

Fertility and Infertility: Shakespeare's Anti-deforestation Stance

An Eco-critical Reading of *Cymbeline*

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Abstract:

Ecocriticism is a field of study concerned with the reciprocal relationship between the environment and literature. It shows how both nature and culture, on one hand, and literature, on the other hand, influence one another. The aim of the eco-critical approach to literature is to spot light on environmental crises trying to find solutions for them. Although multiple literary works were studied in the light of the eco-critical approach, yet very few of Shakespeare's works were examined, which is the aim of this research paper. This paper offers an eco-critical reading of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (1603) focusing on Shakespeare's implicit response to the environmental crisis of deforestation through employing images of fertility and infertility. Through these images, Shakespeare aims at transmitting a clear message that man and nature are inter-connected, and that, in order to restore balance to the ecosystem, both should be kept in harmony. Despite the fact that Shakespeare and others were not able to solve the deforestation problem, yet Shakespeare had shown his eco-consciousness through addressing this crisis in his play, *Cymbeline*.

Keywords:

Eco-criticism – Shakespeare – fertility – infertility – *Cymbeline* – Deforestation – Eco-consciousness – rejuvenation

المخلص

يركز النقد البيئي على العلاقة المتبادلة بين البيئة والأدب؛ حيث يظهر تأثير كل من الطبيعة والثقافة من جانب والأدب من جانب آخر في بعضهما البعض؛ لذا فإن الهدف من تطبيق النقد البيئي على الأدب هو إلقاء الضوء على بعض الكوارث البيئية من أجل إيجاد حلول مناسبة لها. وعلى الرغم من أن العديد من الأعمال الأدبية قد تم تناولها من هذا المنظور فإنه نادرا ما تتم دراسة أعمال شكسبير في ضوء نظرية النقد البيئي. لذلك تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى تقديم قراءة مسرحية

شكسبير "سيمبيلين" فى ضوء نظرية النقد البيئي مع التركيز على رد الفعل غير المباشر لشكسبير على الكارثة البيئية المعروفة بالتصحّر أو تجريف الغابات، وذلك من خلال استخدامه لصور خيالية خاصة بالخصوبة والجذب. وقد حاول شكسبير من خلال هذه الصور توصيل رسالة فحواها أن الإنسان والبيئة مترابطان ولكي يتحقق التوازن البيئي فيجب الحفاظ على التناغم بينهما. وعلى الرغم من أن شكسبير وآخرين لم يتمكنوا من إيجاد حلول لمشكلة التصحر فإن شكسبير قد أظهر وعيا بيئيا من خلال تناوله لمثل هذه الكارثة البيئية فى مسرحية "سيمبيلين".

الكلمات الدالة:

النقد البيئي – شكسبير – التصحر – تجريف الغابات – "سيمبيلين" – الخصوبة – اعادة احياء المدن – الوعى البيئي

The aim of this ecocritical study of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (1603) is to bring out the ecocritical elements latent within the play which reflect Shakespeare's awareness of the value of forests and the hazardous effects they are exposed to through deforestation. To achieve this aim, this study will investigate Shakespeare's use of images of fertility and infertility in the play to metaphorically address the deforestation problem and to point up the worth of nature and its regenerative quality.

The term "ecocriticism" was first used by Michael P. Branch at one of the meetings of WLA (Western Literature Association). Later on, in 1989, Cheryl Glotfelty defined this term, ecoriticism, as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). By the physical environment, Glotfelty does not only mean nature but the environment as a whole, "the entire ecosphere," as she confirms, "But nature per se is not the only focus of ecocritical studies of representation. Other topics include the frontier, animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts..." (xxiii). In his book, *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell too defines ecocriticism as the "study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (430). In that sense, the ecocritical approach is not concerned with the nature-culture dichotomy. It "attempts to transcend the duality of art and life, human and the natural, and to work along the principle of interconnections between them" (Oppermann 38). As Armbruster and Wallace declare, "understanding how nature and culture constantly influence and construct each other is essential to an informed ecocriticism" (4).

The concern of ecocriticism is not only works written about nature but all literary works -- even the ones in which nature is not the main focus. Steven Rosendale declares that ecocriticism "involve(s) considering a potentially very wide variety of texts, some of which present objectionable assumptions about nature and many of which are drawn from genres and traditions alien to nature writing as it is usually conceived" (xxvii). The main role of ecocriticism is to examine "the ways in which the environment is perceived and represented__ for better and for worse_ (in literary texts)..." (Estok, "Teaching the Environment" 178). Its aim in doing that is to stimulate an "increased ecological awareness and a sensitivity to humanity's role in the biosphere" (Berstein 118). As Rueckert asserts, "...reading, teaching, and writing about literature might function creatively in the biosphere, to the ends of biospheric purgation..." (112). Oppermann too affirms that ecocriticism "launches a call to literature to connect to the issues of today's environmental crises" (30). Thus, ecocritics tend to evaluate "texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crises" (Kerridge 5).

Another main task of ecocriticism is to examine the natural environment in canonical texts. Glen A. Love states, "...another important function of ecocriticism (is) to reexamine and reinterpret the depictions of nature in the canonical works of the past"(34). This approach does not undermine the importance of the text but it rather adds another dimension to it, "a dimension which has perhaps always hovered about the text, but without ever receiving our full attention before" (Barry 258). Therefore, "ecocritical readings of canonical texts begin by adding a different perspective, and are not limited to works self-evidently about nature"(259). In spite of that, few critics offer ecocritical readings of Shakespeare's works such as Simon Estok in his *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* and Gabriel Egan in his *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*. The reason behind this scarcity of works that apply ecocriticism to Shakespeare, as stated by Simon E. Estok, is that "doing ecocritical Shakespeares represents a tall order, and it explains why ecocriticism hasn't been applied to Shakespeare yet, with a few exceptions. When applied to Shakespeare, 'ecocriticism', unlike image-cluster-counting, is hard work" (110).

Thus, this paper will offer an eco-critical approach to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (1603) focusing on Shakespeare's implicit response to the environmental crisis of deforestation through employing images of fertility and infertility. A Shakespearean play will be the focus of this study as "drama,

enacted upon the stage, before a live audience, releases its energy into the human community assembled in the theatre and raises all the energy levels" (Rueckert 110). *Cymbeline*, in particular, is chosen for this study as through reading Gabriel Egan's analysis of food and biological nature in the play in *Green Shakespeare From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*, my attention was drawn to the importance of fertility and infertility as elements that reflect Shakespeare's ecoconsciousness, a point overlooked by Egan and other ecocritics. Also, as Barry rightfully argues, "Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is a regrettably underrated and overlooked play. Misunderstood and evaluated upon false grounds, it is far better than many commentators recognize, for it embraces a multitude of Shakespearean devices, themes, and structural principles, with an energy of fusion characteristic only of the dramatist's maturity" (143).

To start with, ecocritics pay great attention to the environment in which the author lives as "where an author grew up, traveled, and wrote is pertinent to an understanding of his or her work" (Glotfelty xxiii). This is true of William Shakespeare as the environment in which he lived played a great role in shaping his eco-consciousness. As Waage asserts, "the physical, ecological features of Warwickshire, Stratford, and his own agrarian lands had a dominant role in Shakespeare's creative consciousness throughout his career" (142). Sam too argues that, "Stratford's life was the land, not inert but vital, like a man's body" (5). Also, Warwickshire was known to have the best soil in England. It was "often noted by tourists and surveyors as the richest in England" (Waage 145). That is due to "agricultural improvements in Warwickshire observed by environmental historians '...through the use of marling and convertible husbandry' based on 'experimental' methods of soil productivity enhancement" (145). Thus, the ground and the forest formed an essential part of Shakespeare's consciousness. His "life on the earth gives evidence of his own lifelong connections with land, earth, and soil" (Estok, "An Introduction to Shakespeare" 115). Edgar C. Knowlton too confirms that "a doctrine of Nature constitutes the core of the view of life held by Shakespeare" (719).

However, a great problem to which the lands were exposed during the Renaissance was deforestation. At the time of Shakespeare, "the forest had been, and was being, logged, particularly for ship timbers and charcoal" (Waage 143). Weixel declares, "the pressures of industry and war created more demand for resources from Elizabeth's administration, and deforestation continued under

Tudor and Stuart reigns for the purposes of grazing, cultivation, building materials, and industries such as glass-making and ironworks" (34). This fact threatened the existence of forests "which were not only of economic and military value, but of social value as places that helped create and delineate social status and embody the power of individuals and groups" (Weixel 17-8). The forests for the Elizabethans stood for authority, nobility and power. They indicated social status, too. As Weixel remarks, "for while common forest dwellers were suspect and associated with the wildness of an uncivilized space, those who owned woodlands used the forest's mythic, archetypal associations of power and privilege to construct their social superiority" (24-5).

This significance of the forests made them of great concern to Elizabeth I and James I who issued proclamations to enforce the compliance to the forest laws and to advocate the husbandry of woodlands. Not only kings and queens were concerned with the deforestation crisis but also famous writers suggested solutions to this catastrophe, namely John Manwood and Arthur Standish. As Weixel remarks, "the sense of imminent deforestation and calamitous results — from dearth to fire to military invasion — made the forested lands of England, a national concern and the focus of a number of proposals, Standish's among them, to preserve the kingdom's forests" (14). William Shakespeare too, like other Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, paid great attention to this environmental crisis as "no travel by Shakespeare in his home environs could avoid the encounter with forested and deforested soil" (143). This fact made him "very sensitive to the issues involved in soil amendment, and ... to the effects of neglect and stewardship" (146). This idea will be the focus of study of this paper as "Shakespeare's views on nature, landscape and geography ... had a powerful influence on people's attitudes to those subjects and were thus a matter of considerable importance" (Mayhew 25).

Although Shakespeare does not explicitly tackle the issue of deforestation in *Cymbeline*, he implicitly addresses it through his use of images of fertility and infertility and through his presentation of the savagery of the city and the innocence and purity of the forest. Harrison affirms, "the changing landscape accounts at least in part for the remarkable topical inversion that we find in the work of Shakespeare: the savagery that once belonged to the forests now lurks in the hearts of men-civic men. The dangers lie within, not without. As the city becomes sinister, forests become innocent, pastoral, diversionary, comic"(212). Waage too argues that deforestation "was an indirect cause for the internalization

of wilderness" (143) in Shakespeare's plays. In *Cymbeline*, the wilderness and the barrenness of the city are brought about by Cymbeline, Queen, and Cloten.

First of all, Cymbeline as a king represents the Divine Right of the Kings concept; that is, as a king, he was appointed by God to keep order on earth as "medieval and Renaissance thought was dominated by the concept of the Great Chain of Being, which placed humans midway between nature and the divine in a hierarchical order" (9). This notion is clear in the play as the First Gentleman assures the Second Gentleman, "Our bloods no more obey the heavens than our courtiers still seem as does the king's" (I. i. 1-3). He later adds that "they (the courtiers) wear their faces to the bent of the King's looks..." (I. i. 13-14). The King has to be obeyed or else one is considered sinful. However, any flaws in the King's character or any wrong decisions taken by the King were thought to have great repercussions on the land. This is true of Cymbeline, the King of Britain. Both his wrath and his weak character bring sterility to the land. This wrath is clear in his banishment of Belarius, a Lord, as a traitor. Belarius relates the event saying:

Cymbeline lov'd me,
 And when a soldier was the theme, my name
 Was not far off: then was I as a tree
 Whose boughs did bend with fruit. But in one night,
 A storm, or robbery (call it what you will)
 Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
 And left me bare to weather. (III. iii. 59-64)

It is important here to analyze the nature imagery used by Shakespeare as "the project of green cultural studies (ecocriticism) is the examination of nature through words, image, model for the purpose of foregrounding potential effects representation might have on cultural attitudes and social practices which, in turn, affect nature itself" (Hochman 187). That is to say, by analyzing the images used by Shakespeare, one comes to know his attitude towards nature. In the previous quotation, Belarius is compared to a tree that becomes fruitless due to a storm or robbery. This storm can connote the King's wrath. Belarius is uprooted from his motherland leaving the land bare and sterile. In fact, comparing Belarius to a plant indicates that there is no diversity between man and nature, as ecocritics believe. Man and nature complement each other; they are inter-related. As Evernden declares, "rather than thinking of an individual spaceman who must

slurp up chunks of the world _ 'resources'_ into his separate compartment, we must deal instead with the individual_ in_ environment, the individual as a component of, not something distinct from, the rest of the environment" (97). Also, this image of infertility discloses Shakespeare's concern with the deforestation disaster and its serious consequences as manifested in the city and its dwellers.

As a reaction to this banishment, Belarius kidnaps the King's two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, the heirs to the throne. The First Gentleman relates, "he had two sons... the eldest of them at three years old I' th' swathing-clothes the other, from their nursery were stol'n" (I. i. 57-60). These two sons are symbols of feracity as youth and as successors to the throne. By presenting them as pulled up from Britain to be planted in another land, Shakespeare establishes the idea of barrenness in the city. Furthermore, King Cymbeline, upon knowing that Posthumus married his daughter against his will, becomes so furious to the extent that Imogen comments on that saying, "I beseech you sir,/ harm not yourself with your vexation, I am senseless of your wrath" (I. ii. 64-66). As a consequence, Cymbeline banishes Posthumus: "Thou basest thing, avoid hence, from my sight! If after this command thou fraught the court with thy unworthiness, thou diest. Away!" (I. ii. 56-58). This action indicates that "Cymbeline's wrath and tyranny act as the 'sneaping' wind of winter, which blights love, marriage, and life itself" (Barry 147).

By banishing Posthumus, Cymbeline brings sterility to the land on three levels. On one level, he separates a husband and a wife, and thus he is "interrupting the sacred fertility of consecrated marriage" (Barry 148). This infecundity is highlighted through the plant imagery that Imogen uses: "Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father, and like the tyrannous breathing of the north, shakes all our buds from growing" (I. iv. 35-37). In this metaphor, Cymbeline's wrath is compared to a strong wind coming from the north which shakes the trees causing the buds to fall thus making them unfruitful. By thus separating husband and wife, Cymbeline is making it impossible for them to have offsprings. As a female and daughter of the king, Imogen will not bear fruit and produce heirs to the king and hence sterilize Britain. On the second level, Posthumus, as a youth, is a symbol of fertility. The First Gentleman relates:

The king he takes the babe
To his protection, calls him Posthumus Leonatus,
Breeds him, and makes him of his bed-chamber,

Puts to him all the learnings that his time
 Could make him the receiver of, which he took,
 As we do air, fast as 't was minister'd,
 And in'spring became a harvest. (I. i. 40-46)

In this speech, Posthumus is compared to a plant that is sowed and nurtured by the King until it becomes a harvest, that is, until he matures. Thus, by deporting him, Cymbeline creates out a waste land. As Waage asserts, "observed conditions of fertile and infertile earth can figure human fertility" (150). These images of fertility and infertility manifest Shakespeare's stance against deforestation. That is, deforestation is related to sterility that is presented by Shakespeare on the level of humans through nature images. On the third level, Imogen, the only heiress to the throne, will run away from the court to search for her husband, Posthumus, and thus there is no successor to the throne, which is a variation of the concept of infertility.

Not only is wrath the main character flaw of Cymbeline that has serious consequences on the land of Britain but also his weak character. The Queen comments in an aside on her influence on the king saying, "yet I'll move him to walk this way: I never do him wrong but he does buy my injuries, to be friends: pays dear for my offences" (I. ii. 34-37). She later adds, "I'll move the king to any shape of thy preferment, such as thou 'lt desire" (I. vi. 70-72). As Hunt asserts, "Cymbeline's fault involves losing mastery over his evil Queen, a mannish, bloodthirsty woman who rule him, even plots against him... with the result that the kingdom wants the effective functioning of its ordained head"(411). This infirmity of Cymbeline enables both the Queen and Cloten, as agents of stimulating infertility, to spread corruption. That is, the Queen easily spurs the King against Posthumus for she wants her son, Cloten, to marry Imogen to take the British throne. Due to her influence, King Cymbeline banishes Posthumus whose absence as a youth and a husband has dire consequences concerning the sterility of the British land.

In addition, the malignant queen subverts the use of flowers as emblems of beauty to poisoning tools. She asks her ladies to gather some flowers for her to give them to Cornelius, a physician, to prepare a poison by which she can kill Imogen and have her son as the only successor to the throne. The Queen asserts, "I have given him (Pisanio) that, which if he take, shall quite unpeople her of liegers for her sweet: and which she after, except she bend her humour, shall be

assur'd to taste of too" (I. vi. 78-82). The Queen also orders her ladies to put the flowers they gathered in her closet: "The violets, cowslips, and the primroses bear to my closet" (I. vi. 83-4). Instead of planting trees and flowers, the Queen puts them in the closet where they will wither and die. This action reflects her role as an anti-fertility promoting agent. It also underscores the desolation and chaos in the city which is intended by Shakespeare to implicitly shed light on the deforestation crisis. For Shakespeare, the disruption of earthly fertility affects and is affected by the disruption of human relations. This inter-dependence of nature and human beings as presented by Shakespeare is, as ecocritics such as Oppermann believe, an "attempt to find a common ground between the human and the non human to show how they can coexist in various ways..." (31). It also "advocates a rethinking of our commonly held beliefs and perceptions, and our versions of nature, towards creating a 'consciousness of the essential unity of all life'" (34), which is the aim of ecocriticism.

Cloten too makes use of Cymbeline's frailty and informs Caesar's messenger that Britain, represented by King Cymbeline, will no longer pay the tribute to Rome. It is noticeable that it is Cloten and not the king who takes the decision as he affirms, "If Caesar can hide the sun from us with a blanket, or put the moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light: else, sir, no more tribute, pray you now" (III. i. 42-46). The fact that King Cymbeline does not keep his promise to Caesar is a great sin as, at that time, Rome was considered as "the proper head of Britain" since "Britain has been a member of the Roman body politic" (Hunt 412). Therefore, this dismemberment of Britain from the Roman body will have great effects on the British land. That is to say, it will become barren and sterile, a fact particularly stressed by the departure of all the youth, Cloten, Posthumus, Imogen and the King's sons, who are the emblems of productivity.

It is worth mentioning here that Shakespeare was not just satisfied with shedding light on the deforestation crisis through his use of images of infertility in relation to the characters in the city. He went so far as to make his banished characters, or those who have fled, unable to survive after leaving their homeland. He presents them as plants cut from their roots and drifted by the wind. They also fail to grow where they are transplanted. This fact metaphorically sheds light on the devastating effects of deforestation. The land of the city becomes unfruitful and the characters become unproductive and lose their balance. By being exiled, Posthumus, for example, is cut from his roots in Britain and is transplanted in Italy in a state of imbalance which is obvious on

more than one level. First, his love for Imogen is shaken, and he accuses her of incest. When he first came to Italy, he asserted, "I fear not my ring" (I. v. 95) and added, "my ring I hold dear as my finger, 't is part of it" (24). The ring here is a token of love and of the marital bond between him and Imogen. Yet, after some time, he starts to be suspicious of Imogen and accuses her of being unfaithful to him. He states:

O vengeance, vengeance!
 Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd,
 And pray'd me oft forbearance: did it with
 A prudency so rosy, the sweet view on 't
 Might well have warm'd old Saturn. (II. Iv. 160-164)

This destruction of love and disintegration of marriage are further emphasized by the loss of the emblems of love, namely, the ring and the bracelet.

Second, being pulled up from the land of Britain, Posthumus decides to fight for the Romans. He states, "I am brought hither among th' Italian gentry, and to fight against my lady's kingdom" (V. i. 17-19). Then, being in a state of disequilibrium, he decides to fight for the British again: "I'll disrobe me of these Italian weeds, and suit myself as does a Briton peasant: so I'll fight against the part I came with" (V. i. 22-25). His loss of identity pinpoints the fact that he is like an uprooted plant drifted by the wind. Third, the head found by Imogen was mistaken for Posthumus's head. According to the Elizabethan world picture, the head, including the brain, "rules the top of man's body, and is the seat of the rational and immortal part" (Tillyard 87). Thus, losing one's head means death and decay. The Queen comments on Posthumus saying, "Return he cannot, nor continue where he is: to shift his being is to exchange one misery with another, and every day that comes comes to decay a day's work in him" (I. vi. 53-57). In other words, Posthumus, as a plant, is about to "decay". These images of decay, as used by Shakespeare in reference to his characters, reflect his deep concern with the deforestation disaster. That is to say, he concretizes the fatal effects of deforestation, namely decay and violation of balance in nature, in his characters through the use of imagery. For Shakespeare and as affirmed by Standish, an ecosystem is "a network of interdependent natural processes: livestock feed on hay and crop byproducts, they fertilize next year's planting, and the crops and firewood feed the human masters for all; knocked out of balance, ... it ends in dearth and the inferno..." (qtd. In Weixel 47-8). Moreover, Posthumus later

affirms that he "quakes in the present winter's state, and wish(es) that warmer days would come" (II. iv. 5-6). Thus, winter stands for death and decay while the warm weather, that of Summer or Spring, stands for rebirth, regeneration, and revitalization. By making this wish, Posthumus voices Shakespeare's concern with the ecosystem and his call for the preservation of forests, the sites of rebirth and regeneration.

Imogen too suffers when dug up from her homeland. She, the heiress of the throne, becomes unproductive as she loses her husband, Posthumus. Also, Imogen, "the rich crop of sea and land" (I. vii. 33-34), fails to survive at first when she escapes from the city. Like a crop eradicated from its native soil, Imogen cannot flourish. This is marked by her being weak and sick and by her mock death. When she first reaches the cave of Belarius at Milford Haven, she complains of being tired and sick: "I am very sick" (IV. ii. 5). Moreover, when Belarius and his supposed sons come back from hunting, they find her asleep but think she is dead. This death-like sleep again indicates her inability to survive in a new land. Imogen, the "sweetest, fairest lily" (IV. ii. 201), as called by Guiderius, fails to grow on a strange land. Therefore, she ironically withers and dies and is covered by flowers. Arviragus promises, "with fairest flowers whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele, I'll sweeten thy sad grave" (IV. ii. 218-220). Moreover, being uprooted from her homeland, Imogen is in a state of oscillation. Although she is the heiress of the British crown, she offers to work for a Roman, Lucius.

The King's sons too suffer when transferred to Milford Haven. They were born in the city but were kidnapped and taken to the woods by Belarius. Although they grow up and bloom in such a wild surrounding, they are never satisfied with their life in there. Guiderius complains to Belarius saying:

Haply this life is best
(If quiet life be best) sweeter to you
That have a sharper known, well corresponding
A cell of ignorance, travelling a-bed,
A prison, or a debtor that not dares
To stride a limit. (III. iii. 29-35)

Arviragus too complains:

We are beastly: subtle as the fox for prey,
Like warlike as the wolf for what we eat:

Our valour is to chase what flies: our cage
We make a quire, as doth the prison'd bird,
And sing our bondage freely. (III. iii. 40-44)

Being transplanted in another land, they don't feel comfortable as they are of noble birth/roots. Belarius asserts that "I th' cave wherein they bow their thoughts do hit the roofs of palaces" (III. iii. 83-84). This fact indirectly sheds light on the negative effects of deforestation as presented by Shakespeare through his portrayal of characters as plants that suffer when uprooted from their motherland. I believe that Shakespeare wanted to emphasize the mutual relationship between man and nature; one affects the other and is affected by it. As Glotfelty asserts, "all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (xix). Thus, the balance in the ecosystem cannot be achieved except when all the elements of the ecosphere work in harmony. As William Howarth declares, "although we cast nature and culture as opposites, in fact they constantly mingle, like water and soil in a flowing stream" (69). Thus, literature should be seen "inside the context of an ecological vision in ways which restrict neither..." (Rueckert 115).

However, Shakespeare does not only tackle the deforestation catastrophe through the images of infertility that he draws but he also stresses the importance of the forests or the woods with their fertility and regenerative quality. He is so careful in choosing the place to which the characters move as "it is a mistake to think that we can talk meaningfully about social relations in the play without talking about how the production of space bears on these relations" (Estok, "Teaching the Environment" 8). Evernden too declares, "there is no such thing as an individual, only an individual – in -context, individual as a component of place, defined by place" (103). For Shakespeare, the woods, literary forests, to which the characters move empower them and play the role of a catalyst in their transformation as they have a revitalizing power. It is only among the elements of nature that characters are reborn. As C. L. Barber asserts, "the woods are established as a region of metamorphosis, where in liquid moonlight or glimmering starlight, things can change, merge, melt into each other" (133). Scott too confirms that the forest "remains a part of man's nature rather than in opposition to it". Yet, for Shakespeare, only those who are noble by nature are offered an opportunity of rebirth and rejuvenation in the forest as nature is "an

embodiment of nobility, a trusted value against which we are invited to weigh our experiences of culture and society (Love 66).

First of all, Shakespeare pinpoints the paradoxical nature of the forest. The forest is considered by some as monstrous and uncivilized while others consider it a refuge from corruption and a place where one comes in contact with nature with its purity, innocence and purging effect. As Harrison confirms, "forests have a way of destabilizing and even reversing the terms that would place them on either side of the dichotomy" (qtd. in Weixel 55). For the church, "they were places of dark evil and lost souls but also places where sage hermits could escape the temptations of civilization, and the law saw them as harboring outlaws, but these outlaws often represented just resistance to a corrupt institution" (Weixel 55). This dual nature of the forest is obvious in *Cymbeline* as when Imogen approaches the cave of Belarius, she gets out her sword, as the forest for her is a place of danger, a place where criminals and savages live. Cloten too refers to Belarius and his supposed sons as "villain mountaineers" (IV. ii. 71). He addresses Guiderius saying, "what slave art thou?" (IV. ii. 72), "thou art a robber, a law-breaker, a villain..." (IV. ii. 74-75), and "yield, rustic mountaineer" (IV. ii. 100). Those who live in the woods/forests are considered brutal and are treated as outlaws. However, when getting in contact with the forest dwellers, Imogen knows the truth as she affirms, "these are kind creatures. Gods, what lies I have heard! Our courtiers say all's savage but at court" (IV. ii. 32-33). She realizes that "th' emperious seas breed monsters; for the dish poor tributary rivers as sweet fish" (IV. ii. 35-36). That is to say, the people in the countryside are as kind and gentle as those in the city. She also confirms this belief through her comment on Arviragus and Guiderius: "great men that had a court no bigger than this cave, that did attend themselves, and had the virtue which their own conscience seal'd them...could not out-peer these twain" (III. vii. 54-59).

Moreover, it is worth noting here that Shakespeare's choice of Milford Haven as the refuge for the characters that fled from the city bears a great significance as it pinpoints the dual role of the forest as a place of banishment and suffering and at the same time a place of rebirth and revitalization. For the British, Milford Haven is "the site either of triumphal entry or martial invasion" (Sullivan). It is the place through which Henry Tudor arrived to England and became the king and also it is a potential point through which the Spanish can invade England. Thus, it is the land of threat and of triumph. It is "also marked by the confusion of identity and allegiances" (Sullivan). This is exactly what its role in the play is;

it is the place of contraries in which characters suffer and lose their identities, yet they are regenerated later. It is the land of suffering and of hidden identities as clear in Imogen's sickness and mock death, Cloten's death, supposed death of Posthumus and the war between the Romans and the British but also a place of revival and renewal.

This regenerative power of the countryside is emphasized by Shakespeare; it is reflected on both the social and political levels. According to the Elizabethans, death is part of the life cycle. That is, people die so that others are born. This idea is so clear in the woods when Cloten, an agent of infertility, fails to survive. He complains to Belarius, "I am faint" (IV. ii. 63). Then he is killed by Guiderius and his head is buried. Cloten, as a plant cut from its roots, couldn't survive in the countryside because he is not of a noble nature. However, by burying his head, he turns into an element of fertility and rebirth. As Waage declares, "such scenes of death on the earth and burial within it could be considered as fulfilling or 'unnaturally' disrupting an organic cycle which integrates humans and non-human nature" (157). Through his death, the Queen loses her roots and thus she withers and dies. Thus, all agents of corruption and infertility die and the rebirth process starts. The death of both the Queen and Cloten ends corruption and facilitates reconciliation. As Barry asserts, "By the deaths of his [Cymbeline's] Queen and her brutish son his kingdom has been purged of a spiritual evil and an animal barbarity which had been draining it of its vitality" (159).

As for Posthumus, his supposed death and burial in the woods symbolically leads to his rejuvenation. He restores his balance as, although he was fighting for the Romans, he, together with Belarius and his supposed sons, didn't hesitate to rescue King Cymbeline when captured by the Romans. Cymbeline laments, "that the poor soldier that so richly fought, whose rags sham'd gilded arms, whose naked breast stepp'd before targes of proof, cannot be found" (V. v. 3-5). Thus, by saving the King, Posthumus restores order to the state. Moreover, he is reunited with Imogen at the end, hence restoring fecundity to the land. As Gifford asserts, "marriage is Shakespeare's dramatic motif for natural harmony, generosity, humility and justice that is taken back into the court" (220). This reunion of the young lovers revitalizes the whole society. As Barry asserts, "this phenomenon in the late comedies parallels the principles lying behind fertility rituals, in which mummers distribute the nature spirit to the whole community..." (146).

As for Imogen, she is rejuvenated in the woods through her death-like sleep and burial. As Viswanathan declares, "the similitude of death for sleep and sleep for death...is one of the topoi which Shakespeare returns to and dramatically exploits time and again, and it is worthwhile considering to what fine uses he puts this received idea" (49). In this case, the death-like sleep of Imogen is used by Shakespeare as a sign of rebirth. When buried, Imogen is covered by flowers which can stand for the power of nature to enliven the spirit and reinvigorate/revitalize the characters. Arviragus decides, "I'll sweeten thy sad grave: thou shalt not lack the flower that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor the azur'd harebell, like thy veins..." (IV. ii. 220-222). It is worth mentioning here that the flowers used in the woods to cover Imogen's body and the supposed head of Posthumus have a function that is contrary to that of those used by the Queen in the city. Whereas in the city the Queen uses the flowers for malignant purposes to make poison to kill Imogen, in the woods they are emblems of rebirth and fertility. This is intended by Shakespeare to show that the power of rebirth lies in nature. In fact, it is the forest that embodies the forces of rebirth and regeneration. Again this fact voices Shakespeare's belief in the importance of preserving the forests and maintaining the woodlands. Moreover, the fact that Imogen is reunited with Posthumus brings fecundity to the land as clear through the image used by Posthumus: "Hang there like fruit, my soul, till the tree die" (V. v. 263-264). Posthumus, the tree, will bear fruit through his reunion with Imogen. As Scott rightfully states, this arboreal image "literalizes the relationship between the human and the forest." He adds that "the woods become meaningful only when they come into contact with human design". That is to say, the humans and the forest (nature) are inter-dependent. Ecocritics, such as Larsen, also assert that "we are never confronted with nature but with the changeable boundary between nature and culture or between the non-human and the human."

Furthermore, although Cymbeline's two sons were discontented with living in the woods, as clarified before, being at one with nature made their noble origin come out. This fact is clear in the hospitality and kindness with which they treat Imogen. Arviragus tells Imogen, "most welcome! Be sprightly, for you fall 'mongst friends" (III. vii. 46-47). Guiderius too was willing to stay by Imogen when sick. Even Guiderius's act of killing Cloten is a mark of dignity and honour and not of savagery. I believe Shakespeare presented Cymbeline's sons in this way to subvert the image of vulgarity attached to nature and to stress the fact that

only those of noble nature can survive in the forest. Belarius brings this out in his words:

't is wonder that an invisible instinct should frame them to
Royalty unlearn'd, honour untaught, civility not seen from other, valour
That wildly grows in them, but yields a crop as if it had been sow'd. (IV. ii.
176-181)

In this part, the noble nature of the characters is compared to a seed that is "sowed" and thus "yields a crop". The plant imagery here again refers to the generative capacity of the youth but only those of noble origin. It also metaphorically exposes Shakespeare's concern with husbandry and the preservation of forests and woodlands as they stand for nobility and abundance. Moreover, the positive effect of the woods on Cymbeline's sons is crystal clear when they go to the battlefield. They " 'gan to look the way that they did and to grin like lions upon the pikes o' th' hunters" (V. iii. 37-39). This valour that they have shown in the battlefield belongs only to noblemen. Thus, it is obvious that "Wales is both where those identities have been shrouded and admittedly where they will be most spectacularly enacted, in the battle against the Romans" (Sullivan). Moreover, Shakespeare makes use of arboreal imagery once more to show how Cymbeline's sons suffer at first and how their return to the court represents fertility and reclamation of peace. The message found on Posthumus bosom after he wakes up from sleep reads as follows: "and when from a stately cedar shall be lopp'd branches, which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow, then shall Posthumus end his miseries, Britain be fortunate, and flourish in peace and plenty" (V. v. 438-443). As the soothsayer clarifies, "the lofty cedar, royal Cymbeline, personates thee: and thy lopp'd branches point thy two sons forth" (V. v. 454-456). These branches or sons were "dead many years" for being hidden in the woods, yet they are reborn and rejuvenated through living in the woods as evident in "shall after revive" and they "freshly grow". This rebirth of Cymbeline's sons and their reunion with their father has great repercussions on the British land. In fact, it will bring about copiousness on more than one level: Posthumus and Imogen will get together (fertility of marriage) and Britain and Rome will be reconciled and thus order will be restored to the kingdom as "the fingers of the powers above do tune the harmony of this peace" (V. v. 466-467).

To conclude, it is obvious through this ecocritical reading of *Cymbeline* that William Shakespeare was so much concerned with the deforestation crisis. Yet, he addresses this problem in a very special way. The devastating effects of deforestation are manifested in Shakespeare's presentation of desolation in the city. In fact, he uses numerous images of fertility and infertility in which he compares his characters to plants to reflect the suffering of both nature and human beings due to this wilderness, sterility and barrenness. By doing that, Shakespeare aims at sending/ communicating/ transmitting a clear message that is: man and nature are inter-connected; they both affect and are affected by each other. Thus, to restore balance to the ecosystem, both should be kept in harmony. Moreover, Shakespeare not only highlights the barrenness in the city but also accentuates the regenerative power of forests and woods. They are presented in the play as sites of rebirth, renewal, and reconciliation. This is done through Shakespeare's use of images of fertility especially arboreal imagery. Shakespeare's aim in doing that might be to lay stress on the necessity of preserving the forests and maintaining the woods. However, despite the efforts of William Shakespeare, other writers, and even Kings and Queens to save the forests, the problem persisted. In 1611, King James ordered Sir Robert Stewart and Richard Vaus to plant any stumps of trees or fallen ones in his forests but that didn't put an end/ eradicate the deforestation problem. The ecosystem continued to suffer and in 1613-19, there was a "demographic crises" due to "the disturbed 'ecological equilibrium caused by transformation of arable land into pasture through enclosure'" (Waage 143). However, despite the fact that Shakespeare and others were not able to solve this problem, Shakespeare had shown his eco-consciousness through addressing this deforestation crisis in his play, *Cymbeline*.

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