



# Shakespeare and Ecology (Oxford Shakespeare Topics)

*Randall Martin*

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*Shakespeare and Ecology* is the first book to explore the topical contexts that shaped the environmental knowledge and politics of Shakespeare and his audiences. Early modern England experienced unprecedented environmental challenges including climate change, population growth, resource shortfalls, and habitat destruction which anticipate today's globally magnified crises. Shakespeare wove these events into the poetic textures and embodied action of his drama, contributing to the formation of a public ecological consciousness, while opening creative pathways for re-imagining future human relationships with the natural world and non-human life.

This book begins with an overview of ecological modernity across Shakespeare's work before focusing on three major environmental controversies in particular plays: deforestation in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Tempest*; profit-driven agriculture in *As You Like It*; and gunpowder warfare and remedial cultivation in *Henry IV Parts One and Two*, *Henry V*, and *Macbeth*. A fourth chapter examines the interdependency of local and global eco-relations in *Cymbeline*, and the final chapter explores Darwinian micro-ecologies in *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. An epilogue suggests that Shakespeare's greatest potential for mobilizing modern ecological ideas and practices lies in contemporary performance.

*Shakespeare and Ecology* illuminates the historical antecedents of modern ecological knowledge and activism, and explores Shakespeare's capacity for generating imaginative and performative responses to today's environmental challenges.

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