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As You Like It and the Nature of Love

by

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Portrait miniature of a Young Man Leaning Against a Tree among Roses

Nicholas Hilliard, 1585-1595

JILL LINE

As You Like It and the Nature of Love

He is already in the Forest of Arden and many young gentlemen flock to him every day and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the Golden World

Although a number of his plays contain pastoral themes, *As You Like It* is the nearest Shakespeare comes to writing an Arcadian romance. While his story is borrowed from the pastoral love story *Rosalynde* by Thomas Lodge, an important influence on *As You Like It* was the youthful Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*.

Following the vogue for Arcadian romances that were arriving from Italy, notably the first using the title *Arcadia* by Jacopo Sannazaro, Sidney decided to write his own version under the same name. Further inspired by the pastoral setting of Wilton House where he frequently visited his sister, Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, he wrote *Arcadia* for her amusement. Some twenty years after it was published in 1580, there is evidence that Shakespeare travelled to Wilton with his company to perform *As You Like It* before the new King James. One may imagine this pastoral play, with Shakespeare playing maybe the old servant Adam, being performed on the very lawns where Sidney had read his own *Arcadia* to his sister and her friends.

However, unlike Sidney and Lodge, Shakespeare was a philosopher as well as a dramatist and poet whose mind, like Socrates' or Plotinus', could rise above the mundane world and see it as if from the world of the gods. With insight and understanding his plays rose far above the somewhat laboured and contrived philosophic references that Sidney, Jonson and many other Arcadian authors liked to impose upon their work.

Both Sidney and Shakespeare follow the traditional pattern of Arcadian romance in which a ruler in conflict with himself and his state leaves the city for the countryside where, having learned to harmonise his soul with his natural surroundings and discover his own nature, he returns to the city as the good ruler of a well-ordered state.

But whereas Shakespeare's Duke in *As You Like It* looks deeply into the Platonic philosophy of nature, Sidney demonstrates some knowledge of these ideas before losing sight of them in the sort of popular adventures of the period involving battles with wild beasts and giants, such as those he would have read in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. After being told by an oracle that his country is threatened by disaster Duke Basilius flees with his family to the countryside whereupon two upright young princes appear on the scene and fall in love with his beautiful daughters:

Two princes born to the exercise of virtue ... accompanying the increase of their years with the increase of all good inward and outward qualities, and taking very timely into their minds that the divine part of man was not enclosed in this body for nothing, gave themselves wholly over to those knowledges which might in the course of their life be ministers to well doing. ¹

However, when they decide to follow the path of love and virtue unlike Shakespeare's heroes starting on the same path they soon forget all about being virtuous and sexual desire overcomes reason. At the same time Duke Basilius becomes involved in an unsavoury love affair, falls into a debased state and is finally poisoned; although having taken a drug that gives but the appearance of death he is brought symbolically back to life and repentance. The adventures of the Duke and the two princes in the Arcadian countryside, helped by their natural surroundings and

¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, (Oxford, 1974) p.10.

the interludes of tales of love sung by the shepherds, finally bring them to their senses and they realise their true nature. The princes win the love of their princesses and Basilius regains rulership over himself, enabling him to return to the city a wiser and better Duke. While it has its parallels with Shakespeare's play *Sidney's* is an altogether coarser version.

In several of his dialogues Plato compares the city to intellect and the nature of the countryside with inspiration of the soul. While walking with Phaedrus into the countryside Socrates tells him it had nothing to teach him since the only place for learning is the city:

I am a lover of learning and hence I consider that fields and trees are not willing to teach me anything, but that this can be effected by men residing in the city.

Yet Nature works her magic and while they are sitting beside the river he becomes captivated by the beauty of their surroundings:

... the plane tree very widely spreads its shady branches and is remarkably tall, and the height and opacity of the willow are perfectly beautiful ... a most pleasant fountain of cool water flows under the plane tree ... how lovely and very agreeable the air of the place is and what a summer-like and sonorous singing resounds from the choir of grasshoppers.²

The beauty inspires him to speak to Phaedrus of the ascent of the winged soul, through which, if we persevere, we may see Beauty herself. And with this vision brought about by the beauty of Nature still in their minds they return to the city.

² Plato, *Phaedrus*, 230b-d, trans. Thomas Taylor, Works of Plato IV, TTS XII.

Philip Sidney is at his best when he describes his Arcadia in a similar fashion:

Do you not see how everything conspires together to make this place a heavenly dwelling? ... Do not these stately trees seem to maintain their flourishing old age being clothed with a continual spring because no Beauty here should ever fade? Doth not the air breathe health which the birds solemnise with the sweet consent of their voices? And these fresh and delightful brooks, how slowly they slide away, as loath to leave so many things united in perfection.³

In the opening scene of *As You Like It* we learn that the true Duke has been usurped by his evil brother and escaped with a number of his courtiers to the Forest of Arden. Here they are living a pastoral life in what is said to be an Arcadian Golden Age:

They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many, merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world.⁴ 1.1.114-119

From Homeric times when Hesiod wrote of the Golden World and the Golden Age they were synonymous with the idea of Paradeisos, Paradise the ‘garden of the gods,’ hence the Garden of Eden. In the same era the writers of the Homeric Hymns called this golden world Arcadia, after a land in central Greece known for its music and shepherds and as the mythical birthplace and home of many gods.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato recalls the Myth of the True Earth. Here Socrates describes the perfect world that was in the mind of the Creator when he created the earth. A soul may rise above our mundane world to this golden world and realise it as the first goal

³ Sidney, *Arcadia*, p.14.

⁴ References to *As You Like It* will appear in the text.

of its return journey through higher worlds to its source.⁵ Around the same time Theocritus was writing his *Idylls* and the idea of Arcadia took root in pastoral poetry. In later ages the most popular and influential of the Arcadian poets was Virgil who wrote of Arcadia and the Golden Age in his *Eclogues*. In the Introduction to his translation E.V. Rieu gives a perceptive summary of Virgil's vision of Nature:

It was in his Arcady, the pastoral world of his memories and his fancy, that Virgil found the window which gave him this vision of the truth, and sensed the spirit that pulsates in everything that is, and makes a harmony of man, tree, beast and rock. Nature is fundamentally at one with man, though towns and politics and war make him a refugee from her and her truth. It is the shepherd and his sheep that are her nurslings and her confidants.⁶

During the Italian Renaissance many Christian Platonic Academies had been founded in cities all over Italy by scholars from Ficino's Academy in Florence. When Virgil's *Eclogues* were rediscovered, their pastoral settings were embraced by the Academies, many of which became known as Arcadian Academies. Some, such as the Arcadian Academy of Rome, continued into the eighteenth century. Their members, including Ficino himself, enjoyed dressing up as shepherds and shepherdesses while immersing themselves in nature in the gardens of their country villas. After Ficino had published his *Commentary on the Symposium on Love*, the speech of Diotima on the ascent of the soul through the love of beauty became an important part of their philosophic thought. It was enacted in their gardens and celebrated with music, poetry and songs. Books of pastoral poetry as well as prose and plays were written with philosophic undertones of the path of love, one of them being Sannazaro's *Arcadia* which would influence Sidney. Translations appeared in England and the same tradition became rooted in the English Renaissance. Arcadian pastoral poetry

⁵ *Phaedo*, 114c, Works of Plato IV, TTS XII, p.295.

⁶ E.V.Rieu, Introduction to Virgil, *The Pastoral Poems* (Penguin Classics, 1949) p.13.

was the vogue and many poets in their work included the Platonic idea of the path of virtuous love towards heavenly beauty. A number of Ben Jonson's court masques followed the same theme, while the love of a woman's beauty became the first step on the path of the soul for all the lovers in Shakespeare's comedies.

As a point of interest, an early pastoral influence on Shakespeare may have been a poet known as Mantuan, named after the Arcadian Academy of Mantua where he taught. Inspired by Virgil, Mantuan wrote his own book of *Eclogues* on pastoral life among the shepherds which, in its original Latin, became popular in England and was widely taught in the grammar schools. This was not only for its subject matter in extolling virtue and the higher form of love, but also because it was written in easy Latin. In this way Mantuan became an important influence on English poets, among them Edmund Spenser while he was writing *The Shepherds' Calendar*. And the schoolboy Shakespeare may have 'crept to school' with it in his satchel for, by poking fun at the pedantry of schoolmasters through his character Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*, he makes it clear that he had studied Mantuan at school. After misquoting the Latin of the opening line of his first eclogue, the pompous schoolmaster continues: 'Good old Mantuan ... old Mantuan! Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not'.⁷ Thus it is quite possible that Shakespeare first learned of the Arcadian pastoral ideal at his grammar school desk. Later he must have read about Arcadia and the Golden Age in the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a much-used book of Greek myths that lay by his side all his working life. To return to *As You Like It*. When we first meet Shakespeare's Duke Senior he is speaking to his comrades from the court who had come to live with him in the forest. In the following speech he reveals the depth of his learning from nature:

Now my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet

⁷ *Love's Labour's Lost*, 4.2.91-6. All quotations from Shakespeare are from the Arden edition.

Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
'This is no flattery. These are the counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.' 2.1.1-11

The Duke has recognised the 'painted pomp of the envious Court' with its false flatterers as belonging to a mere appearance of the sensible world. Now he is learning to look inward to find reality from nature herself. In Arcadia, as Shakespeare would have learned from Ovid, it is everlasting spring so if the 'icy fangs' of winter winds are felt he brushes them off as 'the penalty' suffered by Adam when he left the Arcadian Garden of Eden for an earthly life. At the same time he understands that they are his true counsellors sent to 'persuade me what I am,' which is that he is far greater than his earthly body. For it is through nature that the embodied soul may be raised to know its own nature and through intellect that it may learn to know itself:

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything. 2.1.12-17

The 'ugly and venomous toad,' becomes another councillor of nature reminding him to look beyond appearances to the mind within, the 'precious jewel in his head.' And if he looks beyond the outward appearance of trees, brooks and stones to the beauty of all nature, he will discover the beauty of his own nature, soul and intellect in the unity of the Good itself, 'the good in everything.' Plotinus described it as:

Intellect ... comprehending in itself the nature of beings, of which indeed this our beautiful material world is but the shadow and image ... intellect, that true intelligible world, is situated in universal splendour, living in itself a blessed life ... which divine world, whoever perceives will be immediately astonished if he profoundly and intimately merges himself into its inmost recesses, and becomes one with its all-beauteous nature.⁸

In contrast to the wisdom of the Duke one of his courtiers, the melancholy Jacques, takes a cynical view of mankind and fails to look beyond the appearance of the sensible world. Unlike the Duke he is never reminded by the counsellors of Nature to look for the inner beauty. In one of Shakespeare's most famous and wonderfully observed speeches he compares the world to a stage, in other words an image of the true world. Likewise by referring to all men and women as merely players, although described with sublime wit they are still images of reality. While Jacques is describing the seventh age as:

... second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything, 2.7.165-6

the exhausted old Adam is carried on stage by Orlando. What Jacques describes and what we see is his outward appearance but we already know his inner nature is kind

⁸ Plotinus, *On Nature, Contemplation and the One, Ennead 3.8*, trans. Thomas Taylor, TTS III, p.134.

and generous, a servant who will follow his master ‘to the last gasp with truth and loyalty’. 2.3.70

Adam is mentioned in the first line of the play which is spoken by Orlando, ‘As I remember Adam,’ immediately resonating with the Garden of Eden or Arcadia. Orlando recalls the years of servitude and ill treatment he suffered at the hands of his eldest brother, Oliver. Then suddenly he makes a resolution: ‘The spirit of my father grows strong within me and I will no longer endure it.’ 1.1.21-24 He is at a turning point in his life from which he will embark on a new path, soon to be that of a lover, whose soul through the love of beauty will ascend to knowledge of beauty herself. Before long Orlando meets and falls in love with the beauty of the banished Duke Senior’s daughter, Rosalind. As her father is learning from the beauty of nature in the forest, so Orlando must look beyond appearances and fall in love with the inner beauty of Rosalind’s virtuous soul, in this way he himself will grow virtuous. By the end of the scene he is thinking of her as ‘heavenly Rosalind!’ 1.2.274 Orlando has met and fallen in love with the woman whose soul represents the heavenly part of his own soul and will become his teacher on the path of love.

The first virtue he develops on his path is courage, the courage to stand up to his brother and then to pit himself against the strength of the usurping Duke Frederick’s wrestler and, against all the odds, winning. This arouses the fury of the Duke and to escape death Orlando flees with Adam to the Forest of Arden. When the old man’s strength fails Orlando’s kindness demonstrates his goodness of heart, another virtue of his soul.

After the death of his old servant Orlando throws himself into nature and in the first frenzy of love he races through the forest pinning verses written to Rosalind on to the trees:

O Rosalind, these trees shall be my books,
And in their barks my thoughts I'll character,
That every eye which in this forest looks,
Shall see thy *virtue* witness'd everywhere.
Run, run Orlando, carve on every tree
The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she.

3.2.5-10

Rather than writing to the beauty of Rosalind's appearance Orlando extols the beauty of her virtues from which he will also learn. While the Duke is being taught by the 'tongues in trees' Orlando uses trees as books on which to carve his love. How like Virgil's lovesick shepherd who tells his Arcadian friends, 'I'll carve my love on sapling trees: as the trees grow, so will my love.'⁹

Advancing along the path of love Orlando is now ready for some tutoring by the mistress of his soul, although when she appears he won't recognise her. For Rosalind too has flown from the court with her cousin Celia, accompanied by the court jester Touchstone, to escape the jealous anger of Celia's father, the usurping Duke Frederick. To avoid attracting attention they have disguised themselves as a young shepherd and his sister named Ganymede and Aliena. Ostensibly Rosalind has dressed as a young man for protection, although as with all his disguised heroines Shakespeare intends a far deeper meaning. For men's garments will hide their outer beauty and their lovers must look deeper into the inner beauty that symbolises the higher part of both their souls; thus Orlando is not yet able to recognise Rosalind when he meets her in the forest. Neither is she able to reveal her identity although she too is hopelessly in love with him. Instead, realising she has a role to play in helping him along his path, she teases him into admitting his love:

⁹ Virgil, *Pastoral Poems*, Gallus, Eclogue X.

There is a man that haunts the forest and abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks ... If I could meet that fancy-monger, I would give him good counsel, for he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him.

To which Orlando confesses he is the one 'so love-shak'd.' 3.2.350-3

At this she offers to cure his love sickness if he will come to her each day at her shepherd's cottage, woo her and call her 'Rosalind'. With the outward appearance of her beauty hidden Orlando is forced to look towards the inner beauty of her virtuous soul from which he will learn the virtues of his own soul. And so begin his lessons in love.

He has already shown courage in combat and compassion for Adam, and now he must trust and obey her. Her insistence that he always arrives on time teaches him the virtue of constancy. On one occasion he is delayed by nature herself. His abusive and unnatural brother Oliver has been sent by the still angry Duke Frederick to search for him. However, Orlando comes across him first, asleep under 'an old oak, whose boughs were moss'd with age' where 'about his neck a green and gilded snake had wreath'd itself.' The snake on being disturbed by Orlando slips away only to be replaced by a crouching lion. Recognising the 'wretched ragged man o'er grown with hair' as his brother, Orlando at first thinks it could be a chance to take revenge for Oliver's cruel treatment and twice turns away; then he chooses the right action and bravely kills the lion. This feat of courage is akin to those performed by Sidney's princes and the heroes of other Arcadian romances, but for Orlando it has a greater importance since by saving the life of his unkind brother he has proved his own nature to be full of kindness, mercy and forgiveness, the highest of virtues.

Later Oliver ends his tale to Rosalind and Celia:

Twice did he turn his back and purpos'd so.
But kindness, nobler than revenge,
And *nature*, stronger than his just occasion,
Made him give battle to the lioness,
Who quickly fell before him; in which hurtling
From miserable slumber I awak'd. 4.3.127-32

Moreover, Orlando's virtuous action has had a powerful effect on Oliver. He awakens not only from slumber but with a sudden and complete awakening of his soul in a Damascene-type conversion:

I do not shame,
To tell you what I was, since my conversion
So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am. 4.3.135-7

His true nature, 'The thing I am,' has become known to him.

Things continue to accelerate. On meeting Celia, her beauty draws Oliver on to the path of love, he recognises her as the higher part of his soul and they fall in love at first sight. Rosalind marvels at the speed of their love:

They no sooner met but they looked; no sooner looked, but they loved; no sooner loved but they sighed; no sooner sighed, but they asked one another the reason; no sooner knew the reason, but they sought the remedy. And in these degrees have they made a pair of stairs to marriage. 5.2.32-37

Seven degrees on the ascent of love and never so speedily accomplished. Their marriage is arranged to take place the next day and Rosalind promises Orlando that at

the same time he too shall be married to his Rosalind. Although still unconventional, Orlando's path has taken more time than his brother's however, by bringing about Oliver's conversion through his own mercy and forgiveness he too has accomplished the same degrees to marriage. When she removes her veil at the altar he will recognise his own true Rosalind as the heavenly beauty of his soul.

The Arcadian setting of *As You Like It* would not be complete without its true denizens of the forest. The goat-herd Audrey and her would-be lover William represent the earthy elements and produce the broad comic humour of the play. The ungainly Audrey is excited at the prospect of improving herself by marrying Touchstone, while the court jester is well versed in courtly wit and rhetoric and enjoys showing it off. The clash of broad humour and rhetorical quips are amusing although, if their marriage is to last, it is to be hoped that Audrey, the simple child of nature, has the last word.

But it is Corin, Silvius and Phebe who represent the classical Arcadian shepherds, in name and behaviour straight out of early Greek lyric poetry, Virgil's *Eclogues* and the passion for pastoral poetry being written by Shakespeare's contemporaries. One of these was his friend Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe had been killed in a fight a few years earlier and through the words of his own shepherdess Phebe Shakespeare pays him tribute in *As You Like It*. He is addressed as 'Dead shepherd' with the second line of the couplet being one of Marlowe's:

Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
Who ever loved that lov'd not at first sight. 3.5.81-2

In the tradition of Arcadian literature the shepherds, by living in accord with nature, have much to teach the high born newcomers. The older shepherd, Corin, is a natural philosopher:

Sir, I am a true labourer: I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate,
envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good, content with my harm;
and the greatest of my pride is to see my lambs graze and my lambs suck.

3.2.71-75

Silvius is a traditional shepherd poet, sick with love for the dark-haired beauty of the arrogant shepherdess, Phebe, named after the inconstant moon. Repeatedly rebuffed, Silvius swears undying love and is prepared to take second place in her affections if only now and again she will smile in his direction. There is no higher expression of love to be found, even in Virgil's poems, than Silvius's declaration to Phebe:

So holy and so perfect is my love,
And I in such a poverty of grace,
That I shall think it a most plenteous crop
To glean the broken ears after the man
That the main harvest reaps. Loose now and then
A scatter'd smile, and that I'll live upon. 3.5.99-104

Shakespeare may have gleaned a similar example of unselfish love from the shepherds of Sidney's *Arcadia*. To his two princes on the path of love a shepherd tells the story of two other young men who have fallen in love with the same unobtainable young woman. However they bear no jealousy or animosity but lament for each other, thus revealing a love far deeper than they bear their fickle mistress.

The songs in *As You Like It* although sung by the banished courtiers are the pastoral songs of shepherds:

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino,

That o'er the green cornfields did pass,
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding,
Sweet lovers love the spring. 5.3.14-19

Far from city life yet a song for all young lovers. Or another typical pastoral verse of the day with a shepherd's message: while his pipe is imitating the sounds of nature it will help the listener to live in tune with nature.

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat. 2.5.1-8

There is one last and rather important character who, although he is spoken of a number of times, is never seen. At their first meeting in the forest the lovesick Orlando remarks on Rosalind's fine accent as being above that of a shepherd, to which she replies that 'An old religious uncle of mine taught me to speak, who was in his youth an inland man, one that knew courtship too well for there he fell in love.' 3.2.335-8. Her uncle also taught her how to know a man in love and how he may be cured, advice that she follows in Orlando's cure for love. Later she calls her uncle a magician: 'I have since I was three years old conversed with a magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable. '5.2.60-2 Orlando repeats this to the Duke about the young shepherd who looks so like his daughter:

... this boy is forest-born,
And hath been tutored in the rudiments
Of many desperate studies, by his uncle,
Whom he reports to be a great magician,

In the Arcadian world of nature, Rosalind/Ganymede's magician uncle has taught her not only the art of speech but also the whole philosophy of love as it appears in Plato's *Symposium on Love*. In his *Commentary* Ficino calls Love a magician:

But why do we think that Love is a magician? Because the whole power of magic consists in love. The work of magic is the attraction of one thing by another because of a certain affinity of Nature.

Marsilio Ficino, Speech VI, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*

Magicians or wise men regularly appear in Arcadian literature. In Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, the inspiration for Sidney's book of the same name, the magician appears as a priest in the woodland temple of Pan, a god of nature and Arcadia. Through his kinship with nature the magician has the power to cure unhappy lovers of their love, an art learned by Rosalind from her uncle.

Magicians also appear in the role of the Spirit of the Place or Genius Loci, the name given to a Roman god at the time of Virgil. Playing an important part in much Arcadian literature, the tradition continued and thirty years after Shakespeare wrote *As You Like It*, Milton's first masque *Arcades* was produced in which the Genius of the Wood conducts the proceedings. This was followed by the better-known Arcadian masque of *Comus*, in which the Genius or Attendant Spirit announces himself as coming from the heavenly spheres. He guides two young brothers through a wood, away from the temptations of Comus, the personification of earthly nature, towards virtue and heavenly love:

Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue, she alone is free,

She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the spherey chime.¹⁰

From mythical ages Nature has been regarded as a goddess and Shakespeare writes of her as such. She is addressed as this when Edmund invokes her in *King Lear*: ‘Thou, Nature art my goddess.’ 1.2.1. All these Spirits, the Attendant Spirit in *Comus* and Shakespeare’s unseen Magician or Genius Loci of the Forest of Arden are divine and represent the converting power of the goddess Nature. It is interesting that a symbol of the Genius Loci is a snake, for as Oliver lay sleeping before Orlando’s arrival and the events that led to his conversion, ‘a green and gilded snake had wreath’d itself’ (4.3.108) around his neck, as protection maybe rather than a threat?

The forest has its own magic and having learned from her uncle, Rosalind becomes a magician herself for a while. She tells Orlando that though she says she is a magician she can do strange things and if he truly loves Rosalind she will use her magic so they may be married.

But first Rosalind has to sort out the predicament over the shepherdess Phebe, who has fallen in love with her as the shepherd Ganymede, and the lovelorn Silvius. A ritualistic incantation follows in which Silvius tells them what it is to love:

It is to be made of faith and service,
It is to be made of fantasy,
All made of passion and all made of wishes,
All adoration, duty and observance,
All humbleness, all patience and impatience,
All purity, all trial, all observance.

¹⁰ John Milton, last lines of *Comus*.

And in what then becomes the chorus Phebe begins:

Phebe - And so am I for Ganymede.

Orlando - And so am I for Rosalind.

Rosalind - And so am I for no woman.

As if under a magical spell they continue the chant until Rosalind breaks in, 'Pray you no more of this, 'tis like the howling of wolves against the moon' 5.2.82-111 and she bids them meet for the wedding that will take place tomorrow when all the lovers will be satisfied.

The feeling of mystery continues when the masque-like wedding celebrations begin. The whole company assemble as Rosalind and Celia are led on to the stage by Hymen the Roman god of marriage. By introducing a divine being at this point Shakespeare ensures the presence of the heavenly world. Unlike Orlando, the audience have known the identity of the shepherd boy all along, but it is a magical moment when he sees her dressed as a bride and recognises her as he did when first he saw her as his 'heavenly Rosalind!' 1.2.279

Accompanied by still music Hymen speaks:

Then is there mirth in heaven,

When earthly things made even

Atone together.

Good Duke receive thy daughter,

Hymen from heaven brought her,

Yea brought her hither,

That thou mightst join her hand with his

Whose heart within his bosom is.

5.4.107-114

Heaven and earth are 'atoned' that is, they are 'at one.' Hymen has brought the soul of the Duke's daughter from heaven so that it may be united with the earthly soul of her lover. Rosalind's heart lies in Orlando's bosom and as her father joins their hands the souls of the lovers are united in marriage and heaven and earth become one. The path of love has been completed.

The magician with his converting powers of love and nature very nearly has the last word. After the wedding ceremony, Orlando's middle brother arrives with news of the usurper Duke Frederick having come to the forest:

... Purposely to take

His brother here and put him to the sword.
And to the outskirts 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 the world,
His crown bequeathing to his banish'd brother,
And all their lands restor'd to them again
That were with him exil'd. 5.4.156-164

Full of hate and revenge Duke Frederick had only to enter the outskirts of the wood for nature to work her magic. He undergoes a conversion as suddenly as Oliver but this time we are told that it was through the old religious man, the magician or genius loci of the Forest. These words jolt the melancholy Jacques into questioning his cynical view of mankind:

If I heard you rightly,
The Duke hath put on a religious life,

And thrown into neglect the pompous court?
To him will I. Out of these convertites,
There is much matter to be heard and learn'd. 5.4.179-84

So with souls not yet ready to return to the city, Duke Frederick and Jacques remain in the forest with the chance to learn more from the magician and the converting power of nature.

The Duke promises that all who have been exiled with him in the forest:

Shall share the good of our returned fortune.
According to the measure of their states. 5.4.173-4

The earlier convert, Oliver, has confirmed his love for Celia declaring that he is happy to marry a shepherdess, bequeath his father's house and lands to his brother Orlando and 'here live and die a shepherd' 5.2.12. The pastoral life sounds idyllic, then learning that his intended bride is the Duke's niece he must now take up his responsibilities and return with Celia to the court. Orlando gains an abundance of land and wealth as, apart from the restoration of his father's lands, the Duke promises that on his marriage to Rosalind he will become his heir and the whole dukedom will one day be his.

Yet beyond the earthly benefits lie those of the heavenly world. The converting magic of nature and love has worked its spell on both sets of lovers whose souls have been united. With both his daughter and his dukedom restored to him the Duke, who through his understanding of the goodness of nature has reached the intellectual world of wisdom and understanding, like all Arcadian dukes will return to the city a better and wiser ruler. The rest, while leaving behind those who have more to learn from the forest, will make a harmonious return from the countryside back to the city.

Their lessons learnt from nature will never be forgotten and before they leave the Duke bids them celebrate, singing and dancing with the shepherds in the style they have come to love:

Meantime forget this new-fall'n dignity,
And fall into our rustic revelry. 5.4.175-6