

## Abstract

*Anti-Conquest and As You Like It*, written by Leah S. Marcus, is an article that focuses on the effects that literature, Shakespeare in particular, has on colonization. Marcus uses paratextual evidence from the play *As You Like It* to support her thesis that Shakespeare is a mode to shape and encourage provincialization. She draws attention to a few themes within the play that support colonialist attitudes such as the internal comfort of the “natives” in the Forest of Arden, the discomfort they feel towards foreigners and foreign ideas, the traditional views and values the mainlanders have that are unforgiving to cultures other than their own, which include the demeaning of animals, femininity, and foreigners altogether.

This article was written for Shakespearean scholars or those who are well versed in the play *As You Like It*, especially those who have failed to see colonialist themes within. Leah S. Marcus critiques the play and uses evidence from other editors to support her argument that Shakespearean work “is not so much innocently pre-colonial as it is deliberately meditative on the colonial experience” (Marcus 173). She divides her article into three sections to support her point.

Marcus focuses heavily on the character Jaques as a representation of colonialism. She gives an in-depth analysis of his character and the other characters’ responses to him, in efforts to support that mainlanders are not so accepting of non-traditional or foreign ideas. In the first part of her article, Marcus writes, “The bias of the play’s central characters against the foreign and the well-traveled, links it with early modern English fears of foreign contamination, even though Jaques’s status as an outsider is grounded more in his own habits of mind than in any predefined racial or confessional difference. And editorial treatment of the play over time suggests that the fears have not entirely subsided, at least not in relation to Shakespeare and the sacred space of Arden” (Marcus 173). Marcus gives many examples of the characters often writing Jaques off as unimportant or irrelevant due to his differences. She also gives examples of how Jaques responds to his rejection. One example she uses is, “Jaques’s overdetermined identification with the victimized deer allows him to claim for himself the status of universal victim and gives him a pretext for satirizing every element of the miserable world that would tolerate such exploitation” (Marcus 179).

In the second section the article, Marcus writes an in depth perception of the word, “ducdame,” or rather the many interpretations that the word has. She sites other editors and their definitions of the word and emphasizes that different editors of different demographics have different interpretations, ultimately harboring the difference between a positive or negative connotation of the word. Marcus writes, “Here I will join the circle of fools and suggest—or perhaps a more appropriate word would be ‘perform’—yet another interpretation of ‘Ducdame,’ not in the hopes of forever settling uncertainty of meaning, but with an eye towards linking the word with Arden’s world of animals and also demonstrating an odd blind spot in received interpretations of the phrase” (Marcus 185). This section may be the least supportive or relevant to her original thesis.

In the third part of the article, Marcus draws attention to gender and gender roles in the play. She draws attention to the play in areas that embody the idea that being human is implicitly associated with maleness and masculinity. She focuses on the character Rosalind, who she uses as a figure of the anti-conquest.

By elaborating on characters such as Jaques and Rosalind, elaborating on the editors of the play over generations, Leah S. Marcus writes on how Shakespeare embodies colonialism.