***As You Like It***

1. i. Disorder (brother v. brother) in the de Boys family and in the Duchy; opposition between the court and the forest; these topics are introduced in the civilized wood of the de Boys orchard. [Note parallelism of de Boys and Duchy plots; note Biblical echo in strife between brothers and in Adam’s name; note the potential for court and forest to reconcile is implied by an orchard’s being a civilized wood; note that the de Boys name (French *de Bois*) means “of the woods.”]

ii. Cousins Rosalind and Celia talk of Nature and of Fortune; they watch the wrestling match; Rosalind and Orlando fall in love.

iii. The cousins talk of love; the Duke banishes Rosalind; Celia plans to accompany her cousin, Rosalind plans to disguise herself as male, and both plan to take Touchstone the fool with them.

1. i. Duke Senior is philosophical about exile; Jaques is sad about their slaying deer. [Note that Jaques may be played as a wise satirist, with whom the reader agrees, or as a melancholy cynic, with whom we don’t; his name, “jakes,” also means “outhouse” in Elizabethan English.]

ii. Duke Frederick is angry about flight of Celia and Touchstone.

iii. Adam is faithful to Orlando in opposing Oliver’s planned fratricide.

iv. Cousins and Touchstone meet Corin and Silvius, and talk with the latter.

v. Amiens and Jaques sing of life in the forest.

vi. Orlando and Adam are dying for want of food.

vii. Duke Senior is with Jaques; Orlando enters and exits; Jaques speaks of the seven ages of man; Orlando enters with Adam; Amiens sings of ingratitude. [Juxtaposition: Jaques says that an old man has nothing good, but Adam has Orlando.]

1. i. Duke Frederick is angry at Oliver because he is Orlando’s brother.

ii. Touchstone speaks with Corin; Rosalind finds verses; Celia enters with more verses and with news; Orlando speaks with Jaques; finally Orlando and the disguised Rosalind meet and agree that she will pretend to be the real Rosalind. [Since female roles were played by teenaged boys in Shakespeare’s time, we now have a boy actor playing a female character who is disguised as a male and is pretending to be a female. Thus the artifice of the casting is in effect multiplied.]

iii. Touchstone is with Audrey; they are joined first by Mar-text and then by Jaques.

iv. Rosalind and Celia await the tardy Orlando.

v. Silvius is with Phebe; they are joined by Rosalind, Celia, and Corin.

1. i. Rosalind speaks with Jaques; the tardy Orlando enters. [Note that Orlando’s one-line greeting can be read as a line of blank verse. Jaques and Rosalind have been speaking in prose. So Jaques responds to Orlando’s line with “Nay, then, God buy you, and you talk in blank verse” (“No, then, goodbye, if you’re going to talk in blank verse”), thus breaking the fourth wall.]

ii. Jaques and the lord-foresters celebrate the slain deer.

iii. Silvius takes Phebe’s letter to Rosalind; Oliver takes Orlando’s excuse to Rosalind and Celia.

1. i. Touchstone is with Audrey; they are briefly joined by William.

ii. Rosalind promises to solve all the love problems of Oliver, Orlando, and Silvius.

iii. Touchstone is with Audrey and Duke Senior’s pages.

iv. Rosalind has lovers’ compacts ratified before Duke Senior; she exits with Colin and returns, undisguised, with Celia and Hymen; the middle de Boys brother brings news of Duke Frederick’s repentance and conversion; Jaques takes his leave, after predicting some happy and some unhappy marriages for the four couples; everyone dances; Rosalind gives the epilogue. [Most commonly asked question about this play is why there is a brother between Oliver and Orlando who has no role in the play except that of messenger in the last scene. Fairy-tale and folk-tale plots frequently feature three sons, of whom the third is the one who gets the princess. That is the cause of Orlando’s being the third of three brothers. People create such stories as one result of primogeniture; when the oldest son gets everything, people will root for the youngest. Note also that Jaques must get off stage before an inclusive celebration can begin.]

More notes:

Oliver’s being angered by Orlando’s natural superiority and untaught virtues exactly parallels Duke Frederick’s fits of anger at Rosalind for her father’s innocence. When the Duke banishes Oliver, there is a kind of justice about it, for Oliver, and a kind of foreshadowing in it, for Frederick.

The philosophical thrust of the play is carried as much by contrasts, juxtapositions, and ironies of both plot and speech, as it is by individual speeches. See, for example, the sequence of Act II’s first three scenes; or the sequence of II.v-vi-vii-III.i. Pay attention to the songs, which are rarely (if ever) merely decorative airs.

Confrontations occur between wit and honesty (Touchstone v. Corin in III.ii) and between satire and love (Jaques v. Orlando in III.ii, Jaques v. Rosalind in IV.i). Note that the two defeats of Jaques (he concedes the stage and exits) lead to the two great love-scenes.

Views of love are conveyed by Rosalind-as-Ganymede to Orlando at the end of III.ii, by Touchstone to Audrey in III.iii, by undisguised Rosalind to Celia in III.iv, by Silvius to Phebe / Rosalind to Silvius and Phebe / Phebe to Silvius in III.v, and again by Rosalind-as-Ganymede to Orlando in IV.i. These give the audience a range of perspectives on the possibilities and the absurdities of love. They are followed by the killing of the deer in IV.ii and the “horning” of the huntsman, which is a reference to cuckoldry. This reference and Jaques’ comments in the closing scene about Touchstone and Audrey are glances in the direction of unhappy as well as happy endings, but they are both removed from the other three couples.

Time is an interesting motif to trace through the play: Charles’ description of Duke Senior in the Forest of Arden (I.i.107-111), Orlando on the “fashion of these times” (II.iii.56-62), Jaques, quoting Touchstone (II.vii.20-33), and Rosalind to Orlando (III.ii.285-316 and IV.i.35-45). Add in Jaques’ speech about the seven ages of man and Orlando’s “There’s no clock in the forest.”

The forest hosts a courtly outlaw society but produces rough weather for it to endure; the outlawed courtiers belong neither in a fallen court nor in an uncivilized countryside. The forest is multivalent (not to say polymorphously perverse): it contains pastoral characters and realistic country folks, it grows English oaks and tropical palms, it houses English deer and tropical lions, and it is a place where people must hunt and kill to live but need not work for a living. What is consistent is that the forest offers freedom to be natural to good people, and the villains who enter it magically and instantly reform.

In conclusion (somewhat repetitive of earlier notes), the first half of the play explores the consequences of loyalty versus ingratitude and/or envy in the family and in the state. It also begins to examine the contrasts between court and forest and between philosophical and comical attitudes to life. A useful term for the first half is “doubling”; we have two pairs of brothers, two heroines, two settings, and two court entertainers. The second half of the play pits Jaques against lovers and lovers against each other. It explores right and wrong attitudes to love by means of comparison and contrast: Celia and Oliver are doubles of Rosalind and Orlando, Touchstone and Audrey are one kind of parody, and Silvius and Phebe are another kind. A useful term for the second half is “Petrarchan”: Silvius is the model of a perfect Petrarchan lover, and Orlando comes close to the ideal when he thinks he cannot attain Rosalind. The play suggests that the proper end of love is marriage rather than poetry-writing by an unrequited lover.

In the epilogue, the elusive and illusory question of gender recurs.

My thoughts about names: Shakespeare renames his de Boys brothers Oliver and Orlando (the Italian form of Roland), thus deepening the pressure on them to be friends, as Roland and Oliver were in the Charlemagne epics and romances; Rosalind chooses Ganymede for an alias because Ganymede was an effeminate youth who was made happy by acquiring an adult male lover.

Two observations by Gardner, in Kernan: Shakespeare follows Lodge’s romance [his source] but adds characters of his own invention – Jaques, Touchstone, Audrey, and William; Touchstone is a parodist, who loves what he parodies, whereas Jaques is a cynic, superior to and aloof from what he observes.

A quotation from Gardner, in Kernan: the “discovery of truth by feigning, and of what is wisdom and what folly by debate, is the center of *As You Like It.*”