

As You Like It, Act 2, Scene 3, lines 38–76

In the scene from which this passage is extracted Orlando returns to his Oliver's house where Adam, formerly Orlando's father's servant greets him. Adam knows of Orlando's recent wrestling victory and is concerned that Orlando's strength and bravery will be the keys to his downfall. Adam has heard that Oliver, having learned of Orlando's triumph, plans to burn the house down in which Orlando will sleep, thus killing Orlando. 'Abhor it,' Adam warns Orlando, 'fear it, do not enter it' (2.3.29). Orlando is disconsolate about his future, as without a home he speculates his only recourse is to make a living as highway robber, however he rejects this, preferring to tell Adam he would rather die:

I rather will subject me to the malice
Of a diverted blood and bloody brother

(2.3.36-37)

rather than adopt such a discreditable lifestyle. While Orlando is determined to stay true to his principles, he has no practical plan to deal with his current dilemma. It is up to Adam to propose a plan and to provide the wherewithal to execute that plan, by offering his life savings to fund an itinerant life. Touched by Adam's loyalty and support, Orlando agrees.

Loyalty and love are the main themes of this passage. It is Adam that shows these characteristics most, and it is Orlando's role to recognise, value and reciprocate them. This is the antithesis of the relationship that Orlando has with his brother, Oliver, and which Adam warned Orlando about earlier in the scene.

Orlando is happy that Adam agrees go with him, without any expectation of reward. Orlando warns Adam, using the metaphor 'pruning a tree with no blossoms' (2.3.63) that they will lose everything, despite their best efforts, 'In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry (2.3.65)'.

Even though Orlando says there will be no reward to offset their hardships, ‘That cannot so much as a blossom yield’ (2.3.64), Adam is happy, indeed determined to serve Orlando with no material recompense, rather because he sees it as the right thing to do:

Master, go on, and I will follow thee
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty.

(2.3.69-70)

Adam has the final word, literally, with this rhyming couplet:

Yet fortune cannot recompense me better
Than to die well and not my master’s debtor.

(2.3.75-76)

Once again, Adam is emphasising his traditional values, saying that he would be happiest to die having any obligation to his master, and this also reinforces our view that the Adam-Orlando relationship is more one of equality than subservience.

This scene, and in particular, this passage, is establishing a relationship between Adam and Orlando that mirrors the relationship between Rosalind and Celia—although not relatives by blood, they behave and love each other as such. Orlando is also using the natural image of the tree - this is perhaps to be compared with the trees in the Forest of Arden, where Orlando and Rosalind’s love, also if not nurtured correctly will also wither.

The last we hear of Adam is when Orlando and Adam arrive, in dire need of sustenance, at Duke Senior’s court in the Forest of Arden:

So had you need; I scarce can speak to thank you for myself.

(2.7.168–71)

Adam presumably eats at the Duke’s with Orlando, but then he makes no further appearance in the play. Adam has declared:

Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;

(2.3.47)

yet we are tempted to wonder if this is really true as shortly afterwards Adam uses simile to compare himself to winter:

Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty but kindly.

(2.3.51-52)

Here 'frosty' suggests the white hair of old age and the use of 'lusty winter' is an oxymoron suggesting that although Adam is in the winter of his life (and therefore covered in 'frosty hair'), he still has the energy associated with the lusty, rising sap of spring and summer. Since Adam's last appearance is just as Jacques has completed his 'seven ages of man' speech (2.7.139-166), we are perhaps left wondering if Adam overstated his vigour and perhaps completed his seventh age as a consequence of the hardships of living in the wood. He will have died happy though, fulfilling the requirements he stated in (2.3.75-76).

There is more prose than blank verse in *As You Like It*. This passage is however written in iambic pentameter, mostly as blank verse, but with a rhyming couplet to end each speech and some end of line rhymes within the speech. Generally Shakespeare uses blank verse for the nobler parts (royalty, aristocracy, heroes and heroines) or for the discussion of high emotion (love, hate) and prose for characters of lower social status (commoners, servants) or dealing with factual matters. Here Shakespeare uses iambic pentameter to emphasise that although Orlando (master) and Adam (servant) have different social status and indeed different life levels of life experience, they are conversing more like father and son, or as friends and forming a partnership.

While the regularity of the iambic pentameter drives the conversation forward, the use of enjambment:

When service should in my old limbs lie lame
And unregarded age in corners thrown;

(2.3.41-42)

and caesura, ‘All this I give you; let me be your servant –’ (2.3.48), are used to vary the pace within a character’s dialogue to allow dramatic emphasis.

Shakespeare also uses a wide variety of rhetorical devices in *As You Like it* (Gibson 2015).

Hear they enrich our view of Adam and Orlando’s character – this is perhaps particularly appropriate as Adam is actively persuading Orlando into Adam’s proposed course of action.

These devices include alliteration (‘service sweat’ (2.3.48)) and antithesis when Adam says ‘though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty; (2.3.47)’ since we would expect age to be associated with weakness, frailty and lethargy.

Shakespeare also produces an aphorism when Adam says:

Take that, and He that doth the ravens feed,
Yea providently caters for the sparrow,
Be comfort to my age.

(2.3.43-45)

This sounds like a proverb but is a biblical reference to God's feeding the ravens in Psalm 147:9, Luke 12:24, and Job 38. Adam is likening himself to a sparrow and suggesting that although God feeds the larger, aggressive ravens which are carrion eaters and often seen as omens as evil God also providentially provides for the smaller, harmless sparrow. Perhaps we should be seeing the carrion eating raven as a symbol for Oliver here in contrast to the clean living, gentle sparrow like Adam. Adam is saying that God will provide for his comfort in old age.

[1095 words]

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Tutor Group Postings

Posting 1

12 Oct 2021, 11:09:

<https://learn2.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/discuss.php?d=3763630&p=p26537679#p26537679>

Re: Discussion Topic - Shakespeare Performances

I think the most striking Shakespeare performance I can recall is the Laurence Olivier film production of 1944. Presented in vivid technicolour, it provides a rousing, nationalistic and spectacular piece of entertainment, employing many cinematic techniques that were not available to Shakespeare. For example, it starts with a handbill for the play floating into view then after conducting several scenes within a reproduction of the Globe, the audience is transported to the mud and gore of the fields of France before finally returning to the Globe. It uses miniatures, rich and stylised settings and spectacular costumery - none of which was available, or even thought of, in Shakespeare's time. As this film is also propaganda, and firmly aimed at a morale boost for the British audience, much of the reality of that battle is glossed over, including the English execution of French prisoner of wars after the battle. Naturally though the French killing of the unarmed English squires and boys is included. Both events are present in Shakespeare's text. I wonder how Olivier would have responded to the accusation that he had undermined the authenticity and purpose of Shakespeare's text by his changes. I not sure that Shakespeare would have been that concerned though, as Shakespeare had, in a similar vein, his own political purpose (to laud the Elizabethan monarchy, with its own foreign battles). I'm sure Shakespeare would have liked the royalties the film brought in too. We will never know for sure, however. In the end I think Oliver made a fantastic film, and a significant statement of its time - but maybe he did not quite manage to pull off a great Shakespeare play.

Posting 2

17 Oct 2021, 13:12:

<https://learn2.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/discuss.php?d=3776343&p=p26605171#p26605171>

Shakespeare's audience

I wondered what Shakespeare's audience was like so did a little research. I was wondering: Were the literate and educated, did they read Latin and know the classics? Were the male or female, what were their occupations and how much did they pay? Did the talk over the play and eat and drink?

Only 30% of Elizabethan England could read and write, and many more men than woman – so maybe only 10% of women were literate. In London though literacy rates were much higher, up to 80%. Girls tended to leave school at or before 10, while boys who attended grammar school went onto 14, and studied Latin and classics.

In the Globe, standing in the pit cost 1 penny (=2.4p). The floor of the pit was dirt and rushes or perhaps in later years a floor of hazelnut shells. You could also stand in the galleries and sit there too – with seats up to 2 and sixpence (= 30d or 72p). 1 penny was almost a day's wages for the common man. Food was served to those in the pit (beer and apples for instance) and presumably to those in the tiering too.

No one mentions toilets in the theatre – so I'm not sure what folks did! Did you leave the action and pee in the street? Or were chamberpots provided in the theatre? I would have thought urine would have had a commercial value (tanning etc) so maybe it was collected?

The audience consisted of tanners, butchers, iron-workers, millers, seamen from the ships docked in the Thames, glovers, servants, shopkeepers, wig-makers, bakers, and other tradesmen and their families. Shakespearsglobe.com says:

One visitor, in 1617, described the crowd around the stage as 'a gang of porters and carters'. Others talked of servants and apprentices spending all their spare time there. But wealthier people were in the audience too. In 1607, the Venetian ambassador bought all the most expensive seats for a performance of Shakespeare's *Pericles*.

No doubt there was a mix of gentry too, though I did not find explicit evidence for it. Royalty and the aristocracy I think would be able to command their own private performances away from the Globe.

Shakespeare online says:

Shakespeare's audience was far more boisterous than are patrons of the theatre today. They were loud and hot-tempered and as interested in the happenings off stage as on. One of Shakespeare's contemporaries noted that "you will see such heaving and shoving, such itching and shouldering to sit by the women, such care for their garments that they be not trod on . . . such toying, such smiling, such winking, such manning them home ... that it is a right comedy to mark their behaviour" (Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse*, 1579). The nasty hecklers and gangs of riffraff would come from seedy parts in and around London like Tower-hill and Limehouse and Shakespeare made sure to point them out:

These are the youths that thunder at a playhouse,
and fight for bitten apples; that no audience, but

the Tribulation of Tower-hill, or the Limbs of
Limehouse, their dear brothers, are able to endure.
(Henry VIII, 5.4.65-8)

The Globe was outside the London Wall, on the south side of the river, in a 'lively' neighbourhood devoted to entertainment – including the Rose theatre, alehouses, bordellos and bear pits, no doubt giving the theatre some strong commercial competition.

London's population grew from about 100,000 in 1550 to 200,000 in 1600. The Globe's capacity was maybe 1500 (similar to the modern Globe), or maybe up to 3000 (according to shakespearesglobe.com) so if we assume there were 120000 adults in London, then the Globe's audience was about 1% of the London adult population. Visitors and travellers would expand this somewhat. With several theatres offering plays most afternoons there was the capacity to entertain 10 to 20000 people a week. So presumably lots of opportunity for making money (Shakespeare had a ¼ share in the Globe originally which reduced to 1/8 share later so he clearly had a finger in the pie). And a big demand for plays and playwrights.

Sources:

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Posting 3

23 Oct 2021, 15:49:

<https://learn2.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/discuss.php?d=3776343&p=p26682618#p26682618>

Re: Discussion Topic 2 – Independent Study

Is 'The Spanish Tragedy' a feminist play?

Bel-Imperia can be seen to be protagonist in the Spanish Tragedy. At the start of the play, her lover Andrea has already been killed, then within the play she will fall in love with Horatio, who is then killed by her evil brother Lorenzo and Balthazar and then she is forced

to marry Balthazaar. Her happiness has been destroyed by the actions of the powerful men around her. Though she is the niece of a king and obviously of high social standing than is also denied justice—not because of her class, but because of her gender – she must recruit the help of men (ie Hieronimo) to redress the wrongs she feels, and in the end her only escape is suicide. However, should she be seen as a victim? Maybe, but she is not an acquiescent one. She has the necessary strength of will to take her revenge and throughout the play is willing to take a role equivalent to a man, not only in acts of revenge, but also in love. In her speech to Horatio (Act 2, scene 2):

"Let dangers go, they war shall be with me, But such a war as breaks no bond of peace. Speak thou fair words, I'll cross them with fair words; Send thou sweet looks, I'll meet them with sweet looks; Write loving lines, I'll answer loving lines; Give me a kiss, I'll countercheck thy kiss: Be this our warring peace, or peaceful war."

she establishes that she is just as capable as a man and can do whatever Horatio does.

In addition, although she professes love for Horatio, a perfectly pragmatic and reasonable state of affairs (in a time and world when it must have been quite common to lose a spouse to illness, famine or conflict), she has not forgotten her original love, and has the strength of character to continue to seek to pursue that love in a revengeful act (Act 1, scene 1):

Yes, second love shall further my revenge.
I'll love Horatio, my Andrea's friend,
more to spite the Prince that wrought his end.

Indeed in some respects, she is stronger and more effective than some of the men in the play as, in the end, it is Bel-Imperia that spurs Hieronimo on to revenge when he seems to be lazy in pursuing it, and finally although Hieronimo kills Lorenzo, it is Bel-Imperia that kills Balthazar.

I wonder how Kyd's audience would have felt about Bel-Imperia? Would they have been attracted to her, would they have felt she had been wronged and applauded her actions or would they have felt threatened? Is it essential for her to die at the end of the play, to re-establish the male dominancy of the society, where a wife is an 'owned' object and clearly should not be allowed to dictate terms or justice? Perhaps although Kyd appears to underscore the inequalities and injustices within society based on class and gender, and he ultimately argues that there is rarely justice for women or those of lower classes, and although he chooses the name Bel-Imperia for his heroine – meaning 'the beauty of empire or conquest' – Kyd cannot end the play with Bel-Imperia still alive and triumphant as that would simply be unacceptable to his mostly male audience. I really wish I had a time

machine and could kidnap Kyd from the 16 century and ask him to rewrite the play in a modern setting and for a modern audience.

References

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Passage 1

ADAM

But do not so: I have five hundred crowns,
 The thrifty hire I saved under your father,
 Which I did store to be my foster-nurse 40
 When service should in my old limbs lie lame
 And unregarded age in corners thrown;
 Take that, and He that doth the ravens feed,
 Yea providently caters for the sparrow,
 Be comfort to my age. Here is the gold: 45
 All this I give you; let me be your servant –
 Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;
 For in my youth I never did apply
 Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,
 Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo 50
 The means of weakness and debility;
 Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
 Frosty but kindly. Let me go with you:
 I'll do the service of a younger man
 In all your business and necessities. 55

ORLANDO

O good old man, how well in thee appears
 The constant service of the **antique** world,
 When service sweat for duty not for meed.

Thou art not for the fashion of these times
Where none will sweat but for promotion, 60
And, having that, do choke their service up
Even with the having. It is not so with thee;
But, poor old man, thou prun'st a rotten tree
That cannot so much as a blossom yield,
In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry. 65
But come thy ways: we'll go along together
And, ere we have thy youthful wages spent,
We'll light upon some settled low content.

ADAM

Master, go on, and I will follow thee
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty. 70
From seventeen years till now almost fourscore
Here lived I, but now live here no more.
At seventeen years many their fortunes seek,
But at fourscore it is too late a week;
Yet fortune cannot recompense me better 75
Than to die well and not my master's debtor.