

The title of "As You Like It"

The title of the play As You Like It is very appropriate being in harmony with its tenor. It is "a playful challenge to the audience who may, in their minds, have raised objections to any of its improbabilities, to like as much of it as they like and interpret it as they like," according to Bradley. They may call it a comedy or a pastoral comedy or a romantic comedy or a pure romance.

Stopford Brooke observes, "The title strikes the chord of this beautiful, gay and graceful play. Shakespeare laughed out the title one day after reading what he had written. "Take it As You Like It, in whatever way it pleases you. Take its mirth or seriousness, its matter of thought or fancy, its grave or lively characters, its youthful love and self-conscious melancholy, take anything you like out of it. There is plenty to please all kinds of men. It is written for your pleasure. Take it for your pleasure."

Some critics think differently. They hold that the title of the play significantly refers to the carefree life lived in the forest by its principal characters: it is significant of the happy issue of events, that each character might have said to the other, "This is indeed as you like it."

However, Shakespeare seems to say, "Here is the piece: interpret it in any spirit you like."

So in the epilogue Rosalind regrets humorously that it is not "a good play", but exhorts the ladies "to like" as much of it as pleases them, and the men to imitate them. This verdict may be regarded as final.

Over and above, the title seems an echo of some words in his preface to 'Rosalynde', Addressing his 'gentlemen Readers' he wishes that they must accept his tale for what it is worth. He concludes, "If you like it, so; and yet I will be yours. . . ."

Theme of love in As You Like It

A play in the pastoral convention "As You Like It" shows us a variety of love-affairs and gently points out their ridiculous side. The play is a romance of love where love is the central theme and where love lives in many forms: in Orlando and Rosalind, Celia and Oliver, Silvius and Phebe, Touchstone and Audrey. We see also other forms of love: the love of the two girls for one another, of Adam for his master and his master for him, of Touchstone for Celia and Rosalind. Thus love is the pivot on which the action turns. It is the mainspring of the action.

Here the lovers love one another at first sight; "Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?" It is the cry of Phoebe when she sees Rosalind, and thinks she is a man. Rosalind is smitten the moment she sees Orlando, Orlando when she sees Rosalind. When Oliver and Celia meet, they 'no sooner saw one another but they loved'.

The love-play of Orlando and Rosalind is one of the gayest things in Shakespeare. It is the natural bubbling up of the fountain of happy youth into gracious gaiety of temper, into self-delighting joy. Rosalind plays with love as a kitten plays with a ball. Her love develops, does not check or dim, her humour. As to her natural intellect, it is the same with that. Love has not impaired it. It is as swift and various as summer lighting; and though strikes the point at issue. It sees into the centre of all masked conventions. It understand Jaques in a moment, though he is a man of the world and she a girl, and equal powers.

Orlando's love is of the same quality, full of gaiety even though- for he cannot find Rosalind- it be dashed with a shade of natural melancholy: amusing itself with delightful verses hung

on happy trees; ready to play with the pretty youth he is pleased to call his Rosalind; witty enough to make the talk lively, not witty enough to displease the girl; of a grave intelligence also when he pleases; able like Rosalind, to overcome Jaques with his weapons.

The love of Celia and Oliver is of a different kind, a swift natural passion, more of the senses than of the soul. Celia is temperamentally incapable of romantic love. She relies too much on her common sense and self-restraint and keeps love at a distance. It is a piece of irony that she falls in "the very wrath of love" at first sight and that with one whose nature has been for many years that of a ruffian. It stains her image.

The love of Silvius and Phoebe is the conventional love of the Elizabethan pastoral, and it may be a satire on that academic literary love. This love is as much a pleasant mockery of conventional love as a contrast with the natural love of Rosalind and Orlando. Again, Phoebe smitten with love for Ganymede illustrates the absurdity of the conventional love of the pastoral comedy. Through the interference of Rosalind, the conventional love is cured and led into the natural.

Touchstone's love and wooing of Audrey is a burlesque and a reflection of the nature of other courtships. Others fall in love at first sight with beauty, Touchstone takes a fancy to ugliness. Notice how he describes Audrey to the Duke- "A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own; a poor humour of mine, sir, to take that no man else will." This is just 'a ridicule on the state that of wedlock itself'.

Thus there is no end to the varieties of love in this play. Love is depicted here in all its richness and details.