



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	KING LEAR	HAMLET	MACBETH	OTHELLO	ROMEO AND JULIET	JULIUS CAESAR	CORIOLANUS
CYMBELINE	TITUS ANDRONICUS	TIMON OF ATHENS	TROILUS AND CRESSIDA	ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA	KING JOHN		
HENRY IV, PART 1	HENRY IV, PART 2	HENRY V	HENRY VI, PART 1	HENRY VI, PART 2	HENRY VI, PART 3	RICHARD III	
HENRY VIII	ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL	AS YOU LIKE IT	THE COMEDY OF ERRORS	LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST			
MEASURE FOR MEASURE	THE MERCHANT OF VENICE	THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR	A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM				
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE	THE TEMPEST	TWELFTH NIGHT	THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA			
THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN	THE WINTER'S TALE	LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON	THE HISTORY OF CARDENIO	A LOVER'S COMPLAINT			
THE RAPE OF LUCRECE	THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM	VENUS AND ADONIS	THE PHOENIX AND THE TURTLE	SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS			

[WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE](#)[Comedies >](#)[WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE](#)

[COMEDIES](#)[A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM](#)

[ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL](#)[AS YOU LIKE IT](#)[CHARACTER](#)[MAJOR CHARACTERS](#)[MOTIFS](#)[PLOT OVERVIEW](#)[SUMMARY](#)[SYMBOLS](#)[THEMES](#)[LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST](#)[MEASURE FOR MEASURE](#)[MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING](#)[PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE](#)[THE COMEDY OF ERRORS](#)[THE MERCHANT OF VENICE](#)[THE MERCHANT OF VENICE](#)[THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR](#)[THE TAMING OF THE SHREW](#)[THE TEMPEST](#)[THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF
VERONA](#)[THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN](#)[THE WINTER'S TALE](#)[TWELFTH NIGHT](#)

HISTORIES

[HENRY IV, PART 1](#)[HENRY IV, PART 2](#)

As You Like It

 [Subscribe to posts](#)

Major Characters

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:28 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 21, 2013, 12:20 PM**]

Rosalind

Rosalind dominates *As You Like It*. So fully realized is she in the complexity of her emotions, the subtlety of her thought, and the fullness of her character that no one else in the play matches up to her. Orlando is handsome, strong, and an affectionate, if unskilled, poet, yet still we feel that Rosalind settles for someone slightly less magnificent when she chooses him as her mate. Similarly, the observations of Touchstone and Jaques, who might shine more brightly in another play, seem rather dull whenever Rosalind takes the stage.

The endless appeal of watching Rosalind has much to do with her success as a knowledgeable and charming critic of herself and others. But unlike Jaques, who refuses to participate wholly in life but has much to say about the foolishness of those who surround him, Rosalind gives herself over fully to circumstance. She chastises Silvius for his irrational devotion to Phoebe, and she challenges Orlando's thoughtless equation of Rosalind with a Platonic ideal, but still she comes undone by her lover's inconsequential tardiness and faints at the sight of his blood. That Rosalind can play both sides of any field makes her identifiable to nearly everyone, and so, irresistible.

Rosalind is a particular favorite among feminist critics, who admire her ability to subvert the limitations that society imposes on her as a woman. With boldness and imagination, she disguises herself as a young man for the majority of the play in order to woo the man she loves and instruct him in how to be a more accomplished, attentive lover—a tutorship that would not be welcome from a woman. There is endless comic appeal in Rosalind's lampooning of the conventions of both male and female behavior, but an Elizabethan audience might have felt a

[HENRY V](#)[HENRY VI, PART 1](#)[HENRY VI, PART 2](#)[HENRY VI, PART 3](#)[HENRY VIII](#)[KING JOHN](#)[RICHARD II](#)[RICHARD III](#)

HISTORIES

LOST PLAYS[LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON](#)[LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON](#)[THE HISTORY OF CARDENIO](#)

POEMS[A LOVER'S COMPLAINT](#)[SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS](#)[THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM](#)[THE PHOENIX AND THE TURTLE](#)[THE RAPE OF LUCRECE](#)[VENUS AND ADONIS](#)[VENUS AND ADONIS](#)

TRAGEDIES[ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA](#)[CORIOLANUS](#)[CYMBELINE](#)[HAMLET](#)[JULIUS CAESAR](#)

certain amount of anxiety regarding her behavior. After all, the structure of a male-dominated society depends upon both men and women acting in their assigned roles. Thus, in the end, Rosalind dispenses with the charade of her own character. Her emergence as an actor in the Epilogue assures that theatergoers, like the Ardenne foresters, are about to exit a somewhat enchanted realm and return to the familiar world they left behind. But because they leave having learned the same lessons from Rosalind, they do so with the same potential to make that world a less punishing place.

Orlando

According to his brother, Oliver, Orlando is of noble character, unschooled yet somehow learned, full of noble purposes, and loved by people of all ranks as if he had enchanted them (I.i.141–144). Although this description comes from the one character who hates Orlando and wishes him harm, it is an apt and generous picture of the hero of *As You Like It*. Orlando has a brave and generous spirit, though he does not possess Rosalind's wit and insight. As his love tutorial shows, he relies on commonplace clichés in matters of love, declaring that without the fair Rosalind, he would die. He does have a decent wit, however, as he demonstrates when he argues with Jaques, suggesting that Jaques should seek out a fool who wanders about the forest: "He is drowned in the brook. Look but in, and you shall see him," meaning that Jaques will see a fool in his own reflection (III.ii.262–263). But next to Rosalind, Orlando's imagination burns a bit less bright. This upstaging is no fault of Orlando's, given the fullness of Rosalind's character; Shakespeare clearly intends his audience to delight in the match. Time and again, Orlando performs tasks that reveal his nobility and demonstrate why he is so well-loved: he travels with the ancient Adam and makes a fool out of himself to secure the old man food; he risks his life to save the brother who has plotted against him; he cannot help but violate the many trees of Ardenne with testaments of his love for Rosalind. In the beginning of the play, he laments that his brother has denied him the schooling deserved by a gentleman, but by the end, he has proven himself a gentleman without the formality of that education.

Jaques

Jaques delights in being sad—a disparate role in a play that so delights in happiness. Jaques believes that his melancholy makes him the perfect candidate to be Duke Senior's fool. Such a position, he claims, will "Give me leave / To speak my mind," and the criticism that flows forth will "Cleanse the foul body of th'infected world" (II.vii.58–60). Duke Senior is rightly cautious about installing Jaques as the fool, fearing that Jaques would do little more than excoriate the

[KING LEAR](#)[MACBETH](#)[OTHELLO](#)[ROMEO AND JULIET](#)[SITEMAP.XML](#)[TIMON OF ATHENS](#)[TITUS ANDRONICUS](#)[TROIUS AND CRESSIDA](#)

[RECENT SITE ACTIVITY](#)

sins that Jaques himself has committed. Indeed, Jaques lacks the keenness of insight of Shakespeare's most accomplished jesters: he is not as penetrating as *Twelfth Night's* Feste or *King Lear's* fool. In fact, he is more like an aspiring fool than a professional one. When Jaques philosophizes on the seven stages of human life, for instance, his musings strike us as banal. His "All the world's a stage" speech is famous today, but the play itself casts doubt on the ideas expressed in this speech (II.vii.138). No sooner does Jaques insist that man spends the final stages of his life in "mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" than Orlando's aged servant, Adam, enters, bearing with him his loyalty, his incomparable service, and his undiminished integrity (II.vii.164–165).

Jaques's own faculties as a critic of the goings-on around him are considerably diminished in comparison to Rosalind, who understands so much more and conveys her understanding with superior grace and charm. Rosalind criticizes in order to transform the world—to make Orlando a more reasonable husband and Phoebe a less disdainful lover—whereas Jaques is content to stew in his own melancholy. It is appropriate that Jaques decides not to return to court. While the other characters merrily revel, Jaques determines that he will follow the reformed Duke Frederick into the monastery, where he believes the converts have much to teach him. Jaques's refusal to resume life in the dukedom not only confirms our impression of his character, but also resonates with larger issues in the play. Here, the play makes good on the promise of its title: everyone gets just what he or she wants. It also betrays a small but inevitable crack in the community that dances through the forest. In a world as complex and full of so many competing forces as the one portrayed in *As You Like It*, the absolute best one can hope for is consensus, but never complete unanimity.

Character

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:27 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 6, 2013, 11:27 PM**]

Rosalind

The daughter of Duke Senior. Rosalind, considered one of Shakespeare's most delightful heroines, is independent minded, strong-willed, good-hearted, and terribly clever. Rather than slink off into defeated exile, Rosalind resourcefully uses her trip to the Forest of Ardenne as an opportunity to take control of her own destiny. When she disguises herself as Ganymede—a handsome young man—and offers herself as a tutor in the ways of love to her beloved Orlando, Rosalind's talents and charms are on full display. Only Rosalind, for instance, is both aware of the foolishness of romantic love *and* delighted to be in love. She teaches those around her to

think, feel, and love better than they have previously, and she ensures that the courtiers returning from Ardenne are far gentler than those who fled to it.

Orlando

The youngest son of Sir Rowland de Bois and younger brother of Oliver. Orlando is an attractive young man who, under his brother's neglectful care, has languished without a gentleman's education or training. Regardless, he considers himself to have great potential, and his victorious battle with Charles proves him right. Orlando cares for the aging Adam in the Forest of Ardenne and later risks his life to save Oliver from a hungry lioness, proving himself a proper gentleman. He is a fitting hero for the play and, though he proves no match for her wit or poetry, the most obvious romantic match for Rosalind.

Duke Senior

The father of Rosalind and the rightful ruler of the dukedom in which the play is set. Having been banished by his usurping brother, Frederick, Duke Senior now lives in exile in the Forest of Ardenne with a number of loyal men, including Lord Amiens and Jaques. We have the sense that Senior did not put up much of a fight to keep his dukedom, for he seems to make the most of whatever life gives him. Content in the forest, where he claims to learn as much from stones and brooks as he would in a church or library, Duke Senior proves himself to be a kind and fair-minded ruler.

Jaques

A faithful lord who accompanies Duke Senior into exile in the Forest of Ardenne. Jaques is an example of a stock figure in Elizabethan comedy, the man possessed of a hopelessly melancholy disposition. Much like a referee in a football game, he stands on the sidelines, watching and judging the actions of the other characters without ever fully participating. Given his inability to participate in life, it is fitting that Jaques alone refuses to follow Duke Senior and the other courtiers back to court, and instead resolves to assume a solitary and contemplative life in a monastery.

Celia

The daughter of Duke Frederick and Rosalind's dearest friend. Celia's devotion to Rosalind is unmatched, as evidenced by her decision to follow her cousin into exile. To make the trip, Celia assumes the disguise of a simple shepherdess and calls herself Aliena. As elucidated by her extreme love of Rosalind and her immediate devotion to Oliver, whom she marries at the end of the play, Celia possesses a loving heart, but is prone to deep, almost excessive emotions.

Duke Frederick

The brother of Duke Senior and usurper of his throne. Duke Frederick's cruel nature and volatile temper are displayed when he banishes his niece, Rosalind, from court without reason. That Celia, his own daughter, cannot mitigate his unfounded anger demonstrates the intensity of

the duke's hatefulness. Frederick mounts an army against his exiled brother but aborts his vengeful mission after he meets an old religious man on the road to the Forest of Ardenne. He immediately changes his ways, dedicating himself to a monastic life and returning the crown to his brother, thus testifying to the ease and elegance with which humans can sometimes change for the better.

Touchstone

A clown in Duke Frederick's court who accompanies Rosalind and Celia in their flight to Ardenne. Although Touchstone's job, as fool, is to criticize the behavior and point out the folly of those around him, Touchstone fails to do so with even a fraction of Rosalind's grace. Next to his mistress, the clown seems hopelessly vulgar and narrow-minded. Almost every line he speaks echoes with bawdy innuendo.

Oliver

The oldest son of Sir Rowland de Bois and sole inheritor of the de Bois estate. Oliver is a loveless young man who begrudges his brother, Orlando, a gentleman's education. He admits to hating Orlando without cause or reason and goes to great lengths to ensure his brother's downfall. When Duke Frederick employs Oliver to find his missing brother, Oliver finds himself living in despair in the Forest of Ardenne, where Orlando saves his life. This display of undeserved generosity prompts Oliver to change himself into a better, more loving person. His transformation is evidenced by his love for the disguised Celia, whom he takes to be a simple shepherdess.

Silvius

A young, suffering shepherd, who is desperately in love with the disdainful Phoebe. Conforming to the model of Petrarchan love, Silvius prostrates himself before a woman who refuses to return his affections. In the end, however, he wins the object of his desire.

Phoebe

A young shepherdess, who disdains the affections of Silvius. She falls in love with Ganymede, who is really Rosalind in disguise, but Rosalind tricks Phoebe into marrying Silvius.

Lord Amiens

A faithful lord who accompanies Duke Senior into exile in the Forest of Ardenne. Lord Amiens is rather jolly and loves to sing.

Charles

A professional wrestler in Duke Frederick's court. Charles demonstrates both his caring nature and his political savvy when he asks Oliver to intercede in his upcoming fight with Orlando: he does not want to injure the young man and thereby lose favor among the nobles who support him. Charles's concern for Orlando proves unwarranted when Orlando beats him senseless.

Adam

The elderly former servant of Sir Rowland de Bois. Having witnessed Orlando's hardships, Adam offers not only to accompany his young master into exile but to fund their journey with the whole of his modest life's savings. He is a model of loyalty and devoted service.

Sir Rowland de Bois

The father of Oliver and Orlando, friend of Duke Senior, and enemy of Duke Frederick. Upon Sir Rowland's death, the vast majority of his estate was handed over to Oliver according to the custom of primogeniture.

Corin

A shepherd. Corin attempts to counsel his friend Silvius in the ways of love, but Silvius refuses to listen.

Audrey

A simpleminded goatherd who agrees to marry Touchstone.

William

A young country boy who is in love with Audrey.

Symbols

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:22 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 6, 2013, 11:22 PM**]

Orlando's Poems

The poems that Orlando nails to the trees of Ardenne are a testament to his love for Rosalind. In comparing her to the romantic heroines of classical literature—Helen, Cleopatra, Lucretia—Orlando takes his place among a long line of poets who regard the love object as a bit of earthbound perfection. Much to the amusement of Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone, Orlando's efforts are far less accomplished than, say, Ovid's, and so bring into sharp focus the silliness of which all lovers are guilty. Orlando's "tedious homil[ies] of love" stand as a reminder of the wide gap that exists between the fancies of literature and the kind of love that exists in the real world (III.ii.143).

The Slain Deer

In Act IV, scene ii, Jaques and other lords in Duke Senior's party kill a deer. Jaques proposes to

“set the deer’s horns upon [the hunter’s] head for a branch of victory” (IV.ii.4–5). To an Elizabethan audience, however, the slain deer would have signaled more than just an accomplished archer. As the song that follows the lord’s return to camp makes clear, the deer placed atop the hunter’s head is a symbol of cuckoldry, commonly represented by a man with horns atop his head. Allusions to the cuckolded man run throughout the play, betraying one of the dominant anxieties of the age—that women are sexually uncontrollable—and pointing out the schism between ideal and imperfect love.

Ganymede

Rosalind’s choice of alternative identities is significant. Ganymede is the cupbearer and beloved of Jove and is a standard symbol of homosexual love. In the context of the play, her choice of an alter ego contributes to a continuum of sexual possibilities.

Motifs

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:21 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 6, 2013, 11:21 PM**]

Artifice

As Orlando runs through the forest decorating every tree with love poems for Rosalind, and as Silvius pines for Phoebe and compares her cruel eyes to a murderer, we cannot help but notice the importance of artifice to life in Ardenne. Phoebe decries such artificiality when she laments that her eyes lack the power to do the devoted shepherd any real harm, and Rosalind similarly puts a stop to Orlando’s romantic fussing when she reminds him that “[m]en have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love” (IV.i.91–92). Although Rosalind is susceptible to the contrivances of romantic love, as when her composure crumbles when Orlando is only minutes late for their appointment, she does her best to move herself and the others toward a more realistic understanding of love. Knowing that the excitement of the first days of courtship will flag, she warns Orlando that “[m]aids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives” (IV.i.125–127). Here, Rosalind cautions against any love that sustains itself on artifice alone. She advocates a love that, while delightful, can survive in the real world. During the Epilogue, Rosalind returns the audience to reality by stripping away not only the artifice of Ardenne, but of her character as well. As the

Elizabethan actor stands on the stage and reflects on this temporary foray into the unreal, the audience's experience comes to mirror the experience of the characters. The theater becomes Ardenne, the artful means of edifying us for our journey into the world in which we live.

Homoeroticism

Like many of Shakespeare's plays and poems, *As You Like It* explores different kinds of love between members of the same sex. Celia and Rosalind, for instance, are extremely close friends—almost sisters—and the profound intimacy of their relationship seems at times more intense than that of ordinary friends. Indeed, Celia's words in Act I, scenes ii and iii echo the protestations of lovers. But to assume that Celia or Rosalind possesses a sexual identity as clearly defined as our modern understandings of *heterosexual* or *homosexual* would be to work against the play's celebration of a range of intimacies and sexual possibilities.

The other kind of homoeroticism within the play arises from Rosalind's cross-dressing. Everybody, male and female, seems to love Ganymede, the beautiful boy who looks like a woman because he is really Rosalind in disguise. The name Rosalind chooses for her alter ego, Ganymede, traditionally belonged to a beautiful boy who became one of Jove's lovers, and the name carries strong homosexual connotations. Even though Orlando is supposed to be in love with Rosalind, he seems to enjoy the idea of acting out his romance with the beautiful, young boy Ganymede—almost as if a boy who looks like the woman he loves is even more appealing than the woman herself. Phoebe, too, is more attracted to the feminine Ganymede than to the real male, Silvius.

In drawing on the motif of homoeroticism, *As You Like It* is influenced by the pastoral tradition, which typically contains elements of same-sex love. In the Forest of Ardenne, as in pastoral literature, homoerotic relationships are not necessarily antithetical to heterosexual couplings, as modern readers tend to assume. Instead, homosexual and heterosexual love exist on a continuum across which, as the title of the play suggests, one can move as one likes.

Exile

As You Like It abounds in banishment. Some characters have been forcibly removed or threatened from their homes, such as Duke Senior, Rosalind, and Orlando. Some have voluntarily abandoned their positions out of a sense of rightness, such as Senior's loyal band

of lords, Celia, and the noble servant Adam. It is, then, rather remarkable that the play ends with four marriages—a ceremony that unites individuals into couples and ushers these couples into the community. The community that sings and dances its way through Ardenne at the close of Act V, scene iv, is the same community that will return to the dukedom in order to rule and be ruled. This event, where the poor dance in the company of royalty, suggests a utopian world in which wrongs can be righted and hurts healed. The sense of restoration with which the play ends depends upon the formation of a community of exiles in politics and love coming together to soothe their various wounds.

Themes

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:19 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 6, 2013, 11:19 PM**]

Philosophical Viewpoints

Pondering life's big questions is the activity of choice in *As You Like It*, where debating about philosophical points of view seems like an Olympic sport. (What else are characters supposed to do with their time in the Forest of Arden? Herd sheep? Not likely.) Just about everyone in *As You Like It* has an opinion about the nature of life, love, the passage of time, etc. Yet, the play never offers up any definitive answers to the big questions it raises. Instead, Shakespeare offers up multiple points of view and invites the audience to decide for themselves.

The Delights of Love

As You Like It spoofs many of the conventions of poetry and literature dealing with love, such as the idea that love is a disease that brings suffering and torment to the lover, or the assumption that the male lover is the slave or servant of his mistress. These ideas are central features of the courtly love tradition, which greatly influenced European literature for hundreds of years before Shakespeare's time. In *As You Like It*, characters lament the suffering caused by their love, but these laments are all unconvincing and ridiculous. While Orlando's metrically incompetent poems conform to the notion that he should "live and die [Rosalind's] slave," these sentiments are roundly ridiculed (III.ii.142). Even Silvius, the untutored shepherd, assumes the role of the tortured lover, asking his beloved Phoebe to notice "the wounds invisible / That love's keen

arrows make” (III.v.31–32). But Silvius’s request for Phoebe’s attention implies that the enslaved lover can loosen the chains of love and that all romantic wounds can be healed—otherwise, his request for notice would be pointless. In general, *As You Like It* breaks with the courtly love tradition by portraying love as a force for happiness and fulfillment and ridicules those who revel in their own suffering.

Celia speaks to the curative powers of love in her introductory scene with Rosalind, in which she implores her cousin to allow “the full weight” of her love to push aside Rosalind’s unhappy thoughts (I.ii.6). As soon as Rosalind takes to Ardenne, she displays her own copious knowledge of the ways of love. Disguised as Ganymede, she tutors Orlando in how to be a more attentive and caring lover, counsels Silvius against prostrating himself for the sake of the all-too-human Phoebe, and scolds Phoebe for her arrogance in playing the shepherd’s disdainful love object. When Rosalind famously insists that “[m]en have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love,” she argues against the notion that love concerns the perfect, mythic, or unattainable (IV.i.91–92). Unlike Jaques and Touchstone, both of whom have keen eyes and biting tongues trained on the follies of romance, Rosalind does not mean to disparage love. On the contrary, she seeks to teach a version of love that not only can survive in the real world, but can bring delight as well. By the end of the play, having successfully orchestrated four marriages and ensured the happy and peaceful return of a more just government, Rosalind proves that love is a source of incomparable delight.

The Malleability of the Human Experience

In Act II, scene vii, Jaques philosophizes on the stages of human life: man passes from infancy into boyhood; becomes a lover, a soldier, and a wise civic leader; and then, year by year, becomes a bit more foolish until he is returned to his “second childishness and mere oblivion” (II.vii.164). Jaques’s speech remains an eloquent commentary on how quickly and thoroughly human beings can change, and, indeed, *do* change in *As You Like It*. Whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually, those who enter the Forest of Ardenne are often remarkably different when they leave. The most dramatic and unmistakable change, of course, occurs when Rosalind assumes the disguise of Ganymede. As a young man, Rosalind demonstrates how vulnerable to change men and women truly are. Orlando, of course, is putty in her hands; more impressive, however, is her ability to manipulate Phoebe’s affections, which move from Ganymede to the once despised Silvius with amazing speed.

In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare dispenses with the time--consuming and often hard-won processes involved in change. The characters do not struggle to become more pliant—their changes are instantaneous. Oliver, for instance, learns to love both his brother Orlando and a disguised Celia within moments of setting foot in the forest. Furthermore, the vengeful and ambitious Duke Frederick abandons all thoughts of fratricide after a single conversation with a religious old man. Certainly, these transformations have much to do with the restorative, almost magical effects of life in the forest, but the consequences of the changes also matter in the real

world: the government that rules the French duchy, for example, will be more just under the rightful ruler Duke Senior, while the class structures inherent in court life promise to be somewhat less rigid after the courtiers sojourn in the forest. These social reforms are a clear improvement and result from the more private reforms of the play's characters. *As You Like It* not only insists that people can and do change, but also celebrates their ability to change for the better.

City Life Versus Country Life

Pastoral literature thrives on the contrast between life in the city and life in the country. Often, it suggests that the oppressions of the city can be remedied by a trip into the country's therapeutic woods and fields, and that a person's sense of balance and rightness can be restored by conversations with uncorrupted shepherds and shepherdesses. This type of restoration, in turn, enables one to return to the city a better person, capable of making the most of urban life. Although Shakespeare tests the bounds of these conventions—his shepherdess Audrey, for instance, is neither articulate nor pure—he begins *As You Like It* by establishing the city/country dichotomy on which the pastoral mood depends. In Act I, scene i, Orlando rails against the injustices of life with Oliver and complains that he “know[s] no wise remedy how to avoid it” (I.i.20–21). Later in that scene, as Charles relates the whereabouts of Duke Senior and his followers, the remedy is clear: “in the forest of Ardenne . . . many young gentlemen . . . fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world” (I.i.99–103). Indeed, many are healed in the forest—the lovesick are coupled with their lovers and the usurped duke returns to his throne—but Shakespeare reminds us that life in Ardenne is a temporary affair. As the characters prepare to return to life at court, the play does not laud country over city or vice versa, but instead suggests a delicate and necessary balance between the two. The simplicity of the forest provides shelter from the strains of the court, but it also creates the need for urban style and sophistication: one would not do, or even matter, without the other.

Foolishness and Folly

As You Like It makes it clear that human beings can be pretty ridiculous, so, naturally, much of the play is spent poking fun of foolish behavior – from Orlando's silly notion that love should look like a 14th-century Italian Hallmark e-card to Jaques's melancholy and highly clichéd outlook on life. The character who does most of the mocking in the play just happens to be a “licensed fool,” Touchstone. Like Shakespeare's other fools, Touchstone's quick wit and insight into human nature allows him to point out the folly of those around him, even as he participates in clowning and foolery.

Despite its critique of human folly, *As You Like It* also acknowledges that foolishness and folly

are the very things that make us human. And if we can recognize this, we're way ahead of the game. As Touchstone (channeling Socrates) points out "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man/ knows himself to be a fool" (5.1.8).

Transformation

Transformation is a big deal in *As You Like It*. In the Forest of Arden, some characters literally transform themselves by cross-dressing, while others shrug off their city-slicker identities and live as rustic country-types. Physical transformations aren't the only big changes at work in the play's pastoral setting. Except for the endlessly melancholy Jaques, most characters undergo some sort of psychological or spiritual transformation in Arden. Often, these "conversions" are sudden and seemingly miraculous, as is the case with Duke Frederick and Oliver, who change their evil ways upon entering the woods.

At times, this theme allows Shakespeare to explore the nature of the theater, which requires actors to transform themselves on an ever-changing stage. At other times, the characters' physical and spiritual conversions allow Shakespeare to comment on humanity – we may be deeply flawed, but we are also capable of changing for the better.

Summary

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:15 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 21, 2013, 12:21 PM**]

Sir Rowland de Boys has recently died, leaving behind sons Oliver and Orlando. Since Oliver's the eldest son, he's inherited just about everything. This includes the responsibility of making sure his little bro finishes school and continues to live the kind of lifestyle he's become accustomed to as the s

on of a nobleman. (By the way, this lifestyle looks like a sixteenth-century version of MTV's [Teen Crips](#).)

Oliver, however, treats his little bro like a servant – he refuses to pay for Orlando's education and never gives the kid any spending money. Also, he tells the local court wrestler it would be

a good idea to snap Orlando's neck, but Orlando doesn't know about this. Naturally, Orlando is ticked off that Oliver treats him so badly and he's ready to "mutiny" against his older bro. Instead, he channels all of his pent up anger into a wrestling match, where he beats the court wrestler to a bloody pulp.

Orlando's wrestling skillz catch the eye of a local girl named Rosalind, who has her own family drama to worry about. (Ros is the daughter of Duke Senior, who used to rule over the French court but was overthrown by his snaky, backstabbing brother, Duke Frederick. Because Rosalind's dad is living in exile in the Forest of Arden, Rosalind has been crashing at the palace with her BFF/cousin, Celia. Did we mention that Celia is the daughter of snaky, backstabbing Duke Frederick? And you thought *your* family had issues...)

Rosalind thinks Orlando is the dreamiest boy she's ever laid eyes on and Orlando feels the same way about her. The two fall in

love faster than you can make Ramen noodles. Rosalind gives Orlando her necklace, which means the two are officially an item.

Things go downhill from there. Orlando finds out that his big brother Oliver is planning to burn his house down (with Orlando in it), so he runs away to the Forest of Arden. Since he's broke he takes his old family servant Adam along for the adventure. This is a good thing because Adam ponies up his entire life savings to help cover the costs of the road trip.

Meanwhile, Duke

Frederick decides that he doesn't like the fact that Rosalind is more popular than his daughter, Celia. So, Duke Frederick 86'es his niece from his court.

Rosalind decides to run away to the Forest of Arden, which, apparently, is the destination of choice for exiles. To avoid being the target of rapists and thieves, Rosalind decides that she'll dress as a boy and call herself "Ganymede." Cousin Celia is so devoted that she decides to run away too and she disguises herself as "Ganymede's" sister, "Aliena." (As in Celia is now *alienated* from her father.) Just for kicks, the girls decide to invite the court fool, Touchstone, along with them.

Cut to the Forest of Arden, where we meet Rosalind's dad, Duke Senior. He's a pretty happy-go-lucky guy for being a banished duke, and he tells us that Arden is a lot like the garden of Eden (except for the fact that Arden is lot colder and windier).

Meanwhile, Orlando and his servant Adam are starving because they forgot to watch [Man vs.](#)

Wild and have no idea how to find food in the forest. Adam passes out and Orlando promises to find him some dinner. Luckily, Orla

ndo stumbles upon Duke Senior and his band of "merry men" sitting down to a mouth-watering banquet. Orlando crashes the party and threatens to kill everyone if they don't give him something to eat, like, right now. The Duke is all "chill out, and bring Adam, too." Orlando and Adam make a ton of new friends at the banquet, including "melancholy" Jaques.

On the cross-dressing front, things are good for Rosalind/Ganymede as she settles into the Forest of Arden. She meets a shepherd, Corin, who gives Rosalind a hot real estate tip about a cottage that comes with its own flock of sheep and plenty of land for grazing.

Rosalind/Ganymede and Celia/Aliena don't waste any time going country – they buy the cottage and make friends with the locals. Among their new rustic pals are a lovesick shepherd named Silvius and the woman he loves, Phoebe. (By the way, Phoebe *hates* Silvius.)

Yet, love is definitely in the air. Rosalind discovers poems (stuck to trees) that a mysterious lover has penned – about her! The

poems are pretty awful and they're full of silly clichés about love, but Rosalind doesn't care when she finds out the poems have been written by none other than dreamy Orlando.

Before we know it, Rosalind bumps into Orlando in the forest. Instead of coming clean about her true identity, she stays in her "Ganymede" disguise and becomes pals with Orlando. (That way, she can pump Orlando for information about how he *really* feels about her.) Orlando confesses to "Ganymede" that he's head over heels for Rosalind. "Ganymede" then generously offers to pretend to be Rosalind, so that Orlando can practice all of his best moves in the romance department. Orlando, who has no idea "Ganymede" is actually the girl he loves, takes the bait and even participates in a pretend wedding. Aww.

As it turns out, though, Orlando is under the impression that romance should look something like a sappy, 14th-century Italian Hallmark card, so Rosalind/Ganymede has got her work cut out for her. She rolls up her sleeves and teaches Orlando how to be a good boyfriend/future husband without ever reveali

ng her true identity.

Meanwhile, the local shepherdess, Phoebe, has fallen in love with "Ganymede" and wants to marry "him." Also, Touchstone has managed to find a not-so-bright country girl, Audrey, who is willing to get hitched.

The action comes to a head when Rosalind/Ganymede bumps into Orlando's mean brother, Oliver, in the forest. We learn that Oliver came to the forest to kill his little bro, but, when Orlando saved his life from a ferocious lion, Oliver repented and decided not to kill his kid brother. This is good news, because Oliver and Celia fall in love, about two minutes after meeting. (What? Things happen

fast in Arden.)

Seeing Oliver and Celia so happy makes Orlando sad. Even though it's been fun pretend-romancing "Ganymede," Orlando says he can't live another day without the real Rosalind. "Ganymede" takes pity and promises Orlando that he'll get to marry his girl the very next day. Then "Ganymede" promises that all the lovesick characters will be getting hitched tomorrow.

The next day, everyone gathers around in the forest. "Ganymede" enters and makes Silvius, Phoebe, and Orlando promise to do whatever he says: Orlando must swear to marry Rosalind if Ganymede can produce her; Phoebe must promise to marry Silvius if she decides she doesn't want to marry Ganymede; Silvius must swear that he will marry Phoebe if Phoebe will have him. When Rosalind whips of

her "Ganymede" costume and reveals her true identity (surprise!), her plan falls neatly into place.

Before all of the couples get a chance to smash wedding cakes into each others' faces, Orlando's brother, Jaques de Boys (not to be confused with melancholy Jaques) shows up with news that Duke Frederick has decided to give back Duke Senior's dukedom. Apparently, Frederick entered the forest ready to kill his brother, but met a "religious man" along the way and experienced a sudden conversion. (Like we said, things happen fast in Arden.)

Duke Senior can't wait to return to court and promises to restore all the exiles to their proper social stations – including his new son-in-law, Orlando, who will inherit his dukedom. For now, though, he says that ev

eryone should party like it's 1599.

And they all live happily

ever after. (Except for melancholy Jaques, who decides to hang out by himself in a cave.)

Plot Overview

posted Aug 6, 2013, 11:14 PM by alaa hagag [**updated Aug 6, 2013, 11:14 PM**]

Sir Rowland de Bois has recently died, and, according to the custom of primogeniture, the vast majority of his estate has passed into the possession of his eldest son, Oliver. Although Sir Rowland has instructed Oliver to take good care of his brother, Orlando, Oliver refuses to do so. Out of pure spite, he denies Orlando the education, training, and property befitting a gentleman. Charles, a wrestler from the court of Duke Frederick, arrives to warn Oliver of a rumor that Orlando will challenge Charles to a fight on the following day. Fearing censure if he should beat a nobleman, Charles begs Oliver to intervene, but Oliver convinces the wrestler that Orlando is a dishonorable sportsman who will take whatever dastardly means necessary to win. Charles vows to pummel Orlando, which delights Olive

Duke Senior has been usurped of his throne by his brother, Duke Frederick, and has fled to the Forest of Ardenne, where he lives like Robin Hood with a band of loyal followers. Duke Frederick allows Senior's daughter, Rosalind, to remain at court because of her inseparable friendship with his own daughter, Celia. The day arrives when Orlando is scheduled to fight Charles, and the women witness Orlando's defeat of the court wrestler. Orlando and Rosalind instantly fall in love with one another, though Rosalind keeps this fact a secret from everyone

but Celia. Orlando returns home from the wrestling match, only to have his faithful servant Adam warn him about Oliver's plot against Orlando's life. Orlando decides to leave for the safety of Ardenne. Without warning, Duke Frederick has a change of heart regarding Rosalind and banishes her from court. She, too, decides to flee to the Forest of Ardenne and leaves with Celia, who cannot bear to be without Rosalind, and Touchstone, the court jester. To ensure the safety of their journey, Rosalind assumes the dress of a young man and takes the name Ganymede, while Celia dresses as a common shepherdess and calls herself Aliena.

Duke Frederick is furious at his daughter's disappearance. When he learns that the flight of his daughter and niece coincides with the disappearance of Orlando, the duke orders Oliver to lead the manhunt, threatening to confiscate Oliver's lands and property should he fail. Frederick also decides it is time to destroy his brother once and for all and begins to raise an army.

Duke Senior lives in the Forest of Ardenne with a band of lords who have gone into voluntary exile. He praises the simple life among the trees, happy to be absent from the machinations of court life. Orlando, exhausted by travel and desperate to find food for his starving companion, Adam, barges in on the duke's camp and rudely demands that they not eat until he is given food. Duke Senior calms Orlando and, when he learns that the young man is the son of his dear former friend, accepts him into his company. Meanwhile, Rosalind and Celia, disguised as Ganymede and Aliena, arrive in the forest and meet a lovesick young shepherd named Silvius who pines away for the disdainful Phoebe. The two women purchase a modest cottage, and soon enough Rosalind runs into the equally lovesick Orlando. Taking her to be a young man, Orlando confides in Rosalind that his affections are overpowering him. Rosalind, as Ganymede, claims to be an expert in exorcising such emotions and promises to cure Orlando of lovesickness if he agrees to pretend that Ganymede is Rosalind and promises to come woo her every day. Orlando agrees, and the love lessons begin.

Meanwhile, Phoebe becomes increasingly cruel in her rejection of Silvius. When Rosalind intervenes, disguised as Ganymede, Phoebe falls hopelessly in love with Ganymede. One day, Orlando fails to show up for his tutorial with Ganymede. Rosalind, reacting to her infatuation with Orlando, is distraught until Oliver appears. Oliver describes how Orlando stumbled upon him in the forest and saved him from being devoured by a hungry lioness. Oliver and Celia, still disguised as the shepherdess Aliena, fall instantly in love and agree to marry. As time passes, Phoebe becomes increasingly insistent in her pursuit of Ganymede, and Orlando grows tired of pretending that a boy is his dear Rosalind. Rosalind decides to end the charade. She promises that Ganymede will wed Phoebe, if Ganymede will ever marry a woman, and she

makes everyone pledge to meet the next day at the wedding. They all agree.

The day of the wedding arrives, and Rosalind gathers the various couples: Phoebe and Silvius; Celia and Oliver; Touchstone and Audrey, a goatherd he intends to marry; and Orlando. The group congregates before Duke Senior and his men. Rosalind, still disguised as Ganymede, reminds the lovers of their various vows, then secures a promise from Phoebe that if for some reason she refuses to marry Ganymede she will marry Silvius, and a promise from the duke that he would allow his daughter to marry Orlando if she were available. Rosalind leaves with the disguised Celia, and the two soon return as themselves, accompanied by Hymen, the god of marriage. Hymen officiates at the ceremony and marries Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, Phoebe and Silvius, and Audrey and Touchstone. The festive wedding celebration is interrupted by even more festive news: while marching with his army to attack Duke Senior, Duke Frederick came upon a holy man who convinced him to put aside his worldly concerns and assume a monastic life. -Frederick changes his ways and returns the throne to Duke Senior. The guests continue dancing, happy in the knowledge that they will soon return to the royal court.

1-7 of 7

