
The Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*

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What are sources of interest in *As You Like It*? Probably they are characters, the plot and so on. but no one will fail to miss the dramatic and skilful usage of the Forest of Arden. Some critics have already pointed out the important part of "the Forest of Arden" in the play. This aroused my interest in the study of it very much, so in this essay I should like to give my opinions.

At the beginning of the essay I will relate briefly the main characters in the play, because it is generally believed that characters are the most important elements in plays.

First of all, I must mention Rosalind who is universally acknowledged as the central figure of the play. She is impulsive, intellectual, weak, strong and so very changeable in temper. She is not a simple heroine in love, but she is wise enough to realize the nature of love between men and women. I will quote one good example from the famous comments in her references to the old love stories, moreover we can see clearly Shakespeare's satire here.

Orl. Then in mine own person I die.

Ros. No, faith, die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love-cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander,

he would have lived many a fair year though
Hero had turned nun, if it had not been
for a hot mid-summer night; for, good youth,
he went but forth to wash him in the Hel-
lespont and being taken with the cramp was
drowned; and the foolish chroniclers of
that age found it was—Hero of Sestos. But
these are all lies. *Men have died from time to
time and worms have eaten them, but not for
love.*¹ (italics mine)

Surely she has many attractive qualities of womanhood. Rosalind is one of the most charming Shakespearean heroines. As for Celia, she is serious and amiable, she is always with Rosalind throughout the play, and she matches her will in wit and womanliness. Most of all we love Celia for her faithfulness. Though both Rosalind and Celia are good examples of Shakespeare's creation of character and have very impressive characteristics among Shakespearean heroines, I hesitate to choose one of them as the central figure of the play. Furthermore we must recognize Jaques and Touchstone as remarkable and distinguished characters. Jaques has perhaps the most complex characteristics in the play, and many critics point out the connection between Jaques and Hamlet.

Let me, as an example, quote a description of Jaques' character.

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, IV, i, 92—108 (*Shakespeare Twenty-Three Plays and the Sonnets* edited by Thomas Marc Parrott)

Ros. They say you are a melancholy fellow.

Jaq. I am so; I do love it better than laughing.

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Jaq. I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all these: but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects; and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness—¹

But he looks like a melancholy bystander in this comedy. Here are the well known words spoken by Jaques.

Jaq. All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players: ²

Just like these words he may be an audience at the world stage. Therefore Oscar James Campbell's opinion is as follows:

Jaques' temper is quite unlike that which establishes the tone of *As You Like It*. It is just because his sour comments on life are discordant with the spirit of Arden that they are

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, IV, i, 3—20

² *ibid.*, II, VII, 139—140

so arresting.

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In this utopian pastoral world the fugitives also come upon the melancholy Jaques, he is entirely Shakespeare's invention. Because his only part in the comedy is to stand aloof from the action and make satiric comment upon all that happens, critics have been tempted to regard him as Shakespeare's mouthpiece. ¹

In contrast with Jaques, since Touchstone is the court fool of Duke Frederick, his profession is to make people laugh. But in his jests there is a great deal of bitter satire about the world.

Touch. The more pity, that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly. ²

Touch. Why, thou say'st well. I do now remember a saying: "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool." ³

We can call him a cheerful satirist, compared with the melancholy philosopher, Jaques. Of course, neither Jaques nor Touchstone is the central figure. As for Orlands, though he is probably the "hero" of the play, his part is not very exciting, and his characteristics are not particularly interesting. One of his best traits is his affection for Adam, who follows him, and the good

¹ Oscar James Campbell, *Shakespeare's Satire*, 1943, P.47-48.

² Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I,ii, 92-93

³ *ibid.*, V,i, 33-35

care he gives the old man. There is nothing worthy of special mention about the rest of the characters. Who, then, is the central figure among them? And, who is the really main character who can explain the theme of the play and arouse the interest of the audience,? I think we must answer these questions by saying that none of the above-mentioned characters is a central figure but it is a "forest", "The Forest of Arden". We can say so because of the following passages.

Duke S. Welcome, young man;
Thou offer' st fairly to thy brothers' wedding:
To one his lands withheld; and to the other
A land itself at large, a potent dukedom.
*First, in this forest let us do those ends
That here were well begun and well begot;*
And after, every of this happy number,
That have endur' d shrewd days and nights
 with us,
Shall share the good of our returned fortune,
According to the measure of their states.
Meantime, forget this new-fallen dignity,
And fall into our rustic revelry.
Play, music! And you, brides and bridegrooms all,
With measure heap' d in joy, to the measures fall. ¹
 (italics mine)

Secondly let us now consider the main plot of this play. we can say the same thing about the plot as we did about the characters. If we look for the exquisiteness in the construction of the

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, V, iv, 172--185

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drama or scrutinize it too closely, we might feel some disappointment. I wonder whether such an appreciative attitude or approach for a drama is correct or not, especially for such a drama *As You Like It*. If we look at the plots in this drama, we can see that this story consists of three main plots. The first is the family quarrel of the Dukes; the second is the quarrel between brothers in the de Boys; and the third is the love between Orlando and Rosalind. These plots are combined with each other, but have two climaxes. One is the domestic troubles, the center of which is the wrestling match in the beginning of the story, and the other, later in the story, is the love story in the forest.

Does the audience expect dexterity in the construction of plots? If so, their expectations will be disappointed. We notice many defects in the play. For example, a lion lives in the Forest of Arden and palm trees grow there, for the scene of the play was laid in France. According to Thomas Marc Parrott's note, the Forest of Arden is located in the north-eastern part of France near the Belgian border. ¹

Oli.
Into a bush; under which bush's shade
A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch,
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¹ Thomas Marc Parrott, *Shakespeare Twenty-Three Plays and the Sonnets*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, P. 520

² Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, IV, iii, 114 — 116

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Ros. I was seven of the nine days out of
the wonder before you came; for look
here what I found on a palm tree. ¹

There are other discrepancies. I feel it is unnatural that the usurper, Frederick, repents for his sin so suddenly and it is a little strange that Celia is united with Oliver at first sight. Also I think the settlement is too abrupt. I wonder whether there was any careful consideration of the plots or not.

I suppose that Shakespeare wrote this play as a pastoral comedy in which the dexterous and complicated plots are not so important. Had Shakespeare himself known such a dramatical category? Had they already enjoyed such a dramatical genre as a pastoral comedy in the Elizabethan age? I will prove it by using Shakespeare's own words in *Hamlet* and then I should like to define this play a kind of pastoral comedy.

Pol. The best actors in the world, either
for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, *Pas-*
toral-comical, historical-pastoral, scene indi-
vidable, or poem unlimited. ² (italics mine)

Now let us consider the following questions. What is the motive of a pastoral comedy? What origin has a pastoral comedy?

I feel that no audience could anticipate the way this story develops

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III, ii, 184—186

² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, (*Shakespeare Twenty-Three Plays and the Sonnets* edited by Thomas Marc Parrott) II, ii, 415—418

with its peculiar complications and settlements, nor could the writer himself have given careful consideration to the plot. Neither the audience nor the writer regards the plot as the first principle. In some degree we expect that all things will be settled according to the A. B. C. of the pastoral comedy, which usually has a happy ending. Of course, it is possible that we might think that the main or underlying theme of the play is vicissitudes, but we need not look for such a deep philosophical principle in this play. In fact we go to the theatre to enjoy a play, but we do not go there to study human problems. So we can say, "Pleasure first", especially in such a drama as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *As You Like It*.

Thomas Marc Parrott says in his introduction for this play; "*As You Like It*, one of the happiest of Shakespeare's comedies, presents few problems of interest to the critical student. It is rather a play to be enjoyed than analyzed, delightful on the stage, more fascinating still, perhaps, in the study."¹ Even if we can find out irrationalities and inconsistencies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, they are rather obstacles to our appreciation of the play, and such a attitude is wrong and foolish. I can say the same of the Kabuki Drama. I will quote from *Kabuki Drama* written by S. Miyake for foreigners.

Viewing the performance with an eye for logic is not the proper attitude for the enjoyment of a Kabuki play. It is to be understood as an art intended to appeal to the senses

¹ Thomas Marc Parrott, *Shakespeare Twenty-Three Plays and the Sonnets*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, P. 515

and the perception, an art to feast the eye rather than to satisfy the intellect. In this sense the Kabuki is decidedly not to be classed with modern drama which is entirely based on the story structure, but with music, dancing, painting and sculpture of the classical type. The life of the present-day Japanese is only scantily represented in a Kabuki play.

Being a classical art, the Kabuki play cannot be said to have a direct appeal to the modern mind. Though its appeal is indirect, it is capable of giving aesthetic pleasure; though it is nonsense, it is capable of giving consolation to the people—so it is a play rich in elements of recreation which are enjoyed by the general public. In its combining of general appeal with a considerable amount of artistic merit, it may not inaptly be compared to the plays of Shakespeare. ¹

Judging from such points of view, the main sources of interest of the play come from “The Forest of Arden”. So I should like to conclude that the central character of the play is the Forest of Arden, and also the main plot is nothing but the Forest of Arden. If *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a night dream in the wood, *As You Like It* is also a day dream in the forest. Everything is like dreams in the forest or the wood.

The forest is the carefree place and the dream land.

Ros. I pray you, what is 't o'clock ?

Orl. You should ask me what time o' day:
there's no clock in the forest. ² (italics mine)

¹ S. Miyake, *Kabuki Drama*, P. 12—13

² Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III, ii, 317—319

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Such dreams are pleasant, happy and cheerful. Such dreams give us pleasure. Here I remember the very famous quotation from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact."¹ Though we are normal and ordinary, we have some imaginations, fancies and dreams. If someone says that such dreams or imaginations are absurd, nonsensical and irrational, I should like to suggest that he and drama or literature are strangers. So we ought to accept such dreams without scurting or investigation. Perhaps Shakespeare suggests an idea to us,—you had better enjoy *As You Like It* as much as you like it.

It is probably one of the most suitably appreciative methods to regard this play as a comical opera. The several songs inserted in the play fully entitle us to do so. This play contains well known and most delightful songs.

Song

Amiens.

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither !
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather. ²

¹ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, (*Shakespeare Twenty-Three Plays and the Sonnets* edited by Thomas Marc Parrott) V, i, 7—8

² Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II, v, 1—8

Song

Amiens.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
 As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
 Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green
 holly.
Most friendship is feigning, most loving
 mere folly.
 Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
 This life is most Jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh
 As benefits forgot;
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
 As friend rememb' red not.
Heigh-ho! sing, etc. ¹

Song

Music

I, For.

What shall he have that killed the deer?
His leather skin and horns to wear.
 Then sing him home.
(*The rest shall bear this burden.*)

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II, vii, 174—190

Take thou no scorn to wear the horn;
It was a crest ere thou wast born;
 Thy father's father wore it,
 And thy father bore it.
The horn, the horn, the lusty horn
Is not a thing to laugh to scorn. ¹

Song

It was a lover and his lass,
 With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green corn-field did pass
 In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
 With a hey, and a ho, and hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
 In spring time, &c.

This carol they began that hour,
 With a hey, and a ho, and hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
 In spring time, &c.

And therefore take the present time,
 With a hey and a ho, and hey nonino,
For love is crowned with the prime
 In spring time, &c. ²

¹ Shakespeare. *As You Like It*, IV, ii, 11—19

² *ibid.*, V, iii, 17—34

As to the appreciation of kabuki Drama, I can say the same—we might regard Kabuki Drama as a kind of opera. In the Kabuki Drama, singing and dancing occur during the course of the development of a story characterized by dramatic elements, and the whole performance is executed as a highly refined art. In a sense the Kabuki Drama may be described as a play more like a revue than a drama, in the European sense.

Now, the Forest of Arden is the origin of all fascination and the source of the magical and fantastical background of the play. E. K. Chambers refers to this point, also he touches on the townsmen's strong desire for the country life.

We are always conscious of the forest in *As you Like It*. It is something more than a mere scenic background; a spiritual force, bringing medicine to the hurt souls of men. The banished duke has the sentiment of it——

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?

Thus *As You Like It* does for the Elizabethan drama what the long string of pastoral poets, Spenser and Sidney, Lodge and Greene, Drayton and Browne, and the rest, had already done, or were still to do, for Elizabethan lyric. The temper of it is not strictly the temper of the actual country-dweller as that has filled our later literature for the last century. It is rather the temper of urban disillusion, the instinctive craving of the man who has been long in cities pent for green fields and quiet nights. And no doubt it yields rather a mirage of the country than a sober and realistic vision of the country as it really is.¹

¹ E. K. Chambers, *Shakespeare: A Survey*, New York, Hill and Wang, p. 157—158

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Furthermore I will quote a few passages concerning these explanations from *As You Like It*.

Cha.

They say he is already in the forest
of Arden, and a many merry men with him;
and there they live like the old Robin Hood of
England. They say many young gentlemen
flock to him every day, and fleet the time care-
lessly, as they did in the golden world.¹

Duke S. Now, my co-mates and brothers
in exile,

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?
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference— as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,
"This is no flattery: these are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am."
Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running
 brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.
I would not change it.²

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I, i, 120—125

² *ibid.*, II, i, 1—18

Orl. My lord, the first time that I ever
saw him
Methought he was a brother to your daughter.
But, my good lord, this boy is forest-born,
And hath been tutor'd in the rudiments
Of many desperate studies by his uncle,
Whom he reports to be *a great magician*,
Obscured in the circle of this forest. ¹ (*italics mine*)

The usage of the forest reminds me of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Kabuki Drama. Hawthorne uses dexterously the forest in his works to express the dark side of the human mind and represent the sense of guilt. *Young Goodman Brown*, *The Hollow of the Three Hills*, and *The Man of Adamant* are good examples. Likewise, the forest is used in the Kabuki Drama to breed such a mystic or merry atmosphere. In Japan most of the tutelary shrines are located in such forests or groves. we call them the forests of the tutelary shrines. They are the favorite spots for children at play and the festivals of the tutelary shrines are held there annually. So such forests are familiar places to children and adults.

Where is the Forest of Arden? According to Lodge's pastoral romance *Rosalynde*, which has long been recognized as the source of *As You Like It*, it is located in the northern part of France; but Shakespeare paid little attention to geographical ideas, and with his unrestricted imagination he probably wrote this story while thinking of the forest of Arden as being in Stratford-on-Avon, which was a place associated with memories of his childhood. Spurgeon ex-

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, V, iv, 28—34

presses the same opinion about the river in her book, *Shakespeare's Imagery*.

Another of the chief interests of Shakespeare's mind was the river. The man who had spent his boyhood by the banks of the Avon never forgot its appearance in fair weather or in foul, in winter or in summer. He has sauntered by the river in its peaceful mood, when the current glides 'with gentle murmur', he has leant over Clopton Bridge and watched 'the violent roaring tide' swirling and eddying through its arches, he has seen the river oftentimes in flood, and it is this last aspect of it which, above all others, has impressed itself for ever on his memory. ¹

I feel as sure as I can be of anything that these many pictures drawn by Shakespeare of the movement and behaviour of a river in flood are all *boyhood memories* of the Avon at Stratford. ² (italics mine)

Furthermore, Arden is also the name of his mother's family, which is indicated by many critical students. So the name is close to his heart.

When he wrote this play; he had reached manhood, had known the world and had received worldly fame. At this time he felt nostalgia for his native town as many men do. E.K. Chambers calls such a feeling the pastoral impulse of the end of the sixteenth century and says that at the time Englishmen were learning to feel the oppression of cities. He then explains Shakespeare's mental state as follows.

¹ Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Cambridge University Press, 1961, P.91—92

² *ibid.*, P.96

The monstrous nightmare of the modern city had not yet made its appearance; but there was already reason enough, especially in days when court intrigue was merciless and none too savoury, for the finer souls to dream their dreams of Arcady or of Arden.

And if Shakespeare dreamed, one is tempted to ask whether he dreamed for others only, or for himself as well. Does *As You Like It* disclose the first stirrings of an impulse back to the land, which may be held to account for his ultimate return to Stratford in 1611 while he was still but a man of middle age and in the full enjoyment of fame and fortune? Did Arden mean for him the woods and parks in which he had wandered as a boy and taken his share, if tradition errs not, in goring the round haunches of the poor dappled fools? Such questions can hardly be answered. One likes to think that Shakespeare never became at heart a Londoner. But all that is certain is that he never wholly cut himself adrift from Stratford interests, since two or three years before he wrote *As You Like It* he had already bought the fine house there in which he was to end his days; and that in *As You Like It* itself there breathes more of the country than in any other play between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the group which immediately preceded his retirement.

The fact that its theme is inspired by the reaction against urban life naturally makes *As you Like It* a comedy as well as a romance.¹

That is to say, *As You Like It* is a book of reminiscences. At any rate, in this play Shakespeare proves himself a lyrical poet and a natural poet as well as a dramatist and this success is due to the dexterous usage of the Forest of Arden.

¹ E. K. Chambers, *Shakespeare: A Survey*, New York, Hill and Wang, P. 159—160