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Shakespeare's As You like It and James Cameron's Avatar: Reharmonizing Society with Nature

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SHAKESPEARE'S *AS YOU LIKE IT* AND JAMES CAMERON'S *AVATAR*:

REHARMONIZING SOCIETY WITH NATURE

By

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Bachelor of Arts – English Literature
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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Abstract:

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a comedy whose main character, Rosalind, is forced out of her home among the upper caste of society through no fault of her own, but because of an issue with her father. She moves into the pastoral unknown disguised as a man to avoid the issues that come traveling as a woman, outside the protection of the home. Along the way, she finds pleasure with the power she holds as a man. She is heard when she speaks as a man and she is given access to knowledge she would not be given as a woman. James Cameron's *Avatar* centers on Jake Sully. Jake is thrust into a situation beyond his own familiarity due to events outside his control, involving a family member, like Rosalind. Jake, like Rosalind, lacks a feeling of power due to his recent paralysis. Like Rosalind, Sully feels a sense of power within his disguise and a sense of wonder at the spiritually connected, arguably pastoral world he is introduced to. Rosalind decidedly enjoys and often mentally fully becomes her male counterpart, Ganymede. Sully regains his sense of ability and purpose within his avatar and ultimately sheds his human body and takes on his avatar as a permanent identity. What do the similarities between these texts say about what is retained across genres? How does it or should it affect a contemporary discourse on Shakespeare? A further exploration into each story's strengths, flaws, likenesses, and differences with assistance from various peer-reviewed sources will strive to answer this question. A direct compare and contrast of *As You Like It* and *Avatar* will be the main focus. Theories of cross dressing, androgyny, ecofeminism, and ecocriticism will be drawn upon to form conclusions about the relevance of such an investigation.

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Section 1: Introduction

It is important to recognize what we retain when we traverse genres. *As You Like It* is a perfect example of a Shakespearean comedy. *Avatar* is a perfect example of an alien film and a box office hit. Early modern English literature and Shakespeare may seem to offer a limited number of ways to be interpreted that are slowly dwindling. However, the opposite is true. Contemporary references to Shakespeare in popular socio-cultural texts are common. So, while it may be beneficial to be familiar with his works in a traditional sense to understand these references, it is also valuable to contemplate why these references are being made and how Shakespeare may influence even spaces and texts where explicit links are not made. We witness this intertextuality directly in contemporary science fiction. From its invention, science fiction has been and will always be about the future of human innovation. This can often come at the cost of nonhuman others. Shakespeare writes of the pastoral during a period of intellectual change in which nonhuman others were discursively transitioning as separate from and lesser than humans. Environmental discourse on climate change is rooted in this dichotomy between a human subject and an external environment. Understanding similar elements and themes that can cross genres will help us to innovate in meaningful ways. Looking at a list of Shakespeare's major plays, it becomes obvious that he often used similar themes to create new works and thus, new ideas. Crossdressing can be found in *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cymbeline*, yet each story is different. For example, it would be difficult to make an ecocritical argument about *Twelfth Night* or *Cymbeline*. In contrast, *Cymbeline* is filled with more violence and group action than the identity focus of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. Like aliens, robots and other fantastical technology in science fiction, Shakespeare used recurring elements to create an array of work that has been studied and celebrated for over four hundred years. Recognizing patterns

and elements of Shakespeare in science fiction and across all genres will assist in palliating the sense that Shakespeare is becoming increasingly separate from ideal modern literature and therefore from what it is to be human in the twenty-first century. This thesis will directly compare and contrast Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and James Cameron's *Avatar*. Cross dressing and androgyny, ecocritical theory, and ecofeminist theory will be drawn upon to form conclusions about the identity of human beings living *with* nature instead of against or above it. I argue that both texts exhibit nature as agential, present the costs of human isolation from nature, and how reconnecting with nature can enhance the individual and reharmonize society with the environment.

As You Like It is a comedy by William Shakespeare written sometime between 1598 and 1600. Rosalind is the main character and daughter of Duke Senior, who has been usurped and banished from court by his brother, Frederick. Rosalind is also best friends with her cousin Celia, Duke Frederick's daughter. For this reason, Rosalind is not initially banished with her father. Eventually, however, Duke Frederick fears that sympathy for Rosalind will initiate disruption in his court, and she is banished as well. Celia refuses to be without Rosalind and the two of them escape to the Forest of Arden together with Celia's fool, Touchstone. Before they set out, Rosalind and Celia decide to disguise themselves as peasants to blend in as country women. Rosalind also decides that she will be dressed as a man because it would be more dangerous for two women traveling alone. Rosalind commits both performatively and psychologically to her role as a man. In Act 2 scene 4, Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone are weary from their travels and Rosalind confesses that she feels like crying, but she won't because she is a man (2.4.3-6). She also finds that she can use her male disguise, Ganymede, as tool for more than just warding off ill-meaning people. In Act 3 scene 2, right before she meets Orlando as Ganymede, she says, "I

will speak to him like a saucy lackey and under that habit play the knave with him” (3.2.249-250). A “lackey” is defined specifically as a manservant. Rosalind uses Ganymede to break down sexual barriers between herself and Orlando, who has been running around Arden searching for Rosalind and claiming he loves her even though he does not know her. Rosalind, as Ganymede intervenes and, pretending to be Ganymede pretending to be Rosalind, manipulates Orlando into thinking about women as human, subverting his Petrarchan notions of them as angelic. Eventually, Orlando falls in love with Rosalind for her character and not for the idea of her that he had built in his mind. There are several sub-plots in *As You Like It*, but most importantly for Rosalind, being Ganymede helps her to discover her own identity and what she wants. She is someone with the strength and intelligence to control the outcome of her life. Her father does not choose for her, her uncle does not choose for her, and Orlando does not choose for her. As Ganymede, she gathers the information she needs and enters the spaces she needs to make her own decisions.

Like Rosalind, Jake Sully, the main character in *Avatar* finds his true identity by changing his outward appearance. Director James Cameron’s 2009 film *Avatar* is set in the year 2154 when all of Earth’s natural resources have been used up and major corporations voyage into space in search of more. Jake Sully is a former marine who lost the use of his legs in the line of duty on Earth. His twin brother, Tommy, was a scientist and part of the avatar program on a distant moon called Pandora. Pandora is full of organic life including plants, animals, and humanoids called Na’vi. It also has a substance called “unobtainium” which humans have been mining for years and sending back to Earth for exorbitant profits. Jake’s twin brother dies before he is supposed to leave Earth for Pandora and the corporation that Tommy worked for asks Jake to take his place. The corporation, RDA (Resources Development Administration), has spent

millions of dollars developing an organic avatar similar to the Na'vi that is driven by a human consciousness and can walk freely on Pandora. Each avatar links to a specific person and since Jake's and Tommy's genomes are identical, they theorize that Jake can take Tommy's place. Since Jake is not a scientist, RDA directs Jake to utilize his avatar for reconnaissance. They are looking for faster and easier ways to mine unobtainium. In exchange for his work, RDA has promised to give Jake a surgery that will restore the use of his legs. Jake agrees to go to Pandora and learn how to use his avatar. On his first mission, Jake is nearly consumed by the forest. He is rescued by Neytiri, a Na'vi woman and his motivations quickly begin to shift. Like Rosalind, Jake discovers much more about himself than he expected when he inhabits his avatar. The similarities between these two texts written hundreds of years apart do not end there though.

Central to both *As You Like It* and *Avatar* is the concept of nature. Namely, both invoke the pastoral or idealization of living *with* nature. The people of the Forest of Arden rely on it for sustenance and substance, effectively communicating with the forest. The Na'vi of *Avatar* do the same in even more direct ways by making physical neural connections with animals and plant life that they both live *with* and are sustained by. Ecocriticism theory has often been used to analyze the pastoral in Shakespeare's work as a kind of reunification of human culture and nature. In *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature*, author Todd A. Borlik defines nature "as an inter-locking system of correspondences and a holistic, quasi-sentient entity with a colossal authority over all organic life, including the lives of human beings" (Borlik 205). This is the definition I will use whenever I refer to "nature" in this thesis. Borlik's definition captures the historical understanding of the environment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For the early moderns, Nature was an active force, often personified, who directly influenced human beings in a number of ways. When characters talk of becoming animals, being animalistic or

when they compare humans to animals, there is truth in their exaggeration. And when characters undergo conversions of identity, the same idea applies.

As You Like It and *Avatar* both begin with main characters who have had power and control taken away from them, and both figures regain a sense of self through communion with Nature. Rosalind and Jake feel a sense of power within their alternate identities and of wonder at the spiritually connected, pastoral world they are introduced to. Rosalind decidedly enjoys and often mentally fully becomes her male counterpart, Ganymede. After a long time of wandering Arden without food or rest her party begins to complain, but she says, “I could find in my heart to disgrace my man’s apparel and to cry like a woman; but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat. Therefore, courage, good Aliena!” (2.4.3-6). She admits that she feels capable of tears, but being Ganymede gives her encouragement in this moment. She controls her identity even if she does not control her situation in this moment. It is also interesting to note that Celia changed her name to Aliena before they left for Arden, indicating that, by banishing her closest friend and cousin, Celia’s father has alienated her. Forker says, “*As You Like It*, especially in the first act, acknowledges the fallen condition of the world, and even the forest, however idyllically or invitingly presented, is not wholly free from selfishness, inconvenience, or danger” (Forker 107). Human separation from nature hurts both. Celia’s alias is also a reminder that people are becoming isolated from nature.

Jake regains his sense of ability and purpose within his avatar, and he ultimately sheds his human body and takes on his avatar as a permanent identity. During this process, he becomes more and more *with* nature, sometimes making physical neural connections which are binding for life. Immediately after one of these instances, he says “—I was born to do this” (01:13:29). In

this moment, Jake is neurally connected with an animal and is flying over and through the forest of Pandora. This thesis argues that Rosalind and Jake leave behind their human-made worlds where they were not in control of their bodies or their lives and find their strengths in nature. It is important to note that the gender of these two characters is telling regarding who it is that can enact change and justice. Rosalind is a woman whose ideas would benefit all, but they can only be heard once she is seen as a man. She is then able to orchestrate her life and others for the better. Jake is part of the problem to begin with, and then, after causing much damage, he is also the savior. Enlightened reason and the human-made world clash against the pastoral and a becoming *with* nature in these two dramas. Both encourage a becoming *with* nature and a turn away from the isolation of hierarchical thinking to more communal thinking which includes nature as a part of that community.

I do not believe that *Avatar* is *As You Like It* with a sci-fi spin. I do believe that by examining links between these two texts that were written so far apart in time and genre, that we can expand our ideas about interconnectivity and even our environment. Gabriel Egan, author of *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory*, shares the idea with other Shakespearean critics that “we bring to the past so much baggage that objectivity is impossible, and the most honest approach we can take is to be entirely explicit about this and to declare that our interpretations are always utterly shaped by our present-day concerns” (Egan 20). One of the most pressing concerns of the present-day regards the environment. Science fiction can easily be associated with the enlightened accomplishments of human beings because of the technological advances that it imagines for us. Human advancement, however, often comes at the cost of nature and the environment. By examining what we retain when we move among genres, we can contribute to a discourse which encourages a becoming and working *with* nature as part of advancement rather

than to the detriment of it. Ecocriticism did not exist when William Shakespeare wrote *As You Like It* and there is no way to prove how he intended us to interpret his plays. However, there are signs of a dichotomy between humans and nature within *As You Like It* in addition to the physical movement from the court to the pastoral.

Ecofeminist theory is equally important to look at when analyzing these texts because of the inherent consequences of the patriarchal domination which leads to human disconnection from nature. In *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory* Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe say, “Drawing on the way environmentalists called attention to the increasingly visible negative consequences of industrialism and development, and stemming from how feminists located destructive practices of multiple dominant systems (patriarchal and colonial endeavor, for instance), ecofeminist practitioners sought to interrogate their associations” (Laroche and Munroe 3). Humans are disconnected from nature because of patriarchal ideology and Rosalind is driven from the patriarchal court to the pastoral because her presence disrupts the image of power that her uncle is trying to create. The exigence of Jake’s journey to Pandora is the hegemonic destruction of Earth’s environment and natural resources. An ecofeminist lens attempts to always keep in mind the root cause of environmental destruction and the separation of humans from nature, which is the intrinsic belief started by patriarchal enlightenment that human beings are dominant over everything else. This dichotomy will be revisited multiple times in this thesis.

Section 2: Literature Review: Shakespeare & Sci-Fi

Critical writing about Shakespeare is vast. However, Shakespeare in relation to science fiction (sci-fi) is comparatively sparse. Probably the most discussed text linking Shakespeare and sci-fi is *The Tempest* because of the mystical world in which it is set. It is said to be the inspiration for Cyril Hume's 1956 sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet*. According to Simone Caroti's article "Science Fiction, *Forbidden Planet*, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," the film parallels the plot of the play and explores Freudian notions of the 'id' (Caroti 2). This is the earliest known influence of Shakespeare on sci-fi. However, this was not enough for the work to be considered proto sci-fi by sci-fi scholars such as the editors of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*.

In 2004, Scott Maisano wrote his dissertation on Shakespeare's Science Fictions. He discovered that at that time, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (ESF)* did not include Shakespeare "among the 'pre-19th-century works' of 'PROTO SCIENCE FICTION'" (Maisano 9). The encyclopedia mentions *The Tempest* and *Forbidden Planet*, but refutes Shakespeare as proto sci-fi. On the other hand, the *ESF* recognizes Sir Frances Bacon, Johannes Kepler, Galileo, John Milton, Dante, Thomas More, and Homer among the proto sci-fi writers (Maisano 9). Confronting this elision of Shakespearean interest in the scientific, Maisano argues that "*The Tempest*, [as well as] *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are in fact forward-looking speculations on a 'future history,' a world that hasn't yet been chronicled but nonetheless 'will have been' as the result of some untimely scientific discoveries" (Maisano 7). As this thesis suggests, we should add *As You Like It* to Maisano's list. The *ESF* was updated as of 2011, but no changes were made to include Shakespeare as a proto sci-fi writer or influencer. The work being done in

this thesis/chapter is about discovering what is retained across genres and how we can see Shakespeare's influence in many ways.

This will not be the first time that a Shakespeare text has been compared to a sci-fi film or the first time it has been compared to a blockbuster hit. Eric S. Mallin's article "Jewish Invader and the soul of the state: *The Merchant of Venice* and science fiction movies" compares the Shakespeare play to Roland Emmerich's 1996 blockbuster film *Independence Day*. The film stars Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum. Mallin critiques the film for the way that it "anatomize[s] the ideology of representing the marginal figure—the alien—as a force for unification and defense of the state which marshals its powers against that figure" (Mallin 145). Here Mallin is referring to the identities of Smith and Goldblum in the film as a Black and Jewish man as the original "others" of society. Mallin makes parallels in Shakespeare's work, "If the contemporary Hollywood sci-fi film can insinuate a justification for the destruction of the racialized other in the monstrous form of an alien, certainly *The Merchant of Venice* could do so with its insistently captious, asocial Jew" (Mallin 145). The theme of the racialized other is one that also cannot be missed in *Avatar* as a corporate group headed by white men attempts to colonize and then simply wipe out an indigenous population. Because *As You Like It* does not include this specific theme, I will not spend a lot of time examining it. However, it is important to acknowledge. Mallin also critiques Paul Verhoeven's 1997 *Starship Troopers* using the same framework. Mallin is not making direct comparisons to how *Merchant* fits into the sci-fi genre. He is pointing out what is retained even when genres are swapped. This is similar to what I will be doing in the analysis portion of this thesis, including how humans have separated from nature and how that act is inherently patriarchal which leads to issues of identity for all genders.

Whether or not Shakespeare should be considered a proto sci-fi author is not the purpose of this work. It is to consider what there is to say about Shakespeare and sci-fi to trace the different continuities between two different genres. A precedent for this work has been set and I hope to add to the building of a foundation which other scholars can be exposed to and contribute to. Mallin says that what is similar about Shakespeare's plays and the sci-fi films are that they both allow the audience to "misrecognize" themselves, therefore bolstering racist dynamics which necessitates dehumanization. "By definition nothing could be less human than an alien. Or, Shakespeare shows us, more human either" (Mallin 146). I will be identifying the Shakespearean, i.e. the human elements that lie within the sci-fi film of *Avatar*. As stated in a 2007 episode of *Dr. Who*, Shakespeare is "the most human human there's ever been" (6:59). This is something that is often retained when we swap genres. The effect of anthropocentrism is that we often imagine alien and nonhuman others within science fiction to have human characteristics and desires such as greed, hate, love, etc. In the quoted *Dr. Who* episode, another character asked how Shakespeare always knew what to say. It is his understanding of human nature and the factors that affect it that prompted the "most human human" response.

Section 3: Literature Review: *Avatar* & James Cameron

It is important to examine what was said about Shakespeare and sci-fi in scholarship to establish any precedent that has already been set. And because this thesis is focusing in on two texts, it is also important to establish what has been said about the film *Avatar*. Almost every piece of text written about *Avatar* begins by acknowledging comparisons that were immediately made to Kevin Costner's 1990 film *Dances with Wolves* and Disney's 1995 film *Pocahontas*. It is true that *Avatar* features a white man who comes to be accepted as a member of an indigenous group. More will be said about the problematic factors of white male privilege traversing alternative cultures in a later section. For now, focus will be given to academic works written about *Avatar* after the initial frenzy upon its release in 2009.

Silvia Martinez Falquina's article, "The Pandora Effect: James Cameron's *Avatar* and a Trauma Studies Perspective," acknowledges the "controverted" responses to *Avatar* and recognizes that the plot is simplistic and problematic. She provides examples of sources both in favor of and disinclined to the film and resolves that, "*Avatar* may be functioning like a sort of Melvillean white whale, a blank surface on which each viewer inscribes his or her own interpretation, and which acts like a mirror that reflects back on individuals, telling us something about ourselves in what we each see in the movie" (Falquina 118). This statement could be said of many of Shakespeare's works, including *As You Like It*. The title itself and Rosalind's epilogue entreaty to take "as much of this play as please you" (Epilogue.9-10) indicate that Shakespeare knew that the complicated main plot and the numerous sub-plots would appeal to everyone differently and that it was his intention not to project any single message to his audience with this play. Falquina focuses on "the Pandora effect" which was coined after reports were made of immediate feelings of depression after viewing the film and realizing that Pandora

was not real. Falquina posits that the true unexpressed pain that is felt by the patrons and articulated in the film is “the fundamental fear of human separation and alienation from nature” (Falquina 119). She studies Jake’s trauma as a war veteran and as a separated twin to explore her theory. *Avatar* is not the first of Cameron’s films to elicit deeper investigations than the average action film provokes.

Ten years prior to the premier of *Avatar*, James Kendrick’s article, “Marxist Overtones in Three Films by James Cameron” analyzed an underlying critique of capitalism in three of Cameron’s films: *The Abyss*, *Aliens*, and *Titanic*. Kendrick notes that the promise of action is what fills the theatre seats for these films, but that complex layering of primary features in all three films show that Cameron has a “tendency to create films that are more structurally and thematically complicated than they appear when first examined” (Kendrick 39). Like *Avatar*, all three of the films in Kendrick’s article are driven by corporate greed that results in disaster for every class of person involved. Like these three films, *Avatar* utilizes the spectacle of film to critique capitalism and provide a popular talking point which leads to important discourse. There may not be a way to link the rhetoric of these films directly to social change, but popular discourse is important. Popular opinion can give rise to change as diverse as political representation to who represents a brand of fast-cooking rice.

Joni Adamson’s 2012 article “Indigenous Literatures, Multinaturalism, and *Avatar*: The Emergence of Indigenous Cosmopolitics” discusses how the spectacle of the film brings attention to “the ways that science can be used to camouflage slow violence, or to extend its gaze to temporal horizons that reveal the world to be not ‘natural’ but ‘multinatural’” (Adamson 146). In her article, Adamson also uses the spectacle of the film to bring attention to more important issues. She discusses the film very little and instead uses the reaction of Evo Morales, the

Aymara President of Bolivia's reaction to *Avatar* as a hook to get readers invested. Adamson sheds light on several ecological injustices against indigenous people spanning more than two decades of court battles against oil companies for spills and over-drilling. Essentially, Adamson credits *Avatar* for being the rhetorical spectacle that reignited a conversation about indigenous cosmopolitics. This is not the only time Adamson uses the film as spectacle to shed light on important research.

In 2014, Adamson contributed a chapter to an edited collection, *Material Ecocriticism* called, "Source of Life: *Avatar*, Amazonia, and an Ecology of Selves." Adamson aims to explore claims by the editors of that same collection that, "in some cases, anthropomorphism can work as a 'dis-anthropocentric strategy,' revealing similarities and symmetries between humans and non-humans" (Adamson 253). In line with this, Adamson also discusses scientific observations of the possibilities of non-human others as selves, operating biographical and political lives (255). Adamson compares this real-life scientific study to that of the character of Dr. Augustine in *Avatar*, whose role is designated "xenobotanist" in the film. She uses *Avatar* to illustrate in part the rhetorical power of the interconnected selves of the people, animals, and plants of Pandora. Adamson cites real laws passed in Ecuador and Bolivia that indicate that nature, specifically "Mother Earth" in Ecuador, has agency and therefore rights. By linking the spectacle of *Avatar* to scientific study, Adamson highlights the ways that Pandora is real here on Earth, once again utilizing the film to the advantage of important scientific, ecological, and social work.

Section 4: The Pastoral Analysis

The plants and animals in *Avatar* physically connect to communicate, effectively giving them agency. Adamson's *Material Ecocriticism* chapter discusses this as well. Material Ecocriticism, as a theoretical approach, is an elaboration of ecocriticism which "explores the agentic properties of material forms, whether living or not, whether organic, 'natural' or not" (Iovino and Opperman 7). Everything in *Avatar* from the dirt to the plants and animals is very much alive and made of organic material. It is all interconnected to the goddess of Pandora called Eywa, but each thing also has its own agency. Predators hunt and the Na'vi people must interpret what Eywa is trying to communicate to them. Upon entering the jungle of Pandora for the first time in their avatar bodies, Norm, Dr. Augustine's assistant asks how the Na'vi will know that they are there. Dr. Augustine has been on Pandora for years at this point and replies that they are probably watching right at that moment (00:26:21). The film does not indicate that there are any Na'vi hiding in the trees observing the avatars. The visual presented instead is of Dr. Augustine and Norm observing the interconnected roots of the trees. Dr. Augustine explains this as "signal transduction" (00:26:49). This indicates that they are not being watched specifically by the Na'vi, but by the forest itself which is capable of making its own agential observations. Not being a scientist, Dr. Augustine's and Norm's observations seem to be of no interest to Jake who starts to explore. He has to be introduced to the jungle on his own. Jake's next actions will be analyzed through an ecofeminist lens.

Ecocritical theory acknowledges that humans generally see themselves as superior to nature because of their ability to destroy it for material gains. Ecofeminist theory adjusts this view to incorporate the white male patriarchy that posits men as human and therefore dominant over nature, women as other and often associated with nature (mother nature) and therefore

subjected to male dominance as a non-human other of nature. Jake wanders off and discovers plants that react when touched by inverting into the ground, in short, yielding to him (00:27:48). He is amused by this. He is then discovered by an enormous hammer-headed rhinoceros-like creature (titanothera). Dr. Augustine warns him not to shoot it because its hide is too thick and that would just “piss him off” (00:28:03). After a posturing show-down, the titanothera backs off and thinking he has successfully intimidated the creature, Jake says, “Yeah, that’s what I’m talking about, bitch” (00:28:52). By utilizing this derogatory term in his moment of perceived triumph, this indicates that Jake is in the patriarchal mindset that seats him above the natural world and reaffirms the link that women are considered non-human other in hand with that world. The opening scene of *As You Like It* affirms a similar ecofeminist mindset as Orlando complains about being treated like an animal or a nonhuman other which is associated with women’s status.

In act 1, scene 1 of *As You Like It*, Orlando is complaining to Adam that his brother, Oliver, is depriving him of a courtly education and compares his treatment to that of animals.

For my part, he keeps me rustically at home—or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept; for call you that ‘keeping’ for a gentleman of my birth that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better, for besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage, and to that end riders dearly hired; but I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth, for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I. Besides this nothing that he so plentifully gives me, the

something that nature gave me his countenance seems to take from
me. (1.1.1-13)

Orlando's idea about himself is heteronormative and he is therefore upset that he is currently living what he considers a simple life where animals are cared for an educated more than himself. He says that keeping him hidden away is the same as stalling an ox. Oxen are immensely strong animals that would be utilized every day for work or breeding. Essentially, Orlando believes that he should be doing metaphorical heavy lifting daily at court. He is outraged when he considers how much his brother spends on trainers and food for his horses. Animals are treated better than him in his opinion, but he considers the work to be done at court also animalistic as he states that his brother Oliver was charged to "breed" him well (1.1.3) when he refers to courtly education. In his 2006 *Green Shakespeare*, Gabriel Egan argues that, for Shakespeare's contemporaries, beastilisation of humanity is always possible (Egan 95). Therefore, he says, Orlando may fear in this moment actually becoming an animal. Later on, he will become part of the trees, also known as nonhuman others, as he says, "their barks my thoughts" (3.2.6). It is "the quotidian of love" (3.2.303) that assuages Orlando's fear of enjoining with non-human others or becoming *with* nature. He needs to care about something or someone first in order to become open to traversing the human/nature dichotomy. Until then, he is the example of the patriarchal ideology.

From an ecofeminist standpoint, Orlando feels that his place is threatened within the social order of male domination over all things because he equates his treatment to that of an animal. Orlando says that the only growth he gets is from the food he survives on each day and therefore he owes as much to his brother as the animals (dung beetles) that eat and build their homes from the excrement that his brother's animals, likely his horses, provide. Orlando then

explicitly mentions nature, which he sees as having given him the place of a son of a wealthy gentleman (1.1.11). To Orlando, this means he is automatically owed more than his brother's horses, whom are also of nature. This first scene confirms that, for Orlando, there is a hierarchy of (courtly) man over all else, including nature. It can be concluded that Orlando will feel that his place in the hierarchy is also over women, because they are treated as nonhuman. This is confirmed when Rosalind and Celia discuss how they are treated like meat that will be sent to market for men to buy (1.2.69-71). What is more important here, is that Shakespeare immediately establishes that humans, in this case Orlando, sees himself as both dominant over and more important than the natural world and non-human others. This is not the case for those living within the pastoral Forest of Arden and does not remain the case for Jake.

Unlike Orlando, Jake in the first scene of *Avatar* recognizes himself as “another dumb grunt going someplace he’s gonna regret” (00:02:09). Cameron immediately establishes that Jake is aware that he is being used for capitalistic gains. He knows that in the hierarchy of his reality, he does not hold a dominant position. As a former marine, Jake is used to fulfilling the role of a cog in a military machine, not unlike an ox, which Orlando feels it would be better to be than himself. This creates an opening for Jake to traverse the dichotomy of the human over nature ideology later. One difference that is quickly established in *Avatar* is that it is not humans that are dominant over everything, but capitalism. Jake is told that his twin brother represented a significant investment and that because they share the same genome that Jake could take his place (00:02:51). Jake is not able to contribute to the scientific study of Pandora, but his body represents capital, and that is all that matters to the corporation. To emphasize this, the scene depicts the cremation of Jake's twin as the corporate representative says, “It’ll be a fresh start”

(00:03:02). This is indicating that Jake can escape the pain and trauma of his life on earth, but the corporation will get a fresh start with Jake's body too.

To establish the ecocritical theory of the ideology of human dominance over the natural world in *Avatar*, we need only wait for Jake to descend from the corporate spaceship onto the military-like base called "Hell's Gate" (00:03:52). The name of the base, the image of a strip-mining site, and the image of the concrete base all surrounded by jungle forest indicates that this landscape is in the process of being hegemonized by mankind. The corporation hires former military soldiers to do this work. To stress the danger of colonizing Pandora, Colonel Quaritch, the head of security says in his speech to the incoming group that "If there is a hell, you might want to go there for some R&R after a tour on Pandora" (00:06:51). On the surface, this statement makes the point that Pandora is a dangerous place and that they all need to take their jobs seriously. From a broader perspective, it seems logical that, if this place is more dangerous to human beings than Hell, then they shouldn't be there. But human superiority over the natural world is so absolute to these people that they are there regardless of the risk of loss of individual life. It is also important to note that this is a masculine ideology.

Jake narrates throughout the film and, referencing his paraplegic body as he moves onto the base he says, "I told myself I could pass any test a man could pass" (00:05:23). This statement is what brings him into the realm of Orlando as a man seeking to establish his status as a man and therefore as the dominant species. To emphasize the need for an ecofeminist perspective, there are only two women working on the side of the human corporation. They both betray the corporation in favor of the Na'vi and they are both killed in their efforts. Trudy is a pilot who escorts the scientists in and out of the jungle to do their research. She is not leading mining expeditions or missions. Her work is reserved to assist the "softer" jobs being done on

Pandora. At the climax of the film when everyone begins to prepare to fight each other, Trudy sees injustice and helps Jake, Dr. Augustine, and the Na'vi. As a woman, she can feel empathy for others because she is an other. However, she is not permitted to traverse from her human world where she is othered to defend the world of another other, the Na'vi, without consequences. Trudy and Dr. Augustine are only allowed to sacrifice themselves for the greater good as literally and symbolically women so often do.

Dr. Grace Augustine was always for communicating and working with the Na'vi. She has spent years with them and when her human body is fatally wounded, the Na'vi attempt to permanently transfer her into her avatar Na'vi body. Mo'at, the spiritual leader of the Na'vi asks Eywa in Na'vi to "Let her walk among us as one of The People" (02:00:17). The scene shows hundreds of small glowing tendrils connecting Grace's human body with her avatar and both of those bodies to the roots of the mother tree that they are all under. She turns to Jake and says, "I'm with her [Eywa], Jake. She's real!" (02:00:58). Grace passes away. Mo'at claims that her body was too weakened by the gunshots she suffered and there was not enough time for her to transverse her being into her avatar body. This means that the only person allowed to have a complete mind and body transformation is Jake, a white male. Norm and another male scientist are allowed to survive and remain on Pandora at the end of the film, but they retain their human bodies. The scene of Grace's death also establishes a human witness to the existence of a consciousness that exists within the glowing plants and roots of Pandora. In "Multiple Perspectives in Arden," Charles Forker writes, "One of the lessons of the forest is that the holiness of the heart's affections, the world of selflessness and joy truly experienced, may liberate us from thinking in terms of yesterday or tomorrow and put us in touch with what is timeless" (Forker 111). This same sentiment about *As You Like It* can be applied to *Avatar*. The

root system, really the neural system of Pandora, is connected to every organic body made on Pandora and therefore this forest is timeless too. The forest is not only interconnected, it communicates. The trees talk and the Na'vi listen.

Talking trees can also be found in *As You Like It*. In the *As You Like It* volume of *Twayne's New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare*, John Powell Ward says, "Throughout *As You Like It* there is almost no place where trees are mentioned without clear naming close by of language itself, speech itself" (Ward 6). Ward is speaking here about word placement or word order that refers to aspects of the forest like "tree, forest, forester, oak, acorn, holly, or some other wooded item" (Ward 7). Ward argues that close placement of words that indicate speech to forest words indicate that the forest is speaking. He provides some instances but does not provide explanations. I would also argue that, in most of these instances, the forest is not necessarily speaking, but does hold agency in the situation. For example, Touchstone explains to Audrey that he has sent for a priest to marry them, "Sir Oliver Mar-text, the vicar of the next village, who hath promised to meet me in this place of the forest and couple us" (3.3.32-33). "Promised" is close again to "forest." The part of speech "promised" belongs to the vicar, but the place they are at is "of" the forest or belonging to it. If they were getting married in a church, they would be getting married in the house *of* God, i.e. the house which belongs to God. The place they are in belongs to the forest, giving the forest agency. Another example is when Jaques explains that Duke Frederick has been religiously converted to give up his hostility towards Duke Senior, "Duke Frederick, hearing how that every day / Men of great worth resorted to this forest, / Addressed a mighty power," (5.4.116-118). "Forest" comes right before "addressed." Here the word indicating speech is right next to "forest" and "forest" comes before the verb. If read together the phrase would be "this forest addressed..." Because there is a comma after "power"

which separates the second half of line 118, it is possible to read that it was the men of great worth that addressed a mighty power which is the forest by resorting to it. In this instance, the forest is speaking and holds power or agency. There are also several instances where characters explicitly address the forest as a conscious force.

Duke Senior gives agency to the flora of The Forest of Arden. When we meet the banished Duke for the first time, he is sitting around a campfire addressing the lords that chose to join him rather than be a part of Duke Frederick's court. In his first speech he says, "—Are not these woods / More free from peril than the envious court?" (2.1.3-4). Essentially, he says that the woods are free. By indicating that the woods are free, that they can have freedom, he gives the forest agency. Freedom has three popular definitions: the first is the power to act, speak, or think as one wants, the second is the absence of subjection, and the third is the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved. He did not say, "is this place not more free for us?" he says, "Are not these woods more free?" The woods or the forest here represent a nonhuman other with agency.

Other parts of the natural world are given human characteristics too. The wind has a fang which it uses to chide and bite them with. And although they are cut off from society, Duke Senior "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything" (2.1.16-17). Tongues indicates that the trees speak to him and it can also indicate that the trees may speak *in* tongues or different languages. Books in brooks designates that they tell stories. This could be an audible story because of the sound the water makes or the stories of the living organisms that exist in the brooks like fish, algae, etc. Sermons in stones is a biblical reference as the first ten commandments were said to be written in stone. Several types of stones are made up of thousands of lines of compacted sediment that developed over long periods of time. This links back to books in brooks and lines of narrative. In any case, Duke Senior finds

that the nature of the forest is all good and intends to communicate welcome to him. Because of this he is unfazed by the usurpation of his brother and remains solid like a stone.

Like the “signal transduction” that takes place between the humans and their avatars on Pandora, Orlando attempts to transduce himself onto the trees in the Forest of Arden. He carves poems onto the trees and says, “Hang there, my verse, in witness of my love” (3.2.1) first commanding the trees. Then he says, “O Rosalind! These trees shall be my book, / And in their barks my thoughts I’ll character” (3.2.5-6). Character also means handwriting, but I believe he is literally inscribing his *self*, his character into the trees. He could have penned his thoughts, scratched them, scrawled them, etc. But the word choice “character” indicates a transference of self, akin to the idiom artists sometimes use when they say they have poured themselves into their work. Orlando as poet for Rosalind is prompted to take the first step of becoming *with* nature. To do this, he uses human technology, a knife, and he disfigures the natural state of the trees. In other words, he makes progress towards overcoming the patriarchal mindset of domination, but he does it in a decidedly patriarchal way, the only way he has ever known how to do anything. Although she is flattered, Rosalind still speaks about the trees as if they are conscious of their disfigurement, “There is a man haunts the forest that abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns and elegies on brambles;” (3.2.299-301). Orlando transmutes himself into the trees and Rosalind gets not only Orlando’s message, but the message that the trees are being abused. In *Avatar*, Neytiri cares for Jake and chastises him for his treatment of the jungle the same way that Rosalind cares for Orlando and chastises him for his abuse of the forest. Neytiri also teaches Jake how to become *with* both the plants and animals of Pandora.

Right before he meets Neytiri, Jake gets separated from Dr. Augustine and Norm. When he called the titanotheres “bitch” it moved off, making Jake believe his posturing intimidated the gigantic animal. What really scared it away was another large, predatorial creature called a thanator, a large, fast, cat-like animal. This animal chases Jake and, although he gets away, he is forced to spend the night alone, lost in the jungle of Pandora. Neytiri discovers him fighting off a pack of viperwolves. The Na’vi call the humans “sky people” and Neytiri, recognizing him as a human avatar, was going to kill Jake. However, she sees a sign from Eywa and saves Jake from the viperwolves instead. In this process, she kills a few of them. Afterwards, Jake says, “I just wanted to say thanks for killing those things” (00:38:19). Unlike Rosalind, Neytiri is not flattered by this at all. Like Rosalind, she exhibits her sadness for the damage to the life of the jungle that was done on behalf of the man before her, “You don’t thank for this. This is sad. Very sad only—All this is your fault. They did not need to die” (00:38:28-46). Because Jake is disconnected from the nature of Pandora, he did not know how to act. He drew the animals to him with the noise and fire that he made. Although she was driven to save his life, Neytiri tells Jake to go back to his sky people. She has no patience for his ignorance. But a swarm of “Seeds from the Sacred Tree” (00:41:23) land on Jake and Neytiri sees it as a sign that Jake does have a connection or purpose that Eywa is trying to communicate to her. She takes him to her parents, the leaders of her Na’vi clan, the Omaticaya. They assign her the task of teaching him their ways to see, or, as Mo’at says, “if [his] insanity can be cured” (00:47:15). Insanity has two definitions. The first is that it is a state of mental illness and the second that it is extreme foolishness or irrationality. The disconnection from nature and therefore the lack of respect for it to the Na’vi is seen as an illness and Mo’at wants to see if Jake can be cured of this by reconnecting to nature. For the Na’vi this is literal in many ways.

To cure Jake, Neytiri teaches him the ways and traditions of the Na'vi. A considerable part of this is making neural connections with animals through physically connecting nerves on the ends of the Na'vi hair with corresponding tubes on different plants and animals. Like Orlando, Jake struggles most with horses, but he also begins to learn their language and to understand the deep respect they have for the forest. Jake describes trying to understand the network of energy that flows through all living things. Neytiri takes Jake on his first hunt where he shoots a hexapede (a deer-like animal) and does a ritual of respect as he completes the kill saying, "I see you, Brother and thank you. Your spirit goes with Eywa. Your body stays behind to become part of The People" (01:04:44-59). Neytiri observes this and deems that Jake is ready to take the final test, which is bonding with an Ikran, a pterodactyl-like flying animal. Unlike horses, these animals bond for life with only one person and the Na'vi consider this a rite of passage into their culture. Rosalind does not need to overcome a patriarchal mindset when it comes to respecting the Forest of Arden. From an ecofeminist lens, Orlando does go through a similar, though subtler transformation as Jake.

Once he is no longer in court and therefore unconcerned with his status, Orlando is able to recognize that he is no better than the animals of the Forest of Arden. In *Green Shakespeare*, Egan says:

Once in the forest, Orlando characterizes the relationship between men and beasts there as fairly evenly matched: 'If this uncouth forest yield anything savage I will either be food for it or bring it for food to thee' (2.6.4-5). This is the 'him or me' character of unmediated nature, and it runs counter to the understanding of the

forest as a place where humans can recover their natural dominance over animals. (Egan 99)

Orlando understands that the possibility that he will be eaten is just a fact of life and that he does not have a natural place over nature. Immediately after this, scene 7 of act 2 begins with the Duke Senior saying, “I think he be transformed into a beast, / For I can nowhere find him like a man” (2.7.1-2). Duke Senior refers to Jaques when he says this, but the words come directly after Orlando’s speech about going out to hunt. A conversation between Jaques, Duke Senior, and Orlando shortly after this involves Jaques calling Orlando a “cock” (fighting rooster) (2.7.90), and Orlando calling himself a “doe” (2.7.127). This stipulates that, within the forest, these courtly men become more and more comfortable not only with becoming *with* nature, but with shedding the masculine ideology that was their “insanity” in the first place.

When Orlando refers to himself as a “doe,” he is going to find Adam to bring him to Duke Senior’s camp and care for him. Becoming *with* nature turns Orlando into a compassionate, doe-like person who is willing to reciprocate service to Adam who had previously been his own servant. Animal comparison or association is plentiful in *As You Like It*. Jaques’s famous “All the world’s a stage” speech includes describing “the soldier” as being “bearded like the pard” (2.7.149), or a leopard. Later, as everyone is coupling up, Jaques refers to Touchstone and Audrey as “a pair of very strange beasts, which in all tongues are called fools” (5.4.36-37). Rosalind says that Orlando’s whining is “like the howling of Irish wolves” (5.2.88). All these characters become increasingly comfortable with associating people with animals when they are in the pastoral setting. In this case, if people have agency, then plants and animals have agency. The Forest of Arden has agency. When Orlando talks about meeting Ganymede with Duke Senior, they both agree that he resembles Rosalind. However, Orlando is convinced they are

unrelated because Rosalind/Ganymede has told Orlando that he is forest-born and was raised by an uncle who is “Obscured in the circle of this forest” (5.4.34). Even though they both agree that Ganymede’s resemblance to Rosalind is “lively” (5.4.27), the forest does the job of concealing Rosalind’s identity until she chooses to reveal herself. The agency of the Forest of Arden is subtle but powerful. The corresponding agency of Pandora is vivid to fulfill its socio-cultural blockbuster quota. There is little nuance to decipher how the forest of Pandora communicates. With its glowing and neurally reacting landscape and ability to connect to the Na’vi, communication between nature and The People is literal and therefore easier to identify as agential when compared to the Forest of Arden.

At the climax of *Avatar*, RDA has decided to take the largest source of unobtainium by force because it is located under Home Tree, where the Omaticaya clan lives. Jake won the respect of the Na’vi by bonding with an Ikran. He lost their respect once they found out he had been giving information to RDA, which prompted them to attack. He gained their respect once more by bonding with Toruk, a creature like an Ikran, but at least five times larger. Jake has asked that the Omaticaya call on all the clans of Pandora to come together to protect Home Tree. This is a huge feat, but they come together. Jake fears that it still will not be enough. He makes a neural connection with Home Tree and, in a prayer-like fashion, tries to communicate with Eywa, the goddess. He asks that, if Grace is there, to investigate her memories of what Earth is like. He warns that there is no green there, “They killed their mother. And they’re gonna do the same here” (02:08:54). He asks for her help. He recognizes the agency of Eywa within the life of the forest. Neytiri finds Jake doing this and explains that “Our Great Mother does not take sides, Jake. She protects only the balance of life” (02:09:31-37). But like in *As You Like It*, where Rosalind is able to manipulate everything in the forest to her will by determining the who

couples up with whom, Eywa responds to Jake's prayer to defend Pandora. When it looks like the Na'vi will lose their battle and their home despite their efforts, all of the wild animals of Pandora descend on the RDA soldiers. Neytiri screams, "Eywa has heard you!" This is the ultimate act of anthropomorphic agency which acts as what Joni Adamson calls "dis-anthropocentric strategy."

Avatar and *As You Like It* both have forests that have a special connection with their main characters, but equally importantly, the forest is an active participant in those connections. Amitav Ghosh is the author of *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* and other climate related texts. Much of *The Great Derangement* is spent arguing the existence of nonhuman agency. Citing Bruno Latour, he argues that the reason that science fiction became separated from the literary mainstream is because nature slowly became separated from culture "the former comes to be relegated exclusively to the sciences and is regarded as being off-limits to the latter" (Ghosh 68). Therefore, when science fiction gives nature a level of agency that cannot be connected to what we recognize in our own natural world, we see it as fantastical and hence, not literary. Shakespeare is undeniably literary and when we make connections between Shakespeare's works and science fiction, we reunite nature and culture. Things that once seemed fantastical are happening all the time now. If we can recognize the links between aspects of sci-fi and reality, it is possible for us to become more *with* nature as well, something we desperately need to do right now in order to stop climate change. Ecocritical and ecofeminist similarities of these texts have now become apparent. However, the struggles with identity that both main characters faced and how they change their physical appearance was what I first took hold of between Rosalind and Jake. The next section examines this aspect of their transformations once embedded within the environment.

Section 5: Character Analysis

The most compelling moment affecting Rosalind's identity is when she poses to Celia, "Were it not better, / Because that I am more than common tall, / That I did suit me all points like a man?" (1.3.103-105). Because of her height, Rosalind is the only person in this group who can fulfill the role of a man, which they both believe necessary for their survival because, "Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold" (1.3.99). Rosalind devises this scheme almost immediately and with more zeal than hesitancy. In the same breath that Rosalind gives a logical explanation for disguising herself as a man, she gets excited about the prospect of what would come with it:

A gallant curtal ax upon my thigh,
A boar spear in my hand, and—in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will—
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances.
(1.3.106-111)

The curtal ax is a type of sword and therefore invokes phallic imagery. The image of the spear confirms that depiction. Todd Borlik explains that in humoral theory, the body is conditioned by its environment so, to become a man, Rosalind envisions phallic pieces as becoming a part of the environment of her body. However, she also refers to the ax as "gallant," meaning heroic. Rosalind is in a defensive position. She has just tried valiantly to reason with her uncle on behalf of herself, but he still told her to leave or he would have her killed. She knows that she could be in danger just as much outside of court on her own just for being a woman. She needs a hero, so

she chooses to become her own. In Rosalind's world, the only people who get to be heroes are men. The phrase 'hidden woman's fear' pertains to multiple things. She is afraid because she will be targeted as a woman, "Alas, what danger will it be to us, / Maids that we are" (1.3.97-98). She is referring to the stereotype that women are naturally more fearful than men. This is proven when she faints at the sight of Orlando's bloody clothes. Oliver tells her, "You lack a man's heart!" (4.3.162). Lastly, she fears the hidden woman or for her disguise to be uncovered or unhidden. At one point, she asks Celia, "Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak. Sweet, say on" (3.2.211-212). In "Forget To Be A Woman," William C. Carroll says "It is a difficult question to answer, given the complex levels of her disguise and role-playing, not to mention the negative phrasing of the question, by which either yes or no may mean the same thing—her sexual disguise as Ganymede—represents the transformed otherness of the lover even as it liberates her to be more truly herself" (Carroll 129). This provides another opportunity to interpret Rosalind/Ganymede as an androgynous character. She is able to bridge different parts of herself and can therefore act as a bridge to help others transform in the pastoral. In the long run, Ganymede is only revealed to be Rosalind when Rosalind chooses. In this way, Ganymede provides Rosalind with the agency she could not have and did not have as a woman. Jake in *Avatar* likewise finds agency as his avatar that he could not find as a human man.

Like Rosalind, Jake is the only person who can fulfill a specific role, in this case of his twin's avatar, and be of service to a scientific team. Unlike Rosalind, it was not Jake's idea to take on this role. Notably though, both characters are placed in the positions they end up in due to a family member. Rosalind's father was banished, eventually causing her to be banished. Jake's twin brother died, making him the only suitable replacement genetically. Both sets of circumstances lend a fateful tone to the start of the action. The avatar drivers all use video logs to

journal their experiences. Jake's video log is often narrating the film and he is clear about who he is at the beginning of the film. He compares himself to his brother, "Tommy was the scientist, not me. He was the one who wanted to get shot light-years out in space to find the answers" (00:01:34). He also calls himself a "dumb grunt" and says that, although he is no longer technically a marine, a soldier never stops being a soldier. He tells Colonel Quaritch that he "figured it's just another hellhole" (00:21:31). Jake is not looking for answers. He has been offered a good paycheck which he hopes to use to get surgery to regain the use of his legs. This is his motivation and as he lands on Pandora he says, "One life ends, another begins" (00:04:37). This adds to the fateful tone of the film. The images attached to this line switch between his brother being cremated and Jake landing on Pandora. Literally, his brother's life ended and Jake himself is beginning a new life by trying to fulfill that role. However, this also foreshadows what is to come as Jake's human life will end in a few months and he will begin a new life again as a Na'vi. The phrase also lends itself both to Jake's demeanor to go wherever life takes him. The balance of the phrase also parallels the overall ideology of Eywa which is the balancing of life. Despite his easy demeanor and willingness to follow orders, Jake feels fear before he officially sets out on his journey, just like Rosalind. He says, "I'm just another dumb grunt going someplace he's gonna regret" (00:02:07). Like Rosalind, he is excited about opportunities to claim his agency, but he recognizes that it comes with inherent risks.

Pandora has a reputation for being scarier than hell. Colonel Quaritch, the head of security and antagonist of the film, claims that everything on Pandora wants to kill and eat all the humans. Even though Jake went to Pandora by choice and not by force like Rosalind, he still went to a place with a horrifying reputation just to escape the trauma he experienced on Earth. It is a kind of banishment from human society. Though, as Celia says when she and Rosalind

determine to bring Touchstone along for entertainment, Jake and Rosalind both go “To liberty, and not to banishment” (1.3.127).

Rosalind finds liberty in Arden as Ganymede. Virginia Woolf’s explains in *A Room of One’s Own*:

—that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man’s brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman’s brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. (Woolf 98)

Rosalind’s character is successfully bridging two identities. Acting as a man, she does what she says a man would do when she thinks she might cry and give, she does not cry, she moves forward and encourages Aliena/Celia (2.4.3-6). However, it is important to remember that it is not a man’s strength that Rosalind is truly drawing upon, it is her own strength and therefore must have always existed. She has only been conditioned to believe that women are weak and that is what makes her believe she is drawing upon the masculine will of her guise. Carroll says, “Shakespeare will not hesitate to invoke the metadramatic possibilities either, for the woman-to-man transformation mirrors the man-to-woman illusion the actor has already generated—these paradoxes also represent an investigation of sexual boundaries, of androgyny *as* metamorphosis” (Carroll 127). The bridge does not make them separate identities or mean that one is the real

identity, and one is not. They both *are*. Rosalind expresses a similar sentiment to Woolf when she meets Jacques:

Rosalind: They say you are a melancholy fellow.

Jaques: I am so. I do love it better than laughing.

Rosalind: Those that are in extremity of either are abominable fellows and betray themselves to every modern censure worse than drunkards.

Jaques: Why, 'tis good to be sad and say nothing.

Rosalind: Why then, 'tis good to be a post.

(4.1.2-7)

Melancholy is another word for serious or somber, something seen as a hegemonically masculine quality. Laughing is more emotionally expressive, something seen as a conventionally feminine quality. If 'melancholy' and 'laughing' are replaced with 'masculine' and 'femininity,' it is as if they are having a conversation about Rosalind's androgyny. Jaques is hesitant and worried about such open otherness as he thinks it is better to be "sad" and "safe." Jaques is indeed of the courtly realm where there is a rigid formula for how to act. Rosalind lets him know that that is not a modern way of thinking. At least, it is not the way in Arden. She says life is pointless (or you might as well be a post) if you can't be who you are. Jaques says that he has traveled a lot and it has taught him to be this way, but he only describes other people: scholars, musicians, courtiers, soldiers, lawyers, ladies, and lovers (4.1.8-11). All these people are people of society or the court, indicating that Jaques has not yet experienced the effects of the pastoral. Rosalind says, "I fear you have sold your lands to see other men's. Then to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands" (4.1.15). Essentially, Rosalind says that Jaques is describing other people and not himself. All the traveling he has done did not make him into his

own person. Rosalind can have this very bold conversation with Jaques only because she is Ganymede. It is important to note that the stage direction for Act 4, Scene 1 says, “*Enter Rosalind and Celia, and Jaques,*” but Celia does not participate in this exchange. In fact, there are 168 lines in this scene and Celia, the only person whom everyone knows is a woman, only speaks 5 times. Rosalind, Jaques, and later Orlando, do all the talking. Ganymede provides Rosalind with an opportunity for her voice to be heard.

Initially, what Jake’s avatar provides him with is the ability to walk and run again since he lost the ability in such a traumatic way. Like Rosalind with her ax and spear, phallic imagery is also provided the first time Jake wakes up in his avatar body. He opens his eyes and scientists are performing sensory tests like those that would be done on someone coming out of surgery or going through physical therapy. Enamored with the sensation of feeling and the use of his legs and feet, Jake stands up and whips his body around too quickly. He now has a tail, and this movement causes his tail to knock down all the scientific and medical equipment in the room (00:17:25). It is comedic to see Rosalind excited to try on different axes and spears as it is to see Jake fumble with his new phallus-like tail. Grace even makes a joke about masturbation when she sees Jake examining the nerve endings that come out of the avatar’s (and therefore the Na’vi’s) hair saying, “Don’t play with that you’ll go blind” (00:19:23). Implications that Jake is coming from a masculine world of industry and concrete and moving into the pastoral and by the latter’s terms, feminine of Pandora and the forest are further confirmed by the next scene. Jake approaches Colonel Quaritch as he is lifting weights. Jake was told that the Colonel wanted to see him. The first thing Quaritch says is, “This low gravity’ll make you soft” (00:21:04). That makes this the third phallic reference in 4 minutes. For Jake, like for Rosalind, there is a need not just to be someone else, but to be a masculine man. He is reminded constantly of the physical

abilities of the men around him as they walk, run, and handle heavy machinery as they are unencumbered with a wheelchair. To them and to Jake, this makes them more masculine than him. Lacking those same abilities is emasculating to Jake. Even though he tries to prove his masculinity by refusing help getting in and out of his chair and recounting that he always tells himself he can do anything a man can do, regaining the ability to walk, or his masculinity, is still his preliminary motivation.

When Rosalind faints in front of Oliver he says, “You a man?” (4.3.162) and tells her she lacks a man’s heart. She claims the faint was a “counterfeit” (4.3.164) or a joke. This is the only time Rosalind fumbles in front of someone who does not know her true identity. Her masculinity was questioned, and she came up with a weak excuse. At all other times Rosalind as Ganymede is confident and collected and speaks without indication of fear or anxiety. Still, the outwardly masculine appearance allows Rosalind to confront the hypocrisy that masculinity brings on in male characters like Jaques and Orlando. In the article “Multiple Perspectives in Arden,” Charles R. Forker writes, “—the multiple perspectives of the play—converge charmingly in her [Rosalind]. She is both natural and gracious, strong and frail, virtuous and full of mischief, divinely beautiful and humanly earthly all at once. She is conscious of time at the very moment she seems to occupy and irradiate a world of timeless contentment. She is an activist... She is both a lover and a mocker of love...” (Forker 114). Even though it is important for Rosalind to present masculine, she still encompasses multiple, and therefore androgynous perspectives. For Rosalind, her transformation into Ganymede began as a necessity for survival and turned into a way for her to help others transform, or to see. The more time Rosalind has to challenge their beliefs and the more time they spend in the pastoral setting, the more the male characters are able to see beyond their own rigid, courtly ways.

The outward physical appearance must be altered for Jake and for Rosalind to progress through their character arcs, but Jake's transformation juxtaposes Rosalind's. He is the one who must learn to see. To see in this case refers to what the Na'vi say when they talk about their inherent connection with Eywa, their goddess, and all the living things on Pandora. When Neytiri upbraids Jake for attracting the viperwolves and causing their deaths, he does not understand and asks her to teach him. She says, "Sky People cannot learn. You do not See" (00:39:48). Later, Neytiri is compelled by her mother to teach Jake the ways of the Na'vi. She begins by trying to teach him how to ride a horse. The Na'vi make neural connections through nerve tendrils in their hair to the animals they work with. This connection is called "shahaylu" or "the bond" (00:52:49). He would not be able to make these physical connections to the plants and animals of Pandora in his human body. His mental state cannot begin to change without his avatar and the abilities that it comes with. Jake is immediately bucked off his horse and Tsu'tey, the next leader of Neytiri's Na'vi clan, says, "This alien will learn nothing... a rock sees more" (00:53:47-49). The Na'vi also greet each other by saying "I see you." To see is to connect and be connected to all living things. Jake bonds with a pterodactyl-like creature called an Ikran. This is a major rite of passage for the Na'vi and Jake is able to "see" more than ever. He expresses his conflicting feelings, "Everything is backwards now. Like out there is the true world and in here is the dream" (01:17:49). Jake now feels more himself in his avatar body, among the Na'vi and in the forest than he does in his human body. Jake goes to the pastoral and learns to see with the help of Neytiri. Rosalind goes to the pastoral and helps men entering the pastoral to see or by "curing" them of their love sickness. Both texts require the main character to physically transform, but transformations of the mind occur in men with the assistance of women and the pastoral.

Rosalind cures Orlando like Neytiri cures Jake. When she first meets him in the Forest of Arden as Ganymede, she has seen the carvings he's done in the trees addressed to Rosalind. She asks him "what is't o'clock?" (3.2.252). He replies, "You should ask me what time o' day. There's no clock in the forest" (3.2.253-254). She retorts, "Then there is no true lover in the forest, else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock" (3.2.255-257). Their back and forth banter continues for another hundred lines. What is important is that Rosalind challenges the way that Orlando thinks. Referring specifically to *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, Carroll says, "Only when a woman is trying to get a man must she become a man" (Carroll 127). Both characters are not who they were even a scene ago, but the progression of change is driven by Rosalind. This is how she becomes *with* nature, by being an instrument of the pastoral transformation for all the other characters. Rosalind affects every coupling in some way and plays a direct role in those of Celia and Oliver, herself and Orlando, and Phoebe and Silvius. Even though Rosalind and Jake both physically transformed seeking to capture their masculinity, they each gained different uses out of them.

The different conclusions for Rosalind and Jake say something about what they each needed from their transformations. Ultimately, Rosalind marries and returns to court while Jake becomes a permanent member of the Na'vi, leaving his human body forever. Rosalind utilized her male self to gain not only power, but to transform men like Jaques and Orlando. Rosalind would have never been happy to marry Orlando as he was in Act 1. As a man of the court, he was disconnected from nature and therefore disconnected from anything but his rigid patriarchal ideology. There would have been no room for Rosalind to have equal agency in their relationship. Ganymede is the bridge between the courtly and pastoral spheres on which Rosalind

and Orlando can develop a genuine connection. Therefore, Rosalind is still Rosalind, she just uses Ganymede (who is Rosalind) to open doors for the men in her life.

Jake, however, struggles with his identity even before he adopts his avatar for the first time. He feels his body is broken, and all he wants is the reward of an expensive surgery to repair his spinal injury. If he participates in industrialized ecological violence, similar to the kind that broke his body in the first place, he is promised transformation. What he needed and what he gets instead is a complete transformation of a self that was part of a man-made cycle of violence against nature. He finally sees that, where he came from, “They killed their mother” (02:08:54) when he prays to Eywa to help him protect Pandora. Proof that Jake has become *with* nature comes when all the wild animals of Pandora arrive and answer his prayer. One way that *Avatar* is unlike the traditional pastoral is that, for Jake at least, it is not temporary. The pastoral of Pandora is only temporary for those who fail to see, to become *with*.

Section 6: Conclusion

The Forest of Arden is a transformative place where Rosalind and all her friends must leave from and return to court. Forker says, “Like most pastoral settings, it [Arden] is a place of temporary rather than permanent residence, the literal geography being less important than the emotions, stances, or verities for which it becomes the symbolic backdrop. Shakespeare makes his green world a place of growth—ethical, psychological, and spiritual as well as merely vegetative—but he is more interested in how the human heart may internalize this landscape than in the landscape for its own sake” (Forker 106). However, I think it is wrong to discount the interest of the landscape, or nature. Rosalind certainly cares about the sake of the forest and her father is grateful for the sustenance it provides. Without a true connection to the land, transformation could not have taken place. Duke Frederick would never have had his conversion without traversing the pastoral. Rosalind’s venture into the pastoral was one that took her into the unknown parts of her own ability to control her life. This is not something she ever could have accomplished in the oppressive setting of the court. They may have internalized these transformations in order to take the ideals of the forest back to court with them, but without the ability to always return to it and keep their cultural connection with nature, they could easily fall back into the habits of the courtly, or patriarchal and oppressive ways that restrict them all.

Pandora is a transformative setting where Jake is allowed to stay. After they are defeated, the human corporation and army are sent away from Pandora with few exceptions. Jake, however, is the only human to permanently transfer his consciousness to his avatar. He would probably be arrested for treason or breaking contract if he went with them. Regardless of that, his underlying need to feel masculine prevents him from keeping his human body. He also no longer has the mindset compatible with those humans that deems them dominant over nature. Jake was

not written as a female searching for agency in a male dominated world. He was Orlando at court and Rosalind in the pastoral. While Rosalind needed to find a way to administer change as a woman, Jake was the one who needed to change. Yet he still reaps the benefits of the hero. It is important to keep in mind a major difference between these two texts is the lack of acknowledgement of gender inequality in *Avatar*.

If literary connections can be made that invoke cultural issues like our human connection to nature, or climate change, and then linked with popular culture and cinema that reach a wide audience, eventually the original rhetoric will similarly influence that audience like a ripple effect. Human technological progress may be fast, but changing human ideology can be slow and it is to the detriment of every other nonhuman because, as Ghosh states, we have isolated ourselves from nature so much that we have not realized until recently that nature's destruction is our own (Ghosh 162). My goal for this thesis was to make connections between these two unlike genres—drama and science fiction—to examine what is retained from one to the next. As I have shown, nature has agency, human isolation from nature costs both, and reconnecting with nature can enhance the individual and reharmonize society with the environment. I hope that nature continues to be found within sci-fi and that I am able to contribute to the reunification of nature and culture.

Section 7: Annotated Bibliography

Adamson, Joni. "Indigenous Literatures, Multinaturalism, and *Avatar*: The Emergence of Indigenous Cosmopolitics." *American Literary History*, Spring 2012, Vol. 24, No. 1, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 143-162.

Adamson sheds light on several ecological injustices against indigenous people spanning more than 2 decades of court battles against oil companies for spills and over-drilling. Essentially, Adamson credits *Avatar* for being the rhetorical spectacle that reignited a conversation about indigenous cosmopolitics. This text will be used to support section 1.B regarding what has been said about *Avatar* in academia, or in this case, how it can be used to be rhetorically effective.

Adamson, Joni. "Source of Life." *Material Ecocriticism*, Indiana University Press, 2014, p. 253-268.

This text discusses the possible ways in which "anthropomorphism can work as a 'dis-anthropocentric strategy,' revealing similarities and symmetries between humans and non-humans" (Adamson 253). In line with this, Adamson also discusses scientific observations of the possibilities of non-human others as selves, operating biographical and political lives (255). Adamson compares this real-life scientific study to that of the character of Dr. Augustine in *Avatar*, whose role is designated "xenobotanist" in the film. This text will support using an eco-critical lens to view the anthropomorphising of nature in both the forest of Arden and the jungle of Pandora.

Caroti, Simone. "Science Fiction, Forbidden Planet, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2004, p. 23.

In this article Caroti presents a brief analysis of the relationships between the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This article will help to establish a basis to look further into the need for analysis of Shakespeare's influence on modern science-fiction. Caroti makes direct comparisons between the setting of the film and the themes of the play. This is a similar method I plan to use in my analysis; drawing comparisons between themes, characters, plots, and motivations among others. The discussion of this article and those similar to it will take place early in the thesis in order to set a precedence for this type of work.

Carroll, William C. "Forget To Be A Woman." *Rosalind*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 1992, 126-137.

This article discusses all of Shakespeare's female characters that disguised themselves as male and the tropes that they each had in common. The main focus and comparison is to *As You Like It's* Rosalind, whom Carroll states is different from all the rest. Carroll's analysis of Rosalind's transformation into Ganymede will be directly compared to Jake's transformation. Additionally, some of Carroll's opinions are counter to my own about Rosalind's adoption of Ganymede as a self. This will provide a point for me to contest and an opportunity to open discussion about Rosalind's androgyny, which I believe to be quintessential to the success of her character. Subsequently, I will be able to discuss the moment that Jake verbalizes his own feelings of disconnection from his human body and preference for his Avatar.

Egan, Gabriel. *Shakespeare and Ecocritical Theory*. Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015.

Falquina, Silvia Martínez. “The Pandora Effect: James Cameron's *Avatar* and a Trauma Studies Perspective.” *Atlantis* (Salamanca, Spain), vol. 36, no. 2, 2014, pp. 115–131.

This text is able to briefly summarize the massive response to *Avatar* both positive and negative. Falquina also approaches the theme of trauma from an ecocritical perspective. I will use this in 1.B and 2.A.

Forker, Charles. “Multiple Perspectives in Arden.” *Rosalind*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 1992, 106-115.

Forker analyzes the pastoral in this article, specifically Arden in *As You Like It*. The descriptions in this article will be directly compared to how *Avatar*'s Pandora is another version of the pastoral. Forker analyzes how the pastoral interacts with the characters, noting that more than one character describes nature as having a personality and that the forest speaks to them. Forker also notes that there is a reason that many people don't live in the forest; dangerous animals and other unknowns dwell there. These observations will be able to be directly compared to the Pandoran jungle, where there are both magical connections to be made and many unknowns and dangerous creatures.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2016.

This text is ecocriticism put into action to speak about links between climate change and literary fiction. Ghosh calls for more fiction about climate change to be written in order to imprint climate change as a real problem. I will utilize this text in section 2.A to conclude that ecocriticism and science fiction often intersect.

Kendrick, James. “Marxist Overtones in Three Films by James Cameron.” *The Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1999, pp. 36–44.

This text points to an underlying critique of capitalism in three of James Cameron's films: *The Abyss*, *Aliens*, and *Titanic*. Written in 1999, I believe it would have included *Avatar* if it were written after its premier. I will include this text during a brief discussion about James Cameron as a writer and director in section 1.B.

Laroche, Rebecca, and Jennifer Munroe. *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory*. Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017.

This text explains the difference between ecocritical theory and ecofeminist theory. Ecofeminist theory considers the intersectional experience when binaries like male/female, human/non-human, etc. are expanded. Some feminist theory posits that men are considered human and women are considered other. This then intersects with the notion that humans should rule over nature. This text will be a pillar to the claims I will make in section 2.A.

Maisano, Scott. "Shakespeare's Science Fictions: The Future History of the Late Romances." 2004.

Maisano argues that "*The Tempest*, [as well as] *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* are in fact forward-looking speculations on a 'future history,' a world that hasn't yet been chronicled but nonetheless 'will have been' as the result of some untimely scientific discoveries" (9). The discussion of this article and those like it will take place early in the thesis to set a precedence for this type of work. It will take up 1-2 pages of discussion.

Serenella Iovino, and Serpil Oppermann. *Material Ecocriticism*. Indiana University Press, 2014.

Originally, only one chapter from this text by Joni Adamson was going to be used. However, the text as a whole was helpful in explaining further about ecocriticism and material ecocriticism.

Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millennium, edited by Hugh Grady, Taylor & Francis Group, 2000. ProQuest Ebook Central,

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unlv/detail.action?docID=169307>.

Mallin compares *The Merchant of Venice* with *Independence Day* and *Starship Troopers*.

This text was very helpful in discerning that I am not looking to define Shakespeare as sci-fi or find sci-fi tropes in Shakespeare. I am looking for what these two genres have in common in order to prove that there are interconnections between all sorts of genres.

Ward, John Powell. *As You like It*. Twayne, 1992.

This text gives a critical overview of the main themes and of each character. This will be essential to providing parallels between the characters in *As You Like It* and *Avatar*. The bulk of character analysis will be focused on Rosalind paralleled with Jake Sully.

However, the supporting characters in each story play vital roles in the development of the main characters. The parallels I will draw from the play and the movie will be supported by this text. They will go beyond fulfilling common tropes of supporting characters and into detailed similarities between characters such as Touchstone from *As You Like It* and Dr. Grace Augustine from *Avatar*.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Mariner Books, 1989.

This famous feminist text provides helpful discourse on androgyny for my purposes.

Woolf states that every man has a bit of woman in him and every woman has a bit of man.

Section 8: Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

M.A., English Literature, 2020 (expected)

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

B.A., English Literature, Sociology (minor), 2019

RESEARCH

Fields of Interest: Androgyny, Gender, and Crossdressing in Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature, Androgyny and Sexuality in 20th Century American Literature, Film Studies, Adaptations and Anthology Television Series, Ecofeminism and ecocriticism in contemporary literature.

Reading ability in Italian

PUBLISHED WORKS

Shakespeare and Sci-Fi - Book chapter/Master's Thesis - Shakespeare's influence on James Cameron's 2009 film *Avatar* (forthcoming).

PARTICIPATION AT PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES

PAMLA (Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association)

November 2021: Presiding Officer for special session "Las Vegas and the Absurd."

The Far West Popular and American Culture Associations (FWPCA/ACA)

February 23, 2020: Chair of "Apocalypses and More" session.

Cine-Feminisms and the Academy Symposium

December 13, 2019: Presentation on women in the film industry, Las Vegas as a microcosm of that industry, and observing prior the #MeToo movement and implementing change post the #MeToo movement.

AWARDS/MEMBERSHIPS

Dean's Honor Roll, University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2016-2019

Recognition of Academic Standards

Sigma Tau Delta Honor - English Honor Society - Member Since 2018

Student membership in Sigma Tau Delta is by invitation only for those who meet the high academic standards required. In addition to chapter events, community service events are a regular priority.

MLA Member since September 2019

PAMLA Member Since May 2020

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant/Instructor

College of Liberal Arts English Department at the University of Nevada Las Vegas

August 2019 to Present

My teaching experience consists of introduction to English composition (101 and 102) focusing on understanding and implementing rhetorical strategy and analysis for students to apply to their future academic and professional careers.

Writing Center Consultant

College of Liberal Arts English Department at the University of Nevada Las Vegas

August 2019 to December 2019

I have done approximately 150 hours of working one-on-one with students across the university campus, across majors, and across writing levels. Detailed attention is paid to the needs and questions of the individual. Each consultation is student driven to ensure their engagement and assist in their own writing process.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Witness Magazine - Black Mountain Institute

Reader for fiction and nonfiction Fall 2019 to Spring 2020

Neon Lit - MFA Reading Series

Event coordination committee member. Responsible for organizing event catering. Initiated and organized a silent art auction to raise funds for the 2020 annual community outreach event in cooperation with local artists and in support of Project 150, a local 501(c)3 non-profit organization which provides support for homeless Las Vegas teens. This was the first time Neon Lit did a silent art auction. The 2020 event raised 50% more than the 2019 event with 46% of total money raised being from art sales. I was also given the opportunity to represent Neon Lit and promote the event via social media, including art items and raffle items.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Lead Office Assistant - Office of Information Technology at UNLV - November 2018 to Present

Guest Services/Cast Member - Disney Store Online - November 2018 to August 2019

Rooms Coordinator/Front Desk Agent - The Signature at MGM Grand - February 2015 to August 2018

Front Desk Agent - Caesars Entertainment - June 2014 to January 2015

Spa Receptionist - The Spa at NYNY - July 2013 to June 2014

Supervisor - IT'SUGAR - March 2013 to August 2013

*Additional work history can be provided upon request.

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