

Socrates is said to have thanked the gods that he was born neither barbarian nor female nor animal. His words conjure up the image of a human being, a Greek male, at the center of the universe, surrounded by wild and threatening forces. To the Western imagination the civilized standard has always been masculine, and taken for granted as so until recently. Shakespeares works, for all their genius and astonishing empathy, are inevitably products of a culture that regards women, animals, and foreigners as peripheral and threatening to its chief interests. We have been so hypnotized by the most powerful male voice in our language, interpreted for us by a long line of male critics and teachers, that we have seen nothing exceptionable in his patriarchal premises, writes Jeanne Addison Roberts. If the culture-induced hypnosis is wearing off, it is partly because of studies like *The Shakespearean Wild*. Plunging into a psychological jungle, Roberts examines the distinctions in various Shakespeare plays between wild nature and subduing civilization and shows how gender stereotypes are affixed to those distinctions. Taking her cue from Socrates, Roberts transports the reader to three kinds of Wilds that impinge on Shakespeares literary world: the mysterious female Wild, often associated with the malign and benign forces of [nature]; the animal Wild, which offers both reassurance of special human status and the threat of the loss of that status; and the barbarian Wild populated by marginal figures such as the Moor and the Jew as well as various hybrids. *The Shakespearean Wild* brims with mystery and menace, the exotic and erotic; with male and female archetypes, projections of suppressed fears and fantasies. The reader will see how the male vision of culture "exemplified in Shakespeares work" has reduced, distorted, and oversimplified the potentiality of women.

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