

THE GUILD
Shakespeare



THE GUILD

Shakespeare

AS YOU LIKE IT
TWELFTH NIGHT,
OR
WHAT YOU WILL

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY
JOHN F. ANDREWS

Forewords by
Michael Kahn and Alec Mc Cowen

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FOREWORD

to

AS YOU LIKE IT

by Michael Kahn



As You Like It is one of Shakespeare's most sweetly deceptive plays. Its effortless comedy and accessible romantic appeal often cause it to be regarded and produced as the playwright's concession to popular taste. But remove this preconception, and an examination of the text reveals Shakespeare brilliantly using this popular form to explore the themes that inform all his major work: life, honor, the nature and regenerative power of love,

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illusion and reality, the breakdown of the natural order and its restoration, and, indeed, the very Nature of Man.

The play begins in a world informed by usurpation and loss; a world where children are fatherless and brothers are at war; a world where the only goal is power and where the only punishable crime is to be good and "enchantingly beloved." Orlando, nobly born but deprived of his inheritance and education, and Rosalind, educated but female and powerless, are, as a result of the innate goodness of their natures, forced to flee and take refuge in the Forest of Arden.

But contrary to the pastoral convention, this Arden is not an idyllic fantasy. It is a very real place where the "Icy Fang and Churlish Chiding of the Winter's Wind" chill the bones and remind its inhabitants of the precarious frailty of man and suggest the hard lesson that "Sweet are the Uses of Adversity." Described most often by its new inhabitants as a "desert," it becomes a testing ground for previously accepted values as the social codes and set roles of a dangerous and superficial world are examined and transformed.

Rosalind changes her banishment into liberty by assuming male disguise. With the freedom to approach Orlando as an equal, she provides his education and discovers her power. Proposing to cure Orlando of love, she submits him to self-analysis. Intending to test his ardor, she witnesses his anguish. But in the process she does not spare herself. The young woman who early in the play considered the act of falling in love a sport, now uncovers and rejects all the superficial and socially acceptable feminine responses to the emotion and finds that love is so deep

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it cannot be sounded—but like man himself it must be stripped of all false notions to allow it to mature and endure.

As Touchstone learns the essential nature of honor and behavior, as Jaques moves from an easy cynicism to understanding, as Oliver accepts the depth of brotherhood, as the banished Duke discovers his true power in the acceptance of himself as a fallible man, the communal values emerging from shared hardship are absorbed by all.

And as the characters emerge from their winter of discontent and trial into the spring of renewal and reconciliation, these newly acquired values are restored to the temporal world and we see that Shakespeare might well have entitled this wise and moving comedy, "As It Really Is."

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FOREWORD

to

TWELFTH NIGHT

by Alec Mc Cowen



So many memories of Twelfth Night . . .

At the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, aged sixteen, being cast as an unlikely Sir Toby, and my pride in my first stage-belch before saying "A plague o' these pickle-herring!" At school I had never dreamed that I would be asked to display this talent. Belching for a living? An actor's life for me!

The first time I saw *Twelfth Night*, in 1946 at the Birmingham Rep when I was twenty-one. I still remember leaving the old theatre under a spell of enchantment—convinced that I had dis-

ALEC MC COWEN, one of Britain's leading actors, made his New York stage debut in the role of the Messenger in *Antony and Cleopatra*. His wide-ranging Shakespearean roles include Hamlet, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, the Fool in *King Lear*, and Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors*, in which he toured Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Among his diverse acting credits are the title role in *Hadrian VII*, Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion*, and Martin Dysart in *Equus*.

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covered a masterpiece single-handed, and that nobody else had ever realised its magic.

When I was about twenty-four, being asked at short notice and with no rehearsal to play the Second Officer, who has to come on and say "Antonio, I arrest thee at the suit of Count Orsino." When I entered, I realised I didn't know which actor was playing Antonio and whispered to a fellow Officer for information. In this same production there was no time for a costume fitting, and the crotch of my tights was embarrassingly level with my knees. Luckily this was a single performance at the Battersea Town Hall or it might have halted my career.

The thrill of being cast as Malvolio in a lovely production at the Old Vic in 1960. In order to imagine and duplicate the Steward's passion for his Mistress, I pretended to myself that Olivia was actually Vivien Leigh, with whom I personally had been besotted for years. Then one night Vivien Leigh came backstage to congratulate me—and I was too tongue-tied to confess that she had been my inspiration.

Playing Malvolio again in the BBC Television Shakespeare series, and watching Fabian emerge as a leading character under the skill of the young Robert Lindsay.

But perhaps best of all is my memory of a recital of Shakespeare pieces given by a group of us when we were on tour in Russia with the Royal Shakespeare Company. We were invited to an Old Actor's Home, which was located in a grand palace in Leningrad. I was to open the recital with Malvolio's famous letter speech. The old actors were in their seats and an interpreter came on to explain the plot to them. Suddenly I heard indignant shouting. "What's happening?" I asked a Russian guide; "it

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sounds like a riot!" He said, "They are shouting 'We know! We know! We know the plot of *Twelfth Night*! Don't tell us! We know! Get on with it!'" They were a wonderful audience, and I got my laughs.

Twelfth Night is a deceptively simple play. It reads, and can be performed, without effort. And yet Shakespeare has created an entire world of madness, and an entirely original cast of beguiling characters. It is a comedy; but the comedy will only work against the background of the cruelty and danger in the play.

Feste is desperate to keep his position as Clown. Maria is quietly desperate in her love of Sir Toby. Sir Andrew is gulled and robbed. Orsino, Viola, Olivia, and Antonio are sickeningly in love. And the treatment of Malvolio is monstrously cruel. But at the end of it all, we have visited an enchanted world—a world we somehow recognise, a world that is forever lodged in our dreams.

And as well as all the wonderful poetry within the play, the heart-catching lyricism, there is the best retort to all the killjoys and puritans: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

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Editor's Introduction to

AS YOU LIKE IT

and

TWELFTH NIGHT



As You Like It and *Twelfth Night* are often referred to as “festive” comedies, and there can be no doubt that they are among the happiest of Shakespeare’s dramatic accomplishments.

Both works are products of the poet’s prime. The date normally assigned to *As You Like It* is late 1599, when the playwright was thirty-five; the date usually given for *Twelfth Night* is late 1601, roughly two years later. Both works show the author experimenting with a genre in which he had already demonstrated unprecedented mastery. *As You Like It* introduces two character types, the court jester and the melancholic malcontent, who would move on to roles in Shakespeare’s major tragedies; *Twelfth Night* features “Chance” and an aura of mystery that foreshadows the tragicomic romances with which the dramatist would round out his career in the decade to come. Both works focus on how men and women think, and what they do to attain the things they most desire. The earlier comedy is a meditation on the way to

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achieve a state that is “as you like it”; as its subtitle reminds us, the later play is an interrogation of “what you will.” Both works invite the audience to ponder the problematic relationships between the “real” worlds they reflect and the “play” worlds they conjure into the magic circle, the “Wooden O,” in which they were first performed. In both comedies this exploration centers on various senses of “real” and “play” characters, and “real” and “play” acting, and in the final analysis it forces us to consider the elusiveness of such concepts as Nature and Art, Fate and Freedom, Will and Wit, Folly and Wisdom, and Madness and Sanity.

As You Like It derives much of its plot, and a hint of its title, from a prose romance by Shakespeare’s contemporary, Thomas Lodge. In the preface to *Rosalynde, or Euphues’ Golden Legacy* (1590), Lodge tells his readers “If you like it, so.” At least one reader did, and he drew on *Rosalynde* for many of the characters and situations he dramatized in *As You Like It*. What we find if we set the play and its source side by side, however, is that, as usual, Shakespeare’s modifications are at least as significant as his borrowings.

In Lodge, for example, the situation that opens the story is grimmer than the one we encounter in Shakespeare’s play. There the firstborn who corresponds to Oliver has subverted his father’s will to cheat his youngest brother out of an inheritance that was intended to be even larger than the oldest brother’s own. In Lodge, rather than merely authorize the Duke’s wrestler to encounter an Orlando who has rashly challenged him, the oldest brother incites the challenge and secretly bribes the wrestler to show no mercy. In Lodge the match itself is preceded by preliminary bouts in which the wrestler kills rather than maims his oppo-

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nents. And in Lodge the brother who corresponds to Orlando slays rather than stuns a brutal grappler who has none of the redeeming qualities we see in *As You Like It*’s Charles the Wrestler.

What Shakespeare does is soften the harsh edges of the story he found in his source. His Oliver may seem just as mean-spirited as the oldest brother in Lodge’s narrative, but in fact Oliver’s malice is prompted, not by greed or by an understandable sense of injustice, but by an irrational “humour”: an obsession with his youngest brother’s innate goodness and favor. Meanwhile the youngest brother in Shakespeare’s play has less reason to blame all his troubles on the firstborn, since Orlando’s deprived condition has at least as much to do with society’s laws of primogeniture as with Oliver’s denial of the little that Orlando is entitled to receive as the youngest of three sons. As a consequence of the changes Shakespeare made, the encounters between the two brothers in *As You Like It* are less violent than the ones to be found either in Lodge or in Lodge’s own source, a fourteenth-century *Tale of Gamelyn* in which the youngest brother becomes a Robin Hood-style outlaw and eventually sees his wicked brother hanged.

And what is true of the Oliver and Orlando story is also true of the playwright’s treatment of the two Dukes. Shakespeare augments his source by making them brothers. To reinforce the parallel with Oliver, moreover, he portrays the usurping Frederick as a “humourous” ruler, susceptible to repentance and conversion, rather than as a man so reprobate and tyrannous that he must finally be slain in battle. The net result of these and other alterations is to render *As You Like It* less realistic and more allegorical in its major plot lines than *Rosalynde*. Rather than attempt-

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ing to "motivate" either the humours or the sudden conversions of the "bad" brothers, Shakespeare simply presents them as aspects of a world in which "Strange Events" will have their way.

But if much of what happens in *As You Like It* would seem too improbable to believe in an ordinary setting, Shakespeare persuades us to accept it by transporting us almost immediately from a familiar, constraining environment at Court to a Forest of Arden in which virtually anything becomes possible. Commentators sometimes speak of Arden as a benign, garden-like expanse with affinities to the Eden of Biblical lore and the Golden Age of classical antiquity. That is how it is depicted in the play's first reference to a "Golden World" where men "fleet the Time carelessly" without concern for the malice and injustice of Duke Frederick's Court. Once everyone gets to Arden, however, even such characters as Old Adam find it to be something quite different from the land of ease and plenty celebrated in myth and romanticized in pastoral poetry. To be sure, this Forest has its literate shepherds and shepherdesses, its Silviuses and Phebes; but it also has its crude and inarticulate rustics, its Audreys and Williams. Shakespeare's Arden may provide a home for benevolent Corins, but the playwright reminds us that it also has its share of stingy masters, like the churlish landowner who has decided to sell Corin's sheepcote. And far from providing unlimited abundance and perpetual spring, the Forest we encounter in *As You Like It* appears instead to be a "desert" place (largely uninhabited and uncultivated) where food is hard to come by. In short, Shakespeare's Arden is a locale with the usual allotment of "Wind and Rough Weather." And though the life it offers may be "Sweet" for Duke Senior and his band of loyal Lords, its bless-

ings are reserved for those who have learned to "translate the Stubbornness of Fortune" into a "Style" that enables them to appreciate "the Uses of Adversity."

For two of the Court characters this proves difficult. The melancholy Jaques complains that the banished Duke has merely usurped the Forest from its "native Burghers," the poor deer whose "round Haunches" must be "gor'd" to support a Court in exile. Meanwhile the witty Touchstone says "now am I in Arden, the more Fool I. When I was at home, I was in a better place." Despite the poses with which they satirize the sentiments of others, though, both Jaques and Touchstone accommodate themselves to their new situation. Touchstone presses in "amongst the rest of the Country Copulatives" in the wedding feast that concludes the play, and Jaques eventually decides that rather than "dancing" back to Court, he will join the "Convertites" on "the Skirts of this wild Wood."

For the remainder, Arden proves to be a restorative retreat. Here a young Orlando who "cannot speak" to his Rosalind at Court finds "Tongues in Trees" and counsel from a disguised "Ganymed" who prepares him for marriage by warning him of the worst that may befall him if he persists in his romantic pursuit. Here an Oliver hell-bent on becoming another Cain discovers what it really means to be a brother's keeper. Here a Celia who is prepared to return her inheritance to the cousin from whom it has been usurped is rewarded with marriage to one of the dukedom's foremost gentlemen. And here a Rosalind who enters with nothing but her wit and resourcefulness emerges as the presiding genius over a sylvan realm that she alone sees steadily and as a whole.

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will," it would appear that a prerequisite of that triumph is the subjection of a character whose name embodies "bad will." At one point Malvolio's detractors describe the officious Steward as a "Puritan." In that epithet Elizabethan audiences would have recognized not one but a legion of adversaries. Not only did the Puritans oppose all "Cakes and Ale"; many of them harbored an even greater antipathy to the theatre, to sports such as bearbaiting, and to any form of idleness or play. What happens to Malvolio amounts, in effect, to an exorcism, and one that suits a full range of puritanical attitudes.

First Malvolio the unruly enemy of misrule is "tickled" into donning the very "mask" he claims to despise, that of a jovial merry-maker. In the process Malvolio the enemy of folly is gulled into displaying himself as an unwitting fool before the audience (Olivia) he most wants to impress with his judgment and sobriety. Then Malvolio the "madman" is made the central figure in a "play" in which a mock-Puritan "Curate" attempts to free the Steward of the demonic spirit that "Sir Topas" assumes to be possessing him. And finally, when he is exposed to public scorn upon his release from the lunatic's "Dark Room," Malvolio the victim is forced to endure what he can only regard as the vicious baiting of a "whole pack" of dogs. Not surprisingly, he exits vowing revenge.

Steve Martin once quipped that "Comedy isn't pretty," and what happens to Malvolio is so excruciating that many have preferred to think of it, not as a comedy, but as a quasi-tragedy. At the very least, the discomfiture of Olivia's Steward seems to many to mitigate the spirit of "good will" that *Twelfth Night* is supposedly designed to celebrate. Before we conclude that Malvolio's

punishment spoils the party, however, we should note, first, that the Steward's own "Humour of State" is what prompts "the Whirligig of Time" to plague him with what the Greeks would call Nemesis, and, second, that after being entreated "to a Peace," he may in the fullness of "Golden Time" forgive and be restored to his proper place in the reconstituted household of his Lady. If so, he will have been constrained to acquire some much-needed self-knowledge, and any improvement in mental health that results will have been worth the pain he suffered on his way to that devoutly-to-be-wished consummation.

Something similar could be said of other characters in *Twelfth Night*. Early in the play Olivia tells Malvolio that he is "sick of Self-love." Her diagnosis is accurate, of course, but what she fails to note is that the "physician" is herself in need of attention. Olivia's "medicine" arrives almost immediately in the form of the disguised Viola. As amusing as it may be for the audience, the humiliation that Olivia experiences when she falls in love with an unresponsive "Cesario" is as agonizing for her as Malvolio's treatment is for the "poor Fool" the Steward is shown to be. Meanwhile Orsino, who thinks he loves Olivia, undergoes an ordeal of his own. When his rejection by the Countess is compounded by the apparent betrayal of his trusted ambassador, the frenzied Count is driven to a potentially savage revenge. Before Orsino can act on his mad impulse, fortunately, the proceedings are interrupted by news that two other characters (Sir Toby and Sir Andrew) have just been administered a purgation in keeping with their own characters. Then, just as suddenly, the play's confusions are astonishingly resolved by "A Nat'ral Perspective, that is and is not." Once the various disguises are removed, it

becomes clear that, like the "Adversity" that proves "Sweet" in the Forest of Arden, the "blind Waves" that buffet the Seacoast have bestowed on Illyria a "most happy Wrack."

As You Like It finishes with a dance and an Epilogue in which Rosalind encourages the audience to "like as much of this Play as please you." *Twelfth Night* draws to a close with the Clown's reminder that "Man's Estate" is a steady diet of "the Wind and the Rain." Feste's words sound a more somber note than do Rosalind's; but like the sentiments that conclude *As You Like It*, they remind us that whenever we need a respite from our travails, we can find solace in a company of players who "strive to please [us] ev'ry Day."

Because both comedies were popular in Shakespeare's lifetime, he and his acting company evidently saw to it that neither was printed and thereby made available for competing troupes to produce. The two works were published for the first time in the First Folio of 1623. All modern editions derive from the Folio, which provides excellent texts for both plays.

AS YOU LIKE IT

