



Beyond Metaphor: Zoology, Animality, and Human–Nonhuman Relations in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, and Othello

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Abstract

Animals keep a distinct place in the literature since the birth of narratives. From aerial birds to terrestrial worms, insects, and animals they have been described in the literary world. Traditionally, they have been mentioned as metaphors in literary products. However, the paper explores the zoological imagination of William Shakespeare in Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, and Othello. The study makes an argument that the animals, instead of presenting as metaphors, play the role in Shakespeare’s larger interrogation of humanity, violence, sovereignty, embodiment, sexuality, race, ecological vulnerability, and the boundary between human and post-human life. The study carried out under the integrated theoretical framework of Animal Studies, Ecocriticism, Renaissance natural history and Zoological-cultural analytical study examines Shakespeare’s references to birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, worms, horses, goats, sheep, dogs, cats, serpents, and other creatures. The objective of the study is to expose the instability of human through animals: in Macbeth, the owl, horse, serpent, cat, and scorpion create a disturbed ecological landscape corresponding to political violence; in King Lear, the storm and heath produce a radical encounter with human vulnerability and animal existence; and in Othello, animalization becomes inseparable from sexuality, race, jealousy, and violence. The zoological reading as an interdisciplinary method is practiced associating Shakespearean animal representation with biological characteristics, early modern cultural knowledge, ecological relations, and human–animal studies.

Keywords: Shakespeare, zoology, animal studies, ecocriticism, animality, human–nonhuman relations, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello

1. Introduction

Animals possess a specific significance in the cycle of nature in Ecocritical Studies. They are integral part of nature in Posthuman era. Shakespeare has used animals such as birds, horses, dogs, cats, sheep, goats, serpents,

worms, flies, insects and other creatures in his dramas. They have been associated with the description of human bodies, political relationships, sexuality, violence, death, and the natural surroundings. For centuries, critics view Shakespeare's mentioning of wildlife as metaphors to show human psychology and politics. These animals did not occupy the central positions but merely a linguistic tool which display their relations to human concerns. The reason behind treating them so was that the traditional criticism was anthropocentric reducing their values as inanimate symbols existing only to serve human narratives. The dog has been used as an insulting way to degrade the status, mindless servility or cruelty (Shylock being called a cur in the Merchant of Venice). The serpent is mentioned as a treachery, deceit or hidden danger (Juliet delineating Romeo as a serpent heart hid with a flowering face).

Animal Studies and Ecocriticism have challenged the anthropocentric tendency of supremacy of human beings in the universe due to possessing the intellect, replacing the significance of Nature and animals too as an ultimate value in the nonhuman world. The paradigm gets shifted from human to non-human establishing that the non-human environment holds intrinsic value to exist independently. Previous Studies such as Timothy Michael Wong's Shakespeare's Political Zoology, Joanna Rebecah Grossman's Shakespeare Grounded, Randall Martin's Shakespeare and Ecology, Steven Swarbrick's work on animality in Othello, Todd Andrew Borlik's study of venom and vermin, Perry Guevara's analysis of insects in Titus Andronicus, and Claude Fretz's study of Ovidian animal dreams demonstrate the productivity of reading Shakespeare through animality, ecology, zoology, and nonhuman life. Though the previous studies undertaken the researches on animality and ecocriticism in Shakespeare's single and two plays not providing the wider range and deeper insight into the matter. The present paper seeks to examine Shakespeare's four dark tragedies: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth under the lens of animality, ecology, zoology and non-human life. This study tries to explore the deeper insight of non-human, animality and zoology point of view in Shakespeare's dark tragedies. The objective of the study is to expose the instability of human through animals: in Macbeth, the owl, horse, serpent, cat, and scorpion create a disturbed ecological landscape corresponding to political violence; in King Lear, the storm and heath produce a radical encounter with human vulnerability and animal existence; and in Othello, animalization becomes inseparable from sexuality, race, jealousy, and violence. The zoological reading as an interdisciplinary method is practiced associating Shakespearean animal representation with biological characteristics, early modern cultural knowledge, ecological relations, and human-animal studies. The central argument in Shakespeare's dark tragedies is that animals function simultaneously at several levels: zoological, symbolic, ecological, political, corporeal, and cultural. It asks what happens when metaphorical representations are examined alongside the material characteristics and cultural meanings of the animals invoked. The paper attempts to look beyond metaphor not ignoring metaphorical meaning but studying them the actual physical characteristics and cultural meanings of the animal used.

2. Review of Literature

Recent previous studies explore an increasing interdisciplinary interest in Shakespeare's representation of animals, ecology, and human – nonhuman relations. Timothy Michael Wong's Shakespeare's Political Zoology: Creature Life and the Rise of Constituent Power (2012) examined animality and "creature life" in relation to sovereignty and political power establishing Shakespearean animals having political significance beyond their conventional metaphorical functions. Similarly, Joanna Rebecah Grossman's Shakespeare Grounded: Ecocritical Approaches to Shakespearean Drama (2014) challenges the human-centered "Great Chain of Being" by foregrounding plants, soil, rocks, flora, and fauna placing Shakespeare within environmental humanities and material ecocriticism. Likewise, Randall Martin's Shakespeare and Ecology (2015) investigated deforestation, agriculture, warfare, and other environmental concerns in Shakespeare's plays. Animal representation gets focused in Steven Swarbrick's "Shakespeare's Blush, or 'the Animal' in Othello" (2016) using animal studies and Derridean theory to investigate the relationship between animalization, race, shame, and human/nonhuman

boundaries. However, Sophie Chiari's "The Plague of Gnats in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries" (2022) narrows the focus to insects, connecting representations of gnats with pestilence, environmental disorder, and emerging early modern natural history.

Jonathan P. A. Sell's *The Chameleon's Blush and the Poetic Imagination from Shakespeare to Keats* (2022) explores zoological imagery and the chameleon as a figure of identity and imaginative transformation. Moreover, Claude Fretz's "Dreaming of Serpents and Asses" (2023) combines Ovidian studies, animal symbolism, dream studies, Christian iconography, and demonology to interpret animal dreams in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mackenzie Marrow's study introduces cryptozoology and folklore as additional approaches to Shakespearean creatures. Perry Guevara's "Of Flies: The Insect Mind of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*" (2023) further uncovers how insects can illuminate violence, bodily vulnerability, decay, and the human–nonhuman boundary. Furthermore, Todd Andrew Borlik's *Shakespeare and the Snakehandlers* (2023) connects venomous animals, ecological processes, social conflict, and violence through ecocritical and historicist analysis.

Research Gap

Existing recent studies focus on a single animal, a single play, a particular ecological problem, or one theoretical framework. Additionally, animals are frequently interpreted symbolically or metaphorically, while their zoological characteristics, species-specific behaviour, habitats, ecological functions, and early modern understandings of natural history receive comparatively limited systematic attention.

There is a significant gap remaining. No sufficiently comprehensive interdisciplinary study in the selected previous researches systematically examines zoological representation across *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Othello* as a comparative corpus.

The proposed research can therefore combine zoology, animal studies, ecocriticism, environmental humanities, Renaissance natural history, cultural studies, and close textual analysis. It can investigate how birds, beasts, reptiles, insects, and other creatures function simultaneously as biological entities, cultural symbols, political instruments, and ecological presences. A comparative study of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Othello* would consequently expand Shakespearean animal studies from isolated examples toward a systematic zoological, and interdisciplinary understanding of Shakespeare's animal world as participants in his representation of bodies, environments, power, violence, and species boundaries.

3. Theoretical Framework

The paper combines four complementary approaches. These are the following ones:

Animal Studies

The Animal Studies posits the question on the traditional anthropocentric view of considering humans to be entirely autonomous, superior and intelligent race among the natural world. The study examines that the literary texts construct or break down the boundaries between human being and the animals. This theoretical framework is useful for Shakespeare when he frequently describes, insults or praises characters labelling animal traits: for instance comparing the character to a dog, a wolf or a horse. This is an effective way of labelling the animal traits on other characters to reveal about power, status and morality.

Zoological Reading

The zoological reading is the extension of the methodology of Animal Studies. It doesn't look at texts as a metaphor generally but rather it treats the texts as a historical and cultural artifact to investigate specific modern

realities. It works on four targets. Firstly, it seeks to identify the literal species being used in the text. Secondly, it attempts to look closely the animal acts, looks, or functions within the context of the background. Thirdly, it explores Renaissance era science, folklore, bestiaries to understand what specific animal symbolized to Shakespeare's audience. Fourthly, It examines how Shakespeare takes standard cultural beliefs about animals and transforms them for thematic and dramatic effect in *Othello* and *King Lear*.

Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary approach of literary criticism and environmental studies that explores the relationship between literature and Natural Environment. Instead of considering the characters in isolation, it seeks to examine the characters how they interact with, affect and get affected with the non-human world. The Ecocriticism makes the paradigm shift with the idea that instead of taking environments as a mere background, it argues that the environment is the active agent in the story. The storm depicted in *King Lear* is not mere a weather event but mirrors his internal psychological breakdown and political chaos of his kingdom. The antagonist becomes the environment to face for him his own vulnerability as a human being. The subversion of nature mirrors the moral decay of state in *Macbeth* as *Macbeth* kills King Duncan, the order descends into disorder. Duncan's horses are eating on another creating chaos into political tyranny.

Human–Nonhuman Studies

Human-Nonhuman Studies (associating with Animal Studies) questions the long held assumption of the historical division between human and nonhuman. It subverts the anthropocentrism of human beings supremacy in the universe. The study takes the reciprocal relationships between human and animals. Instead of taking the cunning from the fox, the framework looks at the mutual impact of humans and animals on each other. It explores how human identity is constructed against animals and how treating animals as mere property reflects deeper cultural anxieties.

4. Methodology

The present study takes into account the qualitative approach to carry out the insight into the Shakespeare's plays prioritizing the textual analysis to examine the mutual relationship between humans and animals in Shakespearean tragedies. This approach suits to the study because it lets the study explore symbolic meanings, cultural anxieties and the conceptual boundaries of human identity. The primary data is gathered from the original texts of the tragedies. Close reading techniques are employed to isolate specific passages, metaphors, and dialogues that feature zoological imagery or animal imagery. Subsequently, the secondary data is applied to make argument after the points and analysis of the texts from the theoretical framework. The data is gathered from peer-reviewed online journals, academic databases, critical essays and articles as secondary sources to support the arguments. These sources contextualize the primary texts within cultural attitudes towards animals. The available data has been utilized by the analytical and interpretive method. The comparative method is also applied to understand the topic in a comprehensive manner.

5. Discussion

Zoological Imagination in Hamlet

Hamlet presents human being the best creation of God. The reason is of stating this is that the human being comprises the intellect to think of and the infinite faculty of imagination. *Hamlet* posits the question about the excellence of intellect in the play by placing humanity alongside animal existence. The important soliloquy of *Hamlet*: what a piece of work is a man I how noble in reason I how infinite in faculty I" (*Hamlet* 2.2) *Hamlet*'s idea gets changed about Human being's superiority, physical excellence, and godlike rationality and he thinks of the dust how the supremacy of intellect meets in dust. This change in outlook from excellence of intellect to

mere dust, associates human beings that they are nothing but dust. As a matter of fact, human beings are not exceptional beings because of intellect however they are the matter as other matter exists in nature and ultimately, they meet the dust. It also reminds of that the human beings are made of five elements of Nature Air, Sky, water, fire, dust as mentioned in Ramcharit Manis by Tulsidas. The dust meets dust at last. Therefore, the upheld ideal of supremacy of human beings comes to dust becomes the point of zoological reading for human beings as matter, not the immortal and autonomous entity. Because one day it ends to dust. The instability of this perspective is visible when Hamlet states “Man delights not me – no, nor woman neither.” (Hamlet 2.2) Hamlet rejects the distinction which is being made by Claudius and Gertrude to make a social order between civilized and irrational behaviour. The zoological reeding comes into effect when the passages from Graveyard scene is taken into consideration from Hamlet for analysis. Hamlet states, “How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the book, or equivocation will undo us.” Hamlet makes a conversation with gravedigger who presents the real truth of life that man is eaten by worms and is decomposed matter into nature. What is made of nature is decomposed in nature at last. He asks where Alexander's body may be found and concludes that even a great conqueror becomes matter: “Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay.”

Natural cycle of an individual's end equalizes all and destroys the classification between king and the subject; conqueror and the defeated making them the mere dust by decomposing. This idea of food chain can be understood from the statement of Hamlet: “A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.” (Act 4, Scene 3)

A man can use a worm that has eaten the king as a bait to catch the fish, and then eat the fish that has eaten that worm. So ironically, a king's body becomes the cycle of food chain and may end up in nourishing a common man. Even a powerful king after death, becomes the food for worms. The worm may be eaten by a fish, and that fish may ultimately consumed by an ordinary man. Another passage from Hamlet when Claudius asks Hamlet where is Polonius dead body. Hamlet gives a witty reply: “Not where he eats, but where he is eaten...” This statement shows that everyone gets this end and be the prey to worms because corporal body is ultimately destroyed by the worms, the decomposer of Nature. The food chain is maintained by the worms and ecological balance is maintained.

The food chain cycle is presented by Shakespeare through imagination. The ecological system regards all the creatures of Nature equal and does not make privilege to anyone and human intellectual supremacy is naught before the natural cycle. The worm eats the king; the fish consumes the worm and human make the food to the fish. Nature removes the barrier and hierarchy of the king over subjects and human over the animal. Instead of the symbolic metaphor of death to humans, the worms function the decomposition of the human life as doe to other forms of live in the nature. The play Hamlet represents the idea that human being is not separate from Nature rather the part of it.

Animality, Predation, and Ecological Disorder in Macbeth

On one hand, Hamlet stresses the decomposition and the food chain under the animal studies and environment interpretation, whereas Macbeth is the narrative of political violence disturbing relationship between predator, prey, pet animals and humans. Lady Macbeth compares Macbeth's unwillingness to that of an animal: “Like the poor cat i' th' adage.” (Macbeth 1.7) The imagery presents the picture of a cat which wants to catch the fish without making its paw wet. Human courage and ambitions are judged by animal behaviour. Lady Macbeth instigation and attempts to manipulate her husband's Macbeth behaviour, is unveiled on the basis of predatory action. The murder of the king Duncan is presented as a political disruption in Scotland. Shakespeare makes a comparison of political disturbance to the disorder in nonhuman world. The murder of Duncan is followed by the killing of animals and unnatural behaviour. The Old Man reports: “A falcon, towering in her pride of place, was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.” (Macbeth 2.4)

The predator -prey hierarchy is inversed for zoological interpretation in Macbeth. The falcon that is predator and preys to other birds, however in the play Macbeth it is preyed by the owl, the ordinary nocturnal predator for smaller creatures. The owl kills the falcon. The animal imagery of Macbeth horses gets intensified when they become cannibal eating to each other representing the politicalcatastrophe: “The horses of the time are broken loose, the wildest fled.” And: “’Tis said they ate each other.” The impact of Duncan’s murder is beyond the political court spreading in the environment disturbing the animal life. Macbeth later employs reptilian imagery: “We have scorched the snake, not killed it.” (Macbeth 3.2)

The imagery of serpent has been displayed in Macbeth on the two levels: first, when Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth how to appear before the king as the flower looks under which the serpent is hidden, so he must wear modesty lurking his ambition to get the throne. Secondly, the serpent is presented as scratched and injured not killed when the king Duncan is killed, but his sons Malcolm and Donalbin escaped abroad for survival. Therefore, savings of the Duncon’s sons is compared to the serpent that is injured but still survived and more dangerous to Macbeth. This shows the psychological disturbance of Macbeth. Again, the psychological pain is displayed in the imagery of scorpion. Macbeth states: “O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!” (Macbeth 3.2) However, the scorpion’s venomous sting provides the physical basis for Macbeth's description of thoughts as dangerous internal creatures. Consequently, Macbeth constructs an ecological network in which political violence, animal behaviour, and environmental disturbance mirror and influence one another.

Human Vulnerability and Animal Existence in King Lear

King Lear interrogates human beings as biological creatures among Shakespeare’s tragedies. Lear’s social and cultural identity is stripped away gradually as he confronts the storm. His body is exposed to Nature. In the middle of the storm King Lear asks: “Is man no more than this?” He then looks at the naked human body: “unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.” (King Lear 3.4) Under the Animal Studies, the statement of King Lear becomes meaningful because he does not compare human being with animals but the human itself becomes the animal. The reason of stating human is that as animal is vagabond having no accommodation, what the accommodation the animal keeps is the earth to sit and sky its roof, in the same way nature has been Lear’s accommodation. The homelessness makes Lear helpless, naked, filthy and untidy and all the external appearance in the name of clothes, political authority, social rank, property, courtly identity are taken away, what is left for Lear is the biological animal body. Lear further states: “Thou ow’st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume.” (King Lear 3.4)

Under the animal studies, human treats animals as resources and depend upon them for their bodies and products. The worm is supposed to give silk for humans for their luxury. Besides, the beast’s hide (skin) becomes a commodity for human’s interest. Moreover, the wool of sheep is the commodity for economic purpose for them. Furthermore, the cat is related to perfume again stressing the appropriation of an animal’s bodily substance for human pleasure. Lear moves from silk to hide and from wool to perfume displaying various ways in which human extracts value from nonhumans bodies. The anthropocentric assumption of Nature’s satisfying human needs, is exposed. In other words, Animals survive merely for human consumption.

The Fool deepens animal imageries by mentioning insects and small creatures. Edgar’s “Poor Tom” identity goes further. He asserts that he really becomes the animal in food consumption. He consumes: “the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall newt” and “the old rat and the ditch-dog.” (King Lear 3.4)

Edgar’s assumed identity as Poor Tom shows how social deprivation can reduce a human being to a condition of uncivilized and uncultured way where animals’ life from frog to tadpole and from rat to ditch dog are at risk and they are being the appetite-gratifier for the human beings. This exposes the anthropocentric view of humans that they can not only use the external product of animals but also eat them if hunger demands.

The famous image: “As flies to wanton boys are we to th’ gods; They kill us for their sport.” (King Lear 4.1) reverses the anthropocentric hierarchy again. Humans are compared to flies before relentless Power. They are puppets in the hands of the Supreme and are killed for his entertainment as boys kills the flies for amusement. The vulnerability of life both insects and humans are demonstrated before the Powerful. The powerful uses, misuses, exploits, and kills the nonhumanrarely humans. It is the culture and socialstatus that makes difference of superiority otherwise king and beggars arethe biologicalbody. The nonhuman life is also the same right as does human life to exist or survive on the earth.

Animalization, Race, Sexuality, and Violence in Othello

Animal imagery, charged by politics, is presented in Othello. The zoological language is deeply associated with race, sexuality, gender, and violence. The animalization is explicitly described in the opening scene of when Othello mates with his wife Desdemona. He is compared to Ram and she to Eve. The animal imageries of ram and eve is politically charged in it. Othello is invested as a racist who engages in sexual activity with the white Desdemona to reconstruct the sheep. Iago states: “an old black ram is tugging your white ewe.” (Othello 1.1)

The sexuality is noticeable in the physical copulation between Othello and Desdemona through the animal imagery of Ram and Eve. Moreover, the sexuality is visible in Othello when Iago informs Brabantio that he has handed over his daughter to the lascivious and lusty Othello. Iago says to Brabantio: “you’ll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse.” (Othello 1.1)

Othello is transformed into animal which is uncontrolled sexuality from military commander and husband. The play dehumanizes the relationship of marriage between Othello and Desdemona into the uncontrolled sexual activity of animal. The offsprings of Othello would be the colt who will neigh like horse. Iago tells Brabantio: “You’ll have your nephews neigh to you; you’ll have coursers for cousins...”

The animal imagery is been so intensified in the description of sexual intercourse between Othello and Desdemona that the two persons seem to appear as one demonstrating the sexual intercourse. The phrase “making the beast with two backs” stated by Iago reduces the dignity of marriage by presenting them the animal imagery engaged in sexual copulation imagined as if they form one two-backed animal. Furthermore, Iago also invokes goats and monkeys when discussing sexual behaviour: “Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys...” (Othello 3.3)

The metaphor of animal behaviour and selection of zoological language structure sexuality. The nonhumans or animals such as Ram, Eve, horse, neighing, goats, and monkeys are again and again imagined to describe the human sexual body.

Animalization constructs the social meaning carrying the identity of Othello as racially and sexually other. The language invested bears the politically charged meaning of human if make Othello as an animal to the degraded beast. Under the zoological analysis the specific behaviour of sheep, horses, goats and monkeys become the part of the culture mechanism which displays race and sexuality.

6. Comparative Analysis

Shakespeare’s dark tragedies uncover different dimensions under zoological interpretation. Animals and creatures are explored to notice in the plays through zoological concern. The worm, fish, dogs, birds, horses, decomposition, food chains and mortality are made visible in the play Hamlet. Besides, Owl, falcon, horses, cat, snake, scorpion predation ecological disorder and violence are the animals and small creatures that suits the animal studies to discover them in Macbeth. Moreover, King Lear examines worm, sheep, cat, dog, flies, frogs, toads, rats, vulnerability, embodiment, and species continuity under the studies of animality.

Furthermore, ram, eve, horse, monkey, monster, animalization, race, sexuality, and jealousy become the points of animal studies in Othello.

The single theory of animality is not applied in Shakespeare's dark tragedies, the comparison excavates it. Animals defy human permanence in Hamlet: the king becomes the eat for worms and fish. Macbeth uncovers ecological and political disorder: the falcon is killed by the owl and abnormality of horses accompany regicide. Animal challenges human excellence. Lear finds that human body is nothing but "forked animal". In Othello, animals unveil the political consequences of dehumanization. Zoological language, as a tool, exposes race, sexuality, and politically constructed social difference in it. The four dark tragedies reveal animal imagery, animal behaviour, human embodiment, species boundary, political power and ecological relations. The excellence of humanity is interrogated in the relation of animal and ecological interpretations.

7. Beyond Metaphor: Toward a Zoological Reading

The phrase "beyond metaphor" does not cease to be metaphor however the animal-metaphor crosses the limits and presents the wider meaning under biological and cultural context. For instance, metaphorically, serpent functions as a political threat on the ground of cultural knowledge considering serpent as dangerous, lurking and venomous creatures. Similarly, the horse becomes the symbol of racism in Othello having cultural association with breeding, sexuality, military power and strangeness.

The zoological reading of the tragedies has three stages: Animal, cultural knowledge and dramatic function. This approach reduces the anthropocentrism and stresses on the significance of the animals in nature no less than human. The interdisciplinary approaches of animal studies and environmental Studies prioritize the environment and animals in Shakespeare's dark tragedies. The animals exist in the plays simultaneously as does the objects of Nature, Renaissance culture, figures in folklore and religion components of ecological system. The metaphor plays the role of a tool rendering the meanings on wider level of political discourse, representation of race and gender, and the imaginative construction of humanity.

8. Original Contribution

The present study contributes in three ways. Firstly, it makes a shift from single-animal studies to comparative zoological interpretation across four tragedies. Secondly, it combines species-specific characteristics with literary interpretation, instead of treating animals solely as metaphors. Thirdly, it establishes a relationship between zoology and major Shakespearean questions: sovereignty in Hamlet, political violence in Macbeth, human vulnerability in King Lear, and race/sexuality in Othello. The research therefore proposes that Shakespeare's zoological imagination is the promising and less explored area.

9. Conclusion

The representation of animal-metaphors in Shakespeare's dark tragedies is neither incidental nor ornamental. In four tragedies: Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, and Othello, animals take participation in the dramatization of mortality, embodiment, political violence, ecological disorder, sexuality, race, and human vulnerability.

The worm and the fish in Hamlet become the agents of ecological cycle defying the permanence of humanity. Macbeth associates animal behaviour with political disruption and ecological disorder. Human excellence is dismantled by presenting human beings as "forked animal" in King Lear. Darker political animalization with gender, race, and sexuality are exposed in Othello.

The comparative studies explores that zoological interpretation of four tragedies moves continuously between human and animal, culture and nature, body and environment, metaphor and materiality. Zoological reading of Shakespeare's tragedies enlarges the interpretation instead of replacing the literary studies. The key argument of

this research paper focuses on animals not as metaphors of human experience but as a culturally and materially constructed nonhuman interrogating the exceptionality of human beings in Shakespeare's four dark tragedies.

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