoreau is not, therefore, found in his plays. Nevertheless, as Simon Estok reminds us in *An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster*, it is not easy to avoid in Shakespeare the feelings of what Scott Slovic calls 'ecodespair.' In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare has advocated the ecocentric philosophy of life instead of the reigning philosophies of Western Civilization which were deeply anthropocentric; that is, human beings were viewed as opposed to and superior to nature, and free to exploit the valuable resources of nature to meet their own needs. The ecocentric values of collective ethical responsibility and the claims of the natural community beyond ourselves receive expression in this play.

Key words: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, Ecocriticism, Ecodespair, Ecophobia.

Ecocritical Studies of Early Modern writers such as Shakespeare are still fairly few in number. "Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: An Analysis of 'Home' and 'Power' in *King Lear*" by Simon C. Estok, and "Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Unexpected Return of the Elizabethan World Picture" and *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* by Gabriel Egan are the most influential writings in this field of study. However, this is only a beginning for an ecocritical scholarship of Shakespeare. In this article I propose to explore an ecocritical approach towards William



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