

Composition date, sources, context

See Arden introduction.

Themes and questions

- Music and harmony
- Gender
- Humours, medicine and cure
- Madness and folly
- The pastoral
- Symmetry and doubles
- Satire and parody
- Forest and court; the “green world”

Food for thought

• **J.-J. Chardin, *AYL ou le palimpseste du sens* (Messene, 1997) :** « La configuration du carnaval est fortement développée dans une pièce qui (...) entretient des liens étroits avec la tradition festive populaire. (...) Mais *AYL* mobilise également les ressorts de la culture savante. » « Ce que la pièce célèbre en premier lieu, c’est le plaisir physique sous toutes ses formes. » « Arden ne présente un aspect idéal que pour mieux révéler sa face cachée de pastorale sombre. Monde corrompu où règne la tentation de l’or et où les bergers cherchent en premier lieu à faire des affaires (2.4.70-85), la forêt est cruelle et grosse de dangers. (...) La nature est inhospitalière parce que mal maîtrisée par l’homme (“*uncouth*”, comme le dit Orlando, 2.6.6). (...) Les rigueurs de l’existence pastorale y sont adoucies par les bonnes manières, le langage et la civilité de ceux qui sont contraints d’y vivre. » « L’Arden shakespearien est un grand livre d’images et d’attitudes de circonstances où la pastorale est tellement travestie qu’elle s’en trouve littéralisée et montrée comme artifice littéraire. » « La déguisement, et c’est là son paradoxe, œuvre [à la fois] à la dissimulation et à la révélation de soi. » « Jaques a tendance à transférer ses propres dysfonctionnements sur le monde qu’il envisage alors comme un corps malsain. » « Bien que le sentiment de fraternité dans l’épreuve ait pu faire croire un instant que les hiérarchies sociales avaient été annulées (...), celles-ci sont finalement réinstaurées. » « La pièce se présente un peu comme le costume bigarré du Fou, faite de morceaux d’étoffe langagière qui, cousues ensemble, renvoient aux codes dont elles sont l’expression. Et comme le costume du Fou est un masque à la satire, les discours utilisés ne sont que pré-textes codifiés dont l’imitation est source de distanciation. »

- **Harold Jenkins (1969):** “. . . [the play’s] dearth not only of big theatrical scenes but of events linked together by the logical intricacies of cause and effects.”
- **Leo Salinger (1974):** “*AYL* comes nearer in form to a discussion play or symposium than any other of Shakespeare’s comedies. Not only is the action punctuated by songs; there is much reporting of meetings and conversations, and the comparatively uneventful plot marks time while the actors talk.”
- **F. Guinle, « Les Chansons dans *AYL* », in *AYL. Essais critiques*, PUMirail (1998) :** « Les chansons de *AYL* expriment, au sein de la pastorale, non pas le *locus amœnus* de la pastorale ou de l’Âge d’Or, c’est-à-dire un printemps de jeunesse éternelle, mais au contraire une nature en changement, le passage des saisons. » « Nos chanteurs ne sont pas des bergers, mais des gens de la cour, qui “jouent” en quelque sorte aux forestiers. » « Ce qui sauve Orlando et Adam, ce n’est pas le lieu (...) mais la présence en ce lieu de gens de la cour. » « Les couples ne se forment que grâce à [un troisième élément]. »
- **Ruth Morse, “Fools, Madness and Melancholy”, *ibid.*:** “If we succumb to ‘the seven ages of man’ speech we think we are recognizing a rational exposition. But its rationality is inhumane; not false, but reasoned with a logic that would have shamed Mr. Spock.” “Jaques is unreasonable by virtue of being too rational.”
- **J. Dunsiberre, “Women and Boys Playing Shakespeare”, *ibid.*:** “Why should it matter that [the actors] are not biologically female, any more than it should matter that they are not royal, Roman, Moors, Egyptians or Italian? Why should the fact of the male body make it impossible to conceive of a woman on the stage, any more than the fact of the commoner’s body might make it impossible to conceive of Richard II’s body? Both are figment of the actor’s art.” “Within the fiction of the play, Audrey is the only one of the women not required to play a part.” (Cf. 5.4.66)
- **R. Smallwood, “Plot Manipulation and the Happy Ending in *AYL*”, *ibid.*:** “This youthful fraternal trinity [the de Boys brothers] is matched, it seems, by another trio, of more mature years, in the ducal family [the two dukes and the “uncle”.] [In both cases: “one good, one bad, one missing”.]
- **R. Gardette, « Le Fou et le philosophe », *ibid.* :** « ... la rencontre de deux fous au point d’acmé de la structure dramatique : dans la scène 3 de l’acte 3 le miroir comique et le miroir politique se superposent. Dans le mesure où Jaques veut être assimilé au fou, les deux rôles s’annulent. » [7 interventions de Jaques, 7 apparitions de Touchstone.]
- **F. Laroque, « *AYL* ou la bigarrure », *ibid.* :** « Le seul principe qui prévale en Arden est celui de la rencontre. »
- **P. Iselin, “Nurture in *AYL*”, in CNED (1998):** “Nature’s powerful drives (power, hunger, or sex) are appetites which are explicitly dealt with in the play; it is through rituals and laws—*i.e.* culture—that they ought to be ruled, but the paradox is that, in the play, the farther one is from court, the further involved in poetry, wooing, ritual, and hyper-refined sentiment.”
- **M. Jones-Davies, “Les Voyageurs de l’expérience singulière dans *AYL*”, in *Ellipses* (1997):** Ganymede has also been seen as a symbol of meditation and self-knowledge, of the Intellect (e.g. Dante’s *Purgatorio* 9.19).
- **Alan Brissenden, Introduction to the OUP edition of the play:** “On his first entrance Rosalind and Celia both refer to Touchstone as a ‘natural’, that is a person of little intellect, a born fool—it is immediately clear that the opposite is true, as they well know—and he may

have worn for this scene at court the long coat of the idiot. In the forest he wears motley, the parti-coloured costume of the professional fool.” “Like Orlando and Oliver, Duke Frederick and Duke Senior, Touchstone and Jaques are, as it were, of the same family, but opposites. Jaques is neither a natural nor a licensed fool, but as the licensed fool mocks under the mask of the simpleton, Jaques comments satirically under the cloak (...) of the melancholic.”

Documents and complementary references

- ***Twelfth Night*, 3.4:** “I am as mad as he,/ If sad and merry madness equal be.” ***The Merchant of Venice*, 1.1:** “I hold the world but as the world, Graziano—/ A stage where everyman must play a part,/ And mine a sad one.”
- **Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (book X) translated by Arthur Golding (1567):** “The King of Gods did burn erewhile in love of Ganymede/ The Phrygian, and the thing was found which Jupiter that stead/ Had rather be than that he was. Yet could he not betem/ The shape of any bird than eagle for to seem/ And so he soaring in the air with borrowed wings, trussed up/ The Trojan boy who still in heaven even yet doth bear his cup,/ And brings him Nectar though against Dame Juno’s will it be.”
- **Ovid’s book I, translated by John Dryden (1631–1700):** “The golden age was first; when Man yet new,/ No rule but uncorrupted reason knew:/ And, with a native bent, did good pursue./ Unforc’d by punishment, un-aw’d by fear,/ His words were simple, and his soul sincere.”
- **Thomas Middleton, *Microcynicon. Six Snarling Satires* (1599):** “Walking the city as my wonted use,/ (...) I spied Pyander in a nymph’s attire.// No nymph more fair than did Pyander seem,/ Had not Pyander then Pyander been./ (...) Never was boy so pleasing to the heart/ As was Pyander for a woman’s part.// (...) Trust not a painted puppet as I have done/ Who far more doted than Pygmalion.” [*Middleton’s satires were part of the books burnt in the Bishops’ bonfire in 1599.*]
- **Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621):** “Love is a species of melancholy.” “ ‘Let me not live,’ saith Aretine’s Antonia, ‘if I had not rather hear thy discourse [on love] than see a play!’ ” “Hart and red deer hath an evil name: it yields gross nutriment. (...) All venison is melancholy, and begets bad blood.”
- **Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646):** “. . .the immoderate salacity, and almost unparallel’d excess of venery, which every September may be observed in [the Deer]” “Concerning Deer there also passeth another opinion, that the Males thereof do yearly lose their pizzel.” “. . .the defect of a Gall, which part (in the opinion of Aristotle and Pliny) this Animal want[s].” (III, 9) “As for the mutation of sexes, or transition into one another, we cannot deny it in Hares, it being observable in Man.” (III, 17) The same goes for the hyena, esp. “if hereby we understand the *Hyæna odorata*, or Civet cat” (III, 4); “an unstable man the Egyptian hieroglyphs represent by an Hyæna, because that animal yearly exchangeth its sex.” (v, 20). Virginité and royal blood are a way to escape being attacked by lions (III, 27).
- **Rabelais, *Gargantua*, LVII (« Comment estoient reigléz les Thélémites a leur manière de vivre ») :** « Toute leur vie estoit employée non par loix, statuz ou reigles, mais selon leur vouloir et franc arbitre. Se levoient du lict quand bon leur sembloit beuvoient, mangeoient, travailloient, dormoient quand le désir leur venoit ; nul ne les esveilloit, nul ne les parforceoit ny à boyre, ny à manger, ny à faire chose aultre quelconques. Ainsi l’avoit estably Gargantua. En leur reigle n’estoit que ceste clause : FAY CE QUE VOULDRAS, parce que gens libères, bien néz, bien instruictz, conversans en compaignies honnestes, ont par nature un instinct et aguillon, qui tousjours les poulse à faitz vertueux et retire de vice, lequel ilz nommoient honneur. »

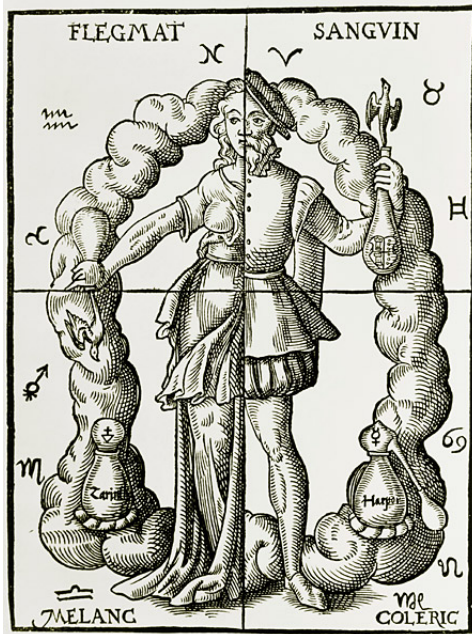


FIGURE 1 – The four humours



FIGURE 2 – Jay in *Clerks II* or AYL 4.1.190-2?