

9. Orlando and Ganymede; a Carol for the time and for my daughter Truth and Pretense in Shakespeare's Comedy of Recognition

At the end of *As You Like It*, the characters leave the stage empty for the boy-actor who has played Rosalind to speak a brief but winning little Epilogue. The actor speaks in his own person (which makes a small problem for the modern actress, who is obliged to continue pretending where her Elizabethan original was dropping all pretense); and he makes first a joking apology, and then a plea for approval and applause.

The grounds of his plea for approval I shall return to later, because I think that he points there to the most important truth about the play, and the best reason for our liking it. To begin with, I want to consider only the heart of his apology: "What a case am I in, then, that am neither a good epilogue nor cannot insinuate with you in the behalf of a good play?" (V, 4, 201-3).ⁱ

We might take this as being simply irony or mock-humility. For has not the actor already argued that "good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues"? Yes, but first of all, he argued that there was no good reason why "the lady" should not be the epilogue; and as soon as we take that argument seriously — as we ought to, for who else but Rosalind should speak the epilogue to this play which she has so largely directed and stage-managed herself? — we can see why the speaker is indeed in bad case as an epilogue. For he is no "lady," but only, at this point, the self-confessed mockery of one. He alludes to this himself in his closing appeal to the men in the audience, where he tells us what he *would do* if he were indeed a woman: "If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not."

Just as he is speaking the truth, then, about not being a *good* lady-epilogue, but only the mockery of one, may he not also be telling the truth about *As You Like It* being not a good play but only the mockery of one?

For many years, I felt that I had to accept the conclusion that *As You Like It* was intended simply as a mockery. It appears on the surface to be not so much a play, as a pantomime; something like the Christmas pantomimes of my childhood, but in this case a pantomime for the Spring equinox or for May-Day. Unlike all the other pantomimes I have ever encountered, *As You Like It* is unmistakably a work of genius. But as a drama it is simply nonsense — far more nonsensical than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, which is quite a respectable drama, in which some of the agents happen to have *magical* powers. These special powers are not clearly defined, but there is a long folk-tradition about how they are exercised, and the agents who have them are recognizably subject to the same passions as ourselves; so in the hands of a great playwright who understands the folk traditions, the fairy king and his minions become dramatically quite acceptable characters.

In *As You Like It*, on the other hand, the story itself seems to be very largely absurd; and its absurdities produce great cracks or fissures in some of the characters — bottomless abysses, and unbridgeable crevasses in their supposed humanity. Who can believe, for example, in the twin perils of the “green and gilded snake” (IV, 3, 109) and the “lioness with udders all drawn dry” (IV, 3, 115) from which Orlando rescues Oliver? And that peril itself is scarcely more incredible than the conversion of the wolf-like “tyrant brother” into a distinctly sheepish husband for Celia. Even more fantastic is the other conversion, the change of heart suffered by the tyrant duke as a result of a chance meeting with an “old religious man” (V, 4, 157ff.). This is essential to Shakespeare’s denouement; but one feels that only Oberon and Puck could produce this effect on the leader of an army against which the “many young gentlemen fleeting the time carelessly as they did in the golden world” (I, 1, 109-11) would seem to have about as much chance as the men of Athens against the hosts of Atlantis in Plato’s *Critias*. (Plato had the good sense to leave *that* story unfinished.)

When we turn to Shakespeare's main source, the impression that he was deliberately mocking the normal conventions of drama is powerfully strengthened. For we do not find anything quite so absurd as these events in Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*. Lodge's conception of the psychological springs of human action is about on a level with that of a popular escapist writer of our own time such as Agatha Christie; he is less sophisticated than a modern Arcadian romantic such as Georgette Heyer. But he works out the conversion of the treacherous brother more believably, with a lion rescue balanced by a counter-rescue; and he recognizes that a monarch, unjustly deposed by a usurper, must win his own kingdom back in fair fight, if he is to be plainly seen to deserve it. So he makes things happen thus. Ms. Heyer would have approved.

On the other hand, she would not have approved of Lodge's treatment of the wrestling. For the rustic Franklin's sons who go against Lodge's professional wrestler, suffer mortal injuries and die. This occasionally happens in modern boxing; and perhaps in modern wrestling (of which I am quite unlamentably ignorant). But it could scarcely occur in Tudor wrestling which ended in the "throw" or "fall." Cracked ribs and mild concussions could and did occur (they happen easily enough in ordinary falls where there is no "throwing"). So on *this* count it is Shakespeare for whom Ms. Heyer would vote.

Why is Shakespeare's treatment of Lodge's story so willfully and gratuitously absurd in some directions, and so sensibly realistic in others? Surely he has some object, and mockery is at least a part of it?

The crucial action of the play, the action that takes place inside the Forest of Arden, contains the same violent contrast between some romantic conventions that are pushed to absurdity, and others that are brought down into the light of common day. But mockery is not all that is involved. For there seems also to be a complex symbolic relationship between what takes place outside the Forest and what happens inside it. Thus, for example, the only important part of the action that has its literal venue *outside* the Forest — the wrestling match between Orlando and Charles — is poetically repeated inside it. Everyone journeying to the Forest, except Orlando, is physically dead

beat when they arrive there. Orlando literally carries Adam — and when he has procured refreshment and refuge, he does not stay to rest and eat until he has fetched him — an eloquent tribute to the physical strength which he has fostered and trained in the art by which he overthrows Charles. Spiritual strength on the other hand (which Orlando can display inside the Forest only in his truly lamentable efforts as a poet) is portrayed both in and out of the Forest by Rosalind's lightheartedness and ready wit. In the Forest, Rosalind's wit supports the spirits of everyone in her group even at the limit of physical endurance. But at the Court, where there is no physical stress, her very first words draw our attention to her wrestling match of the spirit: "Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of, and would you yet [I] were merrier? Unless you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure" (I, 2, 2-5).ⁱⁱ In the Forest she does not have this burden — but her efforts to overcome physical exhaustion, like Orlando's efforts to achieve poetic wit, are rather less than perfectly successful.ⁱⁱⁱ

In suggesting that there is some kind of mirror-relation (and often a complementarity, e.g., of body and spirit) between the events inside the Forest and those outside it, I have already betrayed the fact that I now believe that something more than a mockery of pastoral comedy is going on in *As You Like It*. But before I begin to develop my positive interpretation we must follow the thread of mockery to its end — which was a bitter one indeed for me, when it was all that I had.

For whereas the independent behavior of Orlando in the Forest merely shows us the Arcadian lover in plain daylight — acting out his idyllic fantasy by producing the sort of doggerel that such a one really would produce — the apparent behavior of Rosalind (and of Orlando under her tutelage) is absurd to the point where it ceases even to be funny. Only in relation to the official stage-shepherds of the Forest does Rosalind behave like her normal out-of-Forest self. At the beginning of it all, she was the one who proposed "falling in love" as a sport to raise the spirits; and Celia assented: "Marry, I prithee do, to make sport withal; but love no man in good earnest, nor go further in sport neither, than with safety of a pure blush thou mayst in honour come off again" (I, 2, 25-8). In the Forest Celia violates her own precept; but Rosalind, who has already violated it outside of the wood, follows it to the letter inside. Yet we cannot see what she gains by it. Her activities resemble

nothing so much as the efforts of Buttons to raise the spirits of Cinderella in her disappointment about not going to the ball; and the serious upshot of what Rosalind does, appears to be something much worse than any failure on the part of Buttons. For if we believe what every critic save one thinks we are supposed to believe about the action, all that her activities show is that her father and her beloved are fools and blockheads, men quite unworthy of her. They are blockheads because they do not know her; and her lover is the bigger blockhead, for when her father — who has the excuse of not having seen so much of her in the Forest, and not having seen her at all for several years before that (and the years have changed her from child to young woman too) — when her father finally begins to express his suspicions Orlando puts him off the track very firmly:

Duke: I do remember in this shepherd boy
some lively touches of my daughter's favour

Orlando: My lord, the first time that I ever saw him
Methought he was a brother to your daughter.
But, good my lord, this boy is forest born,
And hath been tutored in the rudiments
Of many desperate studies by his uncle,
Whom he reports to be a great magician . . .
(V, 4, 26-33).

Orlando himself needs the tutoring of a great magician, if he really believes such a fairy-tale in preference to what his own eyes told him the first time he saw the supposed Ganymede.

Being blockheads in their ignorance, they are both fools in their acquiescent subjection to the whimsies of this strange boy. The Duke's behavior at his first meeting with Ganymede in the Forest, is more reminiscent of Mr. Bennet retiring to his library to laugh at the follies of his wife and world (see *Pride and Prejudice*, chapter 42), than of a responsible nobleman concerned for the peace and welfare of his dominion however small (see III, 4, 31-4). But Orlando is again the bigger fool, for after showing some reluctance about the first session of the love game (for which he arrived late — see III, 4 and IV, 1, 37), he becomes so obsessed with the game that he regards it as a matter almost of life and death to get a message to Ganymede, when he is wounded by that remarkable lioness (IV, 3, 76-157). Cinderella, by contrast, is the soul of good sense in falling in with the whimsies of

Buttons, since she knows just what he is doing; indeed, any grown-up attending the pantomime may be pardoned for thinking that Cinders would be a lot better off with Buttons than she ever will be with her Prince Charming.

“How can Shakespeare do this to Rosalind?” I used to ask myself. How can he take the most enchanting, the most sympathetic, the most immediately lovable of all his heroines, and let her gallant gaiety lead into a satire of this sort? He has, to all appearances, given her the role of a female Don Alfonso, answering the indictment of *Così fan tutte* by showing that if women are all faithless it is because men are such fools and dolts that they are unworthy of any intelligent woman’s trust and loyalty. Georges Sand was so distressed by Shakespeare’s disposal of Celia, that she tried to improve on it by wedding Celia to Jaques. But on the evidence it is Rosalind who is the true match for Jaques, since only Jaques could find it amusing to organize the farce that Rosalind is supposed to be responsible for. (And anyone who really studies the character of Jaques in its evolution from cynic philosopher to religious ascetic, will recognize that Jaques is what he is, precisely in virtue of finding no match anywhere; he is the quintessential bachelor, and any girl married to him — even Audrey — would actually be worse off than Celia with her volcanically unpredictable Oliver. What this says about the critical acuity of Georges Sand I leave the reader to decide for herself.)

Instead of trying to mend Shakespeare, let us first try whether a common-sense approach to the whole story will not yield a consistently intelligent interpretation. Let us ask what motives *could* lead the characters, as human beings like ourselves (not dreaming, or bewitched by magic), to do what they do. Let us ask whether they can *possibly* believe all that they assert, and if not, what motives they reasonably could have for pretending. (We can cut the ground from under any accusation of presumption here, by concentrating mainly on the question of Rosalind’s motives, since we *know* that she is pretending, and that Celia is knowingly cooperating.) And finally, let us keep in mind the hypothesis that there may well be a *symbolic* relation of some kind between events inside the greenwood and events outside it. For it is some kind of *symbolic* meaning that we must look for in the events that violate all common sense of the ordinary variety, such as the advent of the snake and the lioness, or the magical influence of the “old religious man.”

It should be noticed at once that to look at things commonsensically is not to look at the Forest in the light of the “real life” outside. There is literally no one in the play who regularly speaks of things as they really are (except Rosalind when she advises the shepherdess Phebe: “I see no more in you, than in the *ordinary* of nature’s sale-work” etc. — III, 5, 35-63 — and of course, Audrey who knows no other way to speak). Orlando and Adam, like Rosalind and Celia, speak to one another of their feelings and hopes with transparent honesty at all times, but virtually all other speech is conditioned by one of two conventions: that of the Court outside the wood, and that of Arcadian romance inside it. The two fully rational observers, Touchstone and Jaques, speak each in his own convention: the fool speaks in counterpoint to the Court, and the philosopher in counterpoint to Arcadia. But neither speaks the language of plain common sense.

Let us strip away the courtly language first and describe the social situation in terms of the practical Machiavellian common sense of Tudor politics. A younger brother has usurped the throne of an elder, but has allowed him to go into retirement with a small retinue. The old Duke’s daughter remains at Court. What exactly is her status? Over an unspecified number of years she has become more than a sister to her cousin, the new Duke’s daughter. But this is not the reason why she was kept at Court to begin with, for Celia plainly says to her father, when the crisis of Rosalind’s banishment is finally reached, that she did not value Rosalind initially: “I did not then entreat to have her stay;/ It was your pleasure and your own remorse./ I was too young that time to value her” (I, 3, 67-9). When Oliver asks Charles for “the new news of the new court” he is told there is nothing but old news. He then asks a supplementary question that has caused some critics to compare Shakespeare with Mr. Puff (in Sheridan’s *The Critic*): “Can you tell if Rosalind, the duke’s daughter, be banished with her father?” But Oliver is not here asking Charles (as Sir Christopher Hatton asks Walter Raleigh in Mr. Puff’s play) to tell him something that he and every gentleman in the country already knows. He is referring rather to the “new news” that he was expecting to hear when he asked his first question — the news that Duke Frederick has finally banished Rosalind. And Charles, in answering, tells him the operative reason why the expected decision, that Rosalind shall be banished with her father, has not yet been reached. Celia loves Rosalind better than a sister, and Charles correctly forecasts that she would follow Rosalind into exile if Rosalind’s banishment were

decreed. Even the next question is much less Puff-like than it sounds: “Where *will* the old Duke live?” The old Duke has been banished for several years, and Oliver’s use of the future tense shows that he is not concerned about that, but about the rumor of some impending change in the old Duke’s situation. It seems that the Duke has not *always* lived in Arden, since he was banished; and in any case, the support that he has gathered in the Forest is increasing rapidly. Charles refers to this, in response to Oliver’s question. His answer is *not* “old news,” for the “old news” concerned only “three or four loving lords” who voluntarily beggared themselves, to share the old Duke’s exile. A political crisis is now approaching; and Celia’s decision to go with Rosalind will in fact precipitate military action against the new Robin Hood with his “many merry men” (I, 1, 91-102). The “old news” can be staged for us. The “new news” cannot. Only Orlando represents it (symbolically) on stage.

Rosalind has, thus far, served as a kind of *hostage* for her father’s good behavior. But she has been an awkward kind of hostage, even in medieval terms, because of her blood relationship to the reigning prince. In the new day and age it was not at all easy to carry out the supreme sanction against *any* royal hostage. The case of the Princess Elizabeth herself shows that the position of a hostage could still be highly uncomfortable — and any candid member of the Globe audience who understood the politics of recent British history would recognize the analogy between Rosalind and the young Princess Elizabeth, penning her courtly addresses from Hatfield House or elsewhere to her elder sister Mary, Queen of England.

Our usurping Duke Frederick certainly lacks the ruthlessness of Elizabeth’s royal father, that appalling monster, Henry VIII — of whom Luther so rightly said “Squire Harry wishes to be God and do whatever he likes.” Frederick probably could not get away with a policy of simple liquidation, since Rosalind was plainly as innocent of treason as she herself claims (I, 2, 48-63); and she was generally loved. So she will soon be sent to join her father; but her general popularity is another sign of the approaching crisis.

Now we come to Rosalind's problem. Since this is solved between her and Celia, there is no mystery about it, and no unmasking to do. The candid observer at the Globe would notice the contrast between the relation of the cousins Rosalind and Celia, and that of the half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth. We should note also that although Rosalind is to wear the doublet and hose, because she is the taller, it is Celia who makes the plan, and displays the resolution required for its execution. The girls are about the same age, but certainly Celia is more mature emotionally, as well as more self-confident. Both of them are motherless, but Rosalind has also been fatherless for several years, and living in her limbo of political insecurity. The romance of the project is what sparks her imagination at the beginning. Celia suggests the disguise, while Rosalind's mind delights in the dressing-up — the curtle-axe and the boar-spear. The disguise itself is not one that would be hard to penetrate for anyone who knew the girls. They do not face the problem that photographs may be circulated — and as for portraits, everyone knew the amusing story of Squire Harry's betrothal to Anne of Cleves (which had its very sandy foundation in the efforts of court portrait-painters). The sex-change for Rosalind would suffice among strangers as long as she could carry it off; and she knew that there were plenty of "mannish cowards" around, whose inner emotions were not unlike her own.

I have called this Rosalind's problem. But, as we can see in Shakespeare's dialogue, the practical problem in the world of the Court, belongs to the two girls together; and it is actually solved by Celia. Rosalind's own personal problem, the one that she has to solve for herself, arises only in the Forest; and to understand what the problem is, is the great riddle of the play. By the time they arrive in the wood, Rosalind has resumed the position of leader that seems to belong to her naturally in relation to Celia. (Celia's normal role, as we can see already in their first scene, is to challenge Rosalind to be her natural self.) Their first action in the wood is not to inquire where the old Duke can be found, but to seek a lodging of their own. They need this quite urgently, because they are tired out; and, when we reflect upon their actual situation, a certain discretion in their manner of inquiring for the Duke is easily seen to be necessary. The old Duke is not really like Robin Hood. He is not an outlaw, someone who must keep his whereabouts secret from the authorities charged with the enforcement of the peculiarly stringent "forest law." That will only

become the actual situation when Frederick decides on military action. At the moment, the old Duke *is* the authority here, and presumably — though we see little sign of it — he is the local fount of legal judgment. But this present group of new adherents of his are well aware that they will be inquired after, because of Celia; and because of Rosalind, they know that the old Duke's camp in the forest is one place where the inquiry will certainly be pursued. Thus Rosalind's failure to seek out her father at once, and in the most direct way, is traceable to the need to keep Celia hidden, at least until they know what Duke Frederick intends to do about her disappearance. It will be time enough to declare themselves after the hunters have come and gone. (Thus the problem that Celia solved to start with, really was hers, since it is her decision to go with Rosalind that creates the need for concealment and disguise.)

Rosalind's own problem only emerges when Celia comes across the poems of Orlando, and Rosalind has to face the fact that he is somewhere in the forest. When Celia is teasing her about the final seal of confirmation, the name of the poetic culprit spoken out loud, she says in half-serious irritation: "dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?" (III, 2, 188-90). But when she has made Celia say the name twice and has convinced herself that it is not a leg-pull, she cries "Alas the day, what shall I do with my doublet and hose?"

Now, how *can* that be a problem for her? What is to prevent her from simply taking them off? Being who she is, and almost four centuries removed from us, she will need a priest first; but that is no great problem even in the Forest (she would not be satisfied with Sir Oliver Martext, but the Forest has its "old religious men" who appear when they are needed!). Rosalind cannot *fear* being recognized by Orlando; she must indeed *want* to be recognized by him. She does not know that he is a fugitive from his brother, as she is from her uncle. Still less does she know that her uncle is but now making a fugitive of that very brother, because he (Frederick) is convinced that Orlando went with the girls as their escort. But this last idea would not surprise her, for with the poem in her hand, she must suppose at once that Orlando has come after her. And she is right in this, for why else is Orlando plastering the forest with his agony-column appeals? He is far too sensible not to know how bad they are poetry. (This point about their badness is driven home by Touchstone's

lewd parody, which shows how even bad verse can have point and verve, if not dignity, when one has the courage to say exactly what one means.)

Orlando simply uses the convention of his condition (stated by Jaques as “the lover,/ Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad/ Made to his mistress’ eyebrow”) to let Rosalind know that he has arrived. He knows that she is already there in the wood somewhere; and that whenever she gets word of one of his broadsides she will certainly patrol that part of the forest to find out who is producing them. He also knows that the girls must remain hidden; but he confidently expects that when Rosalind discovers him, she will know even from his lame verses that she has nothing to fear from him; and her own words at the parting when she gave him the chain (I, 2, 233-44) were as explicit as was in any way consistent with her maiden-status. To Celia she can speak with the explicitness of Touchstone himself, about being miserable “for my child’s father” (I, 3, 11); but it would never do, to speak like that to Orlando. That is not at all the sort of remark from which a maid can “come off again with the safety of a pure blush” in accordance with Celia’s prescription for love as a *sport*.

For some reason, Rosalind does not *want* to dispense with her male attire yet; and it cannot, in common sense, be because she does not want to be recognized. She knows that her lover is looking for her, and she ought, as a sensible person, to be quite shocked and horrified, if he does not know her as soon as he sees her. Yet she wants him to see her in manly disguise, and to accept her in it. Why? Surely the answer is obvious, as soon as the absurd supposition that she wants to *hide* from Orlando (of all people!) is set aside? *She wants him to accept her as his equal*. And if he is to do that, then she must somehow show herself to be his equal. It will not do, now, for the doublet and hose to conceal a “mannish coward.” Yet, as Rosalind herself has confessed, and as the original crisis showed, she has less of the doublet and hose in her own natural disposition than does Celia. No wonder then, that at this point she cries “Alas the day!”

Once we catch on to her problem, we can find confirmation for this interpretation, in the events outside the wood. The clue to the way in which Rosalind must show herself the equal of

Orlando is given us by Celia. Celia it was, who set up the rules for the game of love in the first instance; and when Rosalind, by that unmaidenly comment about “her child’s father,” confessed that she is in love not in sport, but in good earnest, Celia challenged her to emulate Orlando: “Come, come wrestle with thy affections” (I, 3, 21). Celia wanted her to get back to a sporting attitude. Rosalind caught the allusion and capped it with: “O, they take the part of a better wrestler than myself.” But now that the girls are in the wood she sets herself to show that that was not really true.

We can understand the seriousness of the sport that goes on in the Forest, when we see what the risks are. There are two ways in which Orlando can spoil Rosalind’s game. The first would lead to her defeat in it; the second, still more disastrously, to his own. The first way, the one that Rosalind is herself afraid of, would be if he refused to be anything but seriously in love. If, seeing her, and recognizing her at once, as he certainly does, he refused to be put off by her crazy pretense that she was a strange boy who had never seen him before, but marched boldly up and declared to her face that she was his girl, plighted to him by the chain she gave him, she would be lost at once. If he took her in his arms, kissed her with proper manly aggression, and asked her what the devil she thought she was playing at, the doublet and hose would be off in no time. He would then be “her child’s father” all the sooner, but she would not quite be Rosalind any more.

Orlando never shows the slightest inclination to transfer the wrestling match between them to the physical plane in this way. Although quite untutored, he shows himself in the Forest to be a natural courtier. Outside the Forest, when he falls in love with one whom he knows to be a Princess, he is completely tongue-tied. Even inside the Forest, it is only proper for him to take his cue from Rosalind; and although Celia never gets to tell Rosalind (in our hearing) what she said to Orlando, it is natural to assume that the very first thing she would let him know is that his ladylove is passing as a young man. So Orlando is not taken by surprise; and he takes to Arcadia like a duck to water, bad as his verses are. The verses themselves get better with practice (the poem that Celia finds would not altogether disgrace him at Court).

It is the other risk that turns out to be the serious one. Orlando is a very manly man, and he does not like to see *manhood* made a game of. He recognizes that love is a courting game, but it is a game in which the roles are set, and they ought not to be upset. For the girl to assume a man's role, and start telling him how to behave towards her, does stick in Orlando's craw a bit. It was for honor, for the recognition of his manhood, and of his deserving a place at Court, that he wrestled with Charles. (We should never forget that Squire Harry himself was a great wrestler in those far-off days when Catherine of Aragon was plighted to his elder brother.) Thus Rosalind creates for Orlando a terrible conflict between his feelings for her (including his sense of courtly duty towards her) and his own sense of dignity and pride in his manhood. It would be much less terrible for her to be defeated herself. If the game were to prove too much for his stomach, she might well lose him altogether.

The game begins with courtly fun. Since Orlando has used his own verses to address his love in this mode, he cannot be surprised that she should tease him about wasting his time. But he responds appropriately, in his turn, to the barefaced lie that she tells about her woodland origin (III, 2, 326ff).^{iv} So she offers him the slightly more plausible account that he later embroiders for the old Duke's amusement. He then tries to lead her on into attacking her own sex, but she sidesteps neatly. Then she proposes the game formally, challenging him to live up to his own advertisements. He accepts the challenge; and the scene ends not, as he must have expected when it began, with her declaring herself to be Rosalind, but ironically, with her reminding him that he must *call* her "Rosalind."

But then he does not come for his lesson. Seeing how aptly he has matched Rosalind throughout the first scene in the forest, it is already clear that I have done Orlando a grave injustice, in ascribing to him a real sense of conflict between his love and his self-esteem, as the ground of this subsequent tardiness. But Orlando is already part of the Duke's retinue; and behind the surface show of a philosophical contemplative life in Arden, there is serious practical (political) business going on. There really *is* "a clock in the Forest." What I have offered above is more properly an account of *Rosalind's* reflections on Orlando's psychology, in that terrible hour when he does not

come. We find her disgracing her doublet and hose with tears, and Celia only rallies her by putting her fears into words. The harsh advice that Rosalind then gives Phebe (in such plain language!) reflects not just the sympathy she felt for Silvius when she first met him (“Alas, poor shepherd, searching of thy wound,/ I have by hard adventure found mine own” — II, 4, 40-1) but even more her own bitter repentance, for not having given in at once, instead of starting this crazy game. It is more than half to *herself* that she says:

But, mistress know yourself; down on your knees;
 And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man’s love . . .
 Cry the man mercy, love him, take his offer
 Foul is most foul, being foul to be a scoffer

(III, 5, 57-62).

We cannot say that Rosalind completely forgets herself even here, for her unwonted scolding is justified by her sympathy with Silvius. Only to Celia does she ever show her petticoat freely. But her mode of speech is unwonted, and her mode of argument represents a painful exaggeration of any emotion that she normally feels. In the short exchange with Jaques, before Orlando finally arrives, she is herself once more. But Orlando (who probably intended only to “play her up” in the spirit of the game that she has proposed) recognizes at once that he has hurt her quite badly without meaning to. When Celia says “he hath a Rosalind of a better leer than you” (IV, 1, 59-60) we can fairly infer that this present Rosalind still has red eyes and a rather forced smile. (Also there is Orlando’s immediate offer of a kiss here.) Anyway, Orlando promises never to be late again, and when he is wounded he takes quite extreme steps to let Rosalind know why he cannot come.

Rosalind remains distinctly waspish throughout this scene, in spite of the mock marriage ceremony which is the best token she can offer to Orlando that she does mean to marry him. Indeed the ceremony actually was canonically valid, and some part of the Elizabethan audience would know that.^v The ceremony is followed by an important “love-lesson.” The marriage must now be consummated. But how long will it last as a loving relation after that? Orlando says “Forever and a day”; but the “forever” can only be an actuality in this *present* day. Men lose interest in their wives under the pressure of their other concerns. They go straight from “April” to “December.” For the

women it is the mood of the *present* moment that changes. Rosalind offers a deliberately exaggerated, but still recognizable, image of her own mercurial temperament; and she insists that Orlando must take it *seriously*. Celia (who is temperamentally more stable) thinks that she has unjustly slandered her own sex: “We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head, and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest” (IV, 1, 186-9).^{vi} But Rosalind knows *herself*; and she knows that her lover’s problem will be how to *live* in love with a real woman, and not how to die for an idealized fantasy (about which she is quite sensibly skeptical: “men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love” — IV, 1, 96-8). Rosalind wants to have a *happy* life to look back on. As she says to Jaques at the beginning of this scene, “I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad — and to travail for it too!” (V, 1, 24-6).

The scene with Oliver offers further confirmation that our reading of the love play is right. For when Rosalind faints, Oliver refuses to go along with her pretense to be a man any longer. It is quite plain that he has never actually seen Rosalind before; but he knows a girl disguised as a boy when he sees one — and even in his converted state, he has little of Orlando’s courtly patience. We can all see clearly that Oliver is not deceived; so how can we suppose that Orlando was ever really deceived?

It is a standing convention of Arcadian romance, that lovers do not recognize one another in disguise. But Shakespeare is playing with this convention, just as he does with the others. He lets Rosalind impose it upon Orlando as a conscious pretense. They have fallen in love quite *seriously*. But she insists that they must *play* at being in love, in order that they may both come to a proper appreciation of what it means. Rosalind is the teacher (though she learns a lot herself). Orlando — who was initially overwhelmed by the distance between them — is an apt pupil (and one thing he quickly learns, is not to try to teach Rosalind any lessons).

Can we make any sense now of the snake and the lioness? Orlando’s wound is real enough, but he did not receive it from a real lioness. What truth is it that lies behind Oliver’s plainly

allegorical account? Surely these animals are emblems of the passions (of reason corrupted into evil cunning, and courage corrupted into evil wrath respectively). Once we realize that, we can see at once whose passions they are, and how Orlando came by his wound. It was Oliver who set upon his brother violently from an ambush. Then he suffered a violent revulsion of feeling (and one in which practical prudence played some part, for if being already an outlaw he commits the sin of Cain, to whom can he look for succor?). Reconciled, the brothers have concocted some story for public consumption. But if Shakespeare let Oliver give us that story literally, we should never be able even to guess the truth. So he makes him give us the truth emblematically instead. This is a way of indicating that the girl-cousins will soon pierce the actual screen-story (whatever it was). The brothers will have to tell Rosalind and Celia the truth; so it does not matter to us what story it actually was that Oliver told the girls at this immediate moment.

Celia, braver, more mature, and more resolute, than Rosalind though she is, does not attempt to wrestle with her own affections when she falls in love. Nor would it make any sense for her to do so. Oliver is someone who does not understand himself. She will first have to help him to do that, before there can be any question of the sort of mutual recognition between them that the love-play has shown to exist between Rosalind and Orlando. In a character as volcanic as Oliver, proper self-knowledge is too much to hope for. What hope of happiness is there for Celia? We can only say that with the four of them linked as they are, Oliver has a better chance of making a fresh start, than he would have in any other circumstances. Both couples fall in love “at first sight,” but Shakespeare means us to see why we can confidently put “happily ever after” as the amen to one of the marriages but not to the other.

“Whoever loved that loved not at first sight?” quotes Phebe from Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* (III, 5, 81). This is the official doctrine and main theme of the play. But it is worth pondering this “first sight” rather carefully, for here again Shakespeare has taken one of the cliché conventions of romance and found a deeper sense in it than is usually recognized. The couples each meet for the first time at a moment of great stress and crisis, a veritable turning-point in the lives of the men. Orlando is made *visible* in a very important and definite sense by the wrestling match. He

can be seen there for just what he is (though not for all that he is — the very best of him is hidden). And, though he tells his story allegorically, Oliver's reconciliation with his brother reveals the highest potential that is in him (it is the worst that is hidden in his case). Rosalind's woodland play shows that Orlando is as gentle and compassionate as he is brave and strong; and in testing him to show this, she tests her own courage and strength far more terribly. Orlando appreciates this instantly — or "at first sight," which has thus no necessary connection with the first meeting. Rosalind's doublet and hose aptly symbolizes the fact that their meeting in the forest is to be, for Orlando, his first true "sight" of her. Shakespeare's doctrine really is that love is intuitive. The moment of "first sight" can come at any time; no single moment of vision is ever total, and the vision, partial as it always is, must be mutual if any reliance is to be placed on it. *We* know how lucky Oliver is in Celia, but he does not, and he cannot yet be aware of his luck. Also, one may be lucky, yet at the same time terribly unlucky in one's love, as Othello is — but that's another story.

Of course, whatever he may quote from Marlowe, Shakespeare knows that this "sight" is not the only kind of love that binds the beast with two backs together. The love of Touchstone and Audrey is something different. Whatever one says about it, there cannot be much mutual recognition in it, for Audrey is incapable of such a thing. Jaques forecasts, very plausibly, that it will not last (V, 4, 188-9). Yet, remembering Goethe and the mistress whom he finally married, we can see that Jaques may be mistaken. I cannot say as much for Phebe's final acceptance of her Silvius. Here we have only gratitude for loyal devotion (if we have anything serious here at all). It may work out well, but it is obviously a matter of chance. Finally there is a kind of bond that is not represented in this play at all. The fatal fascination of Cleopatra has nothing to do with self-knowledge and mutual recognition at all. But then, of course, it has nothing to do with marriage and children either.

What finally are we to say of the relation between the Court and the Greenwood? We should see here, I think, a symbol of the relation between public and private life, between city-forum and family-hearth, between career and marriage, between ambition or duty, and personal happiness.

Rosalind and Celia belong to a noble family, with traditions of public service and inherited public responsibility. The typical effect of such political stresses on personal happiness is tragically destructive. That is what is shown to us in the figure of the invading army. The army is turned aside at the last moment, by the ideological magic of religion.^{vii} Every thinking person in Shakespeare's audience knew what a frail shield that was. The terrible history of Squire Harry's marriages was followed by Elizabeth's tragic failure to make a marriage at all — or even to establish a lasting love-affair. She is a more tragic figure than her father because she was more truly human than he — though not, perhaps, as completely human as some of the women who suffered at his hands. All this would be in the mind of an audience for whom it would be quite natural to compare Rosalind with the young Elizabeth, and Orlando with the young Prince Harry. In Duke Frederick's bullying, and in Oliver's volcanic malice, they would see signs of the man (so-called) that Prince Harry grew up to be. This was not the world as they would like it. Why should their Queen not have the sort of suitor she deserved? In a little poem of her later years, which bears the stamp of her true greatness, Elizabeth blamed her own foolish pride. If we think of her at Rosalind's age (seventeen?) the poem takes on the stamp of truth as well. Later on, when she was Queen, neither personal pride nor love could well have entered into her political equations at all.^{viii}

I have reminded you of these few facts of Tudor dynastic history several times, because my own knowledge goes no further. But I am convinced that a socio-political commentary is what this play needs, much more than it needs Dover Wilson's learned rubbish about Montemayor's *Diana* (for example). Any responsible editor must give us an appropriately pedantic note about "Diana weeping in the fountain" (IV, 1, 142); and editors will even condescend to notice possible political references that involve an eminent literary figure like Kit Marlowe.^{ix} But although they all know far more about Elizabethan England and its history than I, they betray not the slightest sense of the social and political world against which this marvelous portrayal of life "as you (would) like it, if you could only have it so" is set. Of course, the title itself has a more immediate reference that makes it peculiarly appropriate; and how can we expect ordinary modern readers to understand the play, if the most learned editors have not comprehended the title of it? It is Rosalind to whom the others (and especially Orlando) say: "As you like it, my lady."

But I must have done with this diatribe, for although I think that the placing of the play in its time is the proper business of scholarly commentary, it is not what makes *As You Like It* into a play for all time. It would be a sound emphasis for the study of the play at university, since it provides an unsurpassable avenue into the Elizabethan consciousness of history and politics, and it will bring Tudor history to life better than any modern historian can (or any but the most remarkable novelists — is it only because I learn so much history from novels that I think this way?). But Shakespeare's mocking epilogue points to the ultimate and universal significance of the play — and I want to come back to it now, as quickly as I can. So I will end the political sermon by pointing out that in the world “as you like it,” the naturally self-possessed, and the flawed, Celia, Oliver, Jaques and Duke Frederick retire into private life. Celia promises Rosalind at the very beginning that she will resign the dukedom when she inherits it (I, 2, 15-21); Oliver declares that he will resign his inheritance to Orlando, in order to be a shepherd with his Aliena (V, 2, 9-12); but it is the conversion of Duke Frederick that makes the rapid fulfilment of their declared will possible. Also with them in the greenwood we find the contemplative Jaques. For the old Duke in retirement (an integrated personality, as his relations with Rosalind show), Jaques was a philosopher;^x for Duke Frederick he will be a sceptic moralist. He is the observer appropriate to the private world (to which he belongs essentially because he can form no ties). But he exists also in the public world as Jaques de Boys. The omnipresence of the academic observer of life is what Shakespeare intended to express symbolically by the curious expedient of giving two characters who are otherwise unconnected the same name. Since he calls the late arrival, who is clearly destined to be court philosopher to Rosalind and Orlando, Jaques “of the Wood” (the second brother, who went to the University) it may be that he also means to indicate that the same person whom we meet as philosopher in the greenwood when it is the refuge of the healthy, can be both spiritual physician to the sick, and ironic dialectician for the healthy. (All parts of society, we should note, must have recourse to the jakes with equal regularity.)

The final position of Touchstone is harder to understand. His very name makes it impossible to *duplicate* him; and his name would seem to place him at the very center of the social web. But it

is obvious that Audrey cannot leave the greenwood; and it is Celia to whom Touchstone is attached throughout. So it is natural for him to remain in Arden as far as his personal ties are concerned. All the same, he challenges my thesis about the ultimate symbolism of the play. Does the court-jester belong more to the private than to the public sphere? It would seem that he does not. The solution to this puzzle is to be found in another important fact about self-conscious mutual recognition. For whereas Rosalind and Orlando are touchstones for one another, Celia's essential health and sanity would be threatened if she were left alone in the company of all those penitent sinners. Touchstone preserves Celia for her essentially motherly role in the enormous Bethlehem Hospital that the Forest is to become; and on his other side, Audrey maintains *his* contact with Mother Earth, and the innocence of Eden — the life of natural instinct before the Fall into self-consciousness of any kind. The true clowns, I infer, must in any world, even in the ideal one, be found where the sickness of society is.

Now, at last, we can return to the mocking Epilogue. He appeals to us all thus: "I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you; and I charge you, O men, for the love that you bear to women . . . that between you and the women the play may please" (V, 4, 206-11). The intentional punning upon "play" in the sense of "love-play" or "sex-play" is here intended to focus our attention on the fact that what we have witnessed is above all a drama about partnership in *marriage*. Rosalind appears far removed from a modern girl, in that her mind runs automatically from the thought of love to the ideas of marriage and motherhood. For her, as for the prayer book of Edward VI, marriage and motherhood are not separable ideas at all. "First it was ordained" — says the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony with reference to itself — for the procreation of children"; and Rosalind's way of confessing to Celia that she is *really* in love with Orlando is to speak of him as "my child's father." Compare also the way she speaks to Orlando about the love of Oliver and Celia (V, 2, 28-39). To her the married state appears as the natural fulfilment of human existence; and it is his "traveler" condition (i.e. his bachelor status without home or family) that makes her antipathetic to Jaques (IV, 1, 19-26 — note the pun: travel/travail).

This is a deep truth about the play. But it is still not the deepest truth — and if we allow ourselves to be misled into the idea that Rosalind is not fully “modern” (and as “liberated” as any human being ever will be) because of her seeming fixation about marriage and motherhood, we shall be mocked again.

For it is Celia, not Rosalind, who is the quintessential mother. In their motherless condition Celia mothers Rosalind throughout the play, most notably in the two great crises: the physical crisis when they have to plan their flight, and the spiritual crisis when Rosalind fears that Orlando himself has flown. Celia surrenders herself completely to love; and she must do, for her husband will always need her mothering, just as much as her children do. She will mother everyone but Touchstone. On him she can and must lean.

Rosalind will have children, and be a perfect mother to them. But her relation to Orlando is, as we have seen, the touchstone-relation — not that of a mother or a daughter, which is what she had to fear with him. The deepest truth about Rosalind is that she is a career-girl as well as a mother. That is why she *cannot afford* to surrender to love as unconditionally as Celia does. She is destined from the first for political responsibility. The fact that her father regains his dukedom in a way that reminds us of the activities of Oberon and Puck, only underlines the irrelevance of her birth in this respect. Celia has already promised that if she inherits the dukedom Rosalind shall have it. Rosalind is the one who is born to rule. This is symbolized again in the fact that Orlando is Orlando *de Boys*. He comes from private life to share the burden of her responsibilities with her. (He is the commoner-husband whom Elizabeth needed but never found.) Again, of course, we should not be misled into thinking that the accident of birth is important. The message of the play is that only in an equal partnership of the sexes can the political responsibilities of human existence be adequately discharged. It has to be expressed symbolically in Shakespeare’s world as the problem of how a Queen regnant can be happy, because in that world someone like John Knox sounding his *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* had all the weight of tradition and natural feeling behind him.

Our present situation is not quite as bad as Rosalind's (or Elizabeth's). But it is still bad enough to make it appropriate for us to keep Rosalind in the limelight. There are some among today's feminists who could with profit study Celia; for if it were not sometimes the case that they set themselves to "raise the consciousness" of Celia's modern sisters who are already more self-possessed than they themselves will ever be, they would not meet with as much resistance as they do. But for most of us — and especially for us men who will never get that mockery of a kiss — Rosalind is the shining example of what the relation between the sexes ought to be in a properly integrated society where the distinction of private and public life has been transcended. Her love-play is only the prelude to life-work.

I have not so far said anything about the songs and carols with which the forest of Arden is filled. Critics who can make nothing sensible of the play as a dramatic experience, frequently turn almost in desperation to eulogize its lyrical and musical aspects; and I heartily agree that the songs deserve all the praises they have received. But if we consider them simply as musical interludes, the pantomime character of the play itself is accentuated. Many critics have noted, however, that they contribute a great deal to Shakespeare's critically realistic appreciation of the Arcadian tradition; they are the expression of what we may fairly call an open-eyed, or stoically honest romanticism.

Thus even the completely Arcadian song "Under the greenwood tree" draws our attention to the fact that the spiritual harmony of the simple life involves the acceptance of the "enmity" of the elements ("winter and rough weather"); and it is set against a parody by Jaques in which the folly of abandoning civilized comfort for a life in the open (in England!) is emphasized (II, 5, 1-56). Again, the song "What shall he have that killed the deer?" (IV, 2, 10-9) reminds us that the spiritual harmony of the simple life is fraudulent, because even the simplest life has its dog-eat-dog aspect; the deer, whose life is really simple and involves no harm to other living creatures, must be hunted and slaughtered by these new followers of the "old Robin Hood of England" who "fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world" (I, 1, 110-2). And when we turn back to the moment of our entry into the "golden world" we find that precisely *this* was the subject of the reflections of "the melancholy Jaques" when we first hear of him (II, 1, 26-63).

But all this has been adequately expounded by other critics; and it is not directly relevant to my main theme, which is the character of Rosalind. There is just one lyric in the play that is relevant to this theme, the most famous, the most beautiful, and most perfectly Arcadian of them all (indeed the original germ of it is to be found in Lodge's *Rosalynde*); the song that was so marvelously set by Thomas Morley: "It was a lover and his lass" (V, 3, 15-38). Outwardly, this song has *no* connection with the main action and characterization of the play at all. It is sung by two "pages." Presumably they belong to the entourage of the old Duke, but they sing their song only for Touchstone and Audrey — the oddest "lover and lass" in the whole play.

The isolation of this marvelous little poem within the play, is calculated and deliberate. For the pages with their little musical "interlude" are an emblematic presentation of the main message of the drama. We should notice first of all that the singers, as pages, must, of necessity, be boy-actors, like Rosalind herself. Furthermore, since Rosalind, within the Forest, is disguised as a boy, in her much talked-of "doublet and hose," she is in fact costumed as they are. The more literate members of the Globe audience would remember that in Lodge's *Rosalynde*, the heroine goes to the forest as the *page*, not the brother, of Aliena (Shakespeare's Celia). But Orlando, too, is in doublet and hose; and once they have reached the Forest, the manly strength which enabled him to overthrow Charles, and to carry old Adam, is no longer important. In the Forest he accepts not just Rosalind's equality, but her leadership and tutelage. Thus the two pages represent for us the equality that this lover and his lass must first achieve within the Forest, and then maintain for life when they leave it.

As we saw, Rosalind had a very serious point to make, when she cried out that "men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love" (IV, 1, 96-8). But this cynical observation is not her true opinion about herself and Orlando. It is just a necessary visit to the jakes. She is rebuked for it at once, gently, by Orlando. How right she is about poetic exaggeration, is shown by the fact that her "frown" does him no harm at all; but this is precisely the point at which she stops "frowning." When she says, a little further on, that "men are April when they woo, December when they wed; maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives" (IV, 1, 136-81), she no longer deserves rebuke. This comment is in the spirit of the

“melancholy Jaques” at his dialectical best. The central problem of the play is to discover how we can turn away the enmity of “winter and rough weather” in love relationships, avoiding December and the change of sky. The song points to the way in which Rosalind and Orlando will do this. They are beginning a “carol” *at this very hour* of their existence, which will continue unbroken till they die, because they have realized that they must “take the present time” and hold on to it. The absolutely transient permanence of the present contains the whole meaning of truly human existence: “how that a life is but a flower,/ In Spring time” (the April of the slightly senior husband, and the May of his younger bride). It is, of course, easy enough to *say* (in a song) that this is the right answer to Rosalind’s bitter prophecy that Orlando will meet his “wife’s wit going to his neighbour’s bed . . . to say that she came to seek you there” (IV, 1, 157-9). But the main action of the play — the mutual self-recognition of Rosalind and Orlando — shows us just how the “flower in Spring time” can be kept blooming even in the natural December of human life. Rosalind and Orlando will grow old, and they have important work to do in life. But there must be “no clock in the forest” for them. When we see how the song epitomizes the play, we are forced to admit that the general failure to acknowledge that Orlando does indeed recognize Rosalind in her doublet and hose, destroys the essential point of the drama. If Orlando does not first recognize her, he cannot recognize *himself* in her; without that, they cannot be two equal pages singing together. Without Orlando’s understanding, Rosalind’s recognition of him, and of herself in him, would remain irrevocably subject to “December” and the “change of sky.”

But, as I said before this brief digression, Rosalind’s love-play is only a prelude to life-work. And because this play is essentially a prelude to life, *As You Like It* is peculiarly a play for those who are about to leave school. That moment is, in our world, the point where the journey to the forest of Arden typically begins. Rosalind is a girl on the threshold of adult life. It is not just her lover, but her father who must be made to recognize her, to join hands with her and admit her to the adult circle as a person in her own right. At the very first, it was only her father whom she was in search of. When she fell in love, that quest sank into apparent insignificance. But, for all that she speaks slightly of it (“But what talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando?” — III, 4, 34-5), she tells us of her success in the quest for her father at the very moment when her spirits are

at their lowest ebb. “I met the Duke yesterday and had much question with him. He asked me of what parentage I was. I told him, of as good as he — so he laughed and let me go” (III, 4, 31-4).

It is certain that there could not be “much question” between them — especially when it certainly began with this particular question! — without the Duke realizing who it was that he was talking to. Rosalind’s joking answer was a confession; and his laughing release of her, to let her go on with her game in the doublet and hose, just as she wished, is an image of the relation between the parent and the child passing into adulthood that is as valid for our world as it was for Shakespeare’s; and, thanks to Shakespeare and others, it is more generally accepted as valid in our world than it was in his.

“Disguise, however, was a convention, and Shakespeare did not break through it,” writes H.J. Oliver in his introduction to the New Penguin edition of the play. His view is accepted by all the critics except ‘Q.’ ‘Q’ was himself an author in the tradition of Arcadian comedy, and he understood the place of common sense in it. But even he goes no further than:

But is Orlando really tricked to the end? He may pin foolish ballads on trees where . . . nobody concerned is likely to read ’em. But can anyone read the later scenes of this play and believe that he had not at any rate a shrewd suspicion that this Ganymede was his Rosalind: or even that the exiled Duke himself had not some inkling?

I do remember in this shepherd-boy
Some likely touches of my daughter’s favour

No: we are in Arden, where all is deception, but there is no deception save self-deception, and even that very pretty, and pardonable.^{xi}

This last remark shows great insight. But the initial comment about Orlando’s “foolish ballads” is itself foolish, since Orlando knows very well that Rosalind is in the forest. Once we understand that it was precisely the convention of “disguise” that Shakespeare *intended* to break through, *As You Like It* ceases to be a May Day pantomime, and can be comprehended as the great

play that it truly is. I believe that by applying common sense to it, I have uncovered a remarkably interesting social philosophy behind it (though I have only expounded that in part). Perhaps some of what I have written is no more than the fancies of a philosopher in the forest. My original concern was simply to find in the play something worthy of its heroine. It is only because, and insofar as, I have done that, that I find my own argument finally convincing:

“therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry.”

Notes

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- i. All references are to Act, Scene, and line in the *New Penguin* edition. Since so much of the play is in prose, no standard line numbering is possible. But the Penguin references will usually be found to vary only very slightly from the *New Cambridge* edition (from which I have accepted two necessary emendations that are indicated where they are referred to).
 - ii. I have followed the New Cambridge edition here. The insertion of “[I]” is necessary because of the implicit comparison of the way in which Orlando and Rosalind are each wrestling with their lot. We meet them both at a moment of defeat.
 - iii. Modern editors generally accept Theobald’s emendation “weary” for the Folio’s “merry” in II, 4, 1. But Touchstone’s answering contrast is between his *spirits* and his *legs*. We ought to accept the text that we have here. (Rosalind promptly *explains* why she is trying to keep her *spirits* up; even though her legs are as “weary” as Touchstone’s.)
 - iv. The problem about the passing of time in the Forest is closely connected with the question of woodland origin. Those who are in love rejoin the community of natural life (the Forest). The cycle of the seasons continues, but they become oblivious of the passage of time generally. To be in love is to live in “the present time.” But only someone like Audrey is *naturally* born in the Forest. For a Princess to be *native* to the Forest, an act of creative imagination (or of “magic”) is necessary. The courtiers belong properly to the world of *clock-time*. The lovers do not; and their faith is that their love will be untouched by the *natural* passage of time. Nothing can *guarantee* this; but the practical pressures of the clock-dominated world of affairs must at least be understood.

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- v. Rosalind's rejection of the ambiguous "I will," and her insistence on "I take thee Rosalind," shows how well she understands what she is doing; and her remark "I might ask you for your commission" ensures that Orlando knows and intends what *he* is doing. If he were as oblivious as he is conventionally supposed to be, he could say "That does not matter, because I cannot *really* marry a boy" (IV, 1, 127). (For the canonical validity of the woodland ceremony, see the note in the Arden edition — A. Latham, 1975, 133-5.)
- vi. This comment is made after Rosalind's "wayward wisdom" about letting Orlando go for two hours' business with the Duke. It applies also to the comment about "the girl who goes before the priest" (IV, 1, 128-9). But Rosalind *is* "wise," because marriages are made between individuals. There must be proper understanding of temperaments if "horns" are to be avoided.
- vii. What is signified at the level of real politics, is only that the transference of power was made by peaceful diplomacy. The old Duke retired peacefully before the play began; at the end of the action he returns to power in the same way.
- viii. But even at Rosalind's age Elizabeth was already involved in the tortuous schemes of Thomas Seymour — who resembles Oliver rather than Orlando.
- ix. See III, 3, 12-3 (I agree with the sober editorial consensus that no reference to the death of Marlowe is intended).
- x. Is this perhaps the one place where Francis Bacon *really* appears in Shakespeare's story? Certainly Bacon's little poem "The World's a Bubble" (*Penguin Book of Elizabethan Verse*,

pp. 36-7) throws a very bright light on Shakespeare's association of the philosopher with "the jakes."

- xi. H.J. Oliver (1968 — New Penguin edition), p. 31; Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (1926 — New Shakespeare, Cambridge), pp. xvi-xvii.