

INTRODUCTION

Journeys

As You Like It, like most of Shakespeare's comedies, presents a world apart: a 'forest' to which the principal characters are exiled from court or country estate. The action begins in an orchard and moves to the forest or, as it is sometimes designated in the text, a 'desert'. It ends with the main characters – with the exception of Jaques, who claims to be heading for a monastic life – returning to court. Almost all of the action takes place within that shadow-land elsewhere, which, given that it is peopled with characters out of pastoral, may not satisfy romantic expectations of wilderness, and in which customary patterns of characterisation and plausibility do not obtain. In this world at the fringe of civilisation there is courtliness, hospitality, and cure, whereas in what we might have expected to be the serenity of Oliver's country estate we witness violence and seeming injustice. For the characters who have escaped from the court, the forest is a place imaginatively familiar and also a metonym for values, particularly those allied with Nature; for those that live there, it has material associations with property and with work.¹ But, somehow, in that slightly anarchic – and very literary – realm of fancy, love blooms: not only, and as we should expect, between heroine and hero as atonement for persecution, but also between familiars (Orlando and Adam), between strangers (Oliver and Celia), between the scornful Phoebe and the poetical Silvius (eventually), and between the cynical Touchstone and the trusting Audrey (probably).² In some ways *As You Like It* demands to be apprehended as something 'light, and bright, and sparkling',³ a play to breed both delight and laughter. Its romantic assertions are displaced by a fool, enhanced by song, dance, and spectacle, and laced by the subversive irony and eloquence of Rosalind, who alternately revels in and then repudiates the games of love. For Orlando the forest is a place in which he serves an apprenticeship in honour and explores the impulses and idiocies of love-prate.

This good play of courtship, therefore, may need no prologue. However, as Ben Jonson remarked, comedy can be no laughing matter (see below, p. 44): the play interrogates matters of gender, rank, and the social order, and we might even – given the ways in which it brings some characters near death, eschews punishment in its resolution, is written in a mixture of styles, and is resolved in part by a

¹ For the history of 'soft' and 'hard' versions of primitivism see Erwin Panofsky, 'Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the elegiac tradition', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1970, pp. 340–67; for the contrasts between city and country in Renaissance romance see Walter R. Davis, 'Masking in Arden: the histrionics of Lodge's *Rosalynde*', *SEL* 5 (1965), 151–63; for an analysis of recent design choices for courts and Arden at Stratford-upon-Avon, see Smallwood, pp. 19–71.

² See Fiona Shaw in Carol Rutter *et al.*, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today*, 1988, pp. 97–8.

³ A phrase Jane Austen applied to *Pride and Prejudice* in a letter to her sister of 4 February 1813.

god – want to consider aspects of it as pertaining not just to comedy but to tragedy, a genre newly fashionable in the 1590s.¹ Some modern directors have chosen to mark these departures from the pursuit of happiness by using sombre stage settings or by demonstrating that the play's humour depends upon its men and women having to play many parts that attend upon hierarchies of rank and gender.

'Forest' in Elizabethan times was a legal term as well as being a topographical description or a site licensed for the sports of love: the word designated a domain preserved for the noble sport of hunting.² Moreover, such forests were not necessarily expanses of woodland but could include pasture, as well as sparsely inhabited tilled and untilled terrain – England in Shakespeare's time was, in fact, not much more forested than it is now.³ In literature, however, woods and forests were ubiquitous, figuring not just as settings for romantic sentiment, for endurance, and to house glamorous bandits like Robin Hood, but also as sites where contradictions of the primitive converged. Forests challenged economic and cultural expansion and also kindled nostalgia for civilisation's origins in a lost golden world.⁴ The 'forest' in *As You Like It* turns out to contain tracts that are both 'desert' and given over to husbandry: one meaning for the play's riddling title may have to do with the imagining of topography and landscape – or even of 'reality'. For some in the play, the forest enables the exploration of escapist fantasies and alternative gender roles within a world of 'if' (see 5.4.84–8); for others, it is a place for the enduring of social inequalities and the briars of the 'working-day world' (1.3.9).

The mixed economies of this poetic terrain make the text's images of nature immediately complex: the 'natural' has much more to do with contesting patterns of culture in Elizabethan England than with geographic difference or with the

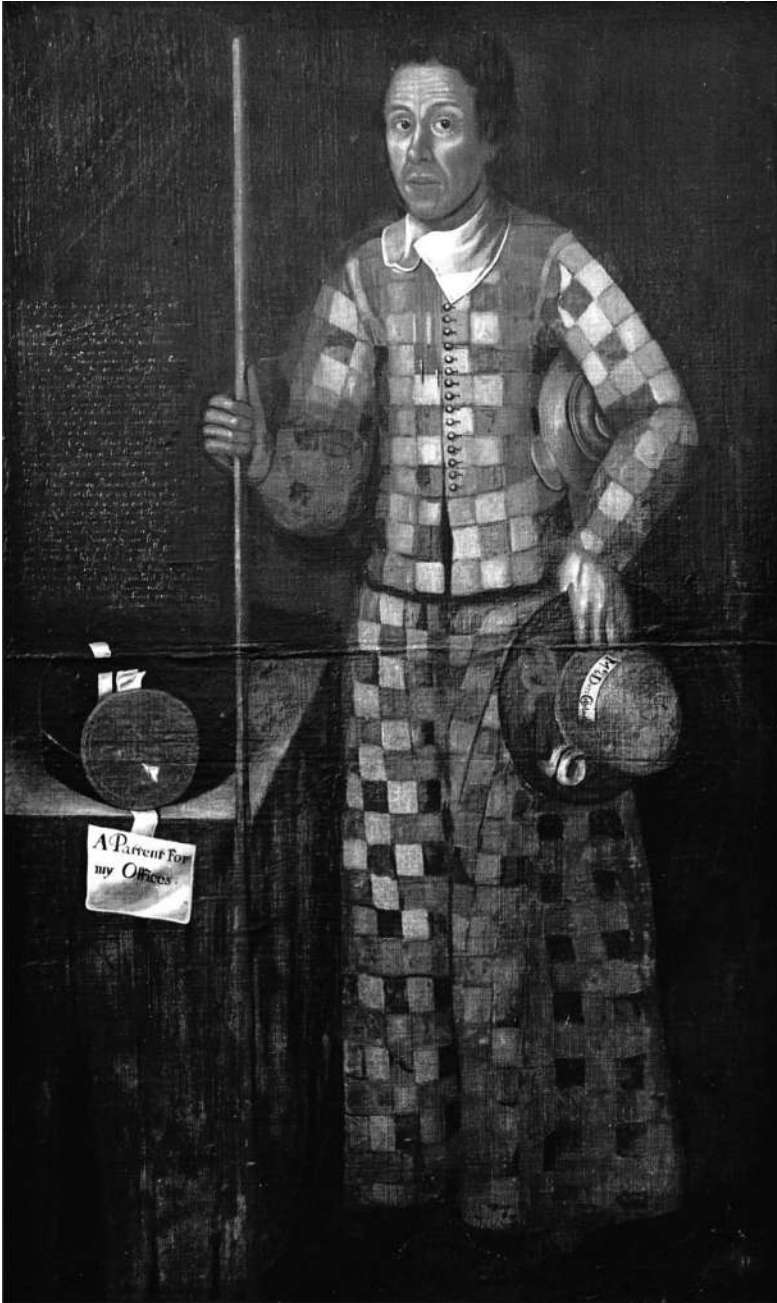
¹ 'A tragi-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy ... so that a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy, and mean people as in a comedy' (John Fletcher, Epistle to *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608?), Fredson Bowers (ed.), *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, 1976, III, 497). Fletcher, like Jonson, was much influenced by Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1590) and *Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* (1590 and 1593). Part of the latter is reprinted in Michael J. Sidnell (ed.), *Sources of Dramatic Theory*, 1991. Guarini also uses pastoral in his play and writes about it in the *Compendium*. For the effect on Jonson, Fletcher, and the later Shakespeare, see Arthur C. Kirsch, *Jacobean Dramatic Perspectives*, 1972; see also Lee Bliss, 'Pastiche, burlesque, tragi-comedy', in A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, 2003, pp. 228–53.

² 'A forest is certain territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, privileged for wild beasts and fowls of forest, chase, and warren, to rest and abide in, in the safe protection of the king, for his princely delight and pleasure' (John Manwood, *A Treatise ... of the Laws of the Forest* (1598 edn), f. 1); there is a commentary upon this work in Richard Marienstras, *Le Proche et le lointain*, 1981, and in Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation*, 1992, pp. 70–5. A. Stuart Daley notes that twelve out of the sixteen 'forest' scenes in the play take place on a farm ('Where are the woods in *As You Like It*?', *SQ* 34 (1983), 172–80).

³ So Michael Drayton writing of Warwickshire: '... of our forests' kind the quality to tell, / We equally partake with woodland as with plain / Alike with hill and dale; and every day maintain / The sundry kinds of beasts upon our copious wastes / That men for profit breed, as well as those of chase' (*Polyolbion*, XIII, 34–8, in Drayton, IV, 276); compare Oliver Rackham, *Trees and Woodlands in the British Landscape*, 1996, pp. 76–86.

⁴ See John Hale, 'The taming of Nature', *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, 1994, pp. 509–83; compare *Aeneid*, VIII, 415–29; *Metamorphoses*, I, 103–28; Harrison, *Forests*, *passim*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83897-9 — As You Like It
William Shakespeare, Edited by Michael Hattaway
Excerpt
[More Information](#)



1 The jester Tom Skelton: see Eric Ives, 'Tom Skelton: a seventeenth-century jester', *S.Sur.* 13 (1960), 90–105; for Touchstone's costume, see Wiles, pp. 186–7

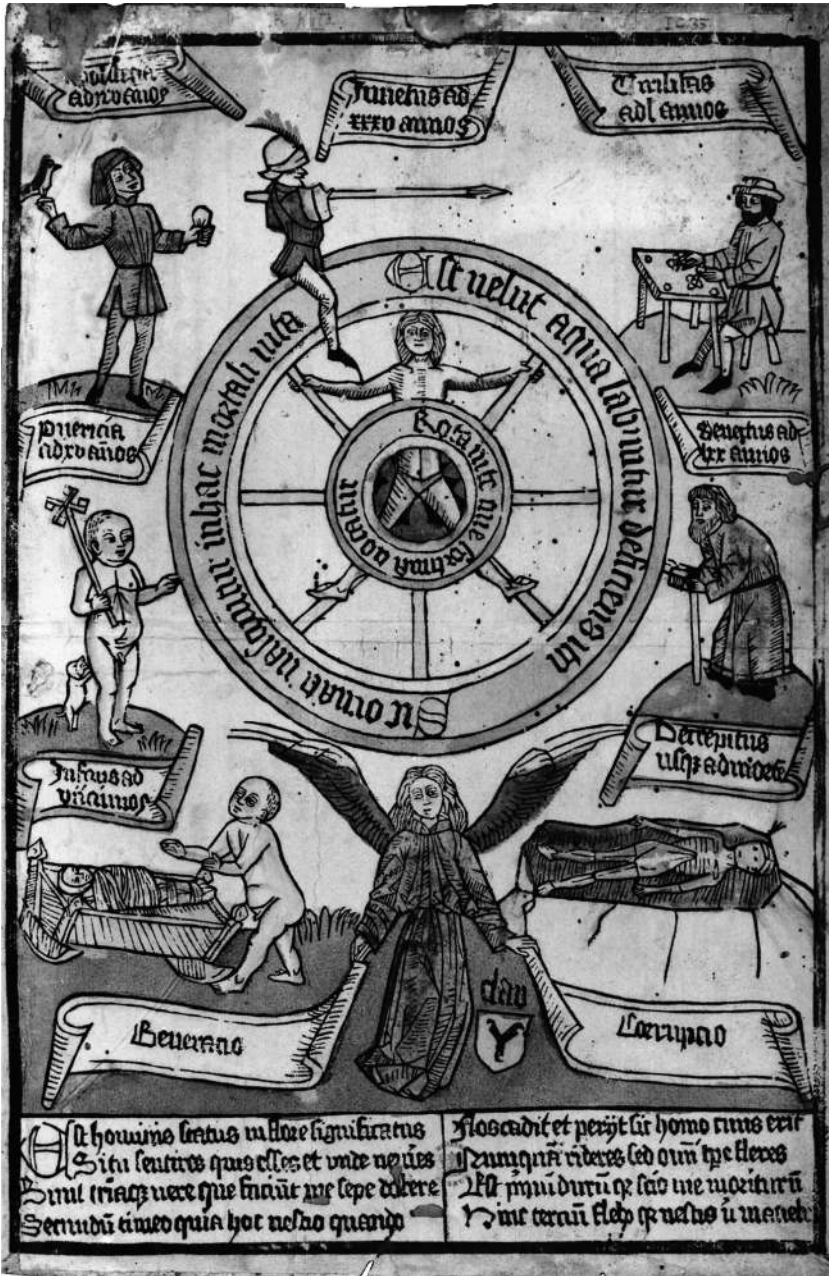
actualities of contemporary behaviour. Ideas of nature in the play define those ideological concepts of the natural which contemporaries used in order to fix identity and legitimate the social and political order – the natural, when not associated with ‘great creating Nature’ (*WT* 4.4.88), generally designates what one social or political group takes to be the normative or, antithetically, the primitive and authentic.¹ As well as generating fun for the audience as the characters overcome difficulties, social and psychological, the play raises questions of authenticity and value that turn upon encounters with the ‘other’. Court impinges upon country, feminine encounters masculine, youth joins with age (old Adam). The elite mix with shepherds (Corin, Silvius, and Phoebe), with a rustic ‘clown’ and his lass (William and Audrey), and with a fool (Touchstone), to all of whom the designation ‘natural’ might apply.² Some, notably Celia and Rosalind, discover their ‘other’ selves: *Aliena* means ‘other’, and ‘Ganymede’ was the name of Jupiter’s male lover, associated since antiquity with homo-eroticism (see below, pp. 39–41). And built into the language of the play is a series of oppositions: winter against spring, Nature against Fortune (see Plate 2), pastoral fantasies against rural realities, Christian orthodoxy against classical humanism (see Plates 3 and 4) and the white magic of Rosalind (3.3.228–9, 5.2.47–9), oppositions that can be dissolved into paradox as when Rosalind exclaims, ‘the wiser, the waywarder’ (4.1.129–30), or as when Touchstone is reported to lament, ‘And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe, And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot’ (2.7.26–7). From the outset, therefore, we realise that there can be no monolithic meaning in the text; we find rather a set of paradoxes and contradictions that can be turned into a multitude of coexistent interpretations. The first task for both directors and readers is to decide upon their forms for this ‘forest’, because the perspectives established upon these will, in part, create their particular webs of meaning for the play.

Nineteenth-century productions of *As You Like It* offered romanticised settings using the conventions of the realist stage,³ and certain screen versions have been shot on location (see below, pp. 74–6): these demonstrate the difficulties of fixing the constitution of the forest, a place which is obviously neither normal nor ‘real’ but a field of play for disguise-games, charades, hunting pageants, and revelry. It is not possible to reproduce or even map the ‘worlds’ conceived for the non-illusionistic stages of the Elizabethan period: court and country estate, arable unenclosed ‘champion’ on the one hand and forest and enclosed pasture on the other, the material boundaries of farms and the symbolic margins of dukedoms, are all inscribed upon one another. The effect is that the court characters migrate not from one location to another, but from one mode of theatrical representation to another: the ‘pastoral’ mode of the ‘forest’ represents a condition – or state of mind – rather than a place. There Orlando can play the role of the Petrarchan lover, and Rosalind, within the

¹ See 1.1.13, 4.3.119; see in this respect the account of Jonson’s ‘To Penshurst’ in Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, 1973, pp. 27–34.

² See 1.2.41–2, 3.3.17 and *OED* *Natural*, *sb* 2; for these characters at Stratford from 1952 to 2000, see Smallwood, pp. 167–88.

³ See Plate 9, p. 61.



2 'The Wheel of Life which is called Fortune', a block-print of about 1460 (British Library, I.C. 35); compare R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 1964, plates 58 and 79. Figures depict the Seven Ages of Man (see 2.7.139–66)



3 Hymen, who is crowned with flowers and who carries a torch and a marriage veil, from Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Immagini dei Dei degli Antichi* (1580), p. 189

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-83897-9 — As You Like It
William Shakespeare, Edited by Michael Hattaway
Excerpt
[More Information](#)



4 John de Critz (attributed), Lucy Harrington Countess of Bedford attired for Ben Jonson's masque *Hymenaei* (1606); see W. Friedländer, 'Hymenaea', *De Artibus Opuscula* 40 (1961), 153–6

guise of a witty adolescent male, can explore roles that might be open to women.¹ *Space* in the playhouse does not have to be configured to represent *places* named in the text: Elizabethan scenic devices were used as much to establish genre as location – the ‘two mossy banks’ found in the list of properties owned by the theatrical impresario Philip Henslowe presumably signalled to their audiences ‘pastoral’ rather than ‘woodland’, as did costumes and properties such as the grey or white cloaks, sheep-hook, scrip (bag), and bottle that the attendant shepherds may have borne.²

Because Shakespeare’s texts were not written for playhouses that attempted scenic verisimilitude it has proved difficult for his poetic topographies to be translated into modern theatrical landscapes for audiences who are likely to relish spectacle and who often still expect elements of realism to compose that spectacle – as Jonathan Miller remarked, ‘It is invariably true that nature looks atrocious on stage.’³ If a modern director decides to represent the forest in *As You Like It* by the use of trees, these had best be stylised to signal the artificiality of the setting. In those modern productions that do eschew theatrical realism it is common for audiences to collude delightedly with a Rosalind who, appearing on a stage with not a leaf in sight, proclaims, ‘Well, this is the Forest of Arden’ (2.4.11).⁴ Moreover, with its allegiances to utopias and lost golden ages of innocence and justice, pastoral occupies not just a special place but a special time, what Mikhail Bakhtin termed a ‘chronotope’.⁵ Time in this forest without a clock, where ‘some kind of social space replaces a physical landscape’, and where no explanations are needed for encounters between characters,⁶ is a measure for play rather than for work, delineates time as it is imagined and remembered rather than as it is calibrated in a regulated society.

Yet if the theatrical location was geographically alien, Elizabethan players appropriated the narrative from its mythical past by using the costumes of the present – gentlemen, it is reported, sometimes willed their finest clothes to their servants

¹ For Orlando and Rosalind at Stratford from 1952 to 2000, see Smallwood, pp. 99–134.

² Henslowe, p. 320; Henslowe lists ‘two white shepherds’ coats’ (p. 317); for the grey cloaks see the Epistle to Fletcher’s *The Faithful Shepherdess*, p. 497; for the staff and bottle, see *Orlando Furioso*, 561, in Greene, XIII, 141; see also Martha Ronk, ‘Locating the visual in *As You Like It*’, *SQ* 52 (2001), 255–76.

³ Jonathan Miller, *Subsequent Performances*, 1986, p. 82; for Giambattista Vico’s notion of ‘poetic geography’, see John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, 1994, pp. 4–7. ‘Ancient Britain’ has always been a problem for modern directors of *King Lear*, a play that uncannily remembers aspects of *As You Like It*: see Helen Gardner, ‘*As You Like It*’, in J. Garrett (ed.), *More Talking of Shakespeare*, 1959, pp. 17–32.

⁴ Werner Habicht, ‘Tree properties and tree scenes in Elizabethan theater’, *Ren. Drama* n.s. 4 (1971), 69–92; in 1985 Bob Crowley at Stratford-upon-Avon successfully made Arden a looking-glass world by the use of mirrors, through one of which Jaques stepped back at the end of the play (see Smallwood, pp. 34–5).

⁵ Arden is equivalent to the first kind of chronotope in ancient novels, ‘adventure time’: see M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 1981, pp. 86–110; see also Bart Westerweel, ‘The dialogic imagination: the European discovery of time and Shakespeare’s mature comedies’, in Jean R. Brink and William F. Gentrup (eds.), *Renaissance Culture*, 1993, pp. 54–74; Maurice Hunt, ‘*Kairos* and the ripeness of time in *As You Like It*’, *MLQ* 52 (1991), 113–35; Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales, 1300–1800*, 2009.

⁶ Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 1984, p. 282.

who then sold them to the players.¹ This meant that the action was not *historically* remote, and that witty interplay between the imaginative and the real allowed for both topical reference and the re-definition of social and cultural issues.²

The codes of theatrical representation are complicated by problems of reading and naming: should we designate the forest ‘Arden’ or ‘Ardennes’? ‘Arden’ is a name that not only signifies a ‘real’ local habitation in Shakespeare’s Warwickshire but also alludes to the *topos* of the ‘greenwood’ that was venerated in idylls and in ballads and romanticised settings for Robin Hood and his outlaws,³ echoes of which sound throughout the text. *La Forêt des Ardennes* is a location with a geographical identity on the border between modern France and Belgium, but was similarly mythologised in prose romance: ‘Nowe our Marriners Pilgrimes... discouered Calleis [Calais] where, hauing taken land, they determined to finishe the voyage on Horsebacke... Thus the Princes... approched the Countrey of Arden [*sic*]... and there... they founde the famous fountaynes, whiche, will they, nill they, inuite the passengers to drinke, engendryng in them the one loue, and the other hate.’⁴ Oliver says of Orlando, ‘it is the stubbornest young fellow of France’ (1.1.111–12), and Robin Hood is referred to as ‘the old Robin Hood of England’ (1.1.93–4): these would suggest a setting in France.⁵ However, accommodating as it does lions and olive-trees, Arden possesses the conventional attributes of the *locus amoenus*

¹ Hattaway, p. 86.

² Juliet Dusinberre, ‘As *who* liked it?’, *S.Sur.* 46 (1994), 9–22, argues subtly that the play’s ‘fictions of sexuality... draw some of their vitality from the complex relationship between [Sir John] Harington and the Queen’; she also cites older authorities who directly linked Jaques with Harington (p. 12 n. 19); for the possibility that Jaques is based on John Marston, see *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport, 1961, p. 27.

³ See, for example, ‘Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne’ in Thomas Percy (ed.), *Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 2 vols., Everyman, n.d. 1, 115–24; *Polyolbion*, xxvi, 286–359, in Drayton, iv, 528–30.

⁴ Henry Wotton, *A Courtly Controversy of Cupid’s Cautels* [Tricks] (1578), p. 224.

⁵ If we decide that ‘Arden’ is English, then it is the only comedy – apart from *Wiv.* – ‘set’ in England. Joseph Hunter insisted upon a French setting (*New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 1845, 1, 332, and a similar case is argued by Stanley Wells, *Re-Editing Shakespeare for the Modern Reader*, 1984, pp. 28–30). Details of the setting are obviously conventional: there is a palm-tree (compare 3.3.146) to be seen in a print of about 1569 by Étienne Delaune, which foregrounds a shepherd with bagpipes and a goatherdess with a distaff (British Library, Reg. 1834, 0804.197). Shakespeare also often uses ‘Monsieur’ in place of ‘Master’, especially for Le Beau and Jaques. In Harington’s translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* there are two magical fountains of love and hate in ‘Ardenna’ (i.78); Spenser refers to ‘that same water of Ardenne, / The which *Rinaldo* drunck in happie howre’ (*FQ*, 4.3.45), and to ‘famous Ardeyn’ in ‘Astrophel’ (line 96), his lament for Sir Philip Sidney published in *Colin Clout’s Come Home Again* (1595). A couplet in a poem attributed to Michael Drayton, ‘Dowsabell’, would indicate that Arden and ‘Ardenne’ were pronounced identically: ‘Farre in the countrey of Arden / There won’d a knight, hight Cassamen’ (Percy’s *Reliques*, 1, 261); A. Stuart Daley, ‘Observations on the natural settings and flora of the Ardens of Lodge and Shakespeare’, *ELN* 22.3 (1985), 20–9, notes that in Henry Roberts’ *Haigh for Devonshire* (1600) there is a forest of ‘Arden’ to the north-east of Bordeaux in Périgord. In the text of *AYLI* the word occurs only once in a verse line (1.3.97), but, unfortunately, in a passage of very free rhythm where scansion does not provide evidence for stress. At 2.4.12 Touchstone’s pun suggests the word was stressed on the second syllable. A succinct counter-argument for reading ‘Arden’ is given by Fiona Carlyon: ‘In political terms... this play was promoting the conception that a foreign court was full of injustice and cruelty, where love or desire could not flourish, whilst England, as represented by the forest of Arden, was where injustices were righted, love and desire were fulfilled’ (‘The significance of homosexuality in Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward IP*’, unpublished MA dissertation, University of York, 1997, p. 15).

As You Like It

10

of classical Arcadias and the exotic worlds of Renaissance romance. This latter milieu is the kind of romance forest (also nominally in France) that we find in the play's source, Thomas Lodge's prose romance *Rosalind* (1590), as well as being the kind of location evoked in the anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock* (1604–6).¹ In that text's 'anticke' or masque the goddess Cynthia arrives and proclaims:

From the cleere orbe of our Etheryall Sphere
 Bright *Cynthia* comes to hunt & revell heere.
 The groves of Callidon and Arden woods
 Of untamd monsters, wild & savadge heards,
 We & our knights have freed...²

In Spenser's pastoral works, there is often an exotic setting peopled with characters with 'English' names.

It could also be that Shakespeare was thinking etymologically, in that contemporaries associated the word 'Arden' with generic or mythological labels for woodland. The Warwickshire Arden is celebrated in Drayton's *Polyolbion*, XIII, but the author notes that 'the relics of [Arden] in Dene of Monmouthshire and that *Arduenna* or *La Forest d'Ardenne* by [near] Henault and Luxembourg shows likelihood of interpretation of the yet used English name of woodland'.³ This is partly reinforced by a meaning offered by the *OED* for the component of many English and Scottish place names, 'dean' or 'dene': 'now, usually, the deep, narrow, and wooded vale of a rivulet'.⁴ William Camden writes of Warwickshire being divided into the 'Feldon [champion or open ground] and the Woodland', and of the latter says 'it is at this day called Woodland, so also it was in old time known by a more ancient name Arden: but of the selfsame sense and signification... For it seemeth that Arden among the ancient Britons and Gauls signified a wood, considering that we see a very great wood in France named Arden [*sic*]'.⁵ Since the inset world of *As You Like It* is, like Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, a 'no place' – the literal meaning of 'utopia' – it seems likely that Shakespeare wittily linked both English and French references to this quasi-allegorical place and, riddlingly, gave us a Jaques as well as a Jacques, an Oliver Martext as well as an Oliver de Boys. Shakespeare's Arden is both an Arcadian sylvan landscape and a location for working arable and pastoral farms, a place for Hymen, the classical god of wedding, and for 'English' rustics like Audrey and William, as well as the hedge-priest Sir Oliver Martext, who is there to remind the audience obliquely of the forms of Christian marriage. Lyly's pastoral drama *Gallathea* (1585) contains a similar mix of characters from Virgilian pastoral and the 'English countryside'. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing* name Greece and Sicily for their settings while nevertheless containing English 'mechanicals' and cultural allusions. The setting of

¹ For the date, see Macd. P. Jackson, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II* and the anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001), 17–65.

² 4.2.2096–2100, reprinted in Bullough, III, 483; see also Curtius, pp. 183 ff.

³ Drayton, *Works*, IV, 286.

⁴ *OED* Dean² b.

⁵ William Camden, *Britain*, trans. Philemon Holland (1610), pp. 562, 565. The equivalent passage is on pp. 316–17 of the first edition (William Camden, *Britannia sive... Chorographica Descriptio* (1586)).