

Seeing love through  
fresh eyes



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Pastoralism as a literary device thrives on the juxtaposition of city life and country life. Pastoralists often stress that the burdens of the city can be alleviated and clarified by a trip into the country's therapeutic environment. A sense of balance and rightness is often restored either through self-reflection or conversations with uncorrupted shepherds. Sojourns to these socially detached regions enable one to "explore ideas and play roles-on one's own terms and for one's own amusement" (Leggatt 192). Through the characters of Rosalind and Orlando in his comedic play *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare suggests that to find true happiness, one must visit the forest and be freed from worldly constraints. The city life burdens the two protagonists of *As You Like It* with social customs and conventions, as illustrated by their initially strained and stumbling speeches. Upon extracting themselves from the suffocating urban environment, both are able to openly embrace and develop their love in the Forest of Arden. The lessons learned and the emotions expressed in the forest (sans the restrictions of social propriety and expectation) extend far beyond the forest's edge - they have existed all the while, and simply required an unclouded lens to be revealed. Whether because of their self-consciousness about expressing their undying love for one another or the social standards that quiet such outbursts, Orlando and Rosalind's "love dialogue at court is hesitant, groping, and shy" at best (Leggatt 194). Orlando, a character heretofore known to be quite eloquent and verbose when expressing his emotions to his brother, finds that he has "weights upon [his] tongue" and is "overthrown" with love, unable to speak to the beautiful Rosalind when she urges conference (*AYLI*. I. II. 244-246). Love is depicted as "more an oppressive than liberating power," as Shakespeare emphasizes by utilizing a number of conquering images

(Leggatt 194). Similarly, Rosalind is awestruck by her newfound love. Upon Celia's appeal that "Cupid have mercy" for her cousin has "not a word," Rosalind admits that she has "not one to throw at a dog" (AYLI. I. III. 1-3). Throughout this scene Celia urges the conversation onward, while Rosalind hesitantly - though dotingly - reveals her interest in the young man. Seen through this window, coated in the dust of antiquated convention and the grime of hesitation, the future for the relationship between Orlando and Rosalind appears murky and unpromising. Having been chased out of civilization by either threat or banishment, both characters are forced to seek refuge in the forest. Upon entering the woods, they cast off their inhibitions, enjoying "considerable imaginative freedom in the forest" while also finding themselves in a "place of testing and education" (Leggatt 191). In direct contrast to his former inarticulacy, Orlando "finds his tongue, in surprisingly ornate, patterned verse," littering the forest sanctuary with heartfelt poems "in witness of [his] love" for Rosalind (Leggatt 195, AYLI. III. II. 1, 122-151). His ability to not only express his love but to do so in such a vulnerable manner and in such a public forum reveals a man uninhibited by personal and social reservations, capable of a level of self-expression that is only actualized upon entering the woods. Furthermore, while Celia had formerly dominated and guided the conversation about Orlando, Rosalind as Ganymede "comes into her own...starts developing her own ideas and using her own wit" (Leggatt 194). Rosalind seems to achieve a full role reversal, illustrated by her litany of inquiries about Orlando and her "rhymed, romantic contemplations" on love; she is driven by a desire to learn more and be more engrossed in the "madness" of love (AYLI. III. II. 213-219, Leggatt 196, AYLI. III. II. 386). As a third testament to their uninhibited

expression of love in the forest, the scenes in which Rosalind (as Ganymede) and Orlando speak to no end about the tortures and raptures of love depict a sentiment that will withstand the seasons (AYLI. IV. I. 136-146). Once cleared of the muck that clouds the relationship in an urban environment, the future for this couple appears clear and long-lasting. Pastoralism is the cloth with which the dust-caked eyeglass is cleaned. Ever since their first encounter, Orlando and Rosalind have been secretly infatuated with each other, though both are initially too concerned with the standards of city life and their own pride to reveal their true emotions, thus clouding their ability to see their future. Clearing away these hindrances by entering the forest (and thus liberating themselves from social conventions), they freely articulate their love to their peers and each other. Because the eyeglass has at last been cleaned, their love and future together is clearer and truer. By leaving the court life and the threats of Duke Frederick and Oliver, Rosalind and Orlando are at last able to examine and nurture their love. The glass merely needed cleaning; now refreshed, they can return to the court with an uninhibited vision of their future.