

As you like it

Analysis: Act 1: Scene 1 and Scene 2

Shakespeare begins his play with a pair of dueling brothers, an amendment of his source material—Thomas Lodge’s popular prose romance, *Rosalynde*—that allows him to establish, with great economy, the corrupt nature of so-called civilized life. Oliver’s mistreatment of his brother spurs Orlando to journey into the curative Forest of Ardenne as surely as Frederick’s actions did his own brother Duke Senior, which immediately locates the play in the pastoral tradition: those wounded by life at court seek the restorative powers of the country. But fraternal hostilities are also deeply biblical and resonate with the story of Cain’s murder of Abel, an act that confirmed mankind’s delivery from paradise into a world of malignity and harm.

The injustice of Oliver’s refusal to educate or otherwise share his fortune with Orlando seems all the more outrageous because it is perfectly legal. The practice of primogeniture stipulated that the eldest son inherits the whole of his father’s estate so that estates would not fragment into smaller parcels. Primogeniture was not mandated by law in Shakespeare’s England, but it was a firmly entrenched part of traditional English custom. With such a system governing society, inequality, greed, and animosity become unfortunate inevitabilities, and many younger sons in Shakespeare’s time would have shared Orlando’s resentment.

In this opening scene, Shakespeare begins to muse on another theme common in pastoral literature: the origins of gentleness. As scholar Jean E. Howard makes clear in her introduction to the play, “gentleness” refers to both nobility and a virtuous nature (p. 1591). Elizabethans were supremely interested in whether this quality could be achieved or whether one had to be born with it, and Orlando shows himself to be a man of the times. Though Oliver has denied him all forms of education and noble living, Orlando nonetheless has a desire for gentleness. As he assails Oliver, he claims that his “gentleman-like qualities” have been obscured, but feels confident that he could develop them still (1.1.59). Of course, Oliver’s behavior suggests that gentleness has little to do with being born into nobility. Though he has the vast majority of his father’s estate at his fingertips, he proves lacking in the generosity and grace that would make him a true gentleman. The audience, then, looks optimistically to Orlando, who vows to go find his fortune on his own.

The episode with the wrestler Charles is important for several reasons. First, it provides further evidence of the prejudices that rule court society. Charles visits Oliver because he worries about defeating Orlando. Although Charles is paid to be a brute, he fears that pummeling a nobleman, even one so bereft of fortune as Orlando, may win him disfavor in the court. Such deference on Charles’s part speaks to the severe hierarchy of power that structures court life. Charles also provides necessary plot explication. Through Charles’s report to Oliver, Shakespeare sketches the backdrop of his comedy: the ‘yoozhupation’ usurpation of Duke Senior by Duke Frederick, Rosalind’s precarious situation, and the qualities of life in the Forest of Ardenne. Although set in France, the forest to which Duke Senior and his loyal lords flee is intentionally reminiscent of Sherwood Forest, the home of Robin Hood. It is, in Charles’s estimation, a remnant of “the golden world,” a time of ease and abundance from which the modern world has fallen (1.1.103). Thus, before we ever see Ardenne, which cannot be located on any map, we understand it as a place where Orlando will find the remedy he so desperately seeks.

Scene 2

Rosalind is depressed over the banishment of her father, Duke Senior. Her cousin, Celia, attempts to cheer her up. Celia promises that as the sole heir of the usurping Duke Frederick, she will give the throne to Rosalind upon his death. In gratitude, Rosalind promises to be less melancholy, and the two women wittily discuss the roles of “Fortune” and “Nature” in determining the circumstances of one’s life (I.ii.26–47). They are interrupted by the court jester, Touchstone, who mockingly tells of a knight without honor who still swore by it. Le Beau, a dapper young courtier, also arrives and intrigues them with the promise of a wrestling match featuring the phenomenal strength and skill of the wrestler Charles.

The match’s participants enter with many members of the court, including Duke Frederick, who cordially greets Rosalind and Celia. The duke remarks on the danger Charles’s young challenger faces, and he

suggests that the girls attempt to dissuade the present challenger from his effort to defeat the wrestler. Rosalind and Celia agree and call to the young man, who turns out to be Orlando. Try as they might, they cannot sway him. He remains deaf to their pleas and speaks as if he has absolutely nothing to lose. Orlando and Charles wrestle, and Orlando quickly defeats his opponent. Amazed, Duke Frederick asks Orlando to reveal his identity. When Orlando responds that he is the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Bois, the duke laments that he wishes Orlando had been someone else's son, admitting that he and Sir Rowland were enemies. Rosalind and Celia rush in to offer their congratulations, and Rosalind admits how deeply her father admired Orlando's father. In the exchange, Orlando and Rosalind become mutually smitten, though both are too tongue-tied to confess their feelings.

Immediately after Rosalind and Celia take their leave, Le Beau warns Orlando that, though his victory and conduct deserve great praise, he will get none from Duke Frederick. In fact, La Beau says, the duke is due for a dangerous outburst. Orlando, already heartsick over Rosalind, resolves to flee from the tyrannical duke.

Analysis: Act 1: Scenes 2 & 3

As many critics have pointed out, Rosalind's relationship with Celia suggests an element of homoeroticism. Homoeroticism differs from homosexuality in connoting feelings of desire or longing between members of the same sex, but not necessarily the desire for actual sex acts. Celia begins Act 1, Scene 2 by challenging the depth of her cousin's love for her, claiming that the depressed Rosalind would be content if she only returned Celia's love. Celia's language here conforms to conventional protestations of romantic love, and there is no doubt that the women's friendship is remarkable. When Celia pleads with Duke Frederick to allow Rosalind to stay at court, she points out that the pair has always slept in the same bed—people normally slept two to a bed in Shakespeare's time—and went everywhere together, “coupled and inseparable” (1.3.70). The women's special bond is not lost on those who witness their friendship—as Duke Frederick's courtier, Le Beau, exclaims, the cousins share a love that is “dearer than the natural bond of sisters” (I.ii.243).

Before jumping to conclusions about the nature of Rosalind and Celia's relationship, it is important to note that contemporary ideas about sexuality are quite different from Elizabethan ideas. Whereas people today tend to expect adherence to neatly defined and mutually exclusive categories of behavior, such as heterosexuality or homosexuality, sexual identity was more loosely defined in Shakespeare's England. Then, in literature and culture, if not in actual practice, Elizabethans were tolerant of same-sex couplings. Indeed, homosexuality was an inescapable part of the Greek and Roman classics that made up an educated person's culture in Shakespeare's day.

At the same time, Elizabethans could be very inflexible in their notions of the sexual and social roles that different genders play. They placed greater importance than we do on the external markers of gender such as clothing and behavior. So, to Elizabethans, Rosalind's decision to masquerade as a man may have been more thrilling than her homoerotic bond with Celia and perhaps even threatening to the social order. By assuming the clothes and likeness of a man, Rosalind treats herself to powers that are normally beyond her reach as a woman. For instance, instead of waiting to be wooed, she adopts the freedom to court a lover of her choosing. By subverting something as simple as a dress code, Rosalind ends up transgressing the Elizabethans' carefully monitored boundaries of gender and social power.

Indeed, it is this very freedom that Rosalind seeks as she departs for the Forest of Ardenne: “Now go we in content, / To liberty, and not to banishment” (1.3.131–132). By christening herself Ganymede, Rosalind underscores the liberation that awaits her in the woods. Ganymede is the name of Jove's beautiful young male page and lover, and the name is borrowed in other works of literature and applied to beautiful young homosexuals. But while the name links Rosalind to a long tradition of homosexuals in literature, it does not necessarily confine her to an exclusively homosexual identity. To view Rosalind as a lesbian who settles for a socially sanctifying marriage with Orlando, or to view Celia as her jilted lover, is to relegate both of them to the unpleasantly restrictive quarters of contemporary sexual politics. The Forest of Ardenne is big enough to embrace both homosexual and heterosexual desires—it allows for both, for all, rather than either/or.

Analysis: Act 2: Scenes 1–4

Pastoral literature makes a clear distinction between the quality of life and benefits of living in the city versus the country. The stresses of the former, this genre romantically suggests, may be healed by the charms of the latter; thus Act 2 introduces us to the Forest of Ardenne after we witness characters undergo banishment from courtly life. Although supposedly situated in France, Shakespeare's forest bears closer resemblance to the fantastical getaway of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* than to any identifiable geography. It may not be overrun with mischievous fairies and sprites, but it serves the function of correcting what has gone wrong with the everyday world. However, even with that purpose in mind, Ardenne is no Eden. Though Duke Frederick praises the forest as preferable to the artificial ceremony of the court, he takes care to describe its hardships. With its wild animals and erratic weather, Ardenne can hardly be called a paradise, and at the same time the duke celebrates Ardenne, he also draws attention to the difference between that forest and Eden or the Golden Age.

The forest is a lovely but ultimately temporary haven for the characters who seek refuge from exile. One reason for the transience of this sanctuary is that the city dwellers are, by the play's end, ready to return to court. Jaques, a stock character who represents the melancholy brooder, suggests a more troubling reason for the temporary nature of the forest's pristine state and restorative powers. Man, he suggests, will sooner or later mar the forest's beauty. Grieved by the killing of the deer, Jaques claims that Duke Senior is guiltier of usurpation than his crown-robbing brother, Duke Frederick. According to Jaques, wherever men go, they bring with them the possibility of the very perils that make life in the "envious court" so unbearable (2.1.4). None of Duke Senior's courtiers disagrees with Jaques, but the melancholy lord's criticism lacks real sting. Indeed, Duke Senior sees Jaques as little more than entertainment, for the extremity of Jaques's mood prompts Senior to declare amusingly, "I love to cope him in these sullen fits, / For then he's full of matter"—matter being the word for pus in Shakespearean English (2.1.67–68). In a play that celebrates the complexity and the range of human emotions, there is little room for someone like Jaques, who knows how to sing only one tune.

With the introduction of Silvius, *As You Like It* begins to explore the foolishness of love as opposed to its delightfulness. Unlike Rosalind, who is equipped with enough wit to recognize the silliness of her sudden devotion to Orlando, Silvius is powerless in his attraction to Phoebe. In his laments to Corin in Act II, scene iv, he presents himself as love's only true victim, and he implies that no one has ever loved as he loves Phoebe. Although Rosalind at first pities the shepherd's predicament as curiously close to her own, she soon enough comes to share Touchstone's observation on the necessary foolishness of being in love. As he watches Silvius call out to the absent Phoebe, Touchstone says, "We that are true lovers run into strange capers. But as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly" (II.iv.47–49). Touchstone's inarticulate and rude manner of speaking makes him a true touchstone for Rosalind, bringing into greater relief her supreme eloquence and wit. Here, however, **he utters two essential pieces of truth: everything in the natural world is temporary, and every lover naturally behaves like a fool.** But the fact that so many characters fall in love in Ardenne proves that they are less love's victims than its willing subjects.

Analysis: Act 2: Scenes 5–7

Both Act 2, Scene 5 and Act 1, Scene 6 deal primarily with **the melancholy lord, Jaques**, who offers a sullen perspective on the otherwise comedic events in Ardenne. He turns Amiens's song about the pleasures of leisurely life into a means of berating the foresters, and he comes close to playing the part of the fool, in the sense that he turns a critical eye on a world in which he lives but does not fully inhabit. But unlike Feste in *Twelfth Night* or the fool in *King Lear*, **Jaques does not demonstrate the insight or wisdom that would make his observations truly arresting or illuminating. His most impressive speech in the play begins with a familiar set piece in Elizabethan drama: "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (2.7.138–139).**

Jacques goes on to describe the seven stages of a man's life, from infancy to death, through his roles as lover and soldier, but his observations may strike us as untrue or banal. His estimation that lovers sigh "like furnace, with a woeful ballad / Made to his mistress' eyebrow" is humorous, and it certainly describes the

kind of intemperate, indiscriminating affection that Silvius shows to Phoebe, or Phoebe to Ganymede (2.7.147–148). But the criticism seems ill-suited to a play as aware and forgiving of love's silliness as *As You Like It*. As a philosopher, Jaques falls short of accurately describing the complexity of Rosalind's feelings for Orlando. His musings bear the narrow and pinched shortcomings of the habitually sullen Jaques's sullenness blinds him to his own foolishness regarding life. Jaques goes on to describe man's later years, the decline into second childhood and obliviousness, without teeth, eyesight, taste, or anything else. Countering Jaques's unflattering picture of old age, Orlando carries Adam to the duke's banquet table, the old man entering his final years with his loyalty, generosity of spirit, and appetite intact. Although the thought of serving as Duke Frederick's fool appeals to him, Jaques ultimately lacks the wit, wisdom, and heart to perform the task.

When Jaques meets Touchstone in the forest, he sings the clown's praises, quoting with glee Touchstone's nihilistic musings on the passage of time: "**And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, / And then from hour to hour we rot and rot**" (2.7.26–27). Jaques does not realize that Touchstone's "deep–contemplative" speech is a bawdy mockery of his own brooding behavior (2.7.31). Indeed, throughout the play, Jaques remains so mired in his own moodiness that he sees very little of the world he so desperately wants to criticize. Knowing that Jaques's eyes are trained on men's baser instincts, the duke doubts Jaques's ability to serve as a proper and entertaining fool. Jaques, he feels, would be a boor, berating the courtiers for sins that Jaques himself has committed. This exchange points to an important difference between Jaques and the duke: the former is committed to being unhappy in the world and will suffer in it, while the latter is happy to make the best of the world he is given and will thrive, as the title of the play seems to promise.

Act Three, Scene 1

[Duke Frederick](#) has not been able to find [Orlando](#) at [Oliver](#)'s house. As a result he tells Oliver that he has a year to find his brother and bring him back, either dead or alive. In the interim Duke Frederick seizes all of Oliver's estate and will hold it until Orlando is brought to him. Oliver comments that he never loved his brother.

Act Three, Scene 2

Orlando enters with a piece of paper on which he has written a sonnet to [Rosalind](#). He says that he will write his love poems on the bark of the trees. Orlando then hangs his sonnet on a tree and leaves it there, commenting, "Run, run, Orlando; carve on every tree" (3.2.9).

[Corin](#) and [Touchstone](#) enter. Touchstone tells Corin what he thinks about the shepherd's life and then asks Corin if he was ever at court. Corin tells him "no" and Touchstone then says that Corin is therefore damned. He reasons that if Corin was never in court he never learned good manners, so his manners must be wicked, and if he has wicked manners then he is damned. Corin does his best to protest but cannot win the verbal battle against Touchstone.

Rosalind, dressed as Ganymede, enters reading a poem that she has found on a tree. Every other line rhymes with Rosalind and Touchstone mocks it when she is done. He then composes a poem that has the same rhyme structure but insults Rosalind by comparing her either to animals or prostitutes. He then remarks, "Truly, the tree yields bad fruit" (3.2.105).

[Celia](#), dressed as Aliena, enters with a poem as well. She proceeds to read it and it turns out to also be addressed to Rosalind. Celia sends away Corin and Touchstone before turning to Rosalind and asking if she knows who is hanging her name on every tree. Rosalind says that she does not and then pleads with Celia to tell her. Celia finally reveals that Orlando is the man leaving all the verses.

Orlando and [Jaques](#) enter, and the two women hide in order to listen to them. Jaques tells Orlando that he would have been just as happy without his company, and Orlando says the same thing. Orlando then agrees to not mar any more trees with his writing as long as Jaques does not mar the verses by reading them unsympathetically. Jaques tells Orlando that he was seeking a fool when he met him. Orlando quips, "He is

drowned in the brook. Look but in, and you shall see him" (3.2.626-263). Jaques gets up and leaves after he realizes that he has been called a fool.

Rosalind comes out and speaks to Orlando, asking him what the time is. He tells her there is no time in the forest, but she points out that time moves at different speeds for everyone. She then introduces Celia as a shepherdess and also her sister. Orlando, thinking she is a young man, remarks that she has a superb accent for a rustic man. Rosalind pretends to have had an uncle from the inland who taught her how to speak.

Rosalind tells Orlando that a man has been going around the forest ruining the trees by carving the name Rosalind on the them. He admits to being that man and asks if she knows a remedy. She tells him that he is obviously not in love with Rosalind since his cheeks are not lean, nor is he disheveled enough to be in love. Orlando swears that he is in love with Rosalind and asks her if there is a cure. She tells him she once before cured a man of his love by making the man pretend that she was his mistress. After much acting the man went truly man and ended up living a monastic life.

Orlando tells her that he does not want to be cured, but Rosalind says that if he pretends she is Rosalind she will do her best to cure him. He agrees to go to her cottage and to start calling her Rosalind.

Act Three, Scene 3

Touchstone has fallen in love with a goatherd named [Audrey](#). She is a simpleton and does not even know what the word "poetical" means. Touchstone comments on the fact that she is chaste and good looking, but Audrey wishes that she were "foul", obviously thinking that "foul" is a term of praise. Touchstone ignores her nonsense and tells her that he will marry her. Throughout this scene Jaques is in the background watching and making sarcastic comments

[Sir Oliver Martext](#), a vicar in the nearby village, arrives to marry them. He asks if there is someone to give away Audrey, telling Touchstone that someone must give her or the marriage is not lawful. Jaques emerges from his hiding place and agrees to give her away. However, before the wedding takes place Jaques asks Touchstone whether an educated man such as himself really wants to be married in the middle of nowhere. After listening to Jaques, Touchstone finally agrees to postpone his marriage and allow Jaques to counsel him.

Act Three, Scene 4

Rosalind and Celia are waiting for Orlando to arrive. Rosalind gets worried when he does not appear, and Celia tells her that a promise from a lover means nothing. Corin, the old shepherd, enters and tells Rosalind that he has located [Silvius](#) and [Phoebe](#). He informs her that she can watch the two lovers together if she comes with him. Rosalind says, "Bring us to this site, and you shall say / I'll prove a busy actor in their play" (3.4.52-53).

Act Three, Scene 5

Silvius is begging Phoebe to show him some mercy and say that she loves him. She scorns his love and tells him she does not pity him for the pain he feels while loving her. Rosalind emerges from where she was watching their exchange and tells Phoebe that she is rather plain looking. She further informs Silvius that he flatters Phoebe too much for her own good. Turning back to Phoebe, Rosalind says, "down on your knees / And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love; / For I must tell you friendly in your ear, / Sell when you can. You are not for all markets" (3.5.58-61).

Phoebe falls in love with Rosalind in spite of her harsh words. Rosalind urges Phoebe to listen to Silvius and scorns her love. However, she does tell Phoebe where to find her house in the forest. Rosalind then leaves with Celia and Corin.

Phoebe is so enamored with Rosalind that she finally is able to empathize with Silvius. She agrees to stay and talk about love with him. Phoebe decides to write a love letter to Rosalind (whom she thinks is Ganymede). Silvius agrees to help her.

Analysis of Act Three

Orlando, having been seen as the silent lover of Rosalind in the first act, now progresses to the literary stage of love. He mimics the role of a Petrarchian lover, a man who writes sonnets to his beloved and adores her beyond compare. Thus, we see Orlando leaving sonnets on the trees and carving Rosalind's name into every trunk. But in a sense he is only a parody of a true Petrarchian lover. After all, Orlando never really sees Rosalind or gets to speak with her, thereby invalidating everything he is writing about her. This excess of emotion is what Rosalind, now in the form of Ganymede, is going to try and stop. She will prefer a mature love that is based on speaking rather than ephemeral notions of womanly virtue.

The emotional and literary excess portrayed by Orlando is of course made fun of by Touchstone. He takes advantage of the fact that Rosalind's name is scrawled on every tree to comment, "Truly, the tree yields bad fruit" (3.2.105). Touchstone not only mimics the writing of lover's names on the trees, but once again serves as a mirror by reflecting the fact that the poems are awful. He goes so far as to make up a poem that derides Rosalind rather than praises her, a parody that clearly shows how bad the other poems are.

Act two already showed Jaques as a fool after his encounter with Touchstone. Here he is also seen to be a narcissus, a self-absorbed person. Orlando mimics him by telling him to look for the fool in a literal mirror, quipping, "He is drowned in the brook. Look but in, and you shall see him" (3.2.626-263). Jaques is slow to realize that he has been insulted here, a fact that is even more damning to his character.

One of the great fears the men have in all of Shakespeare's comedies is being a cuckold. Essentially this is a fear that once married, they will be unable to sexually satisfy their wife, and she will end up sleeping with other men. The primary image of a husband who is duped by his wife is a man wearing a bull's horns. However, underlying this fear is also the necessity of marriage as a social institution. Touchstone put it best, "As horns are odious, they are necessary" (3.3.42). Thus in spite of his intelligence, he will marry the simpleton Audrey. "As the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires" (3.3.66-67). For Touchstone this is a necessity in order for him to become a fully mature individual.

One of the characteristics of Rosalind is that she is dealing with a play that is primarily created for her pleasure. She therefore becomes the director of the play, managing all of its subplots and influencing the action. She says, "Bring us to this site, and you shall say / I'll prove a busy actor in their play" (3.4.52-53). In this sense Rosalind is like Puck in [A Midsummer Night's Dream](#). She can intervene in others' lives and play games with them. However, at the same time that she is controlling others, Rosalind is still unliberated from Celia. By being a part of the play and directing the actions of the other characters, Rosalind will achieve a liberation from Celia that will allow her to marry Orlando.

Much the way Orlando dotes on the unseen Rosalind, the love of Silvius for Phoebe is also a Petrarchian love in excess. Rosalind sees the similarity between the way Silvius and Orlando are acting and tries to cure Orlando of it. She alone realizes that a woman is not worth such an idolization given that women have flaws as well, flaws that the man will have to deal with in marriage. Thus when Phoebe scorns Silvius, Rosalind intelligently points out, "down on your knees / And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love; / For I must tell you friendly in your ear, / Sell when you can. You are not for all markets" (3.5.58-61). This clearly undermines the virtuous deification of women that Silvius and Orlando initially aspire to. Instead, it bluntly lays out the fact that women are human as well and that the man must know both their faults and virtues before actually marrying them.

Although it seems obvious that Rosalind is inclined towards Orlando, she still plays with the female-female relationship alluded to in the beginning. Thus when Phoebe falls in love with her she does not completely ignore Phoebe's advances. Instead, Rosalind flirts with Phoebe and tells her where her house is. This is surprising because it contradicts her very words and sets up the homosexual nature of her character. We can

never be sure whether Rosalind/Ganymede prefers being a man or a woman as a result of the ambiguous sexuality that she displays.

Phoebe herself quickly becomes an inversion of the stereotypical female character. She quotes Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and writes poetry with Silvius. This is of course backwards, she as the woman should be wooed with poetry, not forced to write it herself. This inversion of her sexual identity further plays into the homo-eroticism between Rosalind and Phoebe that may underline the plot.

Analysis of Act Four

One of the great problems for all the characters in [As You Like It](#) is the fact that they need to have sustainable happy marriages. Rosalind points out the problem when she tells Orlando that, "men are April when they woo, December when they wed" (4.1.124-125). This issue of sustaining the fervor with which the married couple loves one another is crucially tied up with the ability to know the virtues and faults of the other person ahead of time. Thus Rosalind takes the time to make Orlando bond with Ganymede. This serves as a way to break his silence towards Rosalind. Not only is the silence gotten rid of, but Rosalind is able to profit from the excesses of the other lovers such as Silvius and Phoebe. Having seen their romantic excess, Rosalind will work to cure Orlando of the same problem.

Part of the underlying themes in the play focus on the danger and attraction of the female. This is more apparent than ever before when Orlando comes across Oliver with a female snake around his neck, about to enter his mouth. Having frightened the snake away, Orlando must next fight a female lioness and spill his own blood in the process of defeating it. Only once the female animals have been beaten back can Oliver and Orlando be reunited as brothers. Indeed, this entire scene may indicate the real reason that Orlando was forced to flee from Oliver's house. It is likely that Oliver was jealous of Orlando, who is obviously stronger (evidenced by his choking of Oliver in the first act). This jealousy could be bound up in the issue of marriage, meaning that Oliver was afraid Orlando would be able to marry into a higher social class and thereby achieve dominance over his brother.

Analysis of Act Five

The brutishness of the court when transplanted into the countryside is again made apparent in the final act. Touchstone sends William away from Audrey and threatens his life. This is an inversion of the stereotype that brutality comes in from the country, not the other way around. William is even excessively polite in spite of the threats that Touchstone makes toward him, undermining the necessity of the threats in the first place..

The true turning point for Orlando and Rosalind is when Oliver and Celia fall in love. The reason is that Celia now leaves Rosalind and shifts her focus onto Oliver. The love at first sight of Oliver and Celia even causes Orlando to exclaim, "I, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes" (5.2.38-39). Rosalind asks him, "tomorrow I cannot serve your turn for Rosalind?" (5.2.43-44). Orlando tells her, "I can live no longer by thinking" (5.2.45). This last line marks the true turning point. Orlando can no longer live by thinking, by imagining that Ganymede is his Rosalind. He instead is ready to have the real Rosalind for his wife and therefore refuses to play the game with Ganymede. Understanding this, Rosalind immediately promises to arrange for Orlando to marry her the next day.

One of the most unusual scenes is where Silvius, Phoebe and Orlando tells Rosalind what it is like to be in love. Silvius describes it as, "It is to be all made of sighs and tears" (5.2.74). This is again the overdone love that Rosalind avoids, she is too wise for this excess. However, Orlando is not yet past this point. He willingly mimics the other two by inserting Rosalind's name after each phrase. Rosalind eventually gets fed up with this entire production and orders them to stop.

Shakespeare pokes a great deal of fun at the institution of marriage at the very end. He introduces the character of Hymen, the god of marriage, into what has turned into four marriages. Jaques alone seems to realize how funny and pathetic this is, "There is sure another flood toward, and these couples are coming to

the ark" (5.4.35-36). He sees the scene for what it is, a ceremony in which the characters are herded, two by two, into the ark of marriage.

A strong theme that emerges at the end is the language of wanting. In fact, this theme has always been present, but never to such a blatant degree. The title itself suggests the act of wanting, "[As You Like It](#)". Touchstone is the character who makes it obvious in his speech about lying and dueling. He indicates the many uses of "if" to avoid a duel, stating that "Your if is the only peacemaker" (5.4.91). The "if" represents the possibilities that are inherent in each situation, "if I bring...you will bestow" (5.4.6-7), "you'll marry me if I be willing?" (5.4.11), "you'll have Phoebe if she will" (5.4.16). Each of these "ifs" indicates another possible outcome to the play, a different path other than the one that is eventually chosen.

The Epilogue is unique because it is done by Rosalind in her woman's clothes. This makes **As You Like It** the only Elizabethan play known where a woman ends the play. Rosalind thus goes from a woman to a man, and reemerges as Rosalind for her wedding. However, to confuse the plot even more, Shakespeare makes her point out the fact that she is only a male playing a female role, "If I were a woman" (5.Epilogue.14-15). This breaking down of the sexual boundaries results in forcing the audience to confront their own sexuality and to question whether it is as absolute as assumed.

As usual in a Shakespearian comedy there are excluded characters at the end, namely Jaques and [Adam](#). However, this ending is inclusionary. Rosalind mentions all the men and women present, thereby breaking down the barrier between the stage and the audience. Where the play at first excluded Jaques, Adam and Orlando's father, they are now all included again. This serves to further draw the audience into the play and make the themes present more a part of everyday life rather than an anomaly seen on stage.