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## Comparative Study between Court Life & Pastoral Life in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

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### ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare's comedy "As you like it" was profoundly influenced by the pastoral genre that is associated with court life. The drama follows a number of individuals as they depart the French Court for the Forest of Arden for various reasons. They can relax, interact with new people, and learn more about personal issues like love. The conflict between court life and the countryside, one of the pastoral tradition's most significant characteristics, is shown in the drama as favoring the later part of the play. This is accomplished both through the actors' behaviors in the two scenarios and by their discourse of how they perceive their environment. They adapt and change as they move from the well-known corrupt city to the unknown but beautiful forest, where they may enjoy quiet and explore issues of love. By the play's conclusion, the characters are eager to return to a society that has not altered and to which they will have to comply after having enjoyed their "escapade from reality." Whether what they have learned in the Forest of Arden will be implemented in the city is left to the audience's imagination, although assessments are made regarding what they have learned about themselves and how prepared they are to return. The goal of the present study is to examine how *As You Like It* depicts this contrast between urban and rural life.

**Keywords:** *Court Life, Pastoral Life, Love, Transformation.*

### Introduction

In Elizabethan England during the 16th century, pastoral literature was popular. Its core notion was the portrayal of the ideal country lifestyle, one in which shepherds, who are also known as poets, would live in a tranquil, picturesque setting and engage in loving conversations. A pastoral play typically starts with a journey that transports its main characters out of the city and into the wilderness. It is an escapism type of literature with a laid-back and happy tale. This comparison's main objective was to criticize and expose the former as risky, dishonest, and overly sophisticated in favor of the latter. Shakespeare's themes are often expressed in terms of oppositions, such as the conflicting values associated with fair and foul in between *Macbeth* and *City Life and Pastoral Life in As You Like It*.

Because it is predominantly set in the Forest of Arden, a charming natural location with shepherds and shepherdesses. The pastoral literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras portrays a manufactured—or, as critic Raymond Williams puts it, "enamelled"—natural world of commoners who perform little actual work and courtly nobles acting out rural life. It does not represent the actual world of rural labor, but rather a countercultural paradise where different viewpoints can be investigated. The famous pastoral play *As You Like It* by Shakespeare. Aristocrats, such Rosalind and Celia, the niece and daughter of the evil Duke Frederick, run away to the forest, where they are followed by the

aristocratic Orlando and meet up with banished Duke Senior and his recreated pastoral 'court' of followers. Add to the mix the shepherdess Phoebe, who rejects the love of the rustic Silvius, and all the elements of a pastoral are in place. Thus the impact of court life and country life takes defined form in the play.

### **Methodology**

The study is a secondary sources data based content analysis. For completing the research, researcher has gone through a good number of journals, articles, web content and Research reports. Both inclusion and exclusion criteria was applied for this research. The study appeared as qualitative in nature followed by a content analysis approach. Repeated reading and re-reading texts made by selecting themes for each discourse connected with the relationship between the pastoral life and court life in *As You Like It* substantially improved the qualitative data analysis to achieve specific research objectives.

### **Background of the Drama**

Near the end of Queen Elizabeth's rule over England, *As You Like It* was penned. Women had very little rights and were forced into arranged marriages in the incredibly patriarchal culture that was Elizabethan England. The court often imposed inflexible standards for the behavior of English monarchy and citizens, and it was seen unwise to marry someone out of love. In this regard, *As You Like It* may be viewed as a romantic exploration of a different, more liberated world in which people live in harmony with nature, fall in love, and get married of their own free will.

### **Historical context of *As You Like It***

*As You Like It* is a pastoral comedy that is thought to have been written in 1599 or the beginning of 1600. In this play the conventions of romance and humor are disregarded. In a piece that commented on how perplexing yet absolutely enjoyable life can be, politics and nature are mixed together. France is the setting for the play's original performance. Shakespeare, however, planned for the most of the action to take place in the Forest of Arden. Rosalind and Orlando, two lovers, became caught up in a seductive game of love, justice, and mistaken identity. This excursion leads to a circle of foolishness and uncertainty for both of them, placing the play in the territory of the classic pastoral comedy. William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It* was originally published in the first Folio in 1623. It is thought to have been written in 1599 or the beginning of 1600. It is unknown when the play was first performed, however a performance at Wilton House in 1603 has been proposed as a possibility. The play has received a variety of reviews throughout history, with some deeming it to be of lower quality than other Shakespearean works and others praising it highly.

### **Court Life versus Country Life**

The contrast between city life and country life is a key element in pastoral writing. It frequently implies that escaping the oppressions of the city can be accomplished by spending some time in the country's healing woods and fields and that conversing with upright shepherds and shepherdesses can help one regain their feeling of balance and rightness. In turn, this kind of healing atmosphere makes it possible to return to the city a better person, able to make the most of city life. Shakespeare opens

As You Like It by creating the city/country dichotomy that the pastoral mood depends on, despite the fact that he pushes the boundaries of these conventions his shepherdess Audrey, for example, is neither eloquent nor pure. In Act I, scene i, Orlando rails against the injustices of life with Oliver and complains that he “know[s] no wise remedy how to avoid it” .Later in that scene, as Charles relates the whereabouts of Duke Senior and his followers, the remedy is clear:

“in the forest of Ardenne many young gentlemen fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world” .Indeed, many are healed in the forest the lovesick are coupled with their lovers and the usurped duke returns to his throne”

Shakespeare, however, points out that Ardenne life is only a passing phase. The drama does not admire country over city or vice versa, but rather depicts a delicate and necessary balance between the two as the protagonists get ready to return to life at court. The forest's simplicity offers respite from the pressures of the court, but it also highlights the need for metropolitan flair and elegance, without which neither would function or even matter.

The drama follows a number of individuals as they depart the French Court for the Forest of Arden for various reasons. They can relax, interact with new people, and learn more about personal issues like love there. The contrast between the two is very obvious as they move from one place to another in keeping with pastoral tradition. The play's opening act contains plenty of evidence of the city's sins, as represented by the French Court. Orlando, one of the play's key protagonists, complains in the play's start about the injustices and mistreatment he endures at the hands of Oliver, their elder brother and the heir to his late father's estate:

“he keeps me rustically at home or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home un kept; for call you that “keeping” for a gentleman of my birth that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better, for, besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage and, to that end, riders dearly hired.”

In addition to abusing his position of authority by failing to provide for Orlando, Oliver deliberately plots Orlando's death out of jealousy because he is "full of ambition, a secret and diabolical contrivance against [him]." The distrust and hostility that pervade their family are evident in each of their speeches. The court is "paranoid, twitchy, a world of fast political judgments, its hectic speed neurotic, born of the knowledge that its power is unlawful," According to Bloom, Oliver's behavior can be compared to that of Duke Frederick, who exiles his brother, Duke Senior, and his daughter Rosalind after seizing control of all of his domains, adding to the impression of the city as a perilous and poisoned location.

The countryside, on the other hand, is presented as a setting in which the court dangers do not prevail. Just as the first scene set in Arden opens, a speech by Duke Senior openly compares the benefits of living in the country as opposed to the city in a truly pastoral manner:

“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?  
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
 Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

"Arden is, as its name appears to indicate, a cross between Arcadia and Eden, the rustic "Golden World" described by pagan poets and the biblical garden all in one," says the author. "In the forest, individuals can take sanctuary and be free to explore life in a simple manner through song." The things Duke Senior does in the forest are also good. When he first encounters Orlando, he immediately and amiably offers to help him and his servant.

It should be emphasized that despite the pastoral tradition's idealization of the countryside, certain characters nevertheless refer to the countryside as being dangerous. According to Orlando, "all things had become savage." Additionally, Duke Senior's lord's song, "Here Shall He See/ No Enemy/ But Winter and Rough Weather," highlights the disadvantages of the wilderness. Nature "can be a puzzling, even threatening setting," as the court characters learn when they venture there for the first time, according to Dickinson. The majority of the characters find something about living in Arden depressing. None of these causes are linked to risks posed by people; instead, nature plays a major role. They would rather live in a world with these perils rather than the ones presented by the city life. The ability for characters to explore and assume positions that are not acceptable within society is a significant difference between the country and the city. Arden permits "self-sufficiency, spontaneous conversions, and above all, a gloriously flexible sexuality, independent of conventional gender signals," according to Gay. After escaping her uncle's court, Rosalind undergoes this change by dressed as a man to keep herself safe. She does this on purpose to empower herself and break away from the patriarchy that controls her society:

“Were it not better,  
 Because that I am more than common tall,  
 That I did suit me all points like a man?  
 A gallant curtal-axe upon my thigh,  
 A boar-spear in my hand, and in my heart  
 Lie there what hidden woman’s fear there will.”

Her traveling companion Celia's statement that they "journey in content to liberty" rather than being exiled serves to emphasize this change. She uses the word "liberty" to describe their voyage into Arden, which may be taken both literally and metaphorically as they flee Duke Frederick's exile and the restrictions of their society at the same time.

The definition of gender identity is further ambiguous when Rosalind, posing as Ganymede, asks Orlando to court her as if she was a girl, and he accepts. As Orlando would never court another guy in civilization, the scenes that follow this agreement demonstrate how gender identities are multiplied in

the environment of the forest. "Rosalind's elaborate courtship game with Orlando throws into question not only the regulation and organization of desire, but also the construction of gender" It allows him to experience different kinds of love, as he pursues not only Rosalind the girl, but also indirectly, Ganymede the boy.

Rosalind and Orlando's courting scenes are examples of what the pastoral tradition is about: being able to explore into love and nature, with no obligations or consequences. This is expressed through poetry and songs, and Arden is full of them:

"It was a lover and his lass,  
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no,  
That o'er the green cornfield did pass  
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing, Hey ding a ding, ding.  
Sweet lovers love the spring."

On the contrary, the speed of the city and its emphasis on politics prevent that. Celia says, "I like this area, and willingly could waste my time in it," to illustrate her point. The word "waste" conveys the stereotype of shepherds as idle held by city inhabitants who lack the opportunity to unwind or temporarily escape from their daily lives. The cultivation of poetry and singing, for example, could potentially fit under this concept in the pastoral culture.

### Conclusion

The play's conclusion highlights the differences in values between city and rural living. While the majority of the story's action takes place in the Forest of Arden, where gender roles are reversed and boundaries are removed, as was previously said, the individuals ultimately elect to return to their regular lives in court. This entails returning to the values they had set aside before entering Arden. Cross-dressing, fantasizing about one's own power, being sedentary, and being an idiot cannot go on since they are national traits. Rosalind consents to marry Orlando, renouncing her male position of authority in exchange for submitting to her husband: "To you I give myself, for I am yours." / "To you I offer myself, for you are yours." Rosalind turns into the male figure's "property," as her language demonstrates. "Returning to the (female) person she was at the play's beginning, bracketing the liberties of the Forest of Arden with the 'reality' of heterosexual normatively," the author writes. The universe will return to its original state once Rosalind and Orlando wed and depart from the pastoral world.

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