

Colliding worlds: green world theory vs. marxist theory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Northrop Frye and C. L. Barber's "green world" and "misrule" theories are very much evident in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (AYLI). Frye discusses his "green world" theory in his books *Anatomy of Criticism*, in 1957, and *A Natural Perspective*, in 1965. In it, Frye describes a "normal" or court world, a "green world," and a changed court world. Barber's theory, found in Shakespeare's *Festive Comedy*, published in 1959, draws from an anthropological perspective. He describes the structures as tension, release, and clarification rather than by worlds. The cultural materialist/marxist view focuses more on how one class suppresses another. The marxist view concentrates on the economics, power, and class, while Frye and Barber are more concerned with the plotline of AYLI. Frye's court world, according to his theory, is where all of the characters are in the beginning of Shakespeare's play. AYLI's court, or normal world is one of injustice. It is a world where misuse of the law is prevalent. Act 1, scene 1 reveals Oliver's knowledge of how brutal Orlando's fight with the Duke's wrestler could become, yet he uses only "underhand means" (I. i. 138) to dissuade him from the fight. The word 'underhand' is footnoted as meaning "unobtrusive, not open or obvious." Oliver has misused the 'rules' of the normal world to attempt to get Orlando killed. Evidence for the murder conspiracy is found in these lines, spoken to the Charles, the challenger: "I had as life thou didst break his neck as his finger" (I. i. 143-4). Another misuse of court is found in scene 2 after Orlando wrestles Charles and wins. Instead of giving Orlando his prize, Duke Frederick replies, "The world esteemed thy father honorable, / But I did find him still mine enemy. / Thou shouldst have better pleased me with this deed / Hadst thou descended from another house. / But fare thee well" (I. ii. 220-5). Two more misuses are discovered in scene 3 when <https://assignbuster.com/colliding-worlds-green-world-theory-vs-marxist-theory/>

Rosalind is banished by Duke Frederick on his whim and readers learn it was he who usurped Duke Senior, his brother. Barber would refer to these injustices as building tension. At this point, something must break or be released. Act II brings all three theories into play. The change of scenery to the Forest of Arden follows Frye's "green world" theory. He describes this world as having the potential for characters to temporarily 'lose' their identity. Celia and Rosalind dress as Aliena and Ganymede to change their identities. Frye also tells how only certain characters proceed into the green world (for instance, Duke Frederick and Oliver are left behind). He identifies the exploration of liberating potentialities in his theory, which he found evident in AYLI when there is interaction of the classes in the forest. Duke Senior and his men are compared to "the old Robin Hood of England" (I. i. 115). The lines immediately after this label suggest Barber's theory of release: They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world" (I. i. 115-18). The men flocking are in situations too tense for them to handle and are escaping to Duke Senior for 'release' or a holiday license. Historically, as the growing industrialization and diminishing agrarianism fueled the tension in European societies the instinct was for society to escape to nature. The marxist view declares no change in worlds but a change in minds. They claim the 'second world' is a strategy for living in the first world. Marxists present Corin as evidence because he was already in the Forest of Arden and has not changed anything but employers. Corin is the character that maintains constant attention to time, space, and degree. Sylvius can declare that no one has loved like him because he has the time to sit around and ponder the question day and night and dream of Phoebe (II. iv. 21-42). He can waste the

<https://assignbuster.com/colliding-worlds-green-world-theory-vs-marxist-theory/>

time in a day because Corin is the one completing his chores and making use of the daylight hours. Marxists argue manual laborers are oppressed by the upper class. The changes all occur in the final scene. Frye's third world is a changed court world. This is described as a discovery of identity, transformation, or marriage. The discovered identities can be Celia and Rosalind's grand appearance with Hymen, the god of marriage, or as their marriages themselves. Frye views marriage as the manner in which women find their identity. The transformation is seen when Duke Senior declares Orlando the heir to his throne in lines 172-185 of act 5, scene 4. Of course, the marriage rites are about to be spoken just as the play ends thus giving Rosalind and Celia found identities. Barber's third structure is clarification. He defines it as being a heightened awareness of the relation between man and nature. This relationship exists when Jaques de Boys relates the misfortunes of Duke Frederick: "Duke Frederick, hearing how that every day Men of great worth resorted to this forest, Addressed a mighty power, which were on foot In his own conduct, purposely to take, His brother here and put him to the sword; And to the skirts of this wild wood he came, Where, meeting with an old religious man, After some question with him, was converted Both from his enterprise and from the world, His crown bequeathing to his banished brother, And all their lands restored to them again That were with him exiled" (V. iv. 159-70). Not only were the characters in the "green world" able to find awareness in nature, but so was Duke Frederick. The marxists argue that no change or clarification took place. Corin is still working on the farm and always will be no matter whom he once served. He catered to the 'down-trodden' escapees, but they merely used him until they could regain their social standings. In conclusion, Frye, Barber, <https://assignbuster.com/colliding-worlds-green-world-theory-vs-marxist-theory/>

and the marxists have similar points of argument in AYLI, but are all looking at the script through different colored glasses.