As You Like It

Study Guide by Course Hero

What's Inside

Book Basics

AUTHOR
William Shakespeare

YEARS WRITTEN
c. 1598–1600

GENRE
Comedy

ABOUT THE TITLE
In naming the play *As You Like It*, Shakespeare invites the audience to interpret the play just as they wish. They may enjoy it simply as entertainment, or they may delve into the deeper issues it tackles, such as the nature of love or the virtues and limitations of court life versus country life.

In Context

Gender Roles and Elizabethan Drama

Under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I of England, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, drama and the arts in general flourished. Much of the theater produced had a broad appeal for all parts of society. Unsurprisingly, the plays were often bawdy and sensational. Portrayals of loose morality, ungodly opinions, and unsavory characters drew criticism from the Church of England. In response, new laws pushed the theaters outside the city limits of London. In addition, acting was viewed as unseemly for women and in fact was illegal. Because of this female roles were played on stage by young boys.

Gender roles were a common subject in the plays produced. Many of the stereotypes of women of the era were not flattering. Even married women were seen as licentious or easily seduced, hence the constant, uncomfortable jokes about horns and cuckolding in Shakespeare's works. Chastity until marriage was an absolute must, and women were to be kept in line by the men in their lives, first by their fathers and then by their husbands. In *As You Like It* the character of Rosalind alludes to this custom when, in Act 5, Scene 4, she first gives herself to her father and then to Orlando, both times using the line, "To you I give myself, for I am yours."

Shakespeare frequently flouts traditional gender roles in his works, however, and *As You Like It* is a prime example. Rosalind's cross-dressing disguise as Ganymede allows her far more freedom in speech and action than a woman would typically exhibit during the Elizabethan era. Her choice of "Jove's own page" as an alter ego is also rather titillating; the mythological Ganymede was not only a page but also a lover of the Roman god Jove. This choice lends overtones of

homoeroticism to the character, especially when Orlando woos Rosalind in her guise as a man.

Court Life

The lives of nobles at court were vastly different from those of the average merchant, villager, or farmer. Social rank dictated life at court; the higher one's rank, the more power one had and the greater one's entourage would be. Queen Elizabeth, for example, had a court of about 1,000 people who attended on her and cultivated her favor. If a courtier fell out of favor with his patron—or if the patron suffered a reversal of fortune—the courtier's rank and fortunes could quickly fall.

This social hierarchy is illustrated in *As You Like It* through the two sets of brothers. When Duke Frederick banishes his brother, Duke Senior's attendant lords retire with him to exile in the country (although in this case they do so voluntarily out of loyalty to Duke Senior). And though Oliver holds power over his brother Orlando, Duke Frederick holds power over Oliver. Duke Frederick confiscates his lands and wealth in a single breath in Act 3, Scene 1. This hierarchy of power was a constant in court life, and courtiers were continually jockeying for position. The courts were seen as a place of whispered rumors, intrigue, flattery, and bribery. Strict social etiquette was required, and courtiers were expected to dress fashionably.

Primogeniture and Inheritance

Elizabethan England upheld the custom of primogeniture or the right of inheritance belonging to the first born. This custom settled an entire estate onto the firstborn son of a family, rather than dividing the wealth and lands among siblings. Wills often made provisions for younger sons and daughters, and eldest sons who inherited an estate were generally expected to provide for their siblings. However, as demonstrated in *As You Like It*, this didn't always happen. Orlando's diminished status is due entirely to Oliver's decision not to support him as expected. Oliver does not provide for Orlando's education, and according to Orlando, "His horses are bred better" and "I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth" (Act 1, Scene 1). In contrast Oliver has sent their other brother, Jaques, to school; it is clear that he deliberately snubs Orlando by not providing him with the benefits of inheritance.

Inspirations for the Play

As with much of his work, Shakespeare drew inspiration for *As You Like It* from already published popular literature and other sources. His main source was the romance *Rosalynde* (1590), authored by English physician Thomas Lodge. Shakespeare adopted most of his characters from this work, the major events of the plot, and also its pastoral elements. Pastoral literature, quite popular at the time, focused on the pleasant country life of shepherds. It often featured romantic love and included elements of verse or song. Lodge's *Rosalynde* was itself inspired by an earlier work, "The Tale of Gamelyn" (author unknown). In that tale Gamelyn is denied his inheritance from his scheming older brother, Johan, and escapes to safety in the forest with his servant Adam.

Stories of Robin Hood were also popular in Shakespeare's day, and he doesn't miss the opportunity to plant references to them in this play. Duke Senior and his men are directly compared to Robin Hood in Act 1, Scene 1, where Charles points out that "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." Another example is Amiens's song in Act 2, Scene 5, which begins with the line "Under the greenwood tree," an allusion to earlier Robin Hood ballads that would have been familiar to the audience.

Author Biography

Childhood and Family Life

The childhood of William Shakespeare is a murky area for scholars since few records of his early activities exist. Very little is known about his birth, education, or upbringing. However, according to church records, he was baptized on April 26, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, which leads scholars to the conclusion that he was born on April 23 of that year. Birth records were not usually kept in Shakespeare's time, although church records—baptisms, weddings, burials—were kept fastidiously by clergy.

Shakespeare's family was solidly middle class, and he would have had a typical education for an English boy of his time at a public school endowed by Elizabeth I, which would have

included studying the Latin language and Roman and Greek classical literature. At age 18 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years his elder who was already pregnant with their daughter Susanna. Anne gave birth to twins—Judith and Hamnet—a few years later. Church records reveal Hamnet died in childhood.

Theatrical Life

Shakespeare moved to London to pursue a career as an actor and playwright, and over time he achieved success. He became a shareholder in the open-air Globe Theatre and had widespread fame as a playwright whose works included romantic and classically inspired comedies, histories, and tragedies. He is credited with writing at least 37 plays and over 150 sonnets.

Throughout his career Shakespeare and his fellow actors were supported by the patronage of the nation's monarchs—first by Elizabeth I (1533–1603), under whose reign Shakespeare's company was known as The Lord Chamberlain's Men. When James I (1566–1625) assumed the throne in 1603, the company was renamed The King's Men. Although many of Shakespeare's plays were written for performance at the Globe, the King's Men also performed at the nearby Blackfriars Theatre, a smaller indoor space, after 1608.

Retirement and Legacy

In 1610 or 1611, Shakespeare retired, moving back to Stratford-upon-Avon. Despite his retirement from London life, the playwright continued to do some writing, contributing to *Henry VIII* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* as well as to another play, *Cardenio*, now lost. Scholars believe these final works to be collaborations with John Fletcher (1579–1625), another playwright.

Shakespeare most likely died on April 23, 1616, leading to the romantic notion he was born and died on the same date, although there are no records of the exact date of either event. He was 52 at his death and was buried on April 25 at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. Over 400 years after his death, Shakespeare is still regarded as the greatest playwright of the English-speaking world.

Characters

Rosalind

Rosalind begins the story as a dependent of the court, but when she is banished she must use her wits and inner strength to fend for herself. She disguises herself as Ganymede to make her way in the world. This disguise allows her greater freedom of speech and action. Even when she falls in love with Orlando, Rosalind keeps her head on her shoulders and tests to see whether his love is true or just a passing fancy. Through her courage and cleverness (and a bit of good luck), Rosalind is able to turn her fortunes around: she marries Orlando and returns to court.

Orlando

Orlando is at the end of his rope at the story's outset; he has no hope of life as a gentleman under his devious brother's thumb. When he tries to prove his worth in a wrestling match, he earns more enmity than accolades and is forced to flee to safety in the forest. Through his trials there he proves his bravery, loyalty, and honor, and earns the hand of his true love, Rosalind.

Celia

At first Celia is wrapped up in her friendship with her cousin Rosalind. When Rosalind falls in love and turns her attention to Orlando, it is a rude awakening for Celia, who tries to dissuade her from the match. In the end she becomes engaged to Oliver, the son of Sir Rowland de Boys and brother of Orlando.

Touchstone

Touchstone loves being himself. He revels in his position at court, his cleverness, and his worldly cynicism. Although his lifestyle changes when he goes with Rosalind and Celia into the forest, his attitude doesn't, until he meets Audrey. At first he just wants to bed her, but this notion soon gives way to honorable marriage as he sees both its inevitability and the

benefits it can offer.

Duke Frederick

Duke Frederick is all about power and money and easily ruins the lives of others in order to further his own position. His sudden conversion into a man of religion is unexpected but shows a complete turnaround in his character. Power and money mean nothing to him as a convert, and he tries to make amends for past wrongs by transferring his former wealth and power back to Duke Senior and his loyal followers.

Duke Senior

Duke Senior's sturdy character doesn't change much even as his circumstances shift throughout the play. During his exile he looks for the bright side of his situation, and when his fortunes are restored he doesn't take forest life for granted and rush right back to the court. He enjoys every moment and serves as a model of loyal, loving leadership.

Oliver

Oliver, despite having all the wealth and power in the family, is jealous of his youngest brother Orlando for his virtues and popularity. He treats him abominably, withholding education and opportunity from Orlando. He even plots to kill him. When Duke Frederick confiscates his lands, though, Oliver suffers in the forest and faces his own mortality when threatened by wild animals. When Orlando saves his life, Oliver sees what a villain he has been, and they reconcile. Good luck smiles upon Oliver, too, when he meets and falls in love with Celia. In the end he decides to remain in the forest, living a simple life with his love.

Character Map

- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Rosalind	Rosalind is the witty, vivacious daughter of the banished Duke Senior. During her exile she takes the name Ganymede and pretends to be a man.
Orlando	Orlando is the youngest son of the late Sir Rowland de Boys. He has inherited nothing, however, and has few prospects due to his circumstances.
Celia	Celia, the daughter of Duke Frederick, goes into exile with her cousin and dearest friend, Rosalind. During her escape she assumes the name Aliena.
Touchstone	Touchstone is the clever, philosophical jester to Duke Frederick. He accompanies Rosalind and Celia into the forest.
Duke Frederick	Duke Frederick is a stern, vindictive lord who has usurped the position of Duke Senior, his older brother, at court.
Duke Senior	Duke Senior is a kind and generous lord who has been banished by his younger brother, Duke Frederick, and lives in the Forest of Arden. He is the father of Rosalind.
Oliver	Oliver de Boys is the greedy, spiteful eldest son and inheritor of Sir Rowland de Boys's estate who is responsible for the upkeep of his brothers, one of whom is Orlando. He later falls in love with Celia.
Adam	Adam is initially a servant to Oliver, but his true loyalty lies with Orlando. This older man goes with Orlando to the forest.
Amiens	Amiens is a lord who voluntarily goes into exile with Duke Senior. He sings to entertain those around him.
Attendants	Attendants serve the dukes throughout the play.
Audrey	Audrey is an ignorant but honest shepherdess who loves and marries Touchstone.
Charles	Charles is the favored wrestler of Duke Frederick's court. He is strong and brutal, often injuring his opponents.
Corin	Corin is a wise older shepherd who helps Rosalind and Celia find a place to live. He also counsels Silvius in matters of love and debates philosophy with Touchstone.
Dennis	Dennis is Oliver's servant. He brings Charles to meet with Oliver before the wrestling match.
First lord of Duke Frederick	The first lord attending Duke Frederick reports that Celia's bed was found empty when she goes missing.
First lord of Duke Senior	The first lord attending Duke Senior in exile describes Jaques weeping over an injured deer. He also kills a deer for the party to eat.
First page	The first page attending Duke Senior in exile sings a song about spring for Touchstone and Audrey.
Hymen	Hymen is the god of marriage who praises that institution and performs the wedding ceremony for the couples in the play.
Jaques	Jaques is a cynical, depressed lord who attends Duke Senior in exile. He does not enjoy court life but loves to talk philosophy (and, indeed, to hear himself talk).
Jaques de Boys	Jaques, the middle brother to Oliver and Orlando, has been away at school but appears in the final scene to deliver news of Duke Frederick to Duke Senior's party in the Forest of Arden.
Le Beau	Le Beau is a shrewd courtier of Duke Frederick's. He warns Orlando to leave the court after the wrestling match.

Lords	Unnamed lords attend on the dukes Frederick and Senior throughout the play.
Sir Oliver Martext	Sir Oliver Martext is a lowly country priest who is supposed to marry Touchstone and Audrey.
Musicians	Musicians perform during various scenes of the play.
Phoebe	Phoebe is a scornful shepherdess who disdains the love of Silvius, even though she herself is no prize.
Second lord of Duke Frederick	The second lord attending Duke Frederick reports to the duke that Celia may have gone off with Orlando.
Second lord of Duke Senior	The second lord attending Duke Senior in exile tells the duke about Jaques weeping over an injured deer. He later sings a song about deer horns.
Second page	The second page attending Duke Senior in exile sings a song about spring for Touchstone and Audrey.
Silvius	Silvius, a young shepherd, is deeply in love with Phoebe even though she treats him terribly.
William	William is a simple country youth who says he is in love with Audrey but easily gives her up to Touchstone.

Plot Summary

Act 1

As You Like It is set in France in the early 1600s and follows the love story of Rosalind and Orlando. The action takes place at the court of Duke Frederick and in the nearby Forest of Arden. As the play opens Orlando is quarreling with his older brother Oliver over his inheritance. He complains that Oliver has not given him a proper gentleman's education after the death of their father. Oliver threatens Orlando, and Orlando grabs Oliver by the throat and defies his older brother before releasing him. After the fight Oliver persuades the wrestler Charles to injure Orlando in a wrestling match the next day. Meanwhile Frederick's daughter Celia tries to cheer up her dear cousin Rosalind, who is depressed because her father, Duke Senior, has been banished by his usurping brother, Duke Frederick.

Rosalind and Celia attend the wrestling match and there meet Orlando, who easily bests Charles despite the brute's undefeated status. Orlando and Rosalind fall in love at first sight, and Rosalind gives him a necklace as a prize for winning. When Duke Frederick learns that Orlando's father is his former enemy, he is displeased, and courtier Le Beau warns Orlando to clear out. Immediately thereafter, Orlando is warned by his servant Adam that his brother plans to kill him that night. Faced with no options, Orlando flees to the Forest of Arden, and loyal Adam accompanies him. Orlando is not the only one to displease Duke Frederick; Duke Frederick has become disenchanted with Rosalind, as well, believing that she outshines his daughter Celia. He banishes Rosalind from court, and Celia decides to follow her into exile in Arden as she cannot bear to be parted from her dearest friend. The two adopt disguises, with Rosalind becoming the young man Ganymede and Celia pretending to be Aliena, a peasant girl. Touchstone the fool goes with them.

Act 2

Duke Senior, Rosalind's father, and his men have taken up residence in the Forest of Arden during his exile. All of the men have given up their lands and wealth to follow Duke Senior into banishment. Among them is witty, philosophical Jaques, who enjoys being depressed and never misses an opportunity to bemoan his situation. The men hunt for deer and set up a picnic under a tree when Orlando bursts upon them with a sword. He is desperate for food for himself and Adam as the old man is weak from hunger and travel. Duke Senior graciously invites them both to join his party.

Act 3

Back at court Duke Frederick has discovered Celia missing, and he believes she and Rosalind have gone off with Orlando. He then takes Oliver's lands into temporary custody and sends

Oliver to find his brother in hope of locating Celia.

Orlando writes love poems to Rosalind and posts them on trees throughout the forest. In her disguise as Ganymede, Rosalind issues a witty challenge to Orlando. She claims she can cure him of his love if he will woo her as if she were Rosalind. He agrees to do so and promises to meet her later. At the same time Touchstone has fallen in love with goat herder Audrey and tries to arrange a quickie wedding, which Jaques talks him out of in favor of a more official ceremony. As Rosalind and Celia wait for Orlando, they witness a spat between the young shepherd Silvius and shepherdess Phoebe, who scorns his love. Rosalind butts in as Ganymede, advising Phoebe to accept the young man, but instead Phoebe falls instantly for Ganymede.

Act 4

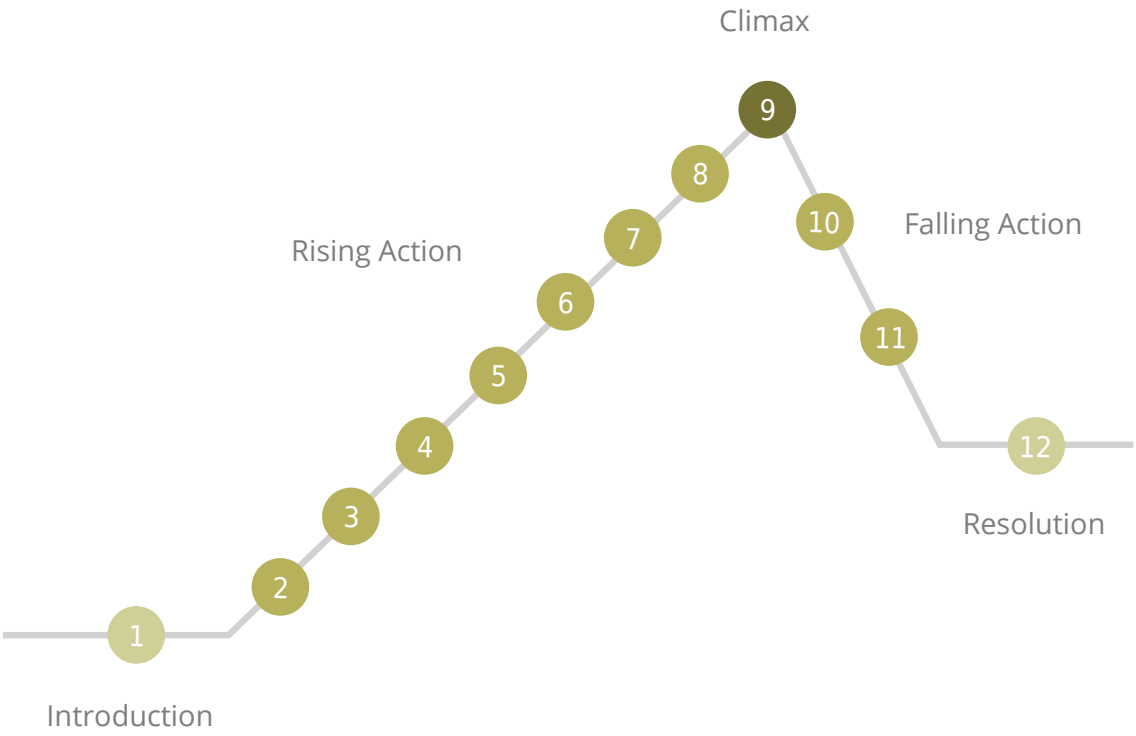
Orlando arrives late, and Ganymede scolds him for his tardiness, claiming there is no true love in him. Nonetheless, she allows him to woo her, and they agree to meet again later that day after he attends on Duke Senior. This time while they wait, Silvius delivers to Ganymede a letter from Phoebe and is crushed to learn that it is a love letter. He departs, and Oliver arrives bearing a bloody handkerchief. He explains that Orlando has rescued him from a snake and a lion, and was wounded in the fray. The two have been reconciled through Orlando's brave act. Ganymede faints but quickly comes to and says it was merely playacting.

Act 5

Ganymede devises a plan to bring all the couples together to be married the next day. She promises to marry Phoebe if Phoebe will have her and extracts a promise from Phoebe that she will marry Silvius if she doesn't marry Ganymede.

Everyone gathers the next day, and Rosalind reveals her disguise as Ganymede. Her father, Duke Senior, gives her to Orlando to wed, and Phoebe agrees to go through with marrying Silvius as promised. Touchstone and Audrey will also be married, as will Celia and Oliver, who have fallen in love at first sight. The god of marriage, Hymen, performs the ceremony. Just then another brother of Oliver and Orlando arrives with the news that Duke Frederick has converted to a life of religion and has returned his wealth, lands, and position to Duke Senior. The nobles resolve to return to court after the wedding celebration, but Jaques vows to follow Duke Frederick instead, preferring to learn what he may from the convert rather than return to court. The play ends with an epilogue in which Rosalind begs the favor of the audience in the form of applause for the actors.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Orlando fights with Oliver, who plots to kill him.

Rising Action

2. Rosalind and Orlando meet and fall instantly in love.

3. Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind from court.

4. Rosalind and Celia, disguised, flee to the Forest of Arden.

5. Orlando and Adam flee to Arden and meet Duke Senior.

6. Orlando woos Rosalind, who is disguised as Ganymede.

7. Frederick takes Oliver's lands and makes him seek Orlando.

8. Orlando saves Oliver from a lion, and they are reconciled.

Climax

9. Oliver reveals Orlando has been wounded; Rosalind faints.

Falling Action

10. Rosalind arranges marriages among several couples.

11. Duke Senior is restored to his power and wealth.

Resolution

12. Rosalind reveals her disguise; the couples are married.

Timeline of Events

1600s, France

Orlando fights with Oliver about his inheritance. Oliver urges wrestler Charles to injure Orlando.

After the match

Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind from court. Celia and Touchstone sneak away with Rosalind.

Meanwhile

Servant Adam warns Orlando of his brother's murderous intent; they escape to the Forest of Arden.

Sometime later, Arden

Desperate for food, Orlando threatens Duke Senior, who welcomes him and Adam to join his feast.

Meanwhile, Arden

Rosalind and Celia find love poems posted on the trees; Celia identifies Orlando as the author.

The next day

Orlando defeats Charles in a wrestling match and meets Rosalind; they fall in love instantly.

The next day

Duke Frederick discovers Celia gone, suspects Orlando, and sends for Oliver to find his brother.

At the same time, Arden

Shepherd Corin helps Rosalind and Celia, disguised as Ganymede and Aliena, buy a cottage.

Meanwhile, back at court

Duke Frederick strips Oliver of his lands and wealth and forces him to seek out his brother Orlando.

Immediately thereafter

Orlando agrees to woo Ganymede, Rosalind in disguise, to prove his love for her.

Soon after

Phoebe spurns shepherd Silvius and falls for Ganymede.

Not long thereafter

Silvius is dismayed that Phoebe's note to Ganymede is a love letter; Rosalind plans to unite them.

Later that day

Oliver and Celia, as Aliena, fall in love; Rosalind plans for multiple marriages.

At the same time

Celia marries Oliver, Phoebe marries Silvius, and Audrey marries Touchstone.

Soon after

Touchstone woos Audrey, and Jaques dissuades them from a hasty marriage in the forest.

Sometime later

Rosalind, as Ganymede, and Orlando have a mock wedding, officiated by Celia.

Immediately after

Oliver tells Rosalind and Celia that Orlando was injured saving him from a lion; Rosalind faints.

The next day

Ganymede reveals herself as Rosalind, is reunited with her father, Duke Senior, and marries Orlando.

Immediately after

Duke Frederick relinquishes the crown to Duke Senior, who promises to reward his loyal lords.

Part Summaries

Act 1, Scene 1

Summary

The play opens with Orlando bitterly complaining to Adam, a servant of his brother Oliver. Oliver has inherited their father's wealth and position but has not fulfilled his brotherly duties as Orlando's guardian. Despite his noble birth, Orlando has had no opportunity to become a gentleman. He has been given the bare necessities of food and shelter, but nothing beyond that, and he compares himself to the barnyard animals his brother owns. Orlando's anger has grown to the point where he feels he must "mutiny against this servitude," and he threatens that "I will no longer endure it."

Oliver then approaches, and Adam conceals himself to observe how his master treats Orlando. Orlando immediately lays into Oliver, alleging that Oliver purposefully keeps him in idleness and poverty. The two begin to struggle, and Orlando grabs Oliver by the throat. Adam tries to break up the fray, but Orlando refuses to release his grip. Oliver demands that either Orlando help him become a gentleman or give him his paltry inheritance so he can make his own way in the world.

Orlando and Adam are dismissed by Oliver, who then calls for his servant Dennis to fetch Charles, a wrestler who has called to see him on urgent business. Charles updates Oliver on what's happening at the court of the "new duke," Duke Frederick. The "old duke," Frederick's older brother, Duke Senior, has been banished and is living in exile in the Forest of Arden. A handful of his loyal lords have abandoned their riches and lands to follow him in a show of support. Still living at court is Rosalind, daughter of Duke Senior and bosom friend of Celia, daughter of Duke Frederick.

Charles then informs Oliver of a rumor he's heard that Orlando plans to wrestle against him anonymously the next day. Charles generally breaks the bones of his opponents or worse, so he has come to ask Oliver to try to talk Orlando out of it. Oliver instead paints Orlando as a villain to Charles, who vows to "give him [Orlando] his payment" in the next day's wrestling match.

Analysis

Oliver has inherited their father's lands and wealth and along with it the power to dispose of Orlando's life as he sees fit. This touches on the theme of court life, in which power is often concentrated in the hands of one person—and that person isn't always very nice. Through the brothers' relationship, Shakespeare also examines the themes of loyalty and love: particularly familial love. There is neither love nor loyalty between the brothers, as one might expect, and so they present a kind of anti-ideal to these virtues. Oliver's actions speak volumes about their relationship, which is far from brotherly and closer to enemies. He keeps Orlando in reduced circumstances purposefully, not wanting to give his brother any chance of advancement in life. The truth of the matter is that Oliver is jealous of Orlando. In his final speech of the scene, Oliver admits that although Orlando is gentle, uneducated but learned, and noble, he hates him still. Orlando's popularity with his own people irks Oliver, who wants nothing more than to see his brother gone. Charles presents a timely opportunity to take Orlando out, and Oliver jumps at the chance, lying about his brother's character and portraying him as a villain so that Charles will not hold back his brutality during their wrestling match.

As for Orlando, he has been holding down his resentment for some time and is at the point of boiling over. He sees his circumstances as stifling and hopeless and rightly blames his brother. A man of action, Orlando has to *do* something to change his life, to "mutiny against this servitude," for he can no longer bear it quietly. The action he decides to take is to enter the wrestling contest against Charles; this would both prove his worth and let off steam from his pent-up anger. He may also hope to gain financially from the match if he wins. Orlando enters the contest anonymously because, at the time, nobles did not generally participate in wrestling. (It is for this same reason that Charles goes to see Oliver; he doesn't want to maim a man of noble birth, which could get him into trouble and bring shame on the noble house.) In entering the contest anonymously, Orlando kicks off the theme of disguises and concealment in the play; he is the first character to conceal his identity using a disguise, and he does so in order to gain greater freedom of action.

The banishment of Duke Senior and his lords indicates the treacherous nature of the court. Fortunes may rise quickly and crash suddenly at court, as they do for Duke Senior and his

men. Duke Senior's relationship with his brother Duke Frederick parallels that of Orlando and Oliver: they are more enemies than friends at the opening of the play, and Duke Frederick has power over Duke Senior. By having Charles relay the news of the court to Oliver, Shakespeare sneaks in an exposition of the events that happened before the play, which are critical for the reader to understand as new events unfold.

Act 1, Scene 2

Summary

Celia tries to cheer up Rosalind, who is sad over her father's exile. They discuss Fortune and Nature, trying to understand how each influences life. Touchstone, the court's fool, comes to fetch Celia to her father, and in doing so relates the tale of a dishonorable knight who nonetheless swears by his (nonexistent) honor. The courtier Le Beau then arrives and tells of "good sport" to be had in the form of the wrestling match that is to take place shortly. He revels in sharing the details of the three brothers that Charles the wrestler has just defeated, who are all now on the verge of death from broken ribs. Touchstone remarks, "It is the first time that ever I heard breaking of ribs was sport for ladies." Nonetheless, Celia and Rosalind stay to view the match.

When Orlando arrives the ladies exclaim at his youth and try to dissuade him from wrestling. He cannot be persuaded, saying that he is willing to die, having no friends to lament him and no place in the world. The wrestling proceeds, and to everyone's great surprise Orlando defeats Charles, who is carried away in a stupor. Duke Frederick is displeased to discover that Orlando is the son of his enemy, Sir Rowland de Boys, and speaks brusquely with him rather than honoring him for winning the impossible match. Celia is shocked at her father's behavior, while Rosalind exclaims that Sir Rowland was a dear friend to her father. She presents Orlando with her own necklace as a prize for winning the match. Orlando is speechless, bowled over with spontaneous love for Rosalind. She feels the same pull, declaring to him, "Sir, you have wrestled well and overthrown/More than your enemies." He is unable to answer, and the ladies depart, leaving Orlando to kick himself for his tongue-tied manner. Le Beau then warns Orlando to leave the area to avoid Duke Frederick's displeasure. Orlando inquires about the ladies, and Le Beau reveals that Duke Frederick is irritated with Rosalind because the people praise her virtues and pity her situation. Le Beau ominously predicts that Duke Frederick's "malice 'gainst the lady/Will suddenly break forth."

Analysis

This scene sheds light on the relationship between Celia and Rosalind, who, as the reader knows from Scene 1, are not just cousins but also bosom friends. The close companions discuss important issues in life with each other. Rosalind's position at court, however, is tenuous simply because of who she is: the daughter of Duke Frederick's brother and enemy, Duke Senior. When her father was banished, Rosalind was just a child, and Frederick allowed her to stay at court for Celia's sake. However, the cousins are no longer children, and Frederick views Rosalind as a rival who eclipses his own daughter by her virtues. The fact that the people pity her also rubs him the wrong way; he wants no sympathy to go toward anyone associated with the banished Duke Senior.

Touchstone is also introduced in the scene and immediately establishes the type of character he is: a wise fool. His anecdote about the knight brings up the topic of honor, a trait that is noticeably present or lacking in many of the characters of the play. It may be that Shakespeare chose the anecdote specifically to make the reader consider the honor of the characters in general.

Le Beau, too, prompts the reader to examine both the court and its characters. In many ways he represents a typical courtier. He keeps his eyes and ears open and is up on the latest gossip and intrigue at court. He doesn't mind spreading a sensational story, either, such as Charles crushing the ribs of the three brothers. In fact he calls such violence "good sport," which reveals something of the bloodlust that pervades courtly life: it's considered fun to watch someone else get beaten to a pulp, so long as it isn't you. Touchstone's comment that such sport is not for ladies gives a disapproving hint of gender roles at the time, but it doesn't deter the women from watching anyway. Despite Le Beau's distasteful love of gossip and gore, he can be both useful and humane. In a not-so-subtle bit of foreshadowing, he rightly predicts that Rosalind is in danger from Duke Frederick, and indeed he seems to feel sorry for her.

The wrestling match does not turn out as Orlando might have hoped. Although he wins, he not only is denied either praise or

prize by Duke Frederick but actually gains him as an enemy. Bad blood runs deep, and since Orlando is the son of Duke Frederick's enemy then he is the duke's enemy by default. Celia also gets a first warning that her father is not the man she thinks he is; his snubbing of Orlando is unfair, and she knows it. However, the match does have some positive results. Orlando and Rosalind are instantly smitten with one another, and she latches onto the fact that he is the son of her father's friend to bolster her sudden feelings for him. She boldly implies that Orlando has overthrown not only the wrestler but also her heart—her strong feelings prompting her to say perhaps more than is proper for a modest young lady to reveal.

Act 1, Scene 3

Summary

Rosalind declares her love for Orlando to Celia, but they are interrupted by Duke Frederick. Without preamble, he banishes Rosalind from court upon pain of death. Rosalind begs to know how she has offended him and declares she has done him no wrong. His plain response is that "I trust thee not," pointing out that she is her father's daughter. Rosalind tries to reason with him, and Celia also intercedes. Duke Frederick calls his daughter a fool, saying that "she robs thee of thy name,/And thou wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous/When she is gone." Celia then says she may as well be banished, too, for "I cannot live out of her company."

Duke Frederick exits, leaving Celia and Rosalind most grieved indeed. Without hesitation, Celia declares herself banished along with Rosalind, for "thou and I am one." She will not be parted from her cousin and sincerely declares, "Say what thou canst, I'll go along with thee." Celia suggests they seek out Rosalind's father, Duke Senior, in the Forest of Arden. To undertake this dangerous journey, they decide that Rosalind will disguise herself as a man, while Celia will dress as a poor woman. Rosalind will take the name Ganymede, "Jove's own page," while Celia will go by Aliena. They also decide to take along the fool, Touchstone, as "a comfort to our travel." As they depart to gather their jewels and money in preparation for flight, Celia staunchly states that "now go we in content/To liberty, and not to banishment."

Analysis

Rosalind is truly an innocent victim of Duke Frederick's ill regard; she has done nothing to deserve being banished. Alas, that's how the cookie crumbles at the court; fortunes can rise and fall on a whim or a word, and a person's character, whether noble or vicious, matters less than who their friends and enemies are. Celia shows some gumption by trying to intercede with her father, but he is set in his judgment of Rosalind. From his viewpoint, the brighter Rosalind shines at court, the duller Celia appears, and he simply can't have that. Throwing Rosalind out because she is Duke Senior's daughter is simply an excuse he grabs onto to get rid of his daughter's competition. It's easy to imagine that if Rosalind were ugly and stupid, he wouldn't mind her sticking around to keep Celia company.

Celia demonstrates unwavering loyalty to Rosalind and is determined to accompany her into exile, come what may. She seems to look on their flight to Arden as a kind of light adventure. Perhaps the situation is less real to her because, at any time, she could always return to her father at court. The situation is far more dire for Rosalind, who has been threatened with death and cannot return. Celia is better able to keep her head about her in the moment of crisis, and it is she who suggests that they disguise themselves and find Duke Senior. She helps pull Rosalind out of her stunned state and into action, and further props up her spirits by declaring that their new life will be happy and free rather than feeling like a punishment.

Act 2, Scene 1

Summary

In the Forest of Arden, Duke Senior speaks to his "brothers in exile" of the sweetness and safety of country life in comparison to the "painted pomp" of court. He claims the icy bite of winter's wind to be more pleasant than flattery and adversity to be useful. He then leads his lords in a deer hunt, though he dislikes having to kill the animals in their native haunt, where they should expect to be safe.

The First Lord chimes in to say that earlier that day, he came upon "the melancholy Jaques" crying over a dying deer in the

forest. Duke Senior eagerly asks what Jaques had to say about the situation. The First Lord replies that Jaques launched into "a thousand similes" of mourning, blasting humans as "usurpers" and "tyrants" to so frighten and kill the animals. Duke Senior finds these "sullen fits" of Jaques entertaining, so off they go to seek him out in the forest.

Analysis

Duke Senior and his lords have been exiles in the forest now for many years. Duke Senior's upbeat speech is likely meant to comfort his followers, who have become like brothers to him, and to help them look on the bright side of their situation. Duke Senior does make a valid point about the court: it has its downside even though life there was easier. Some of Duke Senior's values are revealed in his speech, such as truth over flattery and turning adversity into opportunity—or at least making the best of a bad situation.

One of the hardships of life in the forest is that the men must hunt for their food. While most of the party take this in stride, even if they don't like the task, the injustice of the hunt affects Jaques far more deeply. Make no mistake, though: Jaques is disposed to being affected deeply and, in fact, revels in his misery and depression. On the surface of things, he weeps for the deer because it isn't fair that the animals should be frightened, pursued, and killed in their own home. The deer in this scene, however, symbolizes a deeper issue that angers Jaques: social injustice, particularly that social injustice that has landed them all in exile. When Jaques rants about usurpers and tyrants, he isn't really talking about the hunters; he is talking about Duke Frederick and men like him, who take over and unjustly push people out of their homes.

Act 2, Scene 2

Summary

Duke Frederick discovers that Celia is missing, having joined Rosalind in banishment. "Can it be possible that no man saw them?" he queries, immediately suspecting villainy among the members of his court. The First Lord assures Duke Frederick that Celia escaped unseen during the night, her bed being found empty in the morning. The Second Lord points out that the fool has also gone missing and shares a bit of gossip. Celia's servant, Hisperia, had overheard Celia and Rosalind praising Orlando, and she believes the two women may be in his company. Duke Frederick orders his lords to fetch Orlando immediately, and if he cannot be found to bring his brother, Oliver, instead. Duke Frederick will then compel Oliver to locate Orlando. Duke Frederick orders his attendant lords to search for and inquire after the "foolish runaways" until they are brought home.

Analysis

Whether Duke Frederick has any fatherly love for Celia is unclear; he shows no concern for her safety but rather seems angry or annoyed that she is gone. He lumps her in with Touchstone, calling them both "foolish runaways" since they have gone with Rosalind of their own accord. It is likely he simply doesn't like to be disobeyed, and he wants to force his will onto those who are supposed to obey it. His instant suspicion that someone on the inside has aided their escape hints again at the intrigues of the court as a theme in the play, as does the chain of gossip that reveals clues to Celia's whereabouts. In the end Duke Frederick acts on secondhand news overheard from servants, guessing that the runaways have gone with Orlando. He has no way of knowing this for sure, but that won't stop him from making life difficult for Oliver. After all he's the duke, and he can do what he wants.

Duke Frederick and Oliver share some important characteristics that parallel one another throughout the play. Both have power over and treat their brothers abominably. Duke Frederick usurps Duke Senior's throne and exiles him to the forest, penniless. Oliver, on the other hand, does provide *something* for his brother Orlando, but just barely. In point of fact it's hard to say who is the greater villain at this stage, but perhaps it is Oliver. At least Duke Frederick never plotted to *kill* Duke Senior! Duke Frederick doesn't have much self-awareness of his own villainy, however; he criticizes Oliver for not loving his brother but overlooks the same trait in his own behavior. Oliver, though, recognizes his own villainy when he plots to kill Orlando and when he admits he does not love him.

In contrast to these two scoundrels, the goodness of Duke Senior and Orlando shines all the more brightly. Each pair of brothers has one "good" and one "bad" character, with the virtuous brothers (Orlando and Duke Senior) being persecuted by the villainous brothers (Oliver and Duke Senior). Throughout

the play their paths will continue to parallel each other in various ways.

Act 2, Scene 3

Summary

After the wrestling match at court, Adam lectures Orlando, asking, "Know you not, master, to some kind of men/Their graces serve them but as enemies?" He also asks why Orlando would be so foolish as to defeat Duke Frederick's prize wrestler. A puzzled Orlando asks, "Why, what's the matter?" Adam reveals that he has overheard Oliver's ill intentions toward his younger brother; he intends to burn down Orlando's lodging that night, "and you within it." Adam entreats Orlando not to enter the home. Stunned, Orlando casts about for a plan, wondering aloud if he shall have to beg for food or turn to thievery to support himself. This he cannot do, and says, "I rather will subject me to the malice/Of a diverted blood and bloody brother" than turn to such a life.

Adam offers his retirement savings to Orlando, faithful that God will provide for his own old age. He offers to be Orlando's servant, saying that, despite his age, he is still "strong and lusty" and willing to serve. Orlando praises Adam, likening him to the servants of ancient times for his sense of duty and loyalty—unlike modern servants, who only serve to better their own positions. Orlando then laments that he has so little to offer Adam, saying "thou prun'st a rotten tree/That cannot so much as a blossom yield." Nonetheless, they agree to go along together and try to make a new life somehow. For his part Adam is proud to live and die honorably, having no debt to his master.

Analysis

Loyalty and love are the main themes of this scene, with Adam proving to be a paragon of these virtues and Oliver lacking them entirely. Wise old Adam has been around long enough to understand the minds and motives of men, and it is he, not young Orlando, who sees the danger that Orlando presents to himself. His virtues and graces make him a target of jealousy and malice, and so, in a way, Orlando is his own worst enemy. His desire to prove himself in the wrestling match brought him the wrong kind of attention; it aroused Duke Frederick's and his brother's enmity against him. Orlando's youthful inexperience shows in his response; he can't imagine how to remedy his situation but through begging or thievery, neither of which he is willing to do—likely because of pride or moral scruples. Oliver's desire to kill Orlando shows no brotherly love in him, but even so Orlando has no clue what to do except to return to his murderous sibling.

Adam saves the day by offering an alternative, his life savings and escape to a new life elsewhere. This offer demonstrates deep love and loyalty, bestowed not only because Orlando is the son of his late beloved master but also because Orlando has a good character and deserves it. Adam's love and loyalty parallels that of Duke Senior's lords, who gave up their riches to follow Duke Senior into exile, just as Adam is doing now for Orlando. Adam's generosity and willingness to serve, despite his aging body, show true goodness and strength of character, and it is humbling to Orlando to be the recipient of this unexpected aid. While the richest and most powerful people surrounding Orlando persecute him, it is a poor, lowly servant who brings new hope and opportunity. Adam commits himself to serve even though his new master is in no position to reward him, which Orlando recognizes in comparing himself to a rotten tree that cannot bloom. In this scene Adam serves as a role model who shows how to live an upright, honest life—and to be grateful for it. It is just the guidance Orlando needs.

Act 2, Scene 4

Summary

Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone arrive in the Forest of Arden, weary from their flight. As two shepherds approach, the threesome conceal themselves to eavesdrop. The young shepherd, Silvius, pines for his love, Phoebe, while the older shepherd Corin offers the advice, "That is the way to make her scorn you still." He also empathizes with the younger man, stating that he, too, has been in love. Silvius will have none of it, claiming that he loves more deeply than an old man like Corin could ever understand, and that a true lover will do all manner of foolish things in pursuit of his love. Silvius departs, unable to bear any human company other than his love. Silvius's speech reminds Rosalind and Touchstone of their own loves. Touchstone relates some of his past foolish acts perpetrated

for the sake of love, including kissing the udders of the cow that his girlfriend had milked. Both Rosalind and Touchstone declare that they are in the same boat as the poor shepherd, though for Touchstone, "it grows something stale with me."

Meanwhile, Celia entreats Rosalind and Touchstone to question Corin about finding food, as she nearly faints from hunger. Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, speaks with Corin, offering to pay for his help. Corin apologizes that he has little to offer but will try to find something for them. He explains that he tends another man's flocks, a master "of churlish disposition" who doesn't care about offering hospitality or doing good deeds. He also mentions that his master currently isn't home because his property is for sale. Rosalind seizes on the opportunity and asks Corin to act as go-between in buying the property for them. Corin agrees to do so and to continue tending the estate's flocks for them as well.

Analysis

The journey to Arden has been exhausting, but the threesome arrive safely at their destination. Their first encounter in the forest with Corin and Silvius sets the tone for their entire sojourn in the woods: it's all about love. Rosalind and Touchstone immediately engage with the shepherds' topic of conversation and willingly indulge in thoughts of their own current and past loves. Rosalind is young and in love for the first time, while Touchstone is more experienced in romance and thus views it with somewhat more cynicism than she does. Love "grows something stale," he says: he's had time enough to see both the joys and the folly of it. Meanwhile, Celia's mind is on far more practical matters: survival. Since she is not currently in love, she couldn't care less about love talk, particularly when her stomach is growling from hunger. Once again it is she who initiates action, just as it was she who concocted their plan for escaping court.

Silvius and Corin's conversation examines a major theme of the play, romantic love. Their perspectives as a young man and as an old one cast very different lights on the theme. In Corin's statement, "That is the way to make her scorn you still," the reader doesn't know what "that" is, but based on Silvius's speech and later actions it's clear that he is being a doormat to Phoebe. The more he loves her, the more she scorns him, yet Silvius lets her walk all over him. Corin seems to be advising Silvius to play it cool, or maybe even be a little harder to get, in order to entice the girl. Like many youths, Silvius is sure he knows it all and dismisses Corin's advice without even considering it. Silvius's ideas of love are rather overblown and ridiculous: he believes that the more foolish he acts the more he proves his love. In reality he's just acting foolish, as youth in love are apt to do. Touchstone gives further proof of this universal experience in his admission of kissing a cow's udder!

Conveniently, Corin presents the traveling trio with an opportunity to gain exactly what they need: food and shelter. His offer moves the plot along and handily solves a problem. Such coincidental or "lucky" happenstances are common in Shakespeare's comedies, where the focus is not necessarily on creating a realistic story but rather on entertaining the audience and exploring themes.

Act 2, Scene 5

Summary

The scene opens in the forest with Amiens singing a verse about the simple pleasures of the forest, where "Here shall he see/No enemy/But winter and rough weather." When Jaques entreats him to continue, Amiens warns that it will make him melancholy. Jaques is all for it, proclaiming that "I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs." Amiens tries to beg off, claiming his "voice is ragged" and the singing won't be pleasant. Nonetheless, Jaques insists. Amiens relents but asks the party of assembled gentlemen to prepare a picnic ("banquet") under a tree for Duke Senior, who has been looking for Jaques all day.

Jaques admits that he's been avoiding Duke Senior, who is "too disputable for my company. I think of as many matters as he, but I give heaven thanks and make no boast of them." Amien and the ensemble continue the song, singing to anyone "Who doth ambition shun/And loves to live i' th' sun,/Seeking the food he eats/And pleased with what he gets,/Come hither, come hither, come hither." Jaques then proposes his own verse to the song. He parodies himself and the other lords who have followed Duke Senior into the forest, calling them "gross fools" for leaving their "wealth and ease/A stubborn will to please." Amiens then departs to find Duke Senior, as the banquet is ready.

Analysis

The theme of court life versus life in the country colors this scene, with the pastoral songs underpinning the superiority of country life. In the country there is no enemy but the weather, in contrast with the many enemies one must face at court. The second song calls on a certain type of person to come to the country: a person who doesn't care much for work but prefers to lay around in the sun; a person with simple tastes who is happy to hunt for and eat whatever meager meal comes to hand. Never mind that hunting for food can actually be hard work and might not be all that appealing to a person "who doth ambition shun." The songs idealize the country life to show it in its best light; after all the exiled singers have no choice but to live in the country, so they try to make the best of it.

Naturally, sourpuss Jaques must poke holes in this whitewashing of the country life. His made-up verse to the song strikes the opposite note, pointing out the reality that life was a lot easier at court and that they were all, basically, stupid for leaving. The fact that Jaques has been avoiding Duke Senior hints that he is not as enamored of the duke now as he was when they first came to the Forest of Arden. It was to please Duke Senior's "stubborn will" that Jaques gave up his life of ease, a move that he may regret now—or at least one that he sees now as foolish. Jaques may be somewhat deluded in his own view of himself, however. He complains that Duke Senior enjoys debates or arguments too much, and says that he is just as full of deep thoughts as Duke Senior but that he refrains from oversharing those thoughts (he "make[s] no boast of them"). This is rather like the pot calling the kettle black given Jaques's reputation for rambling on endlessly.

Act 2, Scene 6

Summary

Orlando and Adam enter the forest, where Adam bemoans that he can go no farther and that he will die of hunger. "Here lie I down and measure out my grave," he says. Orlando cajoles him to cheer up, then says that he will go to hunt for some wild animal to eat: "I will either be food for it or bring it for food to thee." He jests that "if I bring thee not something to eat, I will give thee leave to die," but that if Adam dies before he returns his efforts will be for naught. Orlando then lifts up Adam to carry him to some kind of shelter where he will be warm and bids him again to cheer up.

Analysis

Despite his previous claims of strength and stamina, Adam proves himself human. His hyperbole ("Here lie I down and measure out my grave") is more amusing than serious, but it's clear that the poor old man needs sustenance to keep going. Now it is Orlando's turn to support, encourage, and serve his aged servant, just as Adam supported, encouraged, and promised to serve Orlando at the beginning of the journey. Here Orlando shows that he returns Adam's love and loyalty, two of the major themes of the play, as he promises to bring back food or die trying. He adds a tweak of humor by teasing that if there is no food to be had then Adam has his permission to go ahead and die. Before he departs, Orlando makes sure that Adam is sheltered, not out in the cold air, again returning the care that Adam has previously given him. The reader sees Orlando's loyal, nurturing, and responsible side for the first time, which adds depth and maturity to his character.

Act 2, Scene 7

Summary

Duke Senior and the First Lord look for Jaques, who shows up just at that moment. Jaques excitedly announces that he has met a fool (Touchstone) in the forest, who was complaining of his bad fortune and philosophizing about time. "From hour to hour we ripe and ripe,/And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,/And thereby hangs a tale," said the fool, much to Jaques's delight, who laughed nonstop for an hour. Jaques praises the fool for his witty observations and strange way of putting things.

"O, that I were a fool!/I am ambitious for a motley coat," Jaques declares. Duke Senior says that he shall have one, but Jaques places conditions on this. Namely, that Duke Senior must rid himself of any idea that Jaques is wise and that Jaques must always be free to target whomever he chooses, as a fool is generally given leave to do. Duke Senior objects that since Jaques himself has been a libertine, he is hardly in a position to lecture others on morality. Jaques reasons that he would

lecture no one in particular but only speak generally on sins such as pride, and that any person who objected must surely be guilty of the sin.

Orlando bursts in, brandishing his sword, and orders the entire party to stop eating immediately. Duke Senior reprimands him, asking whether his actions are driven by distress or if he is simply being rude. Orlando admits that his situation is dire and that he is desperate for food. Duke Senior graciously invites him to dine with them, and a humbled Orlando responds, "Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you./I thought that all things had been savage here,/And therefore put I on the countenance/Of stern commandment." He asks the party to wait for him to fetch Adam to the table, vowing that "Till he be first sufficed ... I will not touch a bit." Duke Senior agrees, and Orlando departs to bring back the old man.

Duke Senior then muses that life is a "wide and universal theater" that "presents more woeful pageants than the scene/Wherein we play." Jaques runs with the theme, stating "All the world's a stage,/And all the men and women merely players," who live from birth to death the seven acts of life: infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, judge, old age, and the second childhood of "oblivion,/Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." Orlando returns with Adam, and as they all begin to feast Orlando and Duke Senior converse. Meanwhile Amiens sings about ingratitude, false friendships, and foolish love. When Duke Senior learns that Orlando is the son of Sir Rowland, he welcomes him with real warmth and asks to hear the rest of his story in private.

Analysis

For years depressive, mopey Jaques has played the role of amusing or entertaining the others in the forest, whether he cares for the role or not (and his avoidance of Duke Senior suggests that he doesn't really care for it all that much). Thus his delight at finding a fool in the forest—Touchstone, as a fresh face with new ideas and unheard stories—might be able to relieve Jaques of his role to some extent. Moreover, Touchstone is clever enough to amuse hard-to-impress Jaques himself, so he is a rare find indeed. The fool's witty, sardonic banter suits Jaques perfectly, as he, too, likes to talk philosophy and to point out the folly and foibles of others. Jaques's desire to become an official fool suggests that he does not currently feel free to speak his mind completely; he wants to say whatever he wants without fear of repercussions. Even without the motley coat, though, one could say that Jaques already plays the unofficial fool among his comrades in the forest. The theme of court life is in play here, with its need to "play the game" in socializing—acting and speaking according to strict protocols that constrain the individual from saying what they really feel or doing what they really wish to do. In a way it is only the fool at court who does *not* wear a disguise—another theme of the play. Though the fool wears a motley coat, he is virtually the only person at court who can speak his mind freely; the other members of court must disguise their true selves in various ways in order to navigate courtly life.

Orlando's violent entry to the party doesn't make a good first impression, but luckily for him the no-nonsense Duke Senior has a good head on his shoulders and responds by using that head instead of meeting sword with sword. Duke Senior sees that Orlando must be desperate to threaten a large party of people—there would be little hope that Orlando could defeat them all singlehandedly. Duke Senior feels safe, surrounded by supporters, allowing him to offer gracious hospitality even in the face of Orlando's tasteless breach of etiquette. Orlando's youth and inexperience comes through here again. He really doesn't know much of the world and approaches the situation with impetuous bravado rather than thoughtful evaluation. He naively assumes that all he meets in the forest will be "savage," but it is he who acts without manners or courtesy. Given his desperate state of mind, though, his "better safe than sorry" actions are understandable. He also immediately makes amends for his rudeness, and shows the goodness in his character through his motivation to help Adam. In this scene the theme of court versus country is evident. Duke Senior still upholds some of the more laudable manners of the court, despite the fact that he now lives in the country. Orlando, who has just come from court, is the one who behaves in the uncivilized manner that one might expect of country denizens. The themes of love and loyalty are also addressed through Orlando's motivation to help Adam. Adam has been loyal and loving to Orlando, and now Orlando returns the favor by risking his own life to save the old servant.

Jaques's speech on the seven acts of life expounds on the theme of disguises and the roles people play in life. Some characters important to the scene mirror the roles Jaques names. Orlando is like the soldier, leaping out with his sword to do battle; although he really only wants something to eat, he feels he must take on the role of soldier to get what he needs. Adam is the old man, not quite yet to second childhood, but

probably not far off from that oblivious state. Jaques's final summation that man ends his life "sans everything" is appropriately depressing, coming from this self-proclaimed man of melancholy. There seems to be little in life that is pleasurable or rewarding for Jaques; instead he prefers to uncover the darkness and wallow in it. Jaques himself would probably identify with the judge, being "full of wise saws" or sayings; he obviously thinks he knows a lot about human nature and thinks that he is a good judge of the character and follies of others.

Act 3, Scene 1

Summary

Back at court Duke Frederick grills Oliver on the whereabouts of Orlando, praising his own "mercy" for not taking revenge on Oliver immediately. He gives Oliver twelve months to find and bring back his brother, "dead or living." In the meantime he seizes Oliver's lands and fortunes. Oliver panders to Duke Frederick, assuring him that "I never loved my brother in my life." Duke Frederick replies, "More villain thou," has him thrown out, and issues an order for his officers to seize all of Oliver's holdings immediately.

Analysis

This scene is yet another reminder that life can change in an instant at the treacherous court. Duke Frederick uses his power with ruthless efficiency, despite his apparent belief in his own mercy. Oliver, whose only "crime" is being Orlando's brother (in other words, guilt by association), takes the brunt of Duke Frederick's anger, not that he is entirely innocent. He doesn't hesitate to sacrifice Orlando to curry favor with Duke Frederick and to disassociate himself from his brother, a ploy that even the duke finds despicable. Duke Frederick evidently can't see the hypocrisy in his own stance; he calls Oliver a villain for not loving his brother, yet Duke Frederick has done far worse to his own brother, Duke Senior. In short the pair are similar in this regard, both acting ruthlessly and showing no brotherly love for their siblings.

Act 3, Scene 2

Summary

Orlando writes love poems to Rosalind and posts them on the trees of the forest. Meanwhile, Corin and Touchstone discuss philosophy and compare shepherding life in the forest to life at court. Touchstone states that "thou art damned" for not having been at court, since only at court can one learn good manners, and any other manners must be wicked. Corin replies, "Those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behavior of the country is most mockable at the court."

Rosalind enters dressed as Ganymede, reading one of Orlando's love poems. Touchstone immediately begins mocking the poetry, making up his own ludicrous verses about Rosalind. Celia then enters, disguised as Aliena, also reading one of Orlando's poems, and chases off Corin and Touchstone so that she can speak privately with Rosalind. She asks if her cousin has seen the verses, and Rosalind replies by making fun of their poor quality, calling them a "tedious homily of love" that others must bear. Celia hints that she knows the author of the poems and that he had "a chain, that you once wore, about his neck. Change you color?" She is amazed at Rosalind's eager desire to know who it is and teases her for a bit but then admits that it is indeed Orlando. Rosalind peppers her with questions about her encounter with Orlando and constantly interrupts with exclamations and more questions as Celia tries to relate the details. Before Celia can fully answer, Jaques and Orlando enter nearby, bantering about Orlando's poetry and shooting barbs at one another. They commiserate about their worldly miseries and faults, and Jaques takes a parting shot at Orlando as he leaves: "Farewell, good Signior Love." Orlando dishes it right back, with "Adieu, good Monsieur Melancholy."

Rosalind then whispers to Celia that she will "speak to him like a saucy lackey" and play a trick on him. She calls to him, asking the time, and he answers that there are no clocks in the forest. She then explains how time runs differently for different people, dragging for the maid awaiting her wedding day but galloping for the condemned man on his way to the gallows. Orlando seems taken in by Rosalind's disguise and inquires where the "pretty youth" was born, pointing out that her accent is more refined than the usual country dweller. Rosalind claims an old religious uncle taught her to speak and at the same time

schooled her in the "many giddy offenses" of women. These secrets she will only share with "those that are sick" with love—such as the poor man pinning love notes on the trees around the forest.

Orlando admits that it is he, and asks for her remedy for love. Skeptical Rosalind says he bears no signs of love: no lean cheek, no neglected beard, no carelessness in his dress, and no general sense of desolation. "But you are no such man," she claims, for he is too well dressed, which shows that he loves himself more than any lover. Orlando is eager to prove his love of Rosalind, who says she will cure him of his love through wise counsel. She will pretend to be his love, and he will woo her by the name of Rosalind. In doing so she will exhibit all the worst qualities of women, from pride to fickleness, and thus change his love to anger. Orlando says that he does not want to be cured but agrees to the scheme anyway.

Analysis

Touchstone has an unshakeable belief that the people of the court are superior to country folk. However, his logic doesn't hold up under Corin's common sense, who shoots down his argument with the simple opinion that the court appears equally ridiculous to those who live in the country. The contrast in the way the two men reason reflects how different the court and the country are. Touchstone uses twisted logic and fancy verbal footwork to try to prove his point, while Corin's speech is straightforward and sensible.

Orlando's love poems quickly become the talk of the forest. He's not a very good poet, as Rosalind points out in making fun of them—of course that's before she knows that Orlando wrote them. Celia, though, knows the author and enjoys tormenting her cousin by withholding the information. Rosalind can't hide her excitement when she believes it is Orlando—she is too far gone in love to dissemble that it doesn't matter to her.

Shakespeare then pens another convenient happenstance, with Jaques and Orlando strolling onto the scene just at that moment. Their banter seems genial enough, like a harmless insult-fight between acquaintances, but they also don't pull punches. Each nails the other's personality on the head with the labels of "Signior Love" and "Monsieur Melancholy." By now Rosalind knows for certain that Orlando has authored the poems, and she is eager to speak with him even if she's in disguise and can't speak as herself. She seizes on a dull conversational opener by asking him the time, but that's all she needs—an opening—and after that there is no stopping her rambling wit. Rosalind is eager to discover if Orlando truly loves her and craves his attention and wooing. She makes up the elaborate story about her ability to cure love as an excuse to see him again and as a way to elicit the words of love that she longs to hear.

Orlando seems taken in by her disguise, but is he really? That's unclear. He calls Ganymede a "pretty youth," which seems a bit odd—would he normally call an unknown man "pretty"? He also seems quite content to indulge her silly proposal to cure him of his love, agreeing to meet with Ganymede even though he doesn't actually want to be cured. What's more, Orlando later admits to Duke Senior that "the first time that I ever saw him/Methought he was a brother to your daughter" (Act 5, Scene 4). It's possible that he isn't fooled by her disguise at all. It's also possible that Shakespeare is playing with some gender-bending here, introducing an element of homoeroticism between Orlando and this other "man." Perhaps Orlando is attracted to Ganymede and does in fact think he is a man, or perhaps he knows it is Rosalind and it is she he is attracted to. Or maybe he just doesn't have anything better to do and decides it's an amusing enough pastime for a while. The reader may interpret this ambiguous scene "as you like it," choosing the explanation they prefer. In any interpretation this second meeting of Orlando and Rosalind increases the rising action of the play, setting events into faster motion toward the eventual climax.

Act 3, Scene 3

Summary

Touchstone woos Audrey, a goat herder, while Jaques observes from a distance and mocks his foolishness. Touchstone compares himself to Ovid, out of place in the forest just as Ovid was out of place in the land of the Goths. Audrey is not impressed, and the fool laments that she is not "poetical." She doesn't know the word and asks if it is "honest in deed and word." He replies no, since "the truest poetry is the most feigning." Confused, she asks, "Would you not have me honest?" and he answers no, unless she were ugly, "for honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey a sauce to sugar." Audrey says that she is not beautiful, so she would at least be

honest.

Touchstone declares that whatever she may be, he will marry her, and reveals that he has gone to see the vicar, Sir Oliver Martext, to perform the marriage ceremony. Audrey agrees happily. Touchstone laments not having a proper church wedding and muses that his wife will no doubt gift him with horns during their marriage. But he concedes the horned forehead of a married man is better than a bachelor's bare brow.

Martext enters but will not marry the couple unless there is a man to give Audrey away. Jaques pops up from the forest and volunteers for duty, and Touchstone welcomes him. Jaques asks Touchstone if he really wants to get married, saying "will you, being a man of your breeding, be married under a bush like a beggar?" Jaques urges him to find a real priest who can counsel them about marriage, else their hasty marriage may fall apart. Touchstone secretly thinks that an improper marriage would be just fine since it would be "a good excuse for me hereafter to leave my wife." Nonetheless, he allows Jaques to lead them away. "Come, sweet Audrey," the fool concedes. "We must be married, or we must live in bawdry."

Analysis

Most of Touchstone's philosophizing goes straight over simple Audrey's head. She has no idea who Ovid is and can't participate in conversation at clever Touchstone's level. This rather stumps him, for he had planned on seducing her with his pretty words; this is the way wooing works at court. He then wishes that Audrey were more poetical, which he explains is "feigning." Audrey firmly declares that she is honest, however. This is disappointing for Touchstone, because in Shakespeare's day the word *honest* also had the meaning of "chaste or virtuous." In short he has no hope of taking Audrey to bed easily since he can't smooth talk her out of her virtue.

Touchstone's attitude toward marriage seems very lax; he has given no reason for wanting to marry Audrey other than the implication that he wants to bed her. Having a quickie ceremony by a questionable vicar "married under a bush like a beggar" doesn't bother him at all, and his so-called regret that they are not having the ceremony performed in a church is just for show. Once the vicar arrives the problem arises of needing a male to give away the bride; Touchstone likely knew of this requirement but had not arranged for such a witness. It's probable he hadn't wanted witnesses so he could later forswear the marriage, but Jaques foils that possibility by stepping out of his hiding place. Here the theme of disguises and concealment comes into play once more; by concealing himself and spying on the couple, Jaques changes the course of their actions. Jaques makes Touchstone squirm by pointing out that no man of breeding would seriously be married in such a fashion, and Touchstone admits in an aside that he's okay with having such an easy way out of this marriage later on. The fool knows when he is licked, though, and there's no way of going through with the bogus wedding now. On the surface he concedes to Jaques's point of view that a church wedding is better, and away they go to arrange it. His final line that they must be married or live "in bawdry" (in sin) suggests that he has accepted that they must wed in a proper ceremony. In all of this Shakespeare makes the reader consider the theme of love and marriage: What is "proper" when it comes to marriage, and when is love true or false? Touchstone's love seems to be false at this point of the play, but the fact that he continues forward with plans to wed Audrey—even if he has to have a real wedding to do it—makes the reader consider that perhaps he really does love her after all.

Act 3, Scene 4

Summary

Rosalind and Celia await Orlando, who has promised to visit Ganymede, but he's late. Rosalind is on the verge of tears and goes back and forth between thinking him a liar and praising his virtues. "His kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread," she sighs, to which Celia responds that he kisses with "a pair of cast lips of Diana" for his kisses bear "the very ice of chastity." She then agrees that he must indeed be a liar since he has not arrived. Rosalind asks if this is Celia's true opinion, and Celia admits that though he is probably not a pickpocket or a thief, she doubts that he is truly in love.

She then says that Orlando is staying with Rosalind's father, Duke Senior, in the forest. Rosalind reveals that she has spoken to her father in the guise of Ganymede, "but what talk we of fathers when there is such a man as Orlando?" Celia mocks him as a youthful coward, implying that he's all talk and no action. After all he "writes brave verses, speaks brave words, swears brave oaths," but where is he? He hasn't shown

up as promised.

Corin then enters and asks if the two would like to get a peek at a lovers' scene that is about to play out nearby. It is a young shepherd they know of, who is fruitlessly in love with a "proud disdainful shepherdess." Rosalind entreats Celia to go and tells Corin that she will "prove a busy actor in their play."

Analysis

Rosalind waffles over Orlando's character because she is uncertain of his love. She hopes to find reassurance in Celia, but her cousin is skeptical and would rather tear Orlando down than build him up. Celia's reference to Diana, a virgin goddess, implies that there will be no warmth of love found in Orlando. Celia may be wise in her skepticism since the women really don't know that much about Orlando, or she may simply be annoyed or jealous that Rosalind's attention is diverted elsewhere rather than on their own friendship. Celia has given up a life of ease to follow Rosalind into the forest, and this rapid shift in her cousin's affections must sting and make Celia wonder about her own future. If Rosalind marries, where will that leave Celia—stuck in a shepherd's cottage alone?

Celia isn't the only one Rosalind is neglecting. She and her father, Duke Senior, have been parted for *years* and yet when she meets him in the forest she does not reveal her identity. Instead she remains disguised and speaks to him as if they are strangers. She has no interest in talking to Celia about Duke Senior but would rather focus her attention on Orlando. Her dismissal of Duke Senior suggests that Rosalind doesn't yet want to be back under his wing. She has just gained freedom of action for the first time in her life and most likely wants to be in charge of her own fate, especially when it comes to love. While her father might offer the women protection, he might also forbid Rosalind to see Orlando—why risk it? Although her dismissal of her father is a bit cold, it does show she is confident she can make it on her own. This stronger, more capable Rosalind contrasts with the confused, depressed Rosalind who was exiled just a short time ago. She has grown in personal power and is more in charge now—no doubt facilitated by her disguise as a man.

Act 3, Scene 5

Summary

Rosalind, Celia, and Corin eavesdrop as Silvius, a lovelorn shepherd, begs his love Phoebe not to be so scornful. Phoebe doesn't want to hurt him and argues that her scornful looks cannot truly hurt him. To prove her point, she gives him a nasty look, saying, "if mine eyes can wound, now let them kill thee." She then challenges him to show her where he has been wounded, which of course, he cannot. Silvius retorts that if Phoebe should ever fall in love, "Then shall you know the wounds invisible/That love's keen arrows make." Phoebe gives him leave to mock her and to show her no pity if she should fall in love, just as she shows him no pity now.

Rosalind (as Ganymede) bursts in and reprimands the girl for acting so high and mighty to the wretched shepherd. She points out that Phoebe herself isn't all that pretty and is "proud and pitiless" without reason to be so. Phoebe gives her a funny look, and Rosalind realizes that she has caught the girl's fancy. "No, faith, proud mistress, hope not after it," she declares firmly, then turns to ask Silvius why on earth he follows her around like a fool. "You are a thousand times a properer man/Than she a woman," she declares. She encourages Phoebe to accept this good man's love, "For I must tell you friendly in your ear,/Sell when you can; you are not for all markets."

Phoebe responds that she would rather hear Rosalind scold her than Silvius's words of love. Rosalind tells her in no uncertain terms not to fall in love with her but to take Silvius up on his offer instead—for no one else may ever think she is beautiful as he does. Rosalind, Celia, and Corin exit, leaving Phoebe to admit to Silvius that she now understands what it means to fall in love at first sight. She now feels sorry for him, and he proposes the cure: if she would love him back, both his grief and her sorrow would disappear. She concedes that though she still doesn't love Silvius, at least she doesn't hate him anymore. She decides to let him tag along with her because he could be useful but states clearly he shouldn't expect anything further. Silvius happily agrees, asking only that she give him an occasional smile to keep him going.

Phoebe then asks who this boy was who so disdained her. She speaks of Ganymede's good looks and fine speech and says

that some other woman might fall in love with such a man, but not her. "I have more cause to hate him than to love him," she assures Silvius. She decides she will write Ganymede (Rosalind) "a very taunting letter" and tell him off for being rude to her, and she enlists Silvius to deliver it to him (her).

Analysis

Shakespeare uses Phoebe and Silvius to present a different version of the romantic love theme to the reader. While Rosalind and Orlando share a mutual love, Silvius's love is one sided and seems hopeless. Phoebe could not be less interested in Silvius, which she makes abundantly clear with her sharp, honest tongue. She rationally debunks the "if looks could kill" metaphor that Silvius uses to woo her, but Silvius's response reminds the reader that love isn't logical—it strikes when and where it will, and it may even strike Phoebe someday.

Phoebe's disdain gets Rosalind riled up, and she can't resist poking her nose into their business. Perhaps herself being in love, she identifies and sympathizes with the shepherd and thus wants to come to his aid. Phoebe's character actually mirrors that of Rosalind (Ganymede), though, when it comes to wooing: both poke holes in their lovers' inflated ideas about love. Ganymede seeks to "cure" Orlando of his love while Phoebe tries to strip away Silvius's unwanted love through her scornful, pitiless treatment of the man. The difference is that Phoebe is doing so in earnest while Ganymede only pretends to want to cure Orlando.

Until now Rosalind's disguise has been beneficial, allowing her to travel safely and act freely. However, as with most deceptions, there comes a time when the lies begin to create problems. Rosalind's life becomes more complicated when Phoebe falls in love with her. If only she could take off her disguise she could end the confusion immediately, but Rosalind feels she still has need of her male persona, so she is stuck dealing with this ludicrous situation. She then treats Phoebe to some of the same blunt honesty that Phoebe has dished out to Silvius. "Hope not after it," she warns—in other words, "you don't stand a chance with me." Her advice to "sell when you can; you are not for all markets" is clearly a putdown meant to detach Phoebe's love from Ganymede and transfer it to Silvius.

Nonetheless, Phoebe has now learned the lesson that love, indeed, is not logical, as she herself has fallen helplessly in love. While she claims to hate Ganymede, she has also been quite complimentary of the "pretty youth." Thus her declaration that she will write him a "taunting" letter is suspect, at best.

Act 4, Scene 1

Summary

Jaques hails Ganymede (Rosalind) to make his (her) acquaintance. They discuss Jaques's melancholy nature, which he loves better than laughing. His demeanor is "a melancholy of mine own," he explains—unlike the melancholy of musicians, lovers, or other average people. It has many causes, including "contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness." Rosalind says, "I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's," and points out that he has nothing to show for his travels but experiences that now make him sad. "I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad," she says.

Jaques departs as Orlando arrives, an hour late for his meeting with Ganymede, whom he calls Rosalind, as they've previously agreed. Rosalind is sternly displeased, telling him not to come around anymore if he ever pulls such a trick again. He begs pardon, but she continues to rail, saying she'd rather be wooed by a snail. A snail, though slow, at least brings his house with him—more than Orlando can offer—and brings also his destiny, horns on his head. Orlando protests that "Virtue is no hornmaker, and my Rosalind is virtuous." Rosalind then abruptly changes her tune, "for now I am in a holiday humor," and gives him leave to woo her. She answers his every word with sharp wit and retorts, pretending to scorn him as "Rosalind": "I say I will not have you." He answers that he will die, and she mocks the notion, saying that no man has ever actually died for love. She then declares that she will have him after all and proposes that Celia play the part of a priest and marry them.

The three of them stumble through a mock ceremony, and Orlando says that he will love her "Forever and a day." Rosalind dismisses the notion, saying that love changes quickly once a couple is married as the passions of spring change to the chill of winter. For her part Rosalind swears that she will vex her new husband constantly through jealousy, noisy chatter, and unpredictable moodiness, among other unpleasantness. He

responds that the true Rosalind is wise, implying that she would not do such things. "The wiser, the waywarder," quips Rosalind, explaining that a truly witty woman cannot be silenced. She will never be caught without an excuse for her behavior; even if she sneaks off to the neighbor's bed she'll simply say that she went to look for her husband there. Orlando excuses himself to attend on Duke Senior, earnestly promising to return in two hours. Celia, disgusted with her cousin, lectures, "You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate" and she should be exposed so the world could see "what the bird hath done to her own nest." Rosalind tries to convince Celia how deeply she is in love, but her cousin remains skeptical.

Analysis

Jaques and Rosalind present different approaches to life. Jaques purposefully sinks into the sad depths of life, perhaps finding it more "real" or worthy than mere happiness, while Rosalind would rather live a lighter, merrier life. Both probably think themselves wise and the other a fool. Shakespeare again avoids giving a clear opinion on the matter, leaving the reader to decide.

When Orlando at last arrives, Rosalind blasts him on purpose rather than out of real anger. In doing so she sets the precedent for their relationship: she expects specific, nonnegotiable behavior from Orlando, and if he doesn't toe the line he can hit the road. In a nod to the theme of disguises, her guise as Ganymede emboldens Rosalind to act more harshly and speak more bluntly than she might if she were being herself. But the true thrust of this scene has to do with the themes of love, marriage, and loyalty. Rosalind tests Orlando's love and loyalty in many ways, trying to find out if he is truly ready for (and serious about) marriage to her. First she teases that she might cheat on him to see how he reacts (as referenced in the snail's horns, which are a symbol for cuckolding in the same way that deer's horns are in other scenes). Naturally he defends his Rosalind's honor. Then she coquettishly demands that he now woo her; but even though she has asked for the wooing, Rosalind doesn't let up. She continues poking holes in Orlando's courtly notions of love with her slippery wit. It isn't courtly love she wants, as courtly love often proves false. Everything she says and does is to determine if Orlando really loves her. Orlando responds gamely to all her ploys and doesn't so much as flinch when Rosalind suggests the mock wedding. He is able to take whatever she dishes out—even her warnings that she will be a difficult, moody wife. His response is that the Rosalind he knows would not act in such a way. This again raises the question of whether Orlando knows Ganymede's true identity and is merely indulging her in her playacting. Rosalind's cautions do ring true in one regard, though: she will not want to be silenced in marriage, and Orlando had best expect that she will continue to speak her mind.

Rosalind may go a bit too far in her description of the witty, cheating wife who has a smooth answer for every situation. Celia calls her on it, saying that Rosalind is a hypocrite for putting down her own sex in such an unjust way. Practical, not-in-love Celia doesn't see how Rosalind's actions spring from her deep love and from her need for proof of Orlando's love. Celia's love and loyalty still belongs to Rosalind, but Rosalind's love and loyalty has shifted away to Orlando. Her reprimand of Rosalind may serve as a means of venting her frustration with how the situation has changed; there is nothing she can do to change things, but perhaps it feels good to get in a barb or two at her cousin's expense.

Act 4, Scene 2

Summary

Duke Senior's Lords have killed a deer in their hunt, and Jaques proposes they should present the hunter who took it down to Duke Senior "like a Roman conqueror," with the deer's horns on his head as a sign of victory. He begs a song from one of the lords, who obliges him. "What shall he have that killed the deer?" the man sings. "His leather skin and horns to wear" is the answer. The song advises that one should not be ashamed to wear the horns for they've been worn for many generations before. The horn "is not a thing to laugh to scorn," the song proclaims in its final line.

Analysis

This scene serves as a pastoral interlude to entertain the audience rather than progressing the plot or revealing important information about the characters. Jaques thinks presenting the hunter as a conqueror wearing the deer's horns will amuse Duke Senior, nothing more, and he asks for a song

to lighten the load of carrying the deer back to camp. The song has as its theme the deer's horns, which are a symbol for cuckoldry. This alludes to the overall theme of love and marriage in the play, illustrating one more aspect of love that was a common belief of the time: that every man will be cheated on by his wife, and therefore, there is no shame in it since it is a universal condition.

Act 4, Scene 3

Summary

Rosalind and Celia, disguised as Ganymede and Aliena, await Orlando, who is once again late. Celia scoffs that he must be taking a nap. Silvius then enters, bearing the letter that Phoebe has written to Ganymede (Rosalind). He warns her that the letter may be angry, and as she reads it Rosalind seems to confirm this. "She says I am not fair, that I lack manners." Rosalind reads but then accuses Silvius of writing the letter himself, which he denies. Rosalind claims that a woman could not write such a rude letter and reads it aloud to him. The letter gushes sentiments of love, which Rosalind purposely misinterprets as insults against herself. The end of Phoebe's letter is unmistakable, however; she writes plainly that Silvius has no idea of her love and claims that she will die if her love is denied. She instructs Ganymede to send an answer in reply by Silvius.

"Alas, poor shepherd," says Celia, but Rosalind maintains that he deserves none since he continues to pursue disdainful Phoebe. "Wilt thou love such a woman?" she demands of Silvius, but nonetheless gives him a message to take back to Phoebe. "If she love me, I charge her to love thee; if she will not, I will never have her unless thou entreat for her." Silvius departs bearing the message, and in comes Oliver, unknown to the women. He asks for directions to their own cottage. Celia obliges but mentions that no one is home. Oliver guesses by their looks that it is they he seeks, which Celia confirms. He reveals that he has been sent by Orlando "to that youth he calls his Rosalind," with a bloody handkerchief.

Oliver tells the tale of how the cloth came to be bloodied. While traversing the forest, Orlando came upon a beggar sleeping under a tree. A snake had wrapped itself around the man's neck; when Orlando appeared it slithered away under a bush. Under the same bush lay a hungry lioness, waiting to pounce. Orlando discovered that the beggar was his older brother. Twice he turned to leave, but his kindness won out over desire for revenge, and he fought off the lioness to save his brother's life. Both women ask if Oliver is that brother, and he admits humbly that he is. He then recounts how he and Orlando exchanged stories and cried together, and how Orlando had brought him to Duke Senior. There he saw the blood on Orlando's arm, where the lioness had wounded him, and at last Orlando fainted, crying out for Rosalind. When he awoke he sent Oliver to relay the news, lest Ganymede think Orlando had broken his promise. At this news Rosalind faints. She comes to quickly and passes it off as playacting, but Oliver suspects otherwise. Celia escorts Rosalind home, concerned for her, while Oliver returns to Orlando.

Analysis

The theme of love takes center stage in this scene, while the theme of court versus country plays a secondary role. Self-serving Phoebe has sent a love letter to Ganymede, letting Silvius imagine that the missive contains only words of anger. This is the type of action one would expect at the court rather than in the country, proving that it isn't just courtiers who deceive. To add insult to injury, Phoebe has asked loyal Silvius to deliver the letter and to bring back an answer. This could be viewed as sheer deviousness, or it could be seen as one of those foolish actions that young lovers are apt to indulge in (such as Silvius himself praised in Act 2, Scene 4). One might ask why Phoebe simply doesn't tell Silvius the truth, but telling him previously that she doesn't love him did nothing to deter him. Perhaps she is actually hoping to be found out, a discovery that might at last rid her of Silvius's unwanted attention. The reader would probably not be blamed for labeling Phoebe a manipulative liar and Silvius an overly trusting, masochistic rube. It should have been clear to Silvius in Act 3, Scene 5 that Phoebe had been swept off her feet by Ganymede, but he ignored the obvious clues because doing supported his own hopes. The contrast between Phoebe and Silvius and the other lovers in the play is noticeable; for example, Rosalind and Orlando share a mutual love, unlike Silvius's one-sided love for Phoebe. This is yet another aspect of the theme of love that Shakespeare challenges the audience to consider.

Rosalind's treatment of Silvius is not much kinder than Phoebe's; she toys with him by misrepresenting the letter's

contents and blames him for loving such a deceitful woman. Still, despite her declaration that he deserves no pity, Rosalind's actions do show sympathy. She tries to persuade Phoebe to transfer her love to the smitten shepherd in the message she sends to the shepherdess.

As often happens in Shakespeare's plays, the plot then turns on a completely unexpected event that blindsides the characters: the incident of Oliver and the wild beasts, a scene that also serves as the climax of the story. The events that befall the characters have all been leading up to this moment: Rosalind and Orlando falling in love, their separate exiles to the forest, their finding each other once again (albeit with Rosalind in disguise), and then Oliver's exile to the forest all contribute to this climax, when the fates of the three characters intersect and their future changes. The scene serves to "flip the switch" of the plot, leaving behind the rising action and now barreling toward its inevitably happy conclusion. Plus it's also just plain exciting for the audience. Orlando must have been amazed to find his brother in the forest, while Oliver must have been astonished that Orlando saved him. Most certainly, Rosalind was shocked to hear of Orlando's injury—and her dramatic dead faint almost gives away her own deception. Oliver lets it slide without pressing the matter, but Rosalind's disguise seems to be unraveling quickly at this point.

The far-fetched story of Orlando's encounter with the snake and the lion is rather symbolic. Oliver has been a snake to his brother, refusing to give Orlando the gentleman's education that is rightfully his and even planning to murder him in his sleep. In a fitting comeuppance Oliver is threatened by a snake in the forest. The snake slithers away upon Orlando's arrival, a foreshadowing of the change in character that the audience will soon see in Oliver, who gives up his devious ways after the encounter and turns over a new leaf, both with his brother and in life. The second animal that lies in wait for Oliver is a lion, a symbol of strength and power. In a role reversal it is now Orlando that has the power over Oliver. Oliver is weak, and Orlando has the strength to save him, but Orlando can also walk away from the situation if he chooses to do so. This scene provides Orlando an opportunity to further prove the goodness of his character: despite all the terrible things that Oliver has done to him, Orlando chooses the path of honor and fights for his brother's life. His noble actions make such a deep impression on Oliver that he changes his life completely, ashamed of what his character was before and determined to start anew. He is transformed—redeemed from villainy by this key event in the story.

Act 5, Scene 1

Summary

Audrey is impatient to be married, and Touchstone reassures her that it will happen. However, Touchstone has a rival for Audrey's love, a country youth called William in whom she claims she has no interest. William arrives and greets them, and Touchstone immediately begins to quiz him on what he has to offer: Is he rich? Is he wise? Does he love Audrey? Is he educated? He then delivers a lesson in philosophy, "Learn this of me: to have is to have," and explains that it is he, Touchstone, who will have (marry) Audrey, and not William. He then dismisses the youth in a condescending fashion and threatens to kill him if he comes near Audrey again. Audrey urges William to go, and he does so without putting up a fight. Corin enters to fetch the pair at Rosalind's request.

Analysis

Here Shakespeare presents yet another example of romantic love, the inconstant lover. William says he loves Audrey, yet he puts up no fight to keep her when threatened by Touchstone. It's possible he gives way to common sense in this decision—after all Audrey has thrown her lot in with Touchstone and is not interested in William. It's also possible that he was willing to woo her when he had no rivals but decides she just isn't worth the bother of a fight when it comes down to it. Either way William does perhaps ignite in Touchstone a deeper affection for Audrey, whom he has previously considered rather lightly. While he initially wanted a fake marriage so that he could leave her eventually, now Touchstone is willing to fight for her so that they can be properly married. The scene also gives Touchstone an opportunity to break out his snobbish wit in his condescending speech to the simple country lad—an opportunity he thoroughly enjoys. The reader might even suspect that he is putting on a show of power in order to impress Audrey with his manliness.

Act 5, Scene 2

Summary

Orlando is surprised to discover that Oliver has fallen in love with Aliena (Celia) on very short acquaintance. Oliver asks for his blessing and offers to relinquish his estate and wealth to Orlando since he intends to stay in the forest and live as a shepherd with his lady love. Orlando consents, and they set the wedding for the next day. Oliver departs to tell Aliena the good news.

Rosalind then enters as Ganymede, and the two marvel at the sudden love of Oliver and Aliena. Rosalind says that they have "made a pair of stairs to marriage, which they will climb incontinent, or else be incontinent before marriage." Orlando assures her that the wedding will happen tomorrow, but complains, "O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes." Rosalind then astonishes him by swearing that he, too, shall be married on the morrow if he so wishes it—to none other than his beloved Rosalind.

Silvius and Phoebe then arrive, and Phoebe scolds Ganymede for showing her love letter to Silvius. This sets off a cascade of commiseration, in which Silvius describes what it means to love. "It is to be all made of sighs and tears,/And so I am for Phoebe." Each then chimes in on the statement: Phoebe feels so for Ganymede; Orlando feels so for Rosalind; and Rosalind feels so "for no woman." How then can any blame the others for loving who they love? Rosalind gets fed up with the conversation and promises to help each of them if they will let her arrange it all. In the sticky matter of Phoebe, she vows, "I will marry you if ever I marry woman, and I'll be married tomorrow." She promises to fulfill Orlando and Silvius's wishes as well. They all agree to meet the next day to see these miracles made manifest.

Analysis

The unexpected arrival of Oliver on the scene now bears further fruit. He has conveniently fallen in love with Celia and wants to leave behind the courtly lifestyle, transferring his wealth to his brother instead. This sets up a happy ending and triumphant return to court for Orlando. It's not all sewn up for Orlando yet, though, as he still has not secured his Rosalind to complete the picture. And no matter how happy Orlando is for his brother, he can't help but envy that Oliver has found his happiness while he himself has not.

Rosalind is equally surprised by this turn of events and is concerned that the couple had better be married right away, lest they fall into bed before they can be properly wed. (In the line she utters above, "incontinent" means "immediately" in the first instance and "unchaste" in the second instance.) Neither Rosalind nor Orlando seems to recognize that they, too, fell in love just as quickly as Oliver and Celia—because of course, one's own love life always makes more sense than the love lives of other people. Shakespeare is likely making the point here that love turns us all into fools, but fools who are happy to be foolish. The cascade of conversation between the many lovers in the scene reinforces this idea: Silvius is a fool for Phoebe, Phoebe is a fool for Ganymede, Orlando is a fool for Rosalind, and so on.

The arrival of Oliver, his sudden engagement to Celia, and Orlando's reversal of fortune all add fuel to Rosalind's fire to bring events to their conclusion: marriage all around. Besides, her disguise is slipping and she knows it! Her cleverness now pays off in the form of an elaborate plan to make it all happen.

Act 5, Scene 3

Summary

Audrey and Touchstone are eagerly discussing their upcoming nuptials when two of Duke Senior's pages arrive. Touchstone asks for a song, and they sing of how "between the acres of the rye/... These pretty country folks would lie/In springtime, the only pretty ring time,/When birds do sing." The song urges lovers to make the most of the present time and the height of love. When they finish, Touchstone says that "there was no great matter in the ditty" and criticizes the pages for singing out of tune and wasting their time.

Analysis

The pages' song reminds the listener of the birds and bees, both literally and metaphorically, calling to the forefront the play's theme of love and marriage. It is spring, and certainly the birds and bees are out in forest and field, but they're not the

only creatures stirring in the field. Country lovers, too, lie between the acres of rye—whether or not the "ring time," or wedding, has happened just yet. Touchstone's displeasure may show that he doesn't approve of how the song portrays love. To Touchstone, who has now set his mind to be properly married, love is no longer frivolous. Lying in the fields with his lady before marriage may now seem dishonorable to him, though indeed it was his initial aim with Audrey when they first met. The song may also remind Touchstone that he hasn't yet had the pleasure of bedding Audrey, hence his impatience to be married.

Act 5, Scene 4

Summary

The couples and their friends gather for the wedding. Rosalind, as Ganymede, reaffirms that everyone is on board with her plans: Duke Senior will give Rosalind as a bride if she appears; Orlando will have her; Phoebe will marry Silvius if she refuses to marry Ganymede; and Silvius will have her. Rosalind and Celia then exit to make the necessary preparations, leaving Duke Senior and Orlando scratching their heads. "I do remember in this shepherd boy/Some lively touches of my daughter's favor," Duke Senior muses. Orlando also comments that when he first met Ganymede, he thought it was Rosalind's brother.

Touchstone and Audrey arrive, and Jaques introduces the much-loved fool to Duke Senior, stating that the fool was once a courtier. Touchstone offers proofs of his former gentility, such as having danced, having flattered a lady, and having put three tailors out of business. He boasts he had almost gotten into a fight over how a man's beard was cut, but then they realized that "the quarrel was upon the seventh cause." Jaques asks him to explain this, and Touchstone outlines the seven stages of his argument with the man: "the retort courteous," "the quip modest," "the reply churlish," "the reproof valiant," "the countercheck quarrelsome," "the lie circumstantial," and "the lie direct." Both gentlemen realized they could only take the argument so far, neither willing to lie outright, "so we measured swords and parted." He concludes by instructing that the word *if* is a saving grace in such arguments, as it allows both parties to save face and walk away from the fight. Jaques and Duke Senior agree that Touchstone is a remarkable wit, indeed.

Rosalind and Celia reenter, dressed as themselves, escorted by the mythological god of marriage, Hymen. Music plays, and Hymen begins to sing of the joy in heaven when people come together to be united. He bids Duke Senior to bestow Rosalind's hand upon Orlando, and Rosalind confirms, first to her father and then to Orlando, "To you I give myself, for I am yours." With her disguise removed, all recognize the Ganymede that was is now changed into Rosalind. Hymen asks the four couples to join hands so that they may marry, offers insights to each couple, and sings a hymn praising marriage. True to her word, Phoebe marries Silvius, saying "now thou art mine;/Thy faith my fancy to thee doth combine."

Out of nowhere enters Orlando and Oliver's brother, Jaques de Boys ("Second Brother"), bearing news. Duke Frederick had raised an army to come and kill Duke Senior but met "an old religious man" near the forest and was converted to a spiritual life. He has given up both his fight with his brother and his worldly goods, leaving his crown to Duke Senior and restoring the lands to those who were exiled with him. Duke Senior welcomes the brother and his news but urges all to focus on the joyful reason they are gathered together, marriage and celebration. "Forget this new-fall'n dignity," he urges, "And fall into our rustic revelry." Unlike the rest of the company, Jaques decides to join Duke Frederick rather than return to court. He wishes all well and departs just before the wedding ceremony takes place, leaving the revelers to dance and make merry.

Analysis

Touchstone's speech is meant to impress Duke Senior and Jaques with his worldliness and knowledge of life at court. His anecdote about the escalating stages of an argument, which begin with courteous quips and go all the way up to bald lies, reflects the convoluted world of courtly conversation. Wit is highly prized, and the argument seems more of a game than anything serious—especially since the so-called offense given in the first place was a frivolous statement about a man's beard. While both men in the argument have no problem being rude and hurling insults, neither one wants to back up their talk with action. Instead, they "measured swords and parted," making a show of their dangerous weapons but having no intention of using them. Jaques and Duke Senior finally find something to agree on, though: Touchstone is a most amusing fool.

Rosalind's plan comes together beautifully, and although people have begun to suspect that Ganymede was not what he appeared to be, it no longer matters. Rosalind has kept up the charade just long enough to pull off her marital coup. Following the custom of the day in which women were subordinate to men, Rosalind gives herself first to her father to give her away, and then to her new husband. Even Phoebe has had a change of heart; Silvius's faith has at last won her over, and she marries him willingly. The presence of Hymen as the ceremony's officiant emphasizes the notion that marriage is ordained by the gods and also lends an element of fantasy to the play that allows the audience to enjoy it as a light farce, rather than serious fare.

A final convenient twist in the plot wraps up the happy ending for pretty much all of the characters in the play. Duke Frederick's renunciation of his crown shifts wealth and status back to Duke Senior and his loyal followers, and Rosalind will be able to return to court with her beloved Orlando, triumphant in their good fortune. Despite the happy news, Duke Senior urges the party to focus on the merriment at hand, forgetting the "new-fall'n dignity" that a return to the formality of court life will mean. Their time of life in the forest is coming to a close, but they can still kick up their heels together in "rustic revelry" one last time. Jaques will have none of it; he doesn't want to return to the court nor to partake in the festivities—both probably sound like too much fun. His choice to stay with Duke Frederick instead shows that his character remains steadfast; he will continue to indulge his melancholy and live life in his own style, not according to the dictates of society.

Epilogue

Summary

Rosalind addresses the audience directly, saying that while it is not the custom for a lady to deliver an epilogue, it's no worse than a man giving the prologue. She says that while a good play needs no epilogue, even a good play can be improved by a good epilogue. However, she has neither a good epilogue, nor can she claim the play is necessarily good. Since she is not dressed as a beggar and thus cannot beg, she will charm the audience instead. She asks the women to like the play as much as they want to, for the love they bear for men. Then she asks the men, for the love they bear women (as she guesses by their smiles that the men do not hate them), that they with the women will find the play pleasing. She says that if she were a woman, she would kiss all the men with "good beards, or good faces, or sweet breaths," and she is sure that these same "will, for my kind offer, when I make curtsy, bid me farewell."

Analysis

In Shakespeare's comedies, the epilogue served as an unmistakable cue that the play was over, and that it was now time for the audience to show their appreciation of the entertainment. A main character would return to the stage to humbly make apologies for any defects in the play (such as, in this case, the epilogue being spoken by a female character rather than a male one), to deliver a final joke or display (such as Rosalind's teasing banter about kissing the gentlemen in the audience), and to ask directly for applause ("bid me farewell"). Rosalind's direct reference to gender highlights the convention in Shakespeare's time of having only male actors in plays, even for the female roles. The actor says that "if I were a woman" he would kiss the men, but the audience would have been shocked, indeed, if Rosalind were truly played by a woman at that time.

“ Quotes

> *"But I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth, for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I."*

— Orlando, Act 1, Scene 1

Orlando complains bitterly to Adam of the ill treatment he has received from Oliver since their father's death. Orlando feels like a mere barnyard animal; he has been given food and shelter but no opportunity to better himself as his noble birth should allow.

> *"Her cousin so loves her, being*

ever from their cradles bred together, that she would have followed her exile or have died to stay behind her."

— Charles, Act 1, Scene 1

Charles tells of how Rosalind came to stay at the court when her father Duke Senior was banished. It was Celia's strong love for her cousin that caused Duke Frederick to keep Rosalind at court.

"The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly."

— Touchstone, Act 1, Scene 2

Touchstone tells an unflattering anecdote about the character of one of Duke Frederick's knights, and Celia hushes him. She will not hear words spoken against her father or his people, even if they are true. For this Touchstone laments that he, the fool, is reprimanded for speaking the truth to impart wisdom, while his social superiors ("wise men") may spread the same story as mere gossip.

"I am more proud to be Sir Rowland's son,/His youngest son, and would not change that calling/To be adopted heir to Frederick."

— Orlando, Act 1, Scene 2

Even though Orlando beats Charles handily in the wrestling match, Duke Frederick dismisses him coldly because he is the son of his former enemy, Sir Rowland. Orlando stands firm in his identity, though, and will not dishonor his father's memory to earn Duke Frederick's favor.

"In my heart/Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will,/We'll have a swashing and a martial outside."

— Rosalind, Act 1, Scene 3

As Rosalind and Celia prepare to travel to the Forest of Arden in disguise, Rosalind reflects on her adopted role as a man. Despite any "womanly" fear, she will present a strong, "mannish" front in order to deter trouble on the road.

"Now go we in content/To liberty, and not to banishment."

— Celia, Act 1, Scene 3

Celia puts a positive spin on leaving the court for life in the forest to help bolster Rosalind's spirits and courage. She assures her cousin that this banishment will, in fact, be a good thing: it will allow them the freedom to chart their own course in life.

"Hath not old custom made this life more sweet/Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods/More free from peril than the envious court?"

— Duke Senior, Act 2, Scene 1

Duke Senior philosophizes with his lords, speaking of how their exile in the forest is better than life at court—now that they've grown accustomed to its hardships. Though the woods have wild beasts and rough weather, Duke Senior feels safer there than he does among the vipers at court. The "painted pomp" of

jealous courtiers seems superficial and ridiculous to him now.

"And so, from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,/And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,/And thereby hangs a tale."

— Jaques, Act 2, Scene 7

Mr. Melancholy, Jaques enjoys nothing more than philosophizing, especially if the subject at hand is morose. Here he discusses aging and the passing of time, how quickly one's youth turns into overripeness followed by the rotting of old age. While each person's tale may be different, the effects of aging will remain a constant.

"Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you./I thought that all things had been savage here."

— Orlando, Act 2, Scene 7

Orlando, expecting nothing but trouble in the Forest of Arden, approaches Duke Frederick and his men with sword drawn. He is surprised and humbled at Duke Senior's gentle welcome and apologizes for his behavior. While the court is supposed to be the civilized place, it is in truth more dangerous for Orlando than the forest, where he finds true civility.

"All the world's a stage,/And all the men and women merely players./They have their exits and their entrances,/And one man in his time plays many parts."

— Jaques, Act 2, Scene 7

Jaques philosophizes about how life, in its own way, is a performance. Each person has roles they will play simply by being human. He compares birth and death to entrances and exits, and by extension the stages of a person's life become acts in their own ongoing play.

"Good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behavior of the country is most mockable at the court."

— Corin, Act 3, Scene 2

Clever Touchstone upholds court manners as superior to country customs, but simple shepherd Corin points out that there is more than one view on the subject. His plain-spoken wisdom is a breath of fresh air, standing in contrast to the twists and turns of Touchstone's witty philosophizing.

"Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love."

— Rosalind, Act 4, Scene 1

When Orlando claims he will die without Rosalind's love, Rosalind (as Ganymede) ridicules the idea. Her aim is to debunk the false ideals and pretty, meaningless words of courtly love in order to reveal the true nature of authentic love. She wants to know—does Orlando really love her? To this end she shreds his romantic hyperbole with logic and wit.

"You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate. We must have your doublet and hose ... and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest."

— Celia, Act 4, Scene 1

Celia is disgusted with Rosalind (who has just spoken to Orlando in her role as Ganymede) for her unflattering words about women, which is perhaps more a display of wit to impress Orlando than her true opinion. Even so her speech supports feminine stereotypes such as being talkative and devious—able to spin any situation to her advantage through words—and Celia takes her to task for putting down her own gender in such a manner.

> *"Your brother and my sister no sooner met but they looked, no sooner looked but they loved, no sooner loved but they sighed ..."*

— Rosalind, Act 5, Scene 2

Rosalind tells Orlando of the lightning-bolt love that has struck Oliver and Celia, leading them in rapid succession from first glance to love, and thence to marriage.

> *"It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue, but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue."*

— Rosalind, Epilogue

As with the rest of the play, the epilogue challenges gender roles, turning expectations upside down. At the time the play was written, women did not act in plays, so the actor playing Rosalind would have been a male. Moreover, epilogues were generally voiced by male characters. Having Rosalind deliver the closing speech underscores her importance as the person she is, rather than as a female or male, and also asks the audience to consider gender roles and whether they are fair or necessary.

Symbols

Deer

In Act 2, Scene 1 Duke Senior proposes a deer hunt, as the party needs food. "And yet it irks me," he says, that "the poor dappled fools,/Being native burghers of this desert city,/Should in their own confines with forked heads/Have their round haunches gored." Here he compares the Forest of Arden to a city and the deer to its native inhabitants. Duke Senior and his men are interlopers who hunt them, leaving the deer no peace or sense of security in their own home. Duke Senior's first lord then describes coming upon Jaques in the forest, weeping over an injured deer that was not cleanly killed by a hunter's arrow. The first lord relates how Jaques had explored this same metaphor even further, damning the hunters as "usurpers" and "tyrants." The deer in this scene symbolizes the injustice of usurpers like Duke Frederick, who has taken over lands that are not rightly his. In a broader sense Jaques disapproves of the whole system by which common people, who should be free to live in peace and security, are subjugated to the dictates of the ruling class. The deer in the scene has been injured, but the hunter has not come to put it out of its misery; in much the same way the actions of rulers may harm their subjects, and the rulers may not even notice or care.

Horns

The horns or antlers of animals are mentioned many times during the play and are a symbol of cuckolding, or of a man being cheated on by his wife. This was a common joke or concern of the time, and it frequently appears in Shakespeare's works. Cuckoldry was considered almost a universal condition of marriage, an opinion that Touchstone supports in his speech in Act 3, Scene 3. A man's horns, he says, are "the dowry of his wife," implying that all married women will cheat. Even so he views being married and cheated on as better than not being married at all: "As a walled town is worthier than a village, so is the forehead of a married man

more honorable than the bare brow of a bachelor." And again in Act 4, Scene 1 Orlando and Rosalind in the role of Ganymede argue when Orlando shows up an hour late for their meeting. Rosalind comments that she would as soon be "wooed of a snail." She then explains that he "brings his destiny with him ... horns, which such as you are fain to be beholding to your wives for."

Forest of Arden

The Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* is an idyllic place that borders on the mythical, much like Duke Senior and his followers are compared to Robin Hood and his band of merry men. It has a feeling of unreality, of being a world apart. It is an impermanent refuge, a place where characters dwell temporarily and are permanently changed by the experience. In this regard the forest is a symbol of personal transformation. There is a freedom of action and thought in the forest that is not present in courtly life, which is heavy with rules and expectations. The forest provides a safe space away from the dangers of court for the characters to strip away the habits and beliefs that no longer serve and to create new lives better suited to the people they've become (or want to become). It is also a place where life reverts to the basics (kill or starve; find shelter or freeze), which brings out the true personalities of those who experience it.

In the end most of characters depart the forest. Jaques and Duke Frederick are two that remain. Duke Frederick is at the beginning of his personal transformation, having suddenly converted into a religious man at the edge of the forest. His time of exploration is just getting started, and so he intends to dwell in the forest. For Jaques, delving into the nature of humanity is an ongoing quest, and he finds more food for thought in the forest than in the court at this point in his life. He chooses to follow Duke Frederick, for "out of these convertites/There is much matter to be heard and learned" (Act 5, Scene 4).

The Snake and the Lion

In Act 4, Scene 3 Orlando comes upon his exhausted, ragged brother Oliver sleeping under a tree. A snake is wrapped around his neck, ready to strike. Much like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, there is a snake in paradise, and it's Oliver in the Forest of Arden. Oliver has been a snake to his brother, barring him from a gentleman's education and even plotting to kill him. Upon seeing Orlando, the snake slithers away. The snake, which represents Oliver's dishonorable character, flees when Orlando appears on the scene; it is no match for Orlando, just as Oliver's dishonor cannot triumph over Orlando's honor.

Orlando then spots a lion lying in wait to pounce on his brother. As Oliver tells it, "Twice did he turn his back" to leave, "But kindness, nobler ever than revenge,/And nature, stronger than his just occasion,/Made him give battle to the lioness." The lion symbolizes strength and power; Orlando is now in the position of power and can decide his brother's fate rather than the other way around. Instead of making the same choice Oliver did to see his brother dead, Orlando takes the high road. Although Orlando has been unfairly victimized by his snakelike brother, he cannot stand by while Oliver's life is threatened. His honor and humanity take over, calling him to action. His choice to fight the lion and save his brother strongly emphasizes the differences in their personalities.

It is Orlando's intervention that sparks the conversion in Oliver and changes him into a new man. Orlando not only saves Oliver from the wild animals, he saves Oliver from himself and the horrible person he has become. Oliver awakens to an entirely new life, thanks to his brother's noble actions. Orlando again comes away with scars, but the battle has at last been won, and he will now receive his just reward: all the lands and wealth his brother possesses, which Oliver gives over to him voluntarily in renouncing his previous life.

Themes

Love and Marriage

Love in many forms is explored throughout the play, whether it be romantic love, familial love, or the love between friends. The focus on romantic love and marriage is clear, though, as the reader follows the ups and downs of four couples on their way to the altar.

Family bonds (or lack thereof) are presented in the first scene of the play, with the lack of brotherly love between Oliver and Orlando causing friction that may lead to an explosion. The dukes, too, have fallen out with each other; the politics of the court have overshadowed the natural love that one would expect to exist between brothers.

These sets of brothers contrast with Celia and Rosalind, who are as close as sisters even though they are only cousins. In Act 1, Scene 2 Celia cautions Rosalind that though she may "make sport" with men—in other words, to flirt and amuse herself—that she should "love no man in good earnest" nor behave in any way that could damage her reputation. Rosalind seems on board with this until she suddenly falls for Orlando, leaving Celia both astonished and disturbed. For their entire lives the women have focused their love on one another. Celia many times states her deep love for Rosalind, who now has shifted her focus from sisterly love to romantic love. Celia takes jabs at this new love and at Orlando, questioning whether his love is true and subtly trying to influence her cousin against the match. Her tune changes abruptly, of course, when she meets Oliver and becomes engaged before her cousin does. Perhaps Celia sees the writing on the wall: now that the women are no longer children, the era of sisterly love is giving way to adulthood and marriage.

The two other couples reveal different sides of love and marriage, beyond "love at first sight" and the courtly love of Rosalind and Orlando. For Touchstone and Audrey, their hasty marriage is a practical means of having sex in a respectable manner. Even a bad marriage is better than being alone to Touchstone, and for Audrey it establishes her position in society as "an honest woman" rather than a "slut." Phoebe and Silvius's marriage is also practical, but it is not based on physical desire. Silvius's patient, enduring adoration of Phoebe at last wears her down even if it doesn't quite bowl her over, and she accepts the match as, perhaps, the best she is going to get, so she decides to make do with it and be happy.

There is love between friends in the play, too, as demonstrated by Duke Senior and his attendant lords. While the lords have followed Duke Senior into exile as a gesture of loyalty, they would likely not have given up their wealth and lands if they did not also love Duke Senior.

Loyalty and Disloyalty

The theme of loyalty is present throughout the play. Duke Frederick's lords are extremely loyal to him; they have given up their wealth and position in polite society to follow him into the rustic forest. Celia proves her loyalty to Rosalind by voluntarily accompanying her into exile. The aged servant Adam was once loyal to Sir Rowland de Boys and is now loyal to his son Orlando, offering the young man his life savings and helping him flee to safety. Orlando remains loyal to his deceased father, declaring that he is proud to be Sir Rowland's son and wouldn't give that up even to become Duke Frederick's heir. Even Silvius is loyal to Phoebe despite how disdainfully she treats him. Oliver, in contrast to these characters, has been disloyal to his father's memory by not honoring his wishes regarding Orlando's education and keeping.

Court versus Country

The differences between life at court and life in the country are explored by various characters. While life at court may be glamorous and more comfortable, the country offers a certain freedom of lifestyle that is not possible within the hierarchy and social rules of the court. Duke Senior speaks of how life at court is "painted pomp" (Act 2, Scene 1), and that the wild, wind-whipped woods are "more free from peril than the envious court," where gossip and intrigue are the norm. People mix more freely in the country, unlike at the court, with exiled nobles rubbing elbows with lowly shepherds. The standard of living is similar for everyone in the forest, too; Duke Senior and his party have to hunt for their food, just like anyone else. At court, though, the rich nobles call the shots and live well, while servants like Adam and even nobly born younger brothers like Orlando must often live in relative poverty.

Touchstone mockingly debates which is better: he likes the solitude of the country but finds the privacy vile; the fields please him but are tedious compared to the court; the "spare life" suits him, but "as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach" (Act 3, Scene 2). He looks down on Corin because the shepherd hasn't learned "good manners" at the court, to which Corin blithely replies, "Those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behavior of the country is most mockable at the court." As with the other themes, Shakespeare doesn't give a definitive answer on which is better; he leaves the reader to decide.

Disguises and Concealment

Some of the key characters take on disguises or conceal themselves in order to act freely or to accomplish what needs to be done. Celia and Rosalind adopt disguises to ensure their anonymity and safety in travel, with Rosalind going so far as to pose as a man. Orlando enters the wrestling competition anonymously since wrestling was seen as a sport for commoners, rather than the nobles. These disguises allow them to do things they normally wouldn't be able to do. For Rosalind in particular, her disguise as Ganymede gives her leeway to speak more freely and to act more boldly than she otherwise might as a woman of the time. It also enables her to draw upon reserves of strength, such as when they arrive, exhausted, at the Forest of Arden: "I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman, but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat. Therefore courage, good Aliena," she reassures her cousin.

On several occasions characters conceal themselves in order to eavesdrop or spy on others. This behavior is a keen reminder that they come from the courtly world, where knowledge is power and where people may need to watch their backs for unexpected danger or betrayals. Adam eavesdrops as Oliver and Orlando argue at the play's opening, and Orlando later learns that his brother plans to kill him because Adam overhears Oliver plotting. Celia and Rosalind conceal themselves to spy on Orlando in the forest before Rosalind steps forward as Ganymede to speak with him. Meanwhile, Jaques eavesdrops on Touchstone and Audrey for mere amusement or curiosity as they discuss the nature of love; he is thus conveniently at hand to intercede when Sir Oliver Martext appears to marry the couple.

Disguises are also present in the way Shakespeare draws attention to the fact that the audience is viewing a play. The actors are normal people disguised in costumes in order to put on a pretend world for the viewers. This is evident in Jaques's famous speech in Act 2, Scene 7, when he states that "All the world's a stage,/And all the men and women merely players," and again during the epilogue, in which Rosalind reminds the audience that she is actually a male actor (as was the custom of the time) playing a woman pretending to be a man. Thus the lines of fantasy and reality are blurred across the play, making the viewer reflect on that which is disguised and those appearances that are true.

Suggested Reading

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