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## Something Rotten: Space, Place, and the Nation in Hamlet and As You Like It

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Georgia College

Something Rotten: Space, Place, and the Nation in *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*

By

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M.A. Candidate

A Thesis

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*"This above all: to thine own self be true."  
Hamlet, 1.3.84*

I would be remiss to pretend that this thesis simply sprang into being on its own (although at points, I sincerely wished it would). The contributions of mental (and emotional) effort from a great deal of people went into the creation of this thesis.

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## Prologue:

## “A Mirror Up to Nature”

*“The many great gardens of the world, of literature and poetry, of painting and music, of religion and architecture, all make the point as clear as possible: The soul cannot thrive in the absence of a garden. If you don't want paradise, you are not human; and if you are not human, you don't have a soul.”*  
 Thomas More, *Utopia*

Ecocriticism has been defined as literature that concretely concerns the environment. This definition of Ecocriticism can be applied to those of Shakespeare’s plays that specifically depict ecological inevitability, disaster, and problems. This creates a prototype of a Shakespearean Ecocritical canon, which can include plays such as *The Tempest*, *Midsummer*, and *King Lear*. Ecocriticism has become a wider field, however, this canon has become limiting. Lawrence Buell addresses this limitation in his work *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Buell reiterates the growing “terminological issue at stakes [of the] implicit narrowness of the ‘eco,’ insofar as it connotes the “natural” *rather than* the “built” environment and, still more specifically, the field of ecology” (Buell 12). Ecocriticism is no longer confined to only the natural as critics expand the field through examinations of built environments and urban interaction with the natural. This widening of the field encourages the addition of further Ecocritical Shakespeare.

Certain readings of plays such as *Timon of Athens* and *Othello*<sup>1</sup> have moved towards examining depictions of ecology in plays that do not focus on nature. The logical progression of this is to examine plays with an almost entirely built environment and to note how this built

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<sup>1</sup> Estok’s “Queerly Green: From Meaty to Meatless Days and Nights in *Timon of Athens*” (2015) and Brown’s “Defining Nature through Monstrosity in *Othello* and *Macbeth*” (2008).

environment can be read ecocritically. How can audiences see the unnatural as natural, and conversely the natural as unnatural through competing plays? To answer this question, I propose a comparison of two plays from Shakespeare written in 1601 – *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. These plays serve as mirrors up to nature, and as mirrors to one another. While wildly different in their genre – tragedy versus comedy – both plays address topics such as usurpation, treason and gender roles. Hamlet’s father is murdered, and his uncle takes over as king; Rosalind’s father is exiled, and her uncle takes over as Duke. My thesis is particularly interested in defining the ecocritical in *Hamlet*, a play generally not approached for its depictions of nature, and using the pastoral *As You Like It* as a point of comparison.

My thesis is most concerned with defining the built environment within *Hamlet*, or as Buell notes in his widening of the field, “the interweave of ‘built’ and ‘natural’ dimensions in every locale, and the interpenetration of the local by the global” (Buell 12). However, *Hamlet* does not have the critical history associated with pastoralism as *As You Like It* does. The pastoral concerns itself with defining a particular place, which happens to be natural. Pastoral can then be read as a form of Ecocriticism, which seeks to define the purely natural. Adding pastoral criticism to ecocritical criticism pushes definitions of space forward. The pastoral calls back to “the mythical golden age,” including imagery of shepherds, sheep, and idyllic images of life in the forest (Murfin 202). Simply put, *Hamlet* does not bear the markers of a pastoral play. Reading *Hamlet* with an ecocritical lens combines the move towards examining built environments and the urban with the history of pastoral criticism applied to plays like *As You Like It*. Paul Alpers identifies this move in his work *What is Pastoral?* Alpers defines the pastoral through a focus on the characters, which prototypes defining space based on social markers. Those social markers within the forest come from its residents, and therefore define it,

especially more so than the “idealized landscape” that other pastoral criticism considers (Alpers 26). Reading the pastoral with a focus on space moves the pastoral towards the ecocritical.

Returning to Buell’s understanding of space, as seen in *Environmental Criticism*, I began with a line of inquiry into how the definition of space has become vital to contemporary Ecocriticism. Buell proposes “space” to be defined as a nexus point of three meanings for spaces: “environmental materiality...social perception or construction...and individual affect” (Buell 63). Buell’s definition of these three points builds upon those of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s definition of space. Lefebvre addresses space from the viewpoints of both a physical, natural environment and as a production of social spaces. Using his triangle of spatial production – “spatial practice (perceived), representational spaces (lived), and representations of space (conceived)” – I discuss the environments of *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* as not simply perceived environments (Lefebvre 26). This method defining space by characters takes Alpers’ definition of the pastoral and applies it to spatial theory and provides a lens of considering the spaces of Elsinore and Arden as definitions of character.

Both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* take on the broader issue of the definition of space within his works. These two works of tragedy and comedy spend the bulk of the text within singular spaces that define them; Elsinore is synonymous with *Hamlet*, and Arden with *As You Like It*. These socially sequestered spaces dominate the plays, and therefore warrant deeper discussions of how critical analysis of the act of making place, of defining place, and of fearing place impacts the plays. Competing methods of defining space, from pastoral to ecocritical to theoretical all identify a gap that exists between theorizing the built and the natural. This critical gap is where both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* reside. Therefore, my thesis identifies examples of this gap found throughout both plays through a collection of voices from the built environments

discussing the natural environments. Generally, this divide comes on gendered lines. The voices from the built environment voice masculine, monarchical concerns, while the natural environment provides a voice for often forgotten feminine voices. In line with Alpers, Buell, and Lefebvre, characters' social voices define their spaces.

Furthermore, the divide between built and natural further aligns with death and life. Masculine, built concerns are a product of anxiety about death, while feminine, natural concerns are aligned with life. This divide means that the social creation of space is concerned with the process of decay and creation and growth. These social spaces work against each other, but it is in this friction that the cycle of growth and birth can be found.

Essentially, discussion of environment and space boil down to a discussion of power. Who holds power and who does not when discussing the environment? Masculine, monarchical power is associated with the social and mental meaning ascribed to the court. This stems from a drive towards power. Masculine power loses in *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, and as those characters that represent this control see that failure, they grasp towards it. Meanwhile, feminine, non-monarchical power embraces nature as a means of freedom. As these characters move towards this freedom, they shift the balance of power, of freedom, and of gender. Challenging the boundaries of the built space thereby challenges what natural or built means within this context.

Power has been explored as a means of association with ecocritical approaches before. Simon Estok introduced the critical term of "Ecophobia" to describe this phenomenon in his work *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia*. This term defines fear of the environment in much the same way that other phobias are framed. Essentially, Ecophobia delineates a fear of the natural – the dreaded "eco" of ecology, Ecocriticism, and Ecophobia. Estok argues that this fear stems from a fear of loss of control; after all, nature and ecology

represent the ultimate surrender of control. In both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* those characters that represent masculine interest are afraid of surrendering their control to nature.

Beginning outside of the pastoral tradition, my first chapter addresses issues of space and depictions of the natural world in *Hamlet*. My reading hones in on *Hamlet*'s naturalization of the unnatural, a phrase that examines the broad range of unnatural elements – particularly the court and suicide – found throughout the play. To do so, how cultural critics and literary critics alike have theorized waste and decay. These issues are found within the place in which the characters interact – the confined space of Elsinore. Studies of *Hamlet* have focused primarily on character, which I use as a means of aiding in defining the space of Elsinore. I examine characters that fall on either side of the gender and nature-based divide: monarchical, masculine, built, environments with monarchical meaning and non-monarchical, feminine, natural, environments. These spatial constructions overlay upon one another within the space of the graveyard, bringing together life and death into a cycle of growth by the close of the play.

Further discussion of nature in Shakespeare should address the typical Shakespeare Ecocritical canon, including the “forest plays,” including *As You Like It*.<sup>2</sup> My second chapter addresses the critical history of pastoralism with which *As You Like It* inevitably engages. I also address the continuation of the idea of growth out of decay as brought up in my reading of *Hamlet*. In contrast to *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, brings the unnatural courtliness to nature, and accomplishes a blending of the two. While *Hamlet* focuses attention on the non-natural and the non-liminal interacting with the court, *As You Like It* places attention on how courtly characters

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<sup>2</sup> “Forest Plays” here indicates plays like *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Merry Wives of Windsor* that engage with forests in the Early Modern context. I take this generalized definition from a variety of sources including Northrup Frye's discussion of Green Space plays found in *The Anatomy of Criticism* and works concerning Ecocriticism and Shakespeare such as Jeffrey Theis' *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England*.

adapt (or do not adapt) to a liminal space. *As You Like It* places the action within the liminal space, embracing the implication of change that this brings to the play. The characters face different challenges in displaying their relationships to nature and to gender performance, because Shakespeare reset the play from court to liminal forest.

Through examination of the definition of space within *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, I define a particular example of how Ecocriticism can address built environments. *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* provide an example of how these theories can be applied in hopes that an examination of built versus natural environments will apply to other Shakespearean plays that would not be typically considered part of the Ecocritical Shakespeare canon. Furthermore, by examining the intersection between space and gender, this thesis considers the boundaries of how character impacts space, and provides a means of considering how character motivations and spatial considerations intertwine in text. Throughout both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* the unnatural becomes natural. In the upcoming chapters, I address both plays separately, defining how each set of characters in the text creates space. In both cases, I gather voices from the built environments and compare these descriptions to the actualities of the natural environment. In both cases, nature becomes defined by freedom.

## Act I:

“Something Rotten” This Way Comes in *Hamlet*

*Hamlet* criticism focuses on images of rot and material decay typically found littered throughout Hamlet’s speeches describing both the physical space of Elsinore and Denmark and those in charge of these spaces. Rot and material decay discuss Hamlet’s own physical body, the meta-physical state of Denmark, and the abstract ‘corruption’ of the court. Maggots, rot, and worms abound and depictions of environmental vitality are exiled; *Hamlet* is the literary equivalent of a wasteland. These descriptions and points are important, but focusing entirely on the depictions of rot and decay promulgates a reductionist view of the play.

Hamlet’s concerns about rot focus on the physicality of the human body. Discussion of the human body takes on the angle of rot to contrast the abstraction of Hamlet’s thoughts. Understanding *Hamlet* requires looking at these images of waste, but also requires joining these images with those of environmental vitality. I do not reject this common reading of *Hamlet*, but rather move to examine the landscape of the play beyond a concern for how natural the space is. Rather than looking towards rotteness and decay, I realign discussion of *Hamlet* towards the process of creation in contrast to decay. *Hamlet*’s ecocritical alignment can be defined by the creation of space by various characters and, further, how these spaces compete towards dominating the play’s trajectory.

The impulse to realign *Hamlet* towards creation rather than rot requires a closer look at Ophelia’s character, as she represents feminine ideals within the text. She is also the most aligned with markers of environmental vitality; Ophelia engages with the natural, using the

language of flowers in her madness, and her eventual return to nature through her suicide by drowning. Critical studies have examined Ophelia's relationship with flowers before, but not in conjunction with how these representations merge with the built environment. Ophelia's relationship with environmental vitality contrasts with Hamlet's, especially as Hamlet conceives nature simply as inferior. This chapter joins Hamlet's broad conception of nature as wasteful with Ophelia's inversion of the conception of nature's vitality.

This chapter returns to the amalgamation of Lawrence Buell and Henri Lefebvre's theories concerning space, and applies them to Hamlet and Ophelia's relationships with the built versus natural environments. Hamlet and Ophelia's competing viewpoints come together by the close of the play to engage in the process of "becoming." Specifically, I mean the process of "becoming" a place by layering meaning on top of a place, as Buell's theory notes. As previously noted, Henri Lefebvre's theories of space serve as a precursor to Buell's ideas, examining space from "absolute space" to a more complex creation where space is defined by the social processes that exist in it (Lefebvre 26). This discussion of "becoming" threads throughout ecocritical approaches to space. Hamlet, Ophelia, and even the male royalty like Claudius ascribe meaning to space. However, these meanings are dependent upon the binaries between natural and built environments and masculinity and femininity.

Hamlet, Claudius, and other male royalty tie social meaning to the nation-state, and the process of molding the land to fit that social meaning. Through the process of establishing the nation-state, building the castle, and establishing a court, the land of "Denmark" within the play receives social markers as a kingdom and an environmental space marred by conquest, as perpetuated by the male characters of the play. The action of *Hamlet* famously occurs in Denmark, within the constructed space of the castle Elsinore. Both Elsinore and the conceptual

“Denmark” define the space of the play but both are constructions of space that ignore physical environment, and rather put credence on boundaries and divisions of country and of royalty.

The men of Denmark (most specifically Claudius and Hamlet Sr.) follow the impulse to create a built, social space intertwined with their social hierarchy. Therefore, they create a social space that remains “indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of ‘nature’) on the other” (Lefebvre 26). The built space of Elsinore blends mental space of an impulse towards claiming space, and the physical space of Denmark into one social space that promulgates the ideals of these figures. The combination of physical space with physical human and mental space creates a new hybrid space – one defined as much by the land as by the man who leads it.

These intellectual markers tie together to form the nation-state of Denmark; Elsinore quite literally serves as the national headquarters of Danish sovereignty. How natural, though, is the nation-state? Clearly, dividing the land into arbitrary lines based in politics rather than nature goes against the conception of space as purely natural.<sup>3</sup> Annette Kolodony paraphrases critic Herbert Marcuse when exploring the “mother nature” phenomenon describing

America’s oldest and most cherished fantasy: a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine – that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification – enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction. (Kolodony 171)

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<sup>3</sup> I am retroactively referring to a long history of creating nation-states, prominently established by American author William Byrd in his *History of the Dividing Line*, which details the establishment of the line between Virginia and North Carolina.

Crafting the built environment of Elsinore as intrinsically separated from feminine nature plays into these conceptions of creating space. Kolodony's essay focuses primarily on the creation of American space, and therefore sees the land as synonymous with nurturing, abundance, and other feminine qualities; Denmark, and the England from which Shakespeare wrote, did not conceive natural space as an opportunity for brotherhood with so-called virgin land.<sup>4</sup>

What remains true between American pastoralism and European pastoralism is the ideal of "mother earth," or the feminine nature of landscape and nature. Kolodony recognizes the pre-European colonization psychological and linguistic markers that marked the land as feminine in Indo-European languages – "gendering the land as feminine was nothing new in the sixteenth century" (Kolodony 175). Therefore, *Hamlet* has precedent for the audience interpretation of the physical space as feminine – a physical space only briefly encountered throughout by the men. Throughout the play, the women are attached to nature while the men see nature not as something to embrace, but something to obliterate in creating their own environments.

*Hamlet* converts space and place to a hybrid place – one as dependent on the man who leads or governs the space as it is on the natural landscape of it. Space has a long history of finding definition via the relationship men have to it. *Hamlet* and other male characters have unnatural relationships with the production of space. The nation-state of Elsinore is rotten and perpetuates its rottenness. As *Hamlet* focuses on rot, on death, he continues the un-natural history of the nation-state.

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<sup>4</sup> Kolodony states in support of this assertion: "And when America finally produced a pastoral literature of her own, that literature hailed the essential femininity of the terrain in a way European pastoral never had, explored the historical consequences of its central metaphor in a way European pastoral never dared, and, from the first, took its metaphors as literal truths" (Kolodony 173). While *Hamlet* does not fit the exact mold of European pastoral, examining the natural space in the play calls upon pastoral elements.

Conversely, Ophelia embraces natural vitality. However, this narrowly constructed and produced idea of space excludes her attitude, and her femininity. She is excluded from participation in the space of Denmark as defined by masculinity. The space Elsinore has “become” via spatial overlay excludes femininity and Ophelia. While the nation-state is built from a purely social and mental viewpoint, this construction ignores those left out of the social hierarchy of the court. Throughout the play, however, Ophelia subverts expectations. She utilizes natural imagery in her madness, through the use of flower language and imagery. She returns to the natural through her death in the brook. Her burial in the graveyard juxtaposes natural space with social rules from the Church.

In order to join these different interpretations of space, I propose the existence of a secondary “place” overlaid and coexisting with the “place” of Elsinore. While the masculine, built space of Elsinore is what immediately exists to audiences, Ophelia’s existence highlights a secondary Elsinore that has existed prior to the creation of built space. Her presence in the text encourages critics to dig deeper and identify how space of Elsinore had spatial meaning prior to the molding of the space into Elsinore. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the graveyard. The natural meaning of the land engages with the masculine rules of the court, creating a place where the meanings of these places elide. Therefore, the space of the graveyard becomes a liminal space, or a place for change within the text.

Liminal spaces demand change and represent the coming together of disparate ideas. Within this liminal space, the contrast between natural and unnatural is addressed. Ophelia’s suicide is romanticized – descriptions of the event indicate the flowers in her hair, her dress spreading like a mermaid. As will be discussed further, Ophelia joins together the natural and the unnatural, by committing an unnatural act – suicide – in a natural manner – through her

surroundings. These concepts of rottenness and beauty initially form a binary, reinforced by the conceptions of space and gendered aspects: rottenness versus beauty, male versus female, built versus natural are all binaries at odds. These three sets of binaries are challenged by the concepts of death, burial, and particularly suicide found throughout the play.

Death becomes a large part of how the liminal space is considered critically in the play. Specifically, Hamlet and Ophelia's conceptions of space merge in the liminal space of the graveyard at the close of the play. However, for both of these characters, death is the conceptual meaning overlaid on the graveyard. In a sense, death is the ultimate liminal space for them both. Hamlet seeks death, which is fraught with theoretical implications of heaven and hell; Ophelia's view of death seems much more freeing, as she views death as a means of escape from the court, and of a return to nature. Even death itself mirrors theories of space found in the play.

### **Something Rotten: Hamlet and Built Space**

*Hamlet* has come to be synonymous with the physical space of Elsinore. The castle and Denmark play an integral part in the play, particularly in regard to the politics centered side plot concerning Denmark's dealings with Denmark's presumed political rival, Norway. Reputation of the nation-state remains of most importance to Claudius. He recognizes this in 1.2, noting Norway's image of Denmark; Norway "hold[s] a weak supposal of [Denmark's] worth" and finds "[Denmark's court] to be disjoint and out of frame" (*Ham.* 1.2.20). As the center of the court, Elsinore defines this worth and possibility of disjoint. In the vein of Lefebvre, Elsinore represents the state of the court.

Further, Denmark and Elsinore are intertwined with Claudius and Hamlet Sr. Both the former king and his brother are referred to by their country, Denmark, by their actual names;

Horatio refers to the ghost as “the majesty of buried Denmark” and the ghost calls his own ear the “whole ear of Denmark” (*Ham.* 1.5.43). Claudius continues this trend by replacing mentions of himself with Denmark – rather than saying that he himself drinks, instead “Denmark drinks” (*Ham.* 1.2.129). Conflating these names and titles implies a space governed by a man just as much as by the land.

Therefore, it becomes clear that Hamlet’s relationship with his father and uncle is mirrored in his relationship with Elsinore, and vice versa. Hamlet makes his contempt for Denmark clear in discussion with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

HAMLET Denmark’s a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ Then is the world one.

HAMLET A goodly one, in which there are many confines,  
wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o’  
th’ worst. (*Ham.* 2.2.262-6)

While not a specific depiction of nature, Hamlet’s descriptor of Denmark as “one o’ th’ worst” prisons demonstrates his attitude towards the physical, or the real (2.2.cite). This indicates his contempt for the physical space of Denmark, and his need to rely upon the mental; he moves directly from physical to mental – speaking about the physical space, but amending his thoughts by assuring Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that “there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” (*Ham.* 2.2.268-70). Thought, mentality, and opinion, then, produces space.

Denmark is a prison because Hamlet conceives it to be a prison. This places further credence in a reading of *Hamlet* in confirmation of Lefebvre’s theories concerning social production; Hamlet creates Denmark to be a prison, matching how his father and uncle create a nation.

The attitude Hamlet has towards Denmark, towards Elsinore, continues through his attitude towards the people of Denmark and Elsinore. Critics of *Hamlet* have further picked up on these images in his language. Hamlet describes man as “quintessence of dust,” elements of a dusty and decaying earth rather than a person. Corruption of earth extends to the land and space itself as well. Hamlet’s descriptions of Denmark harp on its decadent nature, painting it as one step away from decaying to nothing. He claims that Denmark has grown “rank and gross in nature,” and later that it forms a “foul and pestilent congregation of vapors” (*Ham.* 1.2.139). Even when Hamlet addresses nature metaphorically, the result is “an unweeded garden,/that grows to seed” (*Ham.* 1.2.139-140). The play in fact begins by Marcellus claiming, famously, that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (*Ham.* 1.4.100).

These images share a conflated disgust for the physical, human body and for Denmark. Hamlet’s attention to disgusting images defines his relationship to the landscape – one based on his discussion of filth and disgust. Robert Rawdon Wilson notes these images in his text *The Hydra’s Tale*; in Wilson’s argument, the repetition of filthy images builds disgust throughout the text. *Hamlet’s* fictional world becomes “a continuous representation of filth” hidden by the “dazzling language and sense of tragic form” (112). But, Wilson fails to ascertain *why* the text insists on this continuous representation and to examine the contextual meaning of these representations.

Hamlet’s reveals his perception of natural environment to be associated with waste. Critical history of waste and pollution has examined how waste objects, while not aesthetically beautiful, still factor into the environment. Mary Douglas’ work *Purity and Danger* addresses the broad concept of waste in Western Literature in which she defines dirt as “matter out of place” (Douglas 35). This revolutionizes how dirt is typically conceived, and paints a more sympathetic

picture towards dirt. Douglas “abstract[s] pathogenicity and hygiene from [Western] notion of dirt,” or in other words, destroys the binary between dirtiness and cleanliness (Douglas 44).

Douglas’ work focuses on dirt, which can be extended to rot and decay; after all, these forms of pollution are byproducts of dirt and serve as markers of matter left to break down on its own.

Therefore, Hamlet is literally defining the state as out of place. Just as he perceives time to be “out of joint,” the court itself seems out of place. The court is rot, and rot is displaced matter. Yes, the images of rot and decay shock the audience, as previously identified by Wilson. However, beyond the shock, Hamlet’s focus on rot connects to his felt displacement from physicality. This reading addresses Hamlet’s need for divorcing his physical body from his theoretical self that he continues throughout the text. Douglas’ reading of pollution provides a means of reading the images of decay and waste prevalent in *Hamlet*. Douglas examines dirt and pollution, and the impact these objects have in western culture. Hamlet uses similar terminology to describe the markers of the social space that he and his father and uncle have constructed.

Hamlet’s discussion of waste moves towards the mental and intellectual realm. This falls in line with updates of Douglas’ initial ideas of waste and pollution. Medievalist Eleanor Johnson addresses Douglas’ ideas of “matter out of place” within the context of the medieval. Her essay concerning Ecocriticism within the medieval era moves beyond waste as a physical ‘crime.’ Waste becomes an “intellectual crime” (Johnson 464). This waste is a lack of intellectualism, or the failure of intellectualism to fully germinate. Hamlet highlights the divorce between mental and physical space through his descriptions of the earth as complicit in foulness. His situation has forced him to regard the earth and man as “a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors” and as “quintessence of dust” (*Ham.* 2.2.326, 332).

Johnson also identifies the communal aspects of the sin of “waste” in medieval poetry, as wasting resources affected not only the “waster” but further the people who rely on that person: “waste is a sin without boundaries, the commission of which highlights the connectedness among people” (464). Applying these ideas to *Hamlet*, the creation of rot and decay affects not only Hamlet and the other men, but Ophelia and Gertrude as well; the male sense of personal rot and decay extend outwards to the rest of Denmark. “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,” and that something rotten is Hamlet’s ideas or even Hamlet himself (1.4.100).

Douglas’ ideas of rot and pollution and Johnson’s of intellectual waste further connect with Lefebvre’s theories concerning creation of social space. Hamlet’s spatial “becoming” is influenced by his rejection of physicality and separation from nature seen through his focus on decay. In other words, the focus on decay is symptomatic of Hamlet’s rejection of the natural, and embracement of the built. The natural seems to only be decay for Hamlet. This suggests Lefebvre’s theory concerning spatial meaning; for Lefebvre, space is a social construction based on value and meaning. Hamlet actively rejects nature in favor of his own mental construction.

Representations of filth are confined to discussion by primarily Hamlet himself. Examining *Hamlet* from this angle requires a reason as to why this focus on filthy images is confined to Hamlet’s psyche. What does this say about Hamlet and about the court? Hamlet conceives of nature in the opposite way of Douglas and Johnson: nature, to him, is the waste of built environments, nation-states, and intellectual pursuits. All of this leads to Hamlet’s conception of the world as waste. These thoughts display Hamlet’s Ecophobia – a term coined and defined by Shakespeare Ecocritic Simon Estok as “an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism” (Estok 4). Citing similar passages, Estok characterizes Hamlet’s world as

“metaphorically speaking, filthy and rotting, polluted beyond repair” (Estok 87). However, there is method of repair for Hamlet’s world: embracing the feminine approach to the nation-state and to nature.

The men are clearly wrapped up in this rotting world – Claudius’ transgression is “rank” and “smells to heaven,” Polonius is being consumed by maggots after his death – the images of rot are applied to the women against their wills (*Ham.* 3.3.40). However, throughout the play, Hamlet and other masculine figures reject this method of repairing their rotting world. Hamlet holds his mother in high esteem, yet in the bedroom scene, he continuously applies elements of a corrupt world to her by directly describing her marriage in purely physical terms, and further in physical terms solely concerned with decaying or disgusting images: her marriage lives “in the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,/stewed in corruption, honeying and making love/over the nasty sty” (*Ham.* 3.4.104-6). Notably, the close reader sees Hamlet apply the same terminology to Gertrude’s marriage as Claudius does to his own deeds: her bed is “rank” just as Claudius’ offense is “rank” (*Ham.* 3.3.39).

At this nexus point, the critical importance of control becomes obvious. Here, Hamlet discusses control regarding gender and nature. Hamlet seeks to control those around him, and specifically in the aforementioned lines, to control his mother. Estok notes the importance of control in his definition of Ecophobia: “Theorizing Ecophobia means recognizing the importance of control” (Estok 5). Examples of control in a more contemporary description include the fear “[that] sustains the personal hygiene and cosmetics industries [and] supports city sanitation boards that issue fines seeking to keep out “pests” and “vermin” associated in municipal mentalities with long grass” (Estok 4). All of these examples display humanity attempting to take control over the encroachment of Douglas’ “matter out of place.” Hamlet does the same, but to a

higher degree. He insists upon retaining control over everyone in the court, and by doing so, rejects nature and embraces the built space.

### **Something Beautiful: Ophelia and Natural Space**

Ophelia's relationship to the decay of Denmark comes from a different angle; the men regard her more as being affected by the environment than affecting the environment, as the men in the narrative are given agency to do. Whereas Hamlet's and Claudius' transgressions begin from the basis of exacting their will on nature, Ophelia's are less her own fault and more the environment of Elsinore and the natural world exacting poisonous nature upon her. The text itself demonstrates this lack of agency from Ophelia, an almost passive acceptance of environmental change on her selfhood, during Hamlet's discussion with Polonius as Hamlet feigns madness.

Hamlet spends the scene juxtaposing verdant images with those of decay, retaining a focus on the images of maggots, dead animals, and vultures, before wildly switching focus to asking Polonius of his daughter: "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead/dog, being a good kissing carrion – Have you a daughter?" (*Ham.* 2.2.197-198). Hamlet's dramatic shift in topics here provides an implicit connection between femininity and the rot that he identifies and sees around him. Furthermore, Hamlet's connection here brings out the image of consumption inherent in rot – the maggots multiply, reproduce, and consume the flesh of the dead dog, just as feminine space and femininity are in power of being able to consume.

The pairing of images of dead dogs and maggots in connection with the sun furthers this allusion, and continues throughout the scene. Hamlet furthers this sense of feminine rot as natural by creating an explicit connection between dangers of female conception, and ideals of

reproduction. When faced with the image of the dead dog and maggots, Hamlet connects the sun as polluting Ophelia and womanhood just as much as it pollutes dead animals through the propagation of maggots. Hamlet states:

Let her her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a  
 blessing, but, as your daughter may conceive,  
 friend, look to 't. (*Ham.* 2.2.201)

Hamlet means to encourage Polonius to not allow Ophelia to walk around in public, thereby attracting men to her because of her beauty, and promoting mistrust of Ophelia's power to say no to men interested in sleeping with her. Associations with the sun make this statement more, ascribing agentive power to the sun to create powers of reproduction.

This power of nature lays the basis for the creation of a secondary Elsinore and a secondary Denmark. Ophelia belongs not to the intellectual, built space constructed by men like her father and Hamlet, but to a constructed Denmark found outside of the constraints of Hamlet's view of nature as waste. As the play progresses, Ophelia rather moves closer to nature, or towards what the men regard as wasteful; nature, then, gains the feminine association, as well as sets itself up as the opposite of the masculine dominated nation-state. To examine Ophelia's relationship with the feminine landscape of Denmark I focus on the axis points of Ophelia's character development and connection with nature: her madness scene and the description of her off-stage suicide. Feminist scholarship has continued to explore the madness scene and in part suicide, and focus on giving Ophelia narrative power. I am arguing that Ophelia draws her power, as ascribed to her in feminist readings of *Hamlet*, from her connection with the secondary Elsinore, or the natural "space" of Elsinore that creeps upon the castle.

Audiences infer a connection to nature from Ophelia throughout her madness scene because of the floral imagery that has become iconic of her character.<sup>5</sup> Her madness is signaled in the text purely by the stage direction of “Enter Ophelia, distracted,” making no mention of floral accouterments later implied through her speech (*Ham.* SD 4.5.25.1). Critic Elaine Showalter forefronts discussion of Ophelia by discussing criticism of Ophelia’s mad scene, tracing depictions of Ophelia in stage and filmed productions of *Hamlet*. In her oft-referenced chapter “Representing Ophelia,” Showalter considers past criticism of Ophelia’s appearance in this scene,<sup>6</sup> noting the long past of “the discordant double images of female sexuality as both innocent blossoming and whorish contamination” (76). While the natural may represent good or bad or both for Ophelia, the important aspect of her entry is that it does exist, and that nature provides an outlet for these attitudes.

Ophelia’s speech makes it clear that her entire being aligns with the underlying natural world, no matter the implication. This can be seen through her song meant to mourn her father’s death:

He is dead and gone;  
 At his head a grass-green turf,  
 At his heels a stone...  
 White his shroud as the mountain snow –  
 ...Larded all with sweet flowers  
 Which bewent to the ground did not go

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<sup>5</sup> I say iconic because of the numerous visual representations of Ophelia with flowers in her hair, and filmed and staged depictions of this scene that have become synonymous with the play to the same degree as Hamlet with a skull.

<sup>6</sup> For more discussion of Ophelia’s historic past, see the remainder of Showalter’s essay, which traces productions of *Hamlet* and staging and costuming of Ophelia from the Renaissance to contemporary productions.

With true-love showers. (*Ham.* 4.5.34-7, 41, 43-45)

Through this song it becomes clear that the natural world, the space not occupied by the social and mental world constructed by the king, prince, and his advisors, is one associated with death. Beyond the stone walls of Elsinore lies, presumably, a natural world of grass, flowers, and mountains, all of which are referenced in her song – “grass-green turf,” “mountain snow,” “sweet flowers,” and “true-love showers” which hearkens to rain showers. The natural world, which she connects with through the sun, now finds itself the harbinger, or at least the marker of death.

Notably, however, these images are not the same rotten ones seen from Hamlet’s viewpoint, which separates these ideas from the other depictions of nature found throughout the play. Images of snow, rain showers, and flowers imply virginity, or purity that directly contradicts the images of rotting flesh, vegetation, and death found in other moments. Why, then, does Ophelia associate these positive images with death itself, while Hamlet, in moments of vitality, finds himself connecting rotten images with the same place? The difference lies in the conceptions of space that they both hold; Hamlet’s associations of “place” rely on Denmark as a mentally and socially constructed place, or a place with attachments from his own sovereignty and opportunity to rule. Ophelia does not have these same demands and relationships with nature, and is therefore able to construct a world in which the natural world exists, even despite the mourning and death placed in it as well.

Ophelia continues her song after the entrance of the King, moving past descriptions of the natural world and into a situation on Valentine’s day, in which she sings to a male lover that “[she] a maid at your window [is there] to be your Valentine” (*Ham.* 4.5.55-6). However, the

man of the song treats her poorly, departing from her and failing to commit to her. She then moves on to blame men:

Alack and fie for shame,

Young men will do 't, if they come to 't;

By Cock, they are to blame.

Quoth she "Before you tumbled me, you promised me to wed."

He answers:

"So would I 'a done, by yonder sun,

An thou hadst not come to my bed." (*Ham.* 4.5.64-71)

Mirroring her situation with Hamlet, Ophelia chastises herself for her own involvement with a man and the promises that he makes to her. Of more interest is the repetition of the connection between the sun and reproduction, found again in the song. Hamlet's references to the sun and conception in Act 3 resurface as Ophelia claims the man of her song would have treated her correctly if it were "*by yonder sun*" (*Ham.* 4.5.70) (emphasis my own). Again, the sun is evoked as having a dual meaning. In the more literal sense, the song states the common trope that things done properly are done in the daylight, or in the sun. However, the use of the sun thematically throughout allows a secondary connection to the reproductive power of the sun. By this secondary meaning, Ophelia again ties herself to the natural world and its power.

Ophelia's alignment with the natural world solidifies as she begins to at least reference, if not handle, flowers and give them to the various members of royalty. While Laertes and the other members of the royalty like the King and Queen regard these actions as indicative of her madness – "A document in madness: thoughts and remembrances fitted" – her actions of using flowers as both a means of speaking and of coping with loss further points to a scramble for

agentive power through the use of natural items, particularly flowers: “There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance./Pray you, love, remember” (*Ham.* 4.5.202, *Ham.* 4.5.199-200). Ophelia clearly states her reasons for each of the gifts of flowers; each acts as a small agent of her voice, and her power. In her madness, she is unfortunately finally able to reach the full agentive power of nature that seems to reply and attend to only herself.

Here, the philosophical space and the mental space of Elsinore that can be constructed through thoughts and words belong to the men. Ophelia’s connection with the flowers, the dirt, and physical landmarks hints at the second layer of physicality, or space creation. These connections, however, solely come at the time of her death; the female must encounter madness, must encounter death and destruction, to be admitted to this secondary realm of space. Ophelia’s narrative arc crystallizes these connections through her death by drowning.

Ophelia’s death does not appear on stage, meaning the audience learns of her death through the interpretative lens of Gertrude, who tells Laertes of her death. She begins the description with a romantic, pastoral description of the setting emphasizing the “willow [that] grows askant the brook/that shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream” (*Ham.* 4.7.190-1). Again, femininity is associated with the natural space rather than the built. Gertrude continues to describe the “fantastic garlands she did make/of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,” all of which contribute to a fantastical, otherworldly description of something so common as death (*Ham.* 4.7.192-3).

Throughout the production history of *Hamlet*, these written descriptions of Ophelia’s death as beautiful, surrounded by flowers, trees, and nature, have been regarded as a means of romanticizing her death. Feminist scholars of *Hamlet* have furthered this argument, considering how romanticizing Ophelia damages her character. Showalter notes the prevalent

romanticization of Ophelia's madness, noting how these views have colored and been colored by understanding of female madness.<sup>7</sup>

Further, the imagistic language itself provides meaning. The descriptions of Ophelia stated by male characters, and mirrored by Gertrude, are refined beyond simply nature. The speakers of these descriptions take the liberty to exaggerate the scene, shaping Ophelia by masculine, intellectual standards; each of the descriptions evokes a sense of higher intellectual achievement than would normally be connoted by Ophelia herself. Gertrude's descriptions of the "pendant boughs," "coronet weeds," "weedy trophies," and particularly her description of Ophelia's clothes as "mermaid-like" all invoke a pastoral edge to her speech (*Ham.* 4.7.197, 199). Gertrude's speech layers the masculine intellectual world over the female natural, and forces the audience to consider the dichotomy between the intellectual space and natural space of Elsinore.

Furthermore, Gertrude actually confirms the idea of Ophelia belonging to the water, or belonging to nature. Returning to her description of Ophelia as "mermaid-like," Gertrude continues to focus on the lack of distress from Ophelia as she becomes consumed by nature. Gertrude describes Ophelia in these moments with various elements of nativity to nature:

Her clothes spread wide,  
 And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,  
 Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,  
 As one incapable of her own distress

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<sup>7</sup> "Dr. John Conolly, the celebrated superintendent of the Hanwell Asylum, and founder of the committee to make Stratford a national trust, concurred. In his *Study of Hamlet* in 1863 he noted that even casual visitors to mental institutions could recognize an Ophelia in the wards: 'the same young years, the same faded beauty, the same fantastic dress and interrupted song'" (Showalter 79)

Or like a creature native and endued

Unto that element. (*Ham.* 4.7.200-5)

Ophelia's eventual drowning emphasizes her consumption by water. Gertrude describes her clothes that are "heavy with their drink" as they pull her deeper into the water "to [her] muddy death" (4.7.208). Taken together with the rest of this passage, Ophelia's death becomes one of native consumption, returning to the place where she natively "belongs." While the masculine space of Elsinore remains in the intellectual sphere, Ophelia and feminine forces are tied with the natural, native to the murky depths of water, and only useful to the men when romanticized by their own intellectual terming.

For Ophelia, nature proves better company than the intellectual environment of Elsinore; as the men of the nation-state treat her like an object as seen by Polonius' and Laertes' insinuations on policing her relationship with Hamlet. While Hamlet sees nature as a deterrent, Ophelia views it as a welcoming force – something beautiful, and entirely hers.

### **Rotten Beauty & Rotten Poetry**

Hamlet and Ophelia demonstrate opposite visions of relating to space. Hamlet relies upon the built space of Elsinore that exists as a means of pushing away nature; Ophelia rejects a fear of nature and embraces the loss of control that this rejection implies. The loss of control that Hamlet fears, but that ends up consuming him is demonstrated through his rejection of nature. By perpetuating the built environment of the court, Hamlet seeks the comfort of control. His exploration of both space and gender culminate in his death that continues to perpetuate built space – the play closes with the introduction of Fortinbras, closing the plot concerning Norway,

but further encouraging the continuation of the court and built space. Death remains unnatural in an unnatural space.

Ophelia embraces the secondary Elsinore – that of the land – and gains a sense of strength from the power of the place. She rejects Ecophobia, Hamlet’s sense of control, and the environment of the court. This acceptance of natural beauty comes after her visceral divorce from the court through actions of the men – Polonius and Claudius use her as a pawn, Hamlet stabs her father and hides the body. Ophelia’s madness comes after these traumatic experiences, and utilizes the natural language of flowers, as well as other images of natural vitality. She further commits suicide via drowning – an unnatural death couched in incredibly natural descriptors.

These approaches to *Hamlet* are incredibly different. One rejects nature, and the other embraces it. Masculinity and femininity are at odds. This reading seems to demand a choice between binaries. However, the final act of *Hamlet* begins to engage with the blending of these choices. While the landscape and characters of *Hamlet* enact a binary between the built and the natural, the final act introduces spaces that I argue to be “liminal” defined as a “threshold” or the meeting place between discarding an old identity and taking a new one. The best example of this newly created liminal space is the landscape of the graveyard. This space engages with spatial creation that blends the built and the natural, and therefore takes on the descriptor as liminal.

Engaging with the graveyard as a liminal space creates a singular space within the play where the built and the natural interact. This complicates *Hamlet* as a play: what does it mean that the final act of the play moves away from binaries? Further, what does the implication that the only place where built and natural meet is the graveyard mean for the text? Reading the graveyard as liminal places more importance on the graveyard. If this space is liminal, it brings

further critical engagement to the graveyard and the gravediggers themselves. Perhaps most importantly, reading this space as liminal allows critics to reexamine Ophelia's burial as simultaneously natural and unnatural.

The graveyard brings together the built and the natural through a combination of its natural state and the mental associations placed upon it: the landscape is natural, but it has become subtly mapped by the intellectual machinations of the built environment through both the creation of the nation-state and the church. The nation-state is connected with the authority of the church and the authority of the church is an inherent part of the graveyard. This move towards mapping the graveyard demonstrates an attempt to spatially define an area. However, this is thwarted by nature.

The graveyard becomes defined by a blending of the divide between masculinity and femininity as well. These points are brought up, as Ophelia's burial is the primary action in the graveyard. Here, masculine and feminine coded indicators are juxtaposed to indicate how these intersect in the play. Pollution and rot are juxtaposed with purity, which demonstrates how these ideas blend. Engaging with this blend particularly explains the phenomenon of death within the play – clearly an important part of any tragedy.

The graveyard – from its inhabitants, to its function, to its connotations – obsesses over death. Within the graveyard, the gravediggers discuss the intellectual order that leads to categorizing deaths as natural or unnatural. Of particular importance to this discussion is Ophelia's suicide. Death by suicide is profoundly unnatural, at least to the built, intellectual, masculine order. The gravediggers reveal the unnaturalness of suicide as they discuss Ophelia's death: "Is she to be buried in Christian burial/When she willfully seeks her own salvation?" (*Ham.* 5.1.1). The First Gravedigger expresses incredulity at Ophelia's death being ruled

“Christian burial” because of how she died. In Christian tradition, suicide would be considered an unnatural death. The gravediggers use overlaying built concepts like “Christian burial” to discuss her death, creating the built concept of proper versus improper burial, Christian versus non-Christian death, and hallowed versus unhallowed ground. In this sense, the Christian sensibilities and traditions that govern Denmark as a nation-state are transferred to the outdoor, natural space. While nature will accept Ophelia no matter what, the Catholic, tradition-heavy, Danish state must justify acceptance of her death and burial outside the realm of their traditions and customs, calling in the coroner and the clergy.

The gravediggers discuss this problem at length. Ophelia’s suicide must be rationalized via their understanding of natural death in order to fit it into the built order of Elsinore. The first gravedigger offers an explanation that comically reaches to rationalize death by drowning as non-suicidal:

For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches – it is to act, to do, to perform. Argal, she drowned herself wittingly...Here lies the water; good. Here stands the man; good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is (will he, nill he) he goes; mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life. (*Ham.* 5.1.9-13, 15-21)

The gravediggers essentially argue here that rather than committing suicide, the water rose to meet Ophelia, and therefore drowned her. As those surrounding Ophelia discuss her death, the only way of creating meaning in it involves ascribing elements of intellectualism in suicide. Not to do so would be to accept her suicide as natural, which contradicts intellectual order.

Therefore, Ophelia's return to nature is somehow rendered unnatural because of the rules of the socially created space of Elsinore. This demonstration of "intellectual mapping" shows how the graveyard, while natural, embraces the order of the masculine environment. The nation-state environment maps the natural space, and the "built" ideas of Christian versus non-Christian burial become overlaid on top of the natural space of the graveyard.

In contrast, Ophelia's death lacks descriptions of rot and skeletons. Rather, her death is described in natural terms. Interestingly, this rationalization of suicide importantly takes the agency away from Ophelia for making her own choice, and gives that agency to nature. In attempting to rationalize suicide for the built environment, they rather succeed in giving agency back to nature.

Examining the built space versus the natural space in *Hamlet* reveals an ecocritical undertone through the text that has not been studied. This paper has considered Ophelia's relationship with nature in a new light, and has redefined the relationship between Hamlet and rot. My discussion centers on conceptions of the built environment and shows that the Ophelia's relationship with nature in a new light, while also redefining the relationship between Hamlet and rot.

Clearly, binaries are no longer viable ways of understanding Shakespeare's beliefs on masculinity and femininity in the text or on the environment. As I have shown, suicide serves as a means of examining both binaries within liminal spaces of the graveyard, and provides a melding point between the natural and the unnatural. Further study on the topic of the portrayal of death in *Hamlet* is required before making a definitive statement on the overall portrayal of death, but I did conclude from my study that Shakespeare uses suicide as a means of creating a

liminal space between the natural and unnatural, and expects the audience to feel uncomfortable at the heavily naturalized suicide of Ophelia.

Through this study, it has become clear that Shakespeare's defining point of *Hamlet* comes through a naturalization of the unnatural, as well as the un-naturalization of institutions like marriage and death. While each of these institutions are turned upside down, clearly space and environment has everything to do with how characters relate to the nation-state, the monarchy, and their gender. Something is clearly rotten in the state of Denmark; it just seems unclear as to what it is.

## Act II:

Smashing Expectations of Space in *As You Like It*

*As You Like It* represents a radically different approach to the presentation of nature because of its obvious categorization as a piece of pastoral fiction. *Hamlet*, in contrast, would never be categorized as pastoral. Years of critical analysis have considered nature in *As You Like It* through examples of forest, brooks, and shepherds – all elements of pastoral literature.<sup>8</sup> *As You Like It* can be further analyzed through an ecocritical lens. *As You Like It* demonstrates that Ecocriticism and pastoralism both seek to define natural space, specifically the forest. Merging these critical ideas together leads to a process of defining space as both natural and built. Within *As You Like It*, Arden becomes a claimant of both the natural and the courtly. In this context, the space becomes liminal; Arden is not defined singularly as nature or built, but instead by the transition between the two. Arden serves the plot of *As You Like It* as first an example of nature, but second as a place for the court to engage in overlaying its masculine presence.

It seems that the space of Arden can be claimed as natural. However, this fails to account for the fringe encroachment of the court into the forest that defines the play, and fails to note how these traditions meld within the context of the play. This does not mean that pastoral criticism of *As You Like It* should be ignored. Rather, the Ecocritical and the pastoral work in tandem to provide a means of examining the production of space within Arden. Examining A

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<sup>8</sup> Pastoral literature has a long-standing literary history from the Greek poet Hesiod and continuing through the Medieval Era and into the Early Modern period. This can be seen obviously through Christopher Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd to His Love."

*You Like It* redefines critical awareness of space and how masculinity and femininity impact the space.

The “place” of the Forest has been critically examined, but most prominently through Northrup Frye’s critical definition of *As You Like It* as a “green space” play. Frye defines “green space” as a “world as a desire, not as an escape from ‘reality,’ but as a genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate” (Frye 184). In this definition, Frye recognizes the critical function of the forest as a location of change. Following this train of thought, it becomes clear that *As You Like It* places the Forest of Arden as a space of rebellion, and for enacting change. Tristan Samuk notes this in his work while denoting the possibility of art as change within the play: “*As You Like It* is a play for people who want their world to be different: to change, or at least change back” (118). Aligning *As You Like It* towards growth and towards change opens a dialogue concerning the possibility of how setting functions while moving the play towards this change.

Critics like Terry Gifford<sup>9</sup> and Northrup Frye place the forest as the point of difference, or the point of change. Gifford classifies the play as pastoral because of the *change* or movement towards the forest (Gifford 57). Paul Alpers further categorizes *As You Like It* as pastoral because of its descriptions of shepherds, and because of the contrast it provides counter

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<sup>9</sup> Traditional pastoral studies hinge on the understanding of critics like Terry Gifford, who categorizes pastoral in three different modes in his work *Pastoral*: as one, “a historical form form...[which referred] to poems or dramas of a specific formal type in which supposed shepherds spoke to each other...with (mostly) idealized descriptions of their countryside;” two, a “broader use of ‘pastoral’ to refer to an area of content...that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban;” and three, used in a derogatory term to criticize traditional pastoral literature, or essentially the “‘pastoral’ as pejorative, implying that the pastoral vision is too simplified” (Gifford 1-2).

to the court. Even Frye and Samuk identify Arden as a point of change – a difference, even a “form of the world that human life tries to imitate” (Frye 184). These critics point towards the forest as the major change in the text. I would reframe this reading through the lens that the forest serves as a point of encountering change that stems from the court. The court sends out agents of change – characters like Duke Senior, Jacques, Orlando, and Rosalind – to create change, and that change then takes place in the forest, as the social/mental/political triad of meaning of the court meets that of the forest.

Alpers re-historicizes pastoral for contemporary criticism in his work. Beyond re-historicizing the pastoral, I move toward recognizing the importance of the court to *As You Like It's* Arden. With both of these in mind, Arden becomes Henri Lefebvre's vision of a place imbued with the “social, political, and mental meaning” (Lefebvre 26). Lefebvre considers space as a creation of the social impulses of an area or group. Liminal spaces, as discussed in the previous chapter on *Hamlet*, are places where these social cues are muddled – asking the question of who is the one ascribing social meaning in this place. Arden in *As You Like It* functions as a liminal space for this reason; Arden takes social meaning ascribed by the court, yet simultaneously retains meaning from the shepherds and people who exist there already.

Discussing *As You Like It* becomes increasingly difficult, as the play actively questions the social meaning ascribed to it. Notably, the play features few voices native to the forest – primarily audience understanding of the forest comes from: Duke Senior, an exiled duke, Jacques, his follower, Rosalind, his daughter, and Orlando, Rosalind's suitor. By examining these voices, especially in contrast to those native to the forest – Celia, Audrey, and Silvius – it becomes clear that the meaning ascribed to the forest stems from the description of the forest by the court. Therefore, the meaning of the forest becomes muddled by multiple interpretations: To

Rosalind and Celia, the forest implies danger - “Alas, what danger will [the forest] be to us,/Maids as we are, to travel forth so far?” – or, to Duke Senior and later Celia, freedom - “Now go we in content/To liberty, and not to banishment” and “Are not these woods/More free from peril than the envious court?” – or, to Orlando, fear - “I thought that all things had been savage here...” (AYL 1.3.114-5) (AYL 1.3.144-5) (AYL 2.1.3-4) (AYL 2.7.112). Courtly voices imply the forest means danger or conversely freedom, but do not speak for the forest itself.

Throughout the play, characters note that the peril of the forest still exists: specific relationships with the land reveal a fear – of savagery or brutality, and death – that permeates the forest, contradicting assumptions of the forest as a lawless “green space.” The land beyond this domain reasserts the idea of savagery thus far connected with the forest: Orlando observes that “[he] thought that all things had been savage here,” thus implying that the forest has the connotation of wild savagery, necessitating a “countenance/of stern commandment” (AYL 2.7.112-4). This focus on savagery by the characters undermines the sense of order and meaning that Frederick, and to an extent Senior extend over the forest. Their control is undermined by the forest, and Arden functions as a means of dramatizing that lack of control.

What, then, does the forest mean? How should the natural-ness of the forest be construed in contrast to the court? My chapter on *Hamlet* focuses on making the unnatural into the natural – particularly through Ophelia’s madness and suicide. In *As You Like It*, the major setting is natural, therefore leading to the simple adjudication that nature does not suffer adjustment or change within the play. However, the portrayal of the natural within the play cuts deeper – questioning the inherent creation of nature. Can a space be both natural and unnatural?

Contributing to this question in *As You Like It* is the character’s portrayal or acceptance of gender roles. In contrast, the characters of *Hamlet* broker clear divides between gender and

gender performance, especially between Hamlet and Ophelia. *As You Like It* clearly muddles these divides through expressions of gender, performance of gender, and overall attitude.

Rosalind's character demonstrates this the most. Her cross-dressing has been variably read as indicative of queer coding and of gender and identity throughout the text. Within the forest, gender "play" or difference is allowed, specifically because of the liminal space of Arden.

Rosalind complicates the "gender hierarchy"<sup>10</sup> of the play, and this precisely happens because Arden exists a place that does not rely upon created hierarchies.

Nature is a contested term and collective location within *As You Like It*. Furthermore, the processes of nature – of growth and creation – become challenged within the play. Rather than moving from one setting, or one meaning for that setting, the play begins by embracing both decay and growth. *Hamlet's* obsession is with decay, whereas *As You Like It's* obsession is on their imagination of the natural. *As You Like It* moves even beyond decay and growth as seen in *Hamlet*, but further towards a cycle of decay, growth, and rebirth. The ecocritical core of *As You Like It* is defined not by just the creation of space and domination of space, but also by the competition between alternate meanings for the space.

Classifying Arden as liminal encourages the consideration of what occurs when an entire play takes place in a space considered transitional in form. How does *As You Like It* adapt to the transitional nature of its main setting? By examining how characters such as Duke Senior, Jacques, and Rosalind react to the space of Arden, I seek to illuminate the after effects of placing these characters within a liminal space, as well as how the liminality impacts space and gender within the play.

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<sup>10</sup> This term was coined and popularized by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, which examines the hierarchy of power held in gender and sexuality.

### Courtly Acts: Dukes in Arden

Duke Senior's allegiance and gender coding belongs with the court. Duke Senior is identified primarily by his title. He represents the encroachment of the masculine court into natural space. Duke Senior's status at the start of the play is as a member of nature rather than the court, but this is because his brother has exiled him there. Duke Frederick's action speaks to the perception of Arden held by members of the court; this is an important distinction, as both Dukes represent legitimate views of the court. Duke Frederick sees Arden as a place lesser than the court, while Duke Senior sees Arden as a place to superimpose his own thoughts, especially as he begins to embrace his own place in Arden.

Critical analysis of Duke Senior notes his function as a Robin Hood figure. Charles the Wrestler identifies this function while speaking in the court: "They say he [Duke Senior] is already in the Forest of Arden, and many merry men with him; and there they live like the old robin Hood of England" (AYL 1.1.112-3). The connotations of the Robin Hood reference imply Duke Senior is someone who works outside the confines of the court to serve the people of the court. Despite Robin Hood's and Duke Senior's operation *outside* the realm of the court and *proper* society, they still both function *within* the realm and function of that society's order.

The Robin Hood connotations are furthered by Duke Senior's ability to survive and thrive in a forest in which other noblemen, like Adam and Orlando, nearly starve to death (AYL 2.3). Duke Senior's Robin Hood connotations are furthered by his ability to survive and thrive in a forest in which other noblemen, like Adam and Orlando, nearly starve to death. Furthermore, Duke Senior's own costuming and characterization seems to confirm this reading, as "Duke Senior and Lords, [enter] like outlaws" upon their second entrance in 2.7 (AYL SD 2.7.0). Descriptions of Duke Senior from Charles the Wrestler further evoke the pastoral world of the

Robin Hood associations. Charles continues: “many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world” (*AYL* 1.1.114-9).

In this sense, Charles portends the social order that Duke Senior creates within the forest. Despite the lack of importance of social status within the forest, Charles still notes how the gentlemen “flock to him,” implying Duke Senior’s importance within the structure of the forest. These words further serve to show the overlaying of pastoral, forest elements with the sense of social order from the court. Charles’ use of the word “flock” here relates his purview of the relationships and connected experiences of the forest to the pastoral history of sheep raising. Duke Senior becomes the patriarch, the shepherd, and his young men are his flock. This discussion of shepherding again brings to mind masculine connotations, men shepherding their sheep, and acting as a patriarchal figure. As readers continue to note Duke Senior’s relationship with Arden, it becomes clear that summing up his relationship with Arden as simply Robin Hood-esque fails to capture the subtleties of his relationship to the forest.

As Duke Senior takes on Robin Hood, he does so by accentuating the masculine connotations of his character and actions, and the relationship he has to the liminal forest. His first interactions with the audience implies that he accepts the freedom that Arden can bring; he asks his “co-mates and brothers in exile” if “hath not old custom made this life more sweet/than that of painted pomp?” thus noting the simplicity of the woods in comparison to the court (*AYL* 2.1.1-3). Duke Senior notes that the court’s peril stems from their envy, or a sense of discontent that runs rampant throughout the court. Envy, then, rivals physical danger in its power to corrupt.

Echoing this same longing for simplicity, Duke Senior and his courtiers remake themselves within the image of the shepherds and foresters found within the woods. The minimal stage directions found here note them – “Duke Senior, Amiens, and two or three Lords” – to be

dressed “like foresters” (*AYL* SD 2.1.0). His costuming as a forester returns astute readers to the Robin Hood association, interlacing the history of “Robin Hood” specifically designated as a forester with the attempts made by Duke Senior. Further, both the Robin Hood and forest connotations showcase Duke Senior’s impulse to blend with the existing realm of the forest. Both Robin Hood of medieval myth and Duke Senior of *As You Like It* find themselves attempting to become one with the forest, but cannot become fully ingratiated with the forests in which they reside – Sherwood and Arden.

However, focusing specifically on Arden – Duke Senior lacks the typical ownership of place generally included in a reading of masculinity in nature. While reading *Hamlet*, it becomes clear that the city-state belongs to the monarchy, controlled by men, and specifically Claudius. The monarchy is the progenitor of the court, of the castle, and of the mental meanings of the place. Elsinore has a name, has identity, because of the monarchy. Reading *As You Like It*, it becomes clear that Arden defies this standard. Arden is not linked to the monarchy – as a place, it allows the monarchy to enter, but humbles them as they do. It has its own name, and its own identity – as Arden, as the forest, as “the green space.” Therefore, Duke Senior functions as ancillary to the forest itself. Arden rejects the masculine, courtly presence of Duke Senior, but rather than outright rejecting these figures, instead forces those who enter to adapt.

These readings examine how masculine monarchy functions in Arden. Duke Senior is not critically examined as a monarch when he is in the forest. This leads to an important discussion of social class. Paul Alpers notes discrepancies in his own reading of the text concerning how Duke Senior functions in the text as monarch. Comparing Duke Senior to Prospero from Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, describes the pastoral as a means and method of making sense of the creation of space. Alpers notes the same line, that Duke Senior speaks “in the guise of...a

forester, an inhabitant of the woods,” and uses it to argue that the Duke hides his attempts at changing Arden behind the mask of acquiescing to the power of the natural (Alpers 73). Alpers hits on the larger idea that Duke Senior, on the surface level, acquiesces to nature, but does not adequately live in it.

This acquiescence mirrors Duke Senior’s regard for Arden as a fleeting space, or a fleeting condition. In essence, Duke Senior notes that Arden serves a liminal space much more than even those native to the forest do. His assimilation to the customs of Arden, specifically his move towards becoming a forester, are temporary and are things about him that be conceivably returned to their normal state after leaving the forest. Duke Senior confirms this when he casts off his trappings of the forest and returns to himself as a member of the monarchy (*AYL* 5.4.172-85) Therefore, Duke Senior’s understanding of the temporal status of the forest seems subtler than originally conceived, and ties into critical understanding of the forest as liminal.

The temporal status of the forest, and of time itself in the forest, further undermines Duke Senior’s control. As previously noted, the temporality of the forest remains a precarious subject: the lack of control over time in the forest leaves Duke Senior and his courtesans at the whim of the forest – in this sense, Duke Senior loses his masculine control, at least over this aspect of his life, to the forest. Space and gender within the play come down to a question of control, and who controls space versus who controls gender. Duke Senior exists at a halfway point – not quite Duke, but also not quite shepherd.

Monarchy and social class – both masculine ideals – become important in how Duke Senior conceives of his surroundings. Duke Senior utilizes the social ties from the court as a means of establishing alliances within Arden. In the same breath in which he denounces the order of the court among his followers, he also places stock in familial ties and his own

potentiality for patriarchal power. This carries through his relationship with outside forces like Orlando and those with his own brother – Duke Frederick.

Highlighting the family feuds of the court, both Duke Senior and his brother Duke Frederick find Orlando either acceptable or unacceptable based solely on his name. Within the forest, Duke Senior accepts Orlando because he is “the good Sir Rowland’s son” and because Duke Senior is “the duke/that loved [his] father” (AYL 2.7.202, 206-7). This focus on familial ties finds an ironic home in Arden, as they are of less importance within the forest than they are out of the forest. The audience sees Duke Senior using these ties as justification for his own choices. The masculine urge to create structure from family extends even to the Forest of Arden on behalf of the exiled Duke Senior.

Discussing the final couples found at the end of the play, Duke Senior notes that while *all* of them “have endured shrewd days and nights with [him],” they will also “share the good of our returned fortune/According to the measure of their states” (AYL 5.4.179-181). Rosalind with Orlando and Celia with Oliver are naturally rewarded higher for their “shrewd days and nights” because of their social status, with the implication that the others will receive a different outcome because of their social status.

In short, Duke Senior enacts masculine courtly order, as seen through his return to the monarchy after the wedding. Duke Senior does so in conjunction with his role as one factor of change within the overwhelming presence of Arden. His role cannot be compared exactly to the role of upholder defined by Claudius and Polonius within *Hamlet* because he recognizes the lack of control he truly possesses over the forest. Rather than masculine order found in the court domineering the space of *As You Like It*, the masculine, courtly characters are themselves controlled by the liminal space of Arden. Duke Senior even seems to react against the artifice of

the court, rather than the court itself, and by finding himself in the forest, is able to attempt to construct a court without artifice – a blending of courtly and natural.

Duke Senior seems to vaguely succeed: he brings order to the forest and its inhabitants, but does so while working within the forest. He recognizes his own inability to control the place in which he finds himself, and therefore focuses on making the best of the situation. In contrast, his brother, Duke Frederick, rails against Arden from his place in the court. Returning to the idea of control, Both Duke Senior and Frederick are not in control of the forest. Rather, the forest is in control of them.

Duke Senior accepts nature as the play continues, while Duke Frederick begins the play rejecting nature. By the close of the play, these roles are reversed. Duke Senior accepts the opportunity to return to court while Duke Frederick remains in the forest. Duke Senior indicates his establishment of fortune throughout the wedding scene, as previously discussed. In reversal, Duke Frederick sheds his fortunes by “meeting with an old religious man/ [and becoming] converted/both from his enterprise and from the world” (*AYL* 5.4.165-7). While Duke Frederick has upheld the perceived court versus country divide throughout the play, he changes after stepping into the liminal space. Tellingly, this exchange with the religious man happens on the outskirts of the forest, implying that Arden has conversion powers; it is not just the religious man who converts him, but the power of change associated with Arden.

Duke Frederick also reneges on the courtly decisions that he made prior to entering the forest. He chooses to return “his crown...to his banished brother [Duke Senior]” – a decision that contradicts his plans throughout the rest of the play (*AYL* 5.4.168). This change of heart from his original plan throughout the play also implies the power of the crown and of monarchy. By returning the crown, and thereby power, to Duke Senior, he gives up the role of enforcement and

upholding and passes it back along to Duke Senior; however, Duke Senior has been influenced and changed by Arden and therefore has more power to have his “lands restored to [him] again” (AYL 5.4.169). While this seems like a convenient plot device to deal with Duke Frederick, the audience also sees how the “bad” Duke is seemingly punished for his wrong-doing, and the better Duke is restored to his full power.

Not only does Duke Senior exist to provide a courtly order to the forest, he arguably provides a meaning to the forest beyond its naturalness. Here, we see Duke Senior, and his courtiers, conducting not the opposite of what the masculine characters of *Hamlet* do, but not exactly what those in *Hamlet* do either. While the court of Elsinore identifies a sense of control over nature, both nature and court are intertwined within the reading of Arden as liminal space.

### **Melancholic Acts: Jacques in Arden**

Outside of the two Dukes, Jacques sets a masculine example in the forest. However, Jacques’ masculinity is melancholic – leading to critical comparisons between Jacques and Hamlet<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, throughout the play, comparisons between Jacques and Hamlet are helpful in defining Jacques’ masculinity’s interaction with the court. Jacques fixates on the same ideations of death, isolation, and decay as Hamlet, but does not exert the same Ecophobia, as termed by Simon Estok, that Hamlet suffers. Jacques’ melancholic state functions as displacement in the liminal space of Arden; he does not fear nature, but embraces the depictions of rot and decay that permeate nature. By actively avoiding the cycle of growth and life that comes from the play, Jacques situates himself as afraid at loss of control and further obsessed with decay, much like Ecophobic Hamlet.

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<sup>11</sup> See critics like Bamber (1982), Lyons (1971), and Scott (1962).

Throughout the play, descriptions of Jacques highlight his fixation on death and decay. Even in discussion, as seen in 2.1, Duke Senior and his men note Jacques as a curiosity for his reactions to hunting and other parts of daily life within the forest. His un-adaptability to the forest indicates his comic status, but further how his brand of masculinity does not function within this space. Serving as a comic copy of Hamlet within the play, it displays that Hamlet's particular form of masculinity does not function within the liminal space of Arden.

Jacques' demonstrates the courtly, melancholic, masculinity that reveals the sharp divide between masculinities defined by the court or melancholy. Alpers notes Jacques' refusal to change his self-hood and self-description within the forest (75). Characters like the Dukes, Rosalind, and Celia shift their attitudes to address the liminal space of Arden; Jacques does not. Because of this refusal to adapt to the mental, social, and political meaning of Arden, he functions as an example of his place of displacement from the court. Intellectually, Jacques represents displacement from both nature and from the court. This displacement ties back to Hamlet's conception of waste and displacement.

Critics have attempted to define how Jacques' relates to the world around him – specifically considering the competing ecological and colonial patterns of the forest around him. In her work considering anti-conquest in *As You Like It*, Leah Marcus uses Michael Hechter's ideation of the internal colony or “island of difference cut off from the broader national culture” where “interactions with the local population tend to take place according to the colonial pattern of confrontation” (Marcus 175). In other words, according to critics like Marcus, Jacques relates to the world through the lens of a man surveying land for the first time; or, that Jacques wrests for control over the forest. Therefore, Jacques represents melancholic masculinity stuck in the liminal forest.

As a character, Jacques relates to the liminal space differently, partially because he is one of two characters that does not lose their adopted role in the forest. The other – Touchstone – functions as a foil character for Jacques. Touchstone seemingly answers Jacques’ anxieties about the state of humanity in the forest as neither of them lose their adopted role in the forest – Touchstone is still jester; Jacques is still melancholic courtier. Alpers describes these ideas as “pastoral masking,” noting that Jacques and Touchstone “self-consciously play[ing] out and test[ing] for us the relation between one’s dress, one’s style of speech, and one’s adopted role” (Alpers 75). Alpers picks up on how adopted role changes within the realm of the liminal space. While Duke Senior and Rosalind adjust their roles in the forest, Jacques ostensibly remains a melancholic court member. Touchstone’s jester attitude suits the topsy-turvy logic of the forest, but Jacques’ courtier disposition Jacques does not.

Jacques’ lamentation of the "miserable world" follows his own disgust of the world and of physicality, as seen by Hamlet as well. Throughout the text, Jacques conflates the physical world with the body: the First Lord notes that Jacques has pierced the "body of the country," bringing in this idea early on in the text. Jacques compounds this belief as he speaks to Duke Senior; in a speech mirroring that of Hamlet's characterization of an "unweeded garden gone to seed," Jacques asks to "through and through cleanse the *foul body* of th' *infected world*, if they will patiently receive my *medicine*" (AYL 2.7.62-3) (emphasis my own). Reading this passage, it becomes clear that Jacques' existential angst and anxieties concerning physicality mirror these same concerns of Hamlet; while Hamlet uses gardening terms to describe the body, Jacques uses medical terminology of the body to describe the world. In either case, the conflation of these ideals together points towards a view of the body and the earth as infected.

Jacques' attitudes on Touchstone inform how he sees those characters that adapt well to the liminal forest. He notes that Touchstone is a fool, and associates that foolishness with the rest of the forest: "A fool, a fool, I met a fool I' th' forest, a motley fool! *A miserable world!*" (AYL 2.7.12-3) (emphasis my own). Not only does he find a "fool I' th' forest," but also the world he inhabits is in itself miserable. Jacques' compulsion to note the foolishness in the forest indicates his broader dislike for the liminality of the space.

Touchstone does not change costume, yet he adapts. In contrast, Jacques' disposition does not acclimate well to the forest. Critically, this can be seen in Jacques' exploration of time. The forest locale of the play further seems to alter the passage of time throughout the play, causing both viewer and characters to lose track of time. Time plays an active role throughout the play, as time is bent by the confines of the two-hour play and further by the forest setting itself. Jacques notes this in relation to Touchstone, noting Touchstone's description of time in terms of rot: "...from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,/And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;/And thereby hangs a tale" (AYL 2.7.27-9). Here, the fool character – Touchstone – notes how time truly moves in relation with nature rather than time governing the earth. This distinction demonstrates the difference between the court and the country; here, nature rules time. Jacques' recognition of this fact runs counter to his world view, and contributes to his understanding of the forest as it evolves over the course of the play.

Jacques further notes the fleeting time of Arden not as a possibility for change, but rather as a means of counting towards death. This can be noted in his noted "Seven Ages of Man" speech in 2.7. As Jacques notes the stages of man, he highlights the eventual decline from "the infant/mewling and puking in the nurse's arm" all the way to the "last scene of all...second childishness and mere oblivion" (AYL 2.7.142-3, 162, 164). For Jacques, time ends here, with the

decline of man to existing “sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything,” or the succumbing of man to death (*AYL* 2.7.165). Time represents a march towards oblivion, and meditation on death and decay. In contrast to Duke Senior’s discussion of time as fleeting, Jacques sees time as the end-all.

This speech further emphasizes Jacques’ placement of courtly markers of time upon the natural process of growing and aging. The “seven ages” line up to courtly divisions of time – infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, pantaloon, and finally old man. Specifically, his indication of man as “soldier” and “justice” are dependent upon the court. Soldiers and judges are dependent on the need for the implication of a larger sense of order that they can enforce, making them dependent on the court. Further, these roles are shown to be temporary – much the same way Duke Senior’s forester costumes are shown to be temporary. A soldier would have specific weapons; a justice would have specific props. These objects can be easily taken or given away, making them temporary indicators of self. Therefore, Jacques lines up the passage of time as inherent of the court and concerning rites of passage inherent to the court.

These seven stages align with decay; as the man ends his life “sans everything,” Jacques does not cycle back to the beginning, starting the cycle anew (*AYL* 2.7.165). He instead associates temporality with the stage, implying a set time and span of existence. Since “All the world’s a stage/and all men and women merely players,” it seems that hopefulness off the stage for starting the cycle anew does not exist (*AYL* 2.7.146-7). In Jacques’ discussion of life, the stage does not cycle back. Each player or man gets his moment upon the stage, but it does not repeat or culminate in rebirth.

Within his relationships with characters like Touchstone and Duke Senior, Jacques demonstrates an obsession with death, and a move away from the humor, growth, and life that

the other characters note. Jacques' melancholy here serves not only as an indication of his character, but further strengthens a latent criticism of masculine pioneering in the forest. He notes this through his chastisement of Orlando in 3.2 for his treatment of trees. Orlando writes his love letters directly onto the bark of trees as a means of getting Rosalind/Ganymede. This creates change in the forest that Jacques seems to dislike: "Pray you mar no more trees with writing love songs in their barks" (*AYL* 3.2.264-5). On the surface level, this seems disingenuous – Jacques seems to resent Orlando for ruining nature. But, for Jacques, the nature of the forest does not mean *nature*. Rather, his fear of Orlando's carving of love songs shows a fear of the loss of stability, or of control. In this sense Orlando is the causer of change, and Jacques resents that change.

Jacques applies courtly logic to Duke Senior's actions in exile. The fellow lords note that Jacques complains that "you [Duke Senior] do more usurp/than doth your brother that hath banished you" (2.1.28-9). These words are strong accusation: Jacques accuses Duke Senior of the same sin as his (Duke Senior's) brother. However, the comic timing of this comes from its placement in a discussion of a killed deer. While the deer's death comes as part of the circle of death, decay, and growth, Duke Senior's banishment from Duke Frederick constitutes an actual breach in politics. Jacques fails to move beyond this cycle – utilizing courtly description in the forest.

Further, Jacques' assessment of Duke Senior's banishment as "usurpation" shows him clinging to un-naturalness and the terms of the un-natural. By using these terms against Duke Senior, Jacques adds more elements of un-naturalness to the space of Arden. The First Lord further notes that Jacques calls all of the other courtiers "usurpers, tyrants [and those that] fright the animals and...kill them up" (*AYL* 2.1.64-5). Adding to these terms, the lord notes how

Jacques “pierceth through/the body of country, city, and court” (2.1.62-3). However, Jacques’ focus on animals does not come from care for the forest itself; rather, he utilizes the imagery of the forest to create melancholy from himself, but ostensibly lives in the mindset of the court.

However, Jacques’ encounters with nature beyond Duke Senior are fraught with contradiction. Critics have noted that later on in the play “[Jacques] presides over two short scenes of obscure collective ritual that are seemingly at odds with his sympathetic encounter with the deer: the gathering of foresters, or lords disguised as foresters, in 2.5...and a second gathering of foresters in 4.2” (Marcus 174-5); these two scenes represent an inherent problem in discussing Jacques’ place in the forest. Both of these scenes indicate a shift in how his previous forays with nature have. Particularly, these two scenes seem to indicate diverging thoughts on how nature functions within the play. These two scenes become crucial in discussing the subtleties of Jacques’ relationship with liminal Arden, and how Duke Senior’s men interact with the “native burghers” of the forest, the deer (*AYL* 2.1.23).

Perhaps the clearest example of Jacques’ contested relationship with the setting of the forest comes from his focus on the deer of Arden. The symbol of the deer recurs throughout the narrative, “as readers often notice [the narrative] is steeped in language that identifies the human in the animal and the animal in the human” (Marcus 175). By focusing on the importance of the motif of the deer, it becomes clear that the competing meanings and subtleties of these references are key to understanding Jacques’ particular relationship to the forest; readers should be reminded that throughout the text, “the heart evokes the hart and vice versa,” as discussed in more detail earlier (Marcus 175). Further, depictions of the deer are concentrated upon Jacques in particular. By discussing his relationship to the deer, the reader can illuminate the changes to Jacques’ character.

The first indication of Jacques' connection with the deer comes from the lords, who note that Jacques spends his time crying over the dead deer by the water's edge. Already, his placement at the edge of the river gives rise to the image of other confluences of water and death found – specifically, Ophelia. The description of the deer's face and selfhood assign human likeness to its form; notation of the deer's "big round tears" that fall down its "innocent nose," and the further note that Jacques "augments these tears" with his own blend images of the deer with images of personhood (*AYL* 2.1.40-44). Jacques' grief at the deer does not stem from a want to preserve nature, but rather a fear of the loss of innocence, or loss of control. As the deer decays, Jacques sees mankind slowly descending into death as well.

The deer exemplifies humanity within this construction of the court. They become "the poor dappled fools" who are "native burghers of this desert city" (*AYL* 2.2.21-2). Note how this description of the deer as "dappled fools" correlates to Jacques' description of Touchstone through the metonymy of a "motley coat" later in the play (*AYL* 2.7.44). The deer, Touchstone, and other inhabitants of the city: all are under Jacques' jurisdiction in his own mind. Jacques' actions are someone playacting order – or in other words, testing the limits of his masculine control over the space. This explains Jacques' contradictory impulses towards masculine order and away from nature. He accidentally embraces the liminality of the space because of his inability to fully conceive of himself as ruler; despite his need for control he undercuts his own control of the environment out of fear – much like Hamlet's fear paralyzes Hamlet from action.

Further, this overlays order onto the deer themselves, making them a point of comparison to Jacques himself. Jacques' words imply that the deer of the forest inhabit a full city of their own, and therefore suffer under the same courtly constructions as men (*AYL* 2.1.21-3). However, the deer do not fear death. Fully embraced as part of the natural ecosystem of Arden, the deer

become part of the cycle of death and renewal – and therefore cause Jacques' to fear them.

Jacques' obsession with the deer, then, stems from his fear of the cycle of renewal and life that the deer implies.

Jacques panics at the sight of death, as evidenced by his focus upon the deer's "big round tears" falling down its "innocent nose" and "augment[ing] these tears" with his own (*AYL* 2.1.40, 44). As these descriptions meld together it becomes clear that Jacques plays his own conception of grief, of loss of control, of loss of power on the deer themselves. For Jacques, losing control and death are one and the same, and he fears them both. His melancholic reaction to the deer's death proves not just a comic description of him as a melancholic stereotype, but also as a means of indicating his fear of loss, of giving up control.

Bearing this in mind, Jacques seems to change over the course of the play. Rather than being aligned into a relationship based on class and disposition, Jacques readjusts his disposition towards change. Rather than accepting death because of this fear like Hamlet, Jacques embraces the possibility of change and of the process of becoming. He first demonstrates this change when approached about the deer in 4.2. Upon divining who killed the deer, Jacques rejects celebration, and in turn chooses to celebrate the hunter. He requests that the hunter be presented "to the Duke like a Roman conqueror," including using the deer's antlers as a crown (*AYL* 4.2.3-4). Therefore, Jacques moves from fearing decay to embracing the renewability cycle inherent in hunting.

Further meditations here invoke the history of the deer's antlers or "the horn." Horns have multiple meanings throughout the narrative, but here it suffices to say that Jacques' veneration of the horn demonstrates his acceptance of vitality and of the cycle of life and death that surrounds Arden. Closing his celebration of the renewal of life, Jacques sings to the lords: "the horn, the horn, the lusty horn/is not a thing to laugh to scorn" (*AYL* 4.2.18-9). By

encouraging the lords to respect the symbol of the horn, it becomes clear that vitality should not be scorned or dismissed. The symbol of the horn further relates to gender difference, and Rosalind's power throughout the play; however, it is sufficient to state that Jacques' acceptance of the horn further demonstrates his acceptance of gender and sexual fluidity – not for himself, but within the realm of Arden.

Audiences see Jacques fully embrace these differences upon his decision to remain in the forest after the reestablishment of courtly order by the close of the play. Hearing about Duke Frederick's decision to stay in the forest, Jacques decides to follow the Duke in “put[ting] on a religious life” (*AYL* 5.4.187). Without assuming too much about the religious traditions of the play, it seems clear that Jacques' decision demonstrates the assumption of some higher power, meaning he accepts the cycle of life and death present in the forest. Upon departing for Duke Senior's former dwelling, Jacques bequeaths honor to Duke Senior, love to Orlando, “a long and well-deserved bed” to Silvius, and “wrangling” to Touchstone – embracing their virtues in a show of understanding.

Therefore, Jacques makes a complete realignment throughout the play, not through personality, but rather through embracing and correcting his own fear of death and of control. While Hamlet's fear of control persists throughout his entire narrative, seeping into his very melancholic character, Jacques learns to accept life, and perhaps even align himself to renewal and growth. While he still retains his melancholic state, Jacques manages to align himself for the better by the close of the play.

### **Transgressive Acts: Rosalind's Gender and Connection with Space**

Rosalind does not simply demonstrate “femininity” or “freedom,” which can be connected to the motif of growth and rebirth found throughout the play. As can be seen through Rosalind’s character traits and circumstances, she embodies both Ophelia and Hamlet: the scorned and the scorner, the country and the court, the feminine and the masculine. Rosalind’s centrality to the play comes from her being the nexus points for issues of gender and space that the play embodies. Arden is liminal, but so is Rosalind. Her gender performance is changeable, and her position to her love is changeable. She has no comparative character within other narratives, and she proves to be her own self.

Rosalind’s relationship with her liminal space demonstrates how the growth and rebirth cycle interacts with the space. Ophelia’s interactions with the liminal space come at the expense of her death: the graveyard melds the courtly and religious with the natural space. Rosalind embraces a sort of death through the creation of her masculine alter ego, Ganymede, once within the forest, and her subsequent return to self hood as Rosalind at the close. Rosalind’s gender performance is on the fringe, and is accepted by Arden. Liminal space within *As You Like It* adopts the growth cycle and model, centered upon Rosalind. Her freedom comes from embracing these differences, especially as Arden does not punish difference.

Before moving into the forest Shakespeare establishes Rosalind’s relationship to the court and with the characters of this setting, which provides exposition for changes to come. Throughout Rosalind’s interactions with other courtly characters, she quickly dominates the scene. Duke Frederick explains Rosalind’s likeability to Celia by stating that “[Rosalind’s] smoothness...silence...[and]...patience/Speak to the people, and they pity her” (*AYL* 1.3.80-2).

This provides a means of convincing the audience to like her; by pointing out her “smoothness and patience,” the audience magnifies these traits.

Rosalind’s function and place at the court is more clearly defined. From Rosalind’s interactions with the court, the status of women in the court is made distinct. The masculine, courtly voices of LeBeau and Touchstone provide reference to what is considered suitable for women. Regarding the show of wrestling, for example, Touchstone notes “it is the first time that ever [he] heard breaking of ribs was sport for ladies” (*AYL* 1.2.131-3). Here, the audience receives the structured, set-in-stone masculine and feminine binary.

Rosalind rejects the standard set for her by the court. Upon her move to Arden, Rosalind further adapts to the courtly position laid out. She does this by transforming her gender performance to that of a boy, Ganymede. The liminal space of Arden allows her to fully embody the role of a young boy. Rosalind changes her costume and self to become Ganymede. Her cousin, Celia, states this change in location and in personhood by reframing this move “to liberty, and not to banishment” (*AYL* 1.3.145). Celia and Rosalind share a means of reframing these changes: cross-dressing and exile have been reframed as freedom. This change happens because of the change in social meaning from courtly to liminal. This indicates a key difference in masculine and feminine thinking: Arden is banishment from courtly order to the men who rely upon that order, but is freedom for the women upset by that order.

Cross-dressing creates a new self for Rosalind. Her creation of Ganymede’s ‘identity,’ however, comes from Rosalind’s idea of how masculinity should be performed as a young boy in the forest. Rosalind specifically takes these markers because she believes this to be how a young boy from the forest to act, primarily because this is the understanding she has been given from the court. She then tries to outwardly perform this masculinity. However, Arden rejects this

obsessive masculinity; by the close of the play, Rosalind is half Ganymede and half herself, which results in her final return to self.

Rosalind's initial masculinity relies upon changes to costume and props rather than changes to her physical body or self. She uses what visually marks something as masculine to her rather than becoming masculine at her core. Upon Rosalind's arrival in Arden, she makes us aware of her and Celia's difference in costume. Rosalind as Ganymede calls attention to her "doublet and hose" against Celia's "petticoat" (*AYL* 2.4.6-7). This specific change in her costume to doublet and hose would have indicated a grand change to Shakespearean audiences, as it would be the costume of men. This breaks gendered norms set up within the court, and is a change that becomes so accepted because of its occurrence in Arden.

Furthermore, Rosalind's prop changes indicate her over-compensation when it comes to performing masculinity. The examples of masculine prop changes Rosalind indicates are both weaponry: "a gallant curtal-axe upon [her] thigh" and "a boar-spear in [her] hand" (*AYL* 1.3.124-5). Rosalind views weaponry as essential to play acting as a man – to achieving that "swashing and...martial outside" that she seeks to embody (*AYL* 1.3.127). This seems particularly out of place, as it is not a masculinity that is represented in the play. Charles the Wrestler represents the only overt display of strength, and he is bested by the smaller, weaker Orlando (*AYL* 1.2).

Orlando's comparative weakness compared to Rosalind's aggressiveness becomes important throughout Arden, where the imagery of courtship is flipped. Hunting becomes a means of engaging with courtship and sexuality without directly naming those topics. Leah Marcus identifies how "the heart evokes the hart and vice versa: dear and deer, various forms of stalking, being hit my arrows...human and animal 'fools,' both species of which can wear dappled coats of motley" (Marcus 175). The references to female deer as hind relate the

courtship process to hunting. Orlando's courtship of Rosalind reflects this hunting-as-courting imagery, opening his poem with the bad rhyme of "If a hart do lack a hind./Let him seek out Rosalind" (*AYL* 3.2.101-2). In his poetry, Orlando utilizes stereotypical imagery to make himself the hunter and Rosalind the hunted. However, this imagery does not hold up to how these two interact.

Orlando takes on the feminine association with the hind, as he states that Oliver "lets [Orlando] feed with his hinds [and] bars me the place of a brother" (*AYL* 1.1.118-9). Not only does this mean, then, that Orlando is denied the place of brother, but also that he takes on the feminine association of the deer, of the hunted. In contrast, Rosalind quickly scoffs at the depiction of herself as a hind – or as a jewel, a nut, or a rose. Her masculine costume further affects this image; dressed with a spear and an axe, Rosalind as Ganymede looks the part of a hunter, crucial to her disguise as a boy of Arden. This places her as the advantageous figure within the exchange between her and Orlando. Rosalind holds the tools and means of conquest on her person, while Orlando relies upon words and poetry.

By the close of the play, Rosalind's masculinity and femininity have blended and have created an imagined third self – that of Ganymede. While Ganymede physically looks like a young boy, Rosalind stands up for women at the court like her previous self. When discussion of courtly love brings up courtly problems like unfaithfulness, Rosalind calls attention to men's tendency to place this blame on women: "Why, horns, which such as/you are fain to be beholding to your wives for" (*AYL* 4.1.63-4). Rosalind returns to defending wives, and to defending womanhood from the accusations of men, something that a young boy would probably not do. Revisiting the hart/hind, hunting, and horns motifs found throughout the rest of the play,

Rosalind revises her earlier understandings of gender relations. She is neither hart nor hind, but simply Rosalind.

Rosalind's cross-dressing seems to point to an obsession with achieving this exterior as a means of hiding her own fear, which she labels as "woman's fear" (AYL 1.3.126). As the two women enter the forest, these stereotyped gender portrayals become exaggerated. Rosalind returns to this conception of femininity later in the play when she refers to Celia as "the weaker vessel" because of her feminine appearance, and perceives superiority because she has taken on the masculine role of Ganymede while Celia remains feminine in her portrayal of Aliena (AYL 2.4.6). At the same time, she chooses to avoid engaging with her negative feelings concerning Arden as she fears them to be an affront to her image of masculinity: "I could find it in my heart to *disgrace* my/ man's apparel and to *cry like a woman*" (AYL 2.4.4-5) (emphasis my own). Rosalind makes her initial feelings about her portrayal of masculinity very clear; she embodies toxic masculinity that exists in masculine coded spaces like the court and draws her superiority from her imagined gender.

When entering the forest Celia's bravado before she leaves the court becomes replaced with reliance on "Ganymede" as she asks Rosalind or Touchstone to "question yond man, if he/for gold will give us any food. *I faint almost to death*" (AYL 2.4.64) (emphasis my own). Celia who was bravely calling the forest "liberty" while at the court, now falls into stereotypical faintness, and asks the two masculine figures of the group to support her, which Rosalind obliges, highlighting Celia's frailness: "Here's a young maid with travel much oppressed,/And *faints* for succor" (AYL 2.4.76-7) (emphasis my own). Rosalind enters the forest as a self-sufficient woman, but overcorrects to embody the masculinity she has come to know – that of

courtiers found in masculine space. It takes going into the forest for the pair to become hyper-aware of the implications of their perceived gender and specifically their gender performances.

Thankfully, this attitude does not last long within Arden. The liminal space has the possibility to blend courtly and natural, but not to fully transform. Even as Rosalind inhabits the role of Ganymede, she does not fully become Ganymede. Despite the outward performance of masculinity, Rosalind has not changed at her core. As Rosalind adjusts to Arden, a true blending of masculine and feminine occurs, as she embraces her femininity while still portraying masculinity, flitting between the two in a cycle: death of Rosalind, creation of Ganymede, and the blending of the two, culminating in the rebirth of Rosalind, transformed by her time within Arden: an incubator for change.

Returning to the imagery of the doublet and hose that serves as proof of her overt masculinity earlier in the play, Rosalind tempers these descriptions as she becomes more adapted to the space of Arden. After meeting Orlando, she exclaims to Celia that though she be “caparisoned like a man” she does not “have a doublet and hose in [her] disposition” (*AYL* 3.2.199-200). Rather than being the ideal parts of her imagined personality, the doublet and hose begins to stand for the flaws in Rosalind’s masculine personality. This shift in meaning of “doublet and hose” continues throughout the play, noting Rosalind’s change in how she perceives masculinity. No longer the end all, Rosalind realizes and melds the better parts of how she perceives both masculinity and femininity.

These changes are further brought along within Rosalind’s rebirth and return to selfhood – shedding the persona of Ganymede and rebirth. The language used throughout the marriage scene focuses intensely on the realization of “Ganymede’s” transition to Rosalind – through Duke Senior and through Orlando especially. Duke Senior notes after he interacts with Rosalind

in the final scene that she shares “some lively touches of my daughter’s favor” (*AYL* 5.4.28). This agreement upon Ganymede’s similarities to Rosalind focuses attention less on the marriage, and more on the discovery, on the change about to happen. Upon learning Ganymede’s true identity, both Duke Senior and Orlando uses constructions beginning with the phrase “If there be truth in sight” to indicate their amazement: “If there be truth in sight, you are my daughter./If there be truth in sight, you are my Rosalind” (*AYL* 5.4.122-3). In Arden, sight is deceiving, and the transformative power of the forest realizes its true power.

The play quickly ends after the conclusion of the quadruple ending. How, then, can it be concluded that these virtues have been brought back to the court? The answer comes from Rosalind’s epilogue closing the play, because “good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues” (*AYL* Ep1.6). Speaking directly to the audience, Rosalind encourages men and women of the audience in equal parts to enjoy the play. While this epilogue speaks more to the play itself, Rosalind’s insistence of the men “for the love [they] bear to women...that between you and the women may the play please,” essentially asking the men to appreciate the play to the degree that the women do (*AYL* Ep1.14-17). This, combined with the awareness that “Rosalind” was played by a boy at the time period, complicates the gender relations in the play, and reconfigures preconceived gender roles. While the play does not actively show Rosalind returning to the court as a liminal character, her addressing the audience at the close of the play demonstrates how these virtues are expected to translate to outside of the playhouse.

## Epilogue:

## In the Fashion of Space

*Hamlet* and *As You Like It* both tackle topics like usurpation, treason, and gender bias by placing these difficult topics within isolated spaces. *Hamlet* utilizes the built environment of Elsinore to isolate characters from the natural world; *As You Like It* utilizes a natural and liminal environment of Arden to isolate characters from their external problems. However, the characters of both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* are products of the spaces in which they are placed. Their isolation within these spaces condenses personal meanings of space that comes from individual characters with the socially constructed meanings of the space.

The socially constructed meanings of space centers on the division that has been created between built environments and natural environments. Specifically, these plays address the disconnection between the built, or the unnatural, and the natural. *Hamlet* makes this division clear through the initial construction of Elsinore and the surrounding country. The built environment is defined by the masculine monarchical power ingrained within it, while the natural environment embraces Ophelia's femininity. *As You Like It's* long tradition of pastoral criticism has meant that the play embraces images of the natural world, which is lacking throughout *Hamlet*. This can be seen in the difference in genre, as the comedies rely more upon the natural world and the tragedies upon the built artifice of unnatural spaces.

This moves towards a reading of environmental criticism in both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* that embraces the necessity of including built environments, specifically the court. To understand nature in both texts, I rely on voices from the court and within the court to define

their relationships with the natural world. It becomes imperative to include the court within environmental criticism as it provides a point of comparison for the natural world.

Throughout both *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, depictions of waste, critics have identified rot, and decay. In *Hamlet*, these images have been related to Hamlet's own conception of humanity. Similarly, Jacques' attitudes towards the deer within *As You Like It* have been taken to mean the same thing. However, it becomes clear that images identified by Wilson can be read as exemplary of nature within the play, and that the focus on rot and decay that Douglas brings to other literature can be applied in a similar manner to those found in *Hamlet*.

Merging images of decay, rot, and waste with conceptions of how Hamlet handles images of waste and decay indicates Hamlet's fear of the environment. Estok refers to this as Ecophobia. Working with this definition it becomes clear that this focus does not just apply to Hamlet, but rather to monarchical, masculine power scattered throughout *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. Ecophobia positions itself against change in environment, against wildness. The natural world changes at its own whim, which positions itself against the masculine power found at the court.

Tristan Samuk noted *As You Like It* to be a play for people that are seeking change. This cannot be said for the cast and play of *Hamlet*; in fact, much of *Hamlet* aligns itself as an adverse reaction to the change that rocks the court at the start of the play. Therefore, the reaction of the characters to change, to freedom, to the introduction of nature, impacts their outcomes. Hamlet never conquers his Ecophobia; neither does Claudius or Polonius prior to their deaths. They die firmly entrenched in their fears of change, and of loss of control that nature implies. Even to the last, in Ophelia's death and burial, these characters express their fear of her exertion of control by the means of nature. In contrast, the characters of *As You Like It* address their fears and needs

for control found upon their immersion in Arden throughout their stay in the forest. Because they embrace their loss of control, Duke Senior, Rosalind, and even Jacques do not suffer.

Furthermore, these changes occur within a specific location within both of these plays – the liminal spaces at the core of each play. For *Hamlet*, this core is the graveyard, whereas the core of *As You Like It* is Arden itself. Both of these places embrace the changes, and the blurring of boundaries that take place within them. For *Hamlet*, this blurring is revolutionary and causes friction against the rest of the play, whereas for *As You Like It*, this blurring comes almost instinctively. In either case, this presents a case for how built and natural interact. Examining the intersection between these two texts, it becomes clear that the built and the natural rely upon one another to create meaning.

Both plays demonstrate of how the friction between the courtly and the natural is necessary to create meaning for either of them. My work demonstrates this reliance by collecting voices from the courtly to describe the natural. Furthermore, my work identifies how these lines can be applied to the gender divides over both plays. The boundaries of masculinity and femininity impact space, as it is through these markers that space is created.

As can be seen in both texts, spatial definition comes from social markers; those social markers are generally defined by social cues found in the space, which includes issues of gender. However, these topics are threaded together by the broader issue of control. These plays ask their viewers to ultimately define who controls the space in which the plays are set, and further, if that control is justified. Examining the built environments of Shakespearean plays that seem to fully reject ecology can lead to fruitful discussion of how that rejection displays a fear of environment, and therefore a fear of loss of control.

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