Locating the Visual in *As You Like It*

**MARThA RONK**

The forest of Arden seems in one’s memory to dominate *As You Like It*. Yet the first picture of Arden is given by Charles the wrestler only as distant hearsay. Although one might expect a pastoral play to be replete with visual staging and visual effects (as in the sheepshearing celebration in *The Winter’s Tale*), in *As You Like It* whatever “pastoral” might be is hedged round and inadequate from the outset. The most vivid pictures come in words, words already set forth, both by another speaker and by convention. The forest, not visual, is emblem: “They say he is already in the Forest of Arden. . . . They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world” (1.1.114, 116–19).¹

In this essay I focus on the relation between the verbal and visual in *As You Like It* and how they vie for contested dominance, disrupting presentation of both character and scene. Specifically I focus on Rosalind and on the pastoral world, arguing that Shakespeare purposefully draws attention to the ways in which the one aspect of theater plays against the other such that what is presented is layered and qualified. Shakespeare thus underscores the artificial and unrepresentable nature of what is being represented, emphasizing the impossibility of that which seems theatrically most obvious (what one sees) and the vividness of that which one cannot see. As in the sonnets in which the couplets ask us to embrace the hyperbolic statement that the young man, having been described as ravaged by time, will live forever in these poems, so this play asks that we be both drawn into the reality of the stage’s world and yet distanced from it, that we embrace both potency and failure. Now you see it, now you don’t. *As You Like It* repeatedly destabilizes what we have seen and forces us to experience theater in the making. Any theatrical production offers a complex collage, many visual sign systems of text, space (off- and onstage/above and below stage), costumes, gestures, and scenery. To some extent here I take for granted the materiality of stage production in order to focus on ways in which what is obviously set forth is simultaneously erased and refigured, and to ask, finally, to what end. What Shakespeare’s theater enacts explicitly is how

¹ Quotations of *As You Like It* follow Agnes Latham’s edition for the Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1975); all other Shakespeare quotations follow *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
different sets of signs undercut one another and purposely problematize theatrical representation itself. As such, As You Like It is more than an isolated play about lovers in the forest; it embodies a theory of theatrical production.

My intention here is to address various aspects of the visual in the play, including both literal seeing and seeing as, in order to identify the differences and frictions between the verbal and visual; between ekphrasis (pictures in words) and actual staging; and between sight (falling in love at first sight, for example) and speech (falling in love through extensive dialogue). As we examine the plays, both as texts and visual productions, foreground and background shift and alter. This alteration does not merely reflect critical interests but is built into the plays’ structure by means of various self-referential techniques that call attention to its construction and, more audaciously, as I hope to demonstrate, to failure.

Although we cannot know Shakespeare’s intentions and although the arena in which the visual appears cannot always be circumscribed, it is nonetheless crucial to try to grasp some of the ways in which visual insistence creates and addresses disjunction, the disjunction at the center of this play and at the center of Shakespeare’s culture. That As You Like It participates in historically cultural questions concerning the visual/verbal matrix is both obvious and complex, and can be explored here only briefly but, I hope, suggestively by referring to the tradition of ekphrasis, a verbal representation of a visual representation, and to Reformation attitudes toward the visual itself.

Ekphrasis

First, the play participates, as I have argued elsewhere, in a tradition often associated with medieval drama, a tradition that includes the related modes of ekphrasis, tableaux, talking pictures, and allegory, as well as in the psychological aspects of early modern theater in which characters reveal themselves by means of monologue, dialogue, verbal play, and wit. This tradition was maintained throughout the period by

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2 See Patrice Pavis, Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of the Theatre (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982): “Semiology is concerned with the discourse of staging, with the way in which the performance is marked out by the sequence of events, by the dialogue and the visual and musical elements. It investigates the organization of the performance text, that is, the way in which it is structured and divided” (20).

3 See Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 193–229. For example: “The concept of an aspect is akin to the concept of an image. In other words: the concept I am now seeing it as... is akin to I am now having this image” (213).


the popularity of emblems in books and on coins, on clothing, and in masques and processions. Renaissance writers were keenly interested in ekphrasis as a mode that embodied the antimimetic elsewhere. Sidney writes of “speaking pictures” that enable the poet to create a world other than the ordinary, a world more true because far-fetched and feigned, opening up a space for the imagined, the missing or unsaid or inconsistent. As Murray Krieger argues, “This is why the apophatic visual image helps belie the notion of the natural sign and can move beyond its limitations: playing its fictional role within a complicated code, the apophatic visual image opens out onto the semiotic possibilities of the verbal image. . . . because it does not resemble its object, [it] is therefore free to appeal to the mind’s eye rather than the body’s eye.”

Puttenham also manifests an interest in visual allegory—in both its potency (the “captaine of all other figures”) and its role as a figure of duplicity, deferral, deceit (to say one thing and mean another or, more subtly, to say one thing and mean something off to the side). Ekphrasis stops time and, in the case of Shakespeare, stops the forward movement of the plot in order to allow contemplation, spatial exploration of a specific character or moment. Thus in Twelfth Night, Viola stops in her argument with Orsino to reveal inarticulable aspects of herself (both her love and her mixed gender) by offering the picture of her fictional sister who “sate like Patience on a monument” (2.4.114), an emblem one can locate in emblem collections of the period. Gertrude’s set piece, the picture of Ophelia drowning, reveals the confused motivations of a young woman who drowns because in her madness she chooses suicide and because the branch over the water happens to break. In The Winter’s Tale, Hermione’s appearance as a statue in a memory theater directed by Paulina insists that the past not be forgotten; her very impenetrability as stone suggests the character’s interiority and, moreover, an interiority lasting over time, since, as Leontes remarks, the statue shows Hermione’s age. These examples may make it seem as if we can clearly distinguish between a character’s verbal or her visual aspects and between a picture in words and the visible character onstage.

Yet, to think of this in more general and speculative ways, where the visual is located may not always be clear. It may not appear in an arena that can always be separated off or circumscribed; we might ask, for example, where the picture or icon is located and what difference it makes whether the picture is drawn in words, usually offstage and enacted in “the mind’s eye,” or actually staged—the act of wrestling, for example. It might seem obvious which “image” is more potent, since the eye is

deemed the site of seductive powers by both early modern and postmodern critics. Pictures seem to bring before us a visual presence that a verbal representation cannot evoke and in theater the pictures walk and talk, appearing as actors in physical and embodied form. Theater forces an audience to stare at, gaze at, listen to, want to touch or fend off characters set forth in full view as like or unlike, desirable or repulsive. Although I do not want to dismiss out of hand what seems patently obvious, I also do not want to accept the obvious without question. For what we actually see may depend more on what is noticed or attended to than on what passes before our eyes in a flux of myriad impressions.

In fact, it seems that what focuses attention and creates seeing in the plays is language of two sorts, both intensely figurative language (which often approaches the emblematic) and the overtly emblematic language of ekphrasis. As W.J.T. Mitchell suggests, ekphrasis provides an eerie hope/fear of overcoming the impossible by creating a sort of sight, even an especially potent sort: “This is the phase when the impossibility of ekphrasis is overcome in imagination or metaphor, when we discover a sense in which language can do what so many writers have wanted it to do: ‘to make us see.” The potency of the imagined visual seems to be everywhere underscored in the plays; as Theseus says in relation to the mechanicals’ efforts in Midsummer Night’s Dream: “The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them” (5.1.211–12). Moreover, ekphrasis seems often to provide characters with a kind of etched-in depth, enabling us to “see” more fully and completely; it seems to import or project some form of otherness, even subjectivity, to character (if paradoxically) by shifting codes from dramatic to allegorical. In the gap between one representation and another, often in a

9 See, for example, David Freedberg, The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1989). According to W.J.T Mitchell, “A verbal representation . . . may refer to an object, describe it, invoke it, but it can never bring its visual presence before us in the way pictures do” (Picture Theory: essays on verbal and visual representation [Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1994], 152); but compare Krieger: “Once, like the Neo-Platonists, one pursues Plato’s quest for ontological objects seen by the mind’s eye rather than phenomenal objects seen by the body’s eye, then the superiority of interpretable—and hence intelligible—symbols, visual or verbal, over the immediately representational arts, is assured” (21).

10 “The ambivalence about ekphrasis, then, is grounded in our ambivalence about other people, regarded as subjects and objects in the field of verbal and visual representation. Ekphrastic hope and fear express our anxieties about merging with others” (Mitchell, 163). “The differences’ between images and language are not merely formal matters; they are, in practice, linked to things like the difference between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between ‘hearsay’ and ‘eyewitness’ testimony; between words (heard, quoted, inscribed) and objects or actions (seen, depicted, described); between sensory channels, traditions of representation, and modes of experience” (5). Mitchell’s work informs much of my thinking here.

11 Mitchell, 152.
highly emblematic moment of ekphrasis, an idea of the subject is created, largely because allegory demands contemplation and interpretation. It requires a speculative filling-in. Ekphrasis is also central to the study of Shakespeare’s theater because it parallels a theatrical act and provides a model for the interaction of the verbal and visual. That is, the tension between the verbal and visual enacts a semiotics of theater: the relation of emblem to word or page to stage. Again, if Shakespeare’s theater directly addresses the situation of failure in the theater and in explicitly theatrical terms, ekphrasis performs both impossibility and its overcoming. The clarity of representation in an ekphrastic moment (Patience on a monument or Rosalind as the idealized Helen) often does not stand in the service of that which can be represented.

Reformation

Second, the verbal and visual offer contested forms of representation which not only problematize the enterprise of play production but which specifically reproduce significant cultural anxieties concerning the value or danger of the visual. Thus the questions I mean to address in connection with As You Like It are intensified by the Reformation concern with whether truth resides in image or in word. As Huston Diehl argues, Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies articulate the anxieties created by the “reformers’ systematic campaigns to rid the churches of all taint of idolatry and superstition.”


16 In her discussion of John Foxe, Diehl also examines the reformers’ profound concern over the devotional gaze: Foxe “ridicules ‘our mass-men’ for ‘gazing, peeling, pixing, boxing, carrying, re-carrying, worshipping, stooping, kneeling, knocking.’ . . . Protestants object to the Mass because it deflects the worshipper’s attention away from an invisible God, focusing instead on material objects and ‘man-made’ images. In an effort to break the habit of ‘seeing and adoring the body in the form of bread,’ John Foxe ridicules worshipers who ‘imagine a body were they see no body’” (100).
host was, as Jonas Barish comments, “too tangible, too readily turned into a fetish, as in Protestant eyes it had become in the ceremonies of reservation and adoration associated with it. It had been turned into a thing of spectacle, to be gazed upon and marvelled at.”

Focusing on the handkerchief and on “ocular proof” in Othello (3.3.360), Diehl argues that Shakespeare “examines the truth claims of magic and empiricism, the limits of visual evidence, the basis of faith, and the function of memory and imagination in acts of knowing.”

At this historical period the eye was understood as a conduit between what one imagined as inside and outside, public and private, and thus between truth and falsehood. The eye was also a political tool for those in positions of authority, who used it to dazzle, to consolidate power, to urge a particular way of being seen; using the iconography of Fame from Cesare Ripa’s Iconologia, for example, Queen Elizabeth had ears and eyes embroidered on the sleeves of her gown, illustrating her courtly vigilance. The argument between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones over the precedence of verbal (soul) or visual (body) provides but one famous example of the early modern struggle between these two modes of representation and but one example of the way in which a competition of signs is embodied in the theatrical enterprise. Calvin believed that an image could compel the mind to make a fetish of that image; as a result, his fear of imagery was directly related to his sense of its enormous potency: “Men’s folly cannot restrain itself from falling headlong into superstitious rites.”

The general distrust of images—associated with Catholicism, luxury, idolatry, deception, the whore of Babylon—was coupled with a love of splendor and spectacle, a sense that the image could also transport the viewer to truth or reveal aspects of the divine. So divided an attitude impressed itself everywhere: on decisions Queen Elizabeth made about whether or not to hang a crucifix, on the destruction and reinstatement of church statues, and on the decrying of and simultaneous use of images in Reformation literature. Protestants wrestled with the image, at times using it and at times destroying religious paintings and woodcuts, often determining, as did Calvin, that visual images can be too easily misused and lead to delusion and idolatry. “For what are the pictures or stat-

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18 Diehl, 134.
ues to which [the papists] append the names of their saints,” Calvin rhetorically asks, “but exhibitions of the most shameless luxury or obscenity?”21 In “A Warning Against The Idolatrie of the last times,” William Perkins cautions his followers against the use of any images in worship and indeed against the use of the imagination to form any image at all: “A thing fained in the mind by imagination, is an idol.”22 In the midst of such fear monarchs nonetheless employed all manner of visual devices to dazzle the populace. In 1570 Elizabeth appears with the allegorical figures of peace and plenty in a painting entitled “Allegory of the Tudor Protestant Succession.” As John N. King writes, “By commissioning this allegory, Elizabeth involved herself in the fashioning of her own image as a peaceful Protestant ruler.”23 In response, illustrating the same potency of imagery, enemies of the queen tried to harm her by stabbing and poisoning her image. Because of the overdetermined cultural attitudes toward visual display and idolatry, the competition between the visual and verbal in Shakespeare takes on a pointedness that one might otherwise simply ascribe to the nature of the theater.

AS YOU LIKE IT: ROSALIND

In the spirit of the Reformation, the antitheatrical writers of Shakespeare’s day criticized everything popish, spectacular, showy, enticing to the eye. That which was seen was labeled seductive in a double sense, seducing one to lust and, in times of iconoclastic urgency, to break and destroy. Given this context, we might assume that certain visual scenes in Shakespeare’s As You Like It might therefore be especially salient, that despite the lack of backdrops or elaborate props, they might be read (as the antitheatrical writers indeed must have done) as magical and powerful. Yet we must also consider that certain visual scenes might not be potent, might simply be taken for granted as part of the natural working out of the play, might pass by almost unremarked; whereas a verbal image, especially an odd or emblematic one, might jump out, as when Rosalind discusses her desires with Celia, referring to male and female genitalia and to vaginal depths and male ejaculation:

CELIA You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate. We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head, and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest.

23 John N. King, Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1989), 223 and 226 (Fig. 74).
This dialogue avoids physical display to the physical eye but nonetheless provokes a strong mental image. That an audience doesn’t literally see anything doesn’t make this speech less visually shocking or revealing. One sees what cannot be staged and what cannot be said more explicitly.

When Rosalind speaks to Orlando, moreover, she asserts that as his wife she will be “more new-fangled than an ape” (l. 144), a speech that underscores both her verbal wit and, by means of the accumulation of animal imagery, a desire that is both male, as in “cock-pigeon,” and female, as in “Diana”:

I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen, more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more new-fangled than an ape, more giddy in my desires than a monkey. I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain, and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyen, and that when thou art inclined to sleep.

The vivid image of “more new-fangled than an ape,” an image that suggests a range of meanings (newly made, made anew, created in strange fashion, ape-like, akimbo, insistent, superimposed) emphasizes the complexity of a Rosalind who is able to proliferate new images one after the other and who is differently gendered and differently erotic at different moments in the play. All of this takes place in an exclusively linguistic form, that is, in words that evoke not the costume of an ape but a mental image that might overwhelm or at least strongly compete with the figure of the shepherd Ganymede standing on the stage. The superimposition of the ape image draws attention to the layers of costuming already in place; indeed it focuses the eye on what might otherwise be taken for granted, neglected as “conventional”: boy dressed as girl dressed as boy. The images also force an audience to attend to the superimposition of one sort of desire (human and social) on another (animal and asocial) and of one human form on another and its subsequent stripping away. The eroticized violation of her own privacy enacted by Rosalind creates a kind of seeing for all her audiences which is clearly beyond the literal. Our “seeing” here depends ironically on the “ape” and requires a kind of interpretation that displays and embarrasses. Although this language is not, strictly speaking, emblematic, it does move a great distance in that direction by calling up the conventional amalgam of the human and bestial which attracts Shakespeare throughout his career: “moun-
tainers, / Dew-lapp’d like bulls” (The Tempest, 3.3.44–45), the “beast with two
backs” (Othello, 1.1.116–17), the “poor, bare, fork’d animal” (King Lear, 3.4.107–8).

Thus, if we return to the question of visual potency, we might be tempted to
reframe it: if, as is often the case in Shakespeare’s plays, metaphor is made visual and
the visual metaphoric, which is to be judged most arresting, possessing most
enargeia, a liveliness so potent, as Christopher Braider describes it, as to convey pres-
ence: “the power of filling the beholder with an overwhelming sensation of dramat-
ic physical presence.” In addressing this question, it is important to notice that the
“overwhelming sensation” to which Braider refers seems often to come in moments
of ekphrasis in which verbal pictures vie for attention with the stage precisely
because the allegorical is unfinished, enigmatic, layered, odd. Paradoxically, the stagy
“elsewhere” competes with the stage. While Elizabethan writers such as Sidney fre-
quently fall back on the platitude that painting is mute poetry, poetry a speaking
picture, the issue is clearly more complex, unsettled, and unsettling.

The questions of where visual potency is located and how it is most significantly
experienced are self-consciously raised also in Midsummer Night’s Dream, a play that
confronts the issue of representation head on, most obviously by means of the
artifice of the play-within-the-play, in which the mechanical’s play-business direct-
ly interrogates where “seeing” is located, exploring the tension between literal seeing
and seeing in an interpretive way: what is lion? It appears as a fearful creature to fright
the ladies, a mere emblem from a book, something that disfigures into its absence,
“not a lion” (3.1.35), into name (“lion” [5.1.225], “Snug” [1. 223]), into split costume
(3.1.36–37), into “no such thing” (3.1.43), into generalized “man as other men are”
(1. 44), and into the specific (“Snug the joiner” [5.1.223]). Such a vivid and disjunct

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24 Christopher Braider, Refiguring the Real: Picture and Modernity in Word and Image, 1400–1700
Beauty with Boreas (the north wind) and January, he gave them the attributes he found in the standard
Renaissance Iconology of Cesare Ripa. . . . Commentators since Burckhardt have assured us that the
Renaissance spectator would have recognized these figures at once. Jonson apparently believed other-
wise, for however standard the imagery, January begins the masque by explaining it. . . . One of our
chief difficulties in producing Elizabethan plays on modern stages is the ubiquitousness of the dia-
logue; it does not only explain, it often parallels or duplicates the action. Even in the heat of combat,
Renaissance characters regularly pause to describe in words the actions we see taking place” (The

25 As another pastoral comedy that ends with marriage, Dream also has many parallels to As You
Like It. The mechanics deconstruct (or, to use Peter Quince’s language, “disfigure” [3.1.60])
“Pyramus and Thisbe” by their literalness and attention to visual props, to real lions, and to the
breaking of illusion, as when Bottom addresses the onstage audience so directly as to stop the play.
Thus the mechanics’ rehearsal and performance directly raise the question of where ‘seeing’ is
located, of the tension between literal seeing and seeing in an interpretive way. In the rehearsal the
question each of the players asks about how to represent is not simply comic stage business; it is the
central question concerning dramatic representation: is “moonshine” in language or verbal image;
representation occurs in As You Like It once Rosalind leaves the court for the forest, appearing both as the talkative Ganymede and as a portrait created by Orlando on paper and on the trees: "Hang there my verse, in witness of my love" and "Run, run Orlando, carve on every tree / The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she" (3.2.1, 9–10). Already the question of how the verse is to capture Rosalind is raised by the word "unexpressive": unable to be captured in words, without words, lacking expression, a visual sign as female (only a picture, dumb), about to speak as male. It is not "she" but rather Orlando who cannot find the expressions he wants to present the object of his affections.

Rosalind enters reading the portrait on the paper. Rosalind reads herself off the page (as character must be read from script) and yet reads herself as warped into a picture and a poem, both of which are at odds in various ways with the speaker who is their purported source:

From the east to western Inde,
No jewel is like Rosalind.
Her worth being mounted on the wind,
Through all the world bears Rosalind.
All the pictures fairest lin'd
Are but black to Rosalind.
Let no face be kept in mind
But the fair of Rosalind.

(3.2.86–93)

The female portrait here, so codified and conventional as to be comic, is read aloud by the woman—played by a boy and disguised as a boy—who is being praised in the clichéd poetry of the yet-untutored Orlando. The gaps created among the various pictures, to which the poem itself draws attention, are vast: between what Orlando imagines he sees (having fallen in love at first sight) and what this is it in the sky; can it be represented by a bush of thorns and a lantern carried by "the person of Moonshine" (3.1.61)? As Bottom cries: "A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac. Find out moonshine, find out moonshine" (ll. 53–54). If one could find out, Bottom seems to suggest, all problems of representation would be solved, but, of course, his very cry indicates the foolishness of the endeavor of grasping moonshine, of locating any authentic, unalterable source of meaning. Shakespeare’s plays elude, often in such self-conscious ways as this, finding out. At court, representation is further problematized by Philostrate’s initial description of the play and players ("it is nothing, nothing in the world" [5.1.78]), by the mocking interruptions from the audience, and even by Theseus’s defense of using the imagination to "amend" the play. Terence Hawkes points out that bad acting, such as we see in “Pyramus and Thisbe,” has considerable value in that "it affords insight into the workings of drama itself" (27). On the notions of "self" presented by Bottom’s description of moonshine, see Lloyd Davis, Guise and Disguise: Rhetoric and Characterization in the English Renaissance (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993), 13. See also Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958), 57–92.
veys, between the portrait in verse and the figure of Ganymede onstage, between the various pictures words and eyes create, between this picture and “all the pictures fairest lin’d.”

Such confusion is extended in the second poem, in which Orlando compares Rosalind to ideal representations of women such as Cleopatra, Atalanta, and Lucretia. The problematics of representation are unavoidably thrust into view, especially as we are asked to keep the fair Rosalind’s face in mind as the doubly cross-dressed boy reads the portrait that can match what an audience sees only by an effort of mind.

Nature presently distill’d
Helen’s cheek, but not her heart,
Cleopatra’s majesty,
Atalanta’s better part,
Sad Lucretia’s modesty.
Thus Rosalind of many parts
By heavenly synod was devis’d,
Of many faces, eyes, and hearts,
To have the touches dearest priz’d.
(ll. 141–49)

What interests me about this bad poem is that it is bad—a failure at representation because it relies on cliché, uses obvious rhymes, thumps along in regular rhythm. Yet it also highlights the more general problem of how representation fails, and it becomes interesting as Shakespeare’s statement on such failure. More specifically, it draws attention to what the audience comes to recognize about Rosalind as the play progresses: that she is a “Rosalind of many parts,” beyond description, “unexpressive”; and that what one sees is determined by potent images such as those of Cleopatra or Helen—that is, one sees according to preestablished patterns. The way we see is affected, most obviously, by what we believe we are seeing and what we name it, a point made over and over again by scholars interested in the homoerotic nature of Shakespeare’s theater and critics curious about what members of the audience “saw” when they saw boys playing girls and boys with quite ordinary looks playing girls who were said to “look like” Helen.

One cannot but see by means of emblem and allegory, and, here as elsewhere in Shakespeare, emblem helps to define character. More frequently the emblem of a character provides some new depth. We learn of Viola’s love-longing and even know her confused sexuality as she describes the “worm i’ th’ bud” (Twelfth Night, 2.4.111), that suggests genitals confusedly entangled and refers to the “little thing” (3.4.302) beneath damask skirts which the actor and Cesario possess but which Viola lacks. The actor playing Cleopatra looks like a boy dressed up onstage, but when this character is emblematized in the long ekphrastic monologue by Enobarbus, she is
created as a mental image more visually realized, perhaps, than the costumed player could ever be. We see the actor onstage, in part at least, as Enobarbus has memorialized her, and certainly that is the Cleopatra we remember. Rosalind is Cleopatra here only fleetingly, yet the name itself, especially given the popularity of Cleopatra's image in the Renaissance, is more than imaginatively evocative. It is by means of negotiating the difference between literal and interpretive seeing that one is able to "see" Rosalind's complexity. Like the lion's face in A Midsummer Night's Dream, hers is disfigured, created by cosmetics and wigs. The play asks what it might mean to be a Rosalind: a character, a name ("There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened" [3.2.262–63]), a metaphoric jewel, a face, the witty (cracked/uncracked) voice of a saucy lackey. Later, of course, the deceived Phoebe further un-represents Rosalind in her see-saw description of a figure whose words and beauty vie for her praise and add up to make—she presumes—"a proper man" (3.5.115). The transition from still picture to saucy lackey also implies increasing physical gesture, as if text were to come alive before our eyes. As an interim move, gesture makes us attend to the shift in codes as Rosalind metamorphoses from the stilted, love-lorn, and adored lady to the verbally agile and nimble boy. In this way the play shows again its making and forces the audience to be aware of its artificiality.

Think not I love him, though I ask for him.
'Tis but a peevish boy—yet he talks well—
But what care I for words? Yet words do well
When he that speaks them please those that hear.
It is a pretty youth—not very pretty—
But sure he's proud, and yet his pride becomes him.
He'll make a proper man.

(ll. 109–15)

Many have discussed the play-within-the-play courtship scenes between Rosalind and Orlando as teaching them of one another, as preparing them for marriage. What interests me here is the simultaneous disjunction between the scenes of courtship and the ending, and between one representation of "Rosalind" and another,

LOCATING THE VISUAL IN AS YOU LIKE IT

given the friction between verbal and visual insisted on by the play-within-the-play and the charged and erotic eeriness that such impossibility creates.\textsuperscript{27} Rosalind is not only not the picture hanging from the trees and not the figure in the Epilogue, she is also not (or, again, not exactly) the picture she creates of herself within this framed inner world of the play. Although she signals her own complexity and wit when she describes herself as future wife, she will also not, one assumes, despite her claim to the contrary, cuckold Orlando (4.1.154–68). Thus she is and is not both picture and dialogue, is and is not either one or the other, is perhaps the unresolvable conflicts among them.\textsuperscript{28} Thus one of the important ironies of Orlando's poetry is that it acknowledges these conflicts and failures so explicitly and so well:

\begin{quote}
But upon the fairest boughs,
   Or at every sentence end,
Will I Rosalinda write,
   Teaching all that read to know
The quintessence of every sprite
   Heaven would in little show.
\end{quote}

(3.2.132–37)

These artfully bad poems posit a Rosalind who is a heaven in show, a written text, and a sprite to be read—impossibly all of these. Critics are thus brought to argue over the status and coherence of character versus language—it is built into the play. As the poem says, Rosalind's essence is to be read, to be, as she turns out to be, a textbook of language and stories and myths and rhetorical flourishes, and the one who gives language to Orlando, teaching him what to say to woo and have her: "Then you must say, 'I take thee Rosalind for wife'" (4.1.128). Although their conversations move them toward marriage as Orlando begins to learn wit and blank verse, the play nevertheless holds something back from perfect consonance by insisting on various disruptive images as well, by using the disruptive nature of collage.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} For a discussion of the wrestling scene as a play-within-the-play and as accentuating the tension between performance and script, \textsuperscript{26} Cynthia Marshall, "Wrestling as Play and Game in As You Like It," \textit{Studies in English Literature} 33 (1993): 265–87.


\textsuperscript{29} In an earlier article on the play, I argue that Rosalind teaches Orlando to be worthy of her and of marriage by teaching him language by means of conventional rhetorical techniques (including lying and deceit); see Martha Ronk Lifson, "Learning by Talking: Conversation in As You Like It," \textit{Shakespeare Survey} 40 (1988): 91–105. I am now less sanguine than I was about the coherence of character or play, more convinced that different techniques often work at cross-purposes.
The move in the direction of closure and possible coherence in *As You Like It* is purportedly effected by means of extreme counterfeiting. Again, to use an analogy to another play, this seems similar to what happens when Hamlet uses counterfeit in order to move away from the “antic disposition” (one kind of counterfeit) to murder. His move to kill the king is effected by his acting, that is, by following the lead of the actors and by adopting an artificial pose in imitation of the overacting Laertes. He acts in order to act. Rosalind faints at the sight of the bloody napkin and calls it “Counterfeit” (4.3.172), but this counterfeit is, as Oliver says, “a passion of earnest” (ll. 170–71). In this moment of counterfeit, Rosalind faints at the sight of blood, an image that suggests menstrual blood, the blood of the virgin on the wedding sheets, the blood of violence, the violence of sex as the hymen is torn. It is a counterfeit that also leads to the final device (“I shall,” Rosalind says, “devise something” [l. 181]) in which Rosalind returns as the duke’s daughter and the god Hymen arrives to marry all the couples. Rosalind creates herself as capable of effecting magic. First she promises to “cure” Orlando (3.2.414), having learned tricks from her “religious uncle” (l. 336); at the end she promises concord and seems to call up the god Hymen to “bar confusion” and “make conclusion” (5.4.124, 125). Shakespeare is clearly drawing on moments of religious transformation in which one thing becomes another. Even if she looks the same, she will not be; moreover, girl and wife are not, as the play points out, the same either. Paradoxically, then, only by means of artifice—represented as artifice and named as such, especially in the appearance of the walking emblem of marriage, Hymen—does the play wrap up and stop the endless play of poses, speeches, dresses, redresses, and meanings.

*As You Like It: Pastoral*

Artifice not only provides the transition out of the play and playing but is in many ways its very center. Especially in plays such as *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *As You Like It*, in which the world presented is so patently and conventionally artificial, one is acutely aware of discrepancies and fissures in representation. David Young discusses the contradictory presentation of love and nature, and, although his emphasis is on ultimate coherence, his essay notes the play’s insistence on paradox and the ways in which it raises metaquestions about representation both by its artificial and mannered pastoral form and by what characters say about the form in which they are embedded.30 Young refers especially to the characters’ discussions of pastoral: “Truly shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd’s life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is pri-

vate, it is a very vile life” (3.2.13–17). Pastoral characters are already, one might argue, perfect examples of the tension between the visual and verbal since they appear in shepherd’s garb, a defining mark of pastoral, and yet speak with the verbal sophistication of those at court. In the case of Rosalind the fissures and contradictions are multiplied by her crossdressing and cross-talking—posing as a cynical teacher of rhetoric and its civilizing influences—which underscore her duplicitous and encoded nature. In many ways, then, her pose is itself an emblem of theatrical performance, of complex and contradictory representation. As Robert Weimann points out:

Theatrical disguise, like any playacting or deliberate counterfeiting, constitutes the rehearsal of what the actor’s work is all about: the performer’s assimilation of the alien text of otherness itself is turned into a play; it is playfully delivered as an almost self-contained dramatic action itself. In other words, the actor, in performing a character in disguise, presents a playful version of his own métier, a gamesome performance of his own competence in counterfeiting images of both identity and transformation.

The genre of pastoral itself is designed to deceive and hence is also appropriate to a theater focused on deception, not only the visible deception of—as the Puritans were so fond of pointing out—commoners dressed as nobility or boys as girls but also the theme of deception, beginning in As You Like It with the deception between brothers. As Puttenham argues, pastoral is a literary form especially designed “to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters.” As You Like It not only acknowledges the deceptive nature of the pastoral but creates a larger deception by barely mounting the pastoral at all, by almost insisting on its failure to do so. Although it is true that the play suggests a pastoral world, it is also true that in Shakespeare’s time the stage was but minimally dressed and outfitted, “the empty space.” As I remarked at the outset of this essay, the Forest of Arden is “seen” through the emblematic as given in words: Arden as golden world, as Eden, as the lost pastoral of a Merry England, and as outmoded literary form. This vision of the forest, initially presented by Charles, is picked up first by Duke Senior, who says he is glad for freedom from the court, and then by the First Lord, who provides a Hilliard-like portrait of Jaques and the weeping deer.

32 Weimann, 798–99.
33 Puttenham, 53.
34 See Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Atheneum, 1968).
35 Patricia Fumerton describes Hilliard’s Young Man among Roses (c. 1587–88) in a way reminiscent of Jaques: the painting “quintessentially expresses the problematics of representing sincerity through
The melancholy Jaques grieves at that,
And in that kind swears you do more usurp
Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you.
To-day my Lord of Amiens and myself
Did steal behind him as he lay along
Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood,
To the which place a poor sequester'd stag,
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
Did come to languish. . .

(2.1.26–35)

Again the scene seems set in some mythic past, by the antique root of an oak tree and a quarreling allegorical brook. As pastoral figure, Jaques is more emblematic and mannered than dramatic, more artificial than sad. This bookish pastoral is elsewhere, ungraspable, ridiculous, failed. Jaques becomes emblematically melancholic, self-consciously languid and isolated, at one with the injured stag suffering from an incurable wound (see Fig. 1). He is presented as obviously out of place, even if one could know what place it is. The pastoral deer are emblematic: Orlando describes himself as a doe that must find its fawn, Adam. The picture the First Lord paints of Jaques weeping over a deer is emblematic of all destroyed by hunting and/or social cruelty. In this remembered scene Jaques "moralizes the spectacle" and creates an ekphrastic moment that erases literal pastoral:

...'Ay', quoth Jaques,
'Sweep on you fat and greasy citizens,
'Tis just the fashion. Wherefore do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?'

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Thus most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court,
Yea, and of this our life, swearing that we
Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,
To fright the animals and to kill them up
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

(2.1.54–63)

Further, the liberty and festive release that C. L. Barber refers to as an essential part of the pastoral play never quite materializes, although its allegorical possibilities are everywhere. Holiday is in the wrong season: “winter and rough weather” (2.4.8). There is no sheepshearing, as in The Winter's Tale; no fairies or flowers, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream; no nature goddesses, as in The Tempest. Moreover, throughout As You Like It the pastoral picture is represented and denied, especially in Act 2, in which the Forest of Arden is constantly interrupted and even obliterated by long set speeches that conjure up the court. In the context of the pastoral fiction, it is unsettling that so many such speeches usurp the stage and focus attention elsewhere. Especially given a sparsely furnished stage, the speeches about books in brooks or herds of deer (“fat and greasy citizens”) or time (“And so from hour to hour, we rot, and rot” [2.7.27]) or “All the world's a stage” (l. 139) provide ekphrastic moments that create a different sort of seeing, erasing trees, as well as natural harmony:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

(ll. 139–43)

One might argue that in the pastoral plays of green worlds the vision is momentary in the mind and meant to evaporate. Not only do the courtiers return to the court but the world that has been visible onstage—a world of fairies in A Midsummer Night's Dream or of purported harmony among classes or of performative possibilities in terms of gender—evaporates as if it had never been. The underscoring of such evaporation, especially, of course, in Prospero's farewell-to-revels speech (4.1.146–58), but in all the plays as well, adds to the questions about representation in Shakespeare's theater. It is the design of the play to expose the artificial construction of what we have seen and to problematize its representation.

At this point, in order to draw some broad conclusions about the location of the visual and the differences between literal and interpretive seeing, I turn to one of the most extreme examples of artifice and ekphrasis in As You Like It, the scene in which Oliver produces the bloody napkin that causes Rosalind to “counterfeit”: Oliver's
speech describes how Orlando approaches him as he sleeps under an old oak (just as Jaques is described near the outset of the play: bookends). The speech relates a highly emblematic if ineffable scene, calling out for interpretation: something is hidden, something concealed. Oliver’s portrait of himself also demands analysis, since he presents himself in the third person as an object and as an object quite other than he has been before: “wretched,” “ragged,” “sleeping on his back.” Orlando

... threw his eye aside,
And mark what object did present itself.
Under an old oak, whose boughs were moss’d with age
And high top bald with dry antiquity,
A wretched ragged man, o’ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back. About his neck
A green and gilded snake had wreath’d itself,
Who with her head, nimble in threats, approach’d
The opening of his mouth. But suddenly
Seeing Orlando, it unlinked itself,
And with indented glides did slip away
Into a bush, under which bush’s shade
A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
Lay couching head on ground, with catlike watch
When that the sleeping man should stir; for 'tis
The royal disposition of that beast
To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead.

(4.3.102-18)

This ekphrastic speech contains obvious imagery of a violent primal scene with snakes and mouths (although the phallic power here is associated with the female) which ultimately provides the transition to Oliver’s conversion, the reconciliation of the brothers, and the marriages. Thus it is an ekphrastic speech, conflating the unconsciously erotic and the spiritual as it gestures toward what cannot be represented except by a pictorial replacement—an especially potent vehicle given cultural suspicion, at least in some quarters, of any sort of picture. Like the play-within-the-play in Hamlet, this episode provides a way of contemplating the meaning of the play as a whole—the problematic of representing the relationships among the characters and especially the sexual anxiety attending both homoerotic and hetero-

sexual couples. This scene provides the transition to marriage, which also includes fear of sexuality, violence, dismemberment, confinement to specific gender role. It does so by means of picture. The scene is also a somewhat perverse transition back to the page: a sign of the written, the emblematic, the still moment that can be contemplated, the dead with an uncanny ability to become alive, the allegorical—an embodiment and creation of anxiety. One knows one is “looking” at something horrific, even if one does not know exactly what to make of it.37

Why does this long speech drop into the play at this moment? Why does the play interrupt the witty dialogue with this static emblem that seems so at odds with what has gone before? Why does it seem both a moment of essential if mysterious truth and a digression?38 Why is the charming and dramatic verbal courtship replaced by this wooden visual description of impending doom, which turns out also to be a screen for the courtship between Oliver and Celia, albeit, and perhaps importantly, hidden from view, played out in pictures without words? Why does this scene so move Rosalind that she dies onstage, imaging the little death to come?

The scene seems overly freighted with meaning but meaning that is also oddly unreadable, the blockage that, as Paul de Man suggests, allegory always provides: “Allegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read. . . . Allegories are always allegories of metaphor and, as such, they are always allegories of the impossibility of reading—a sentence in which the genitive ‘of’ has itself to be ‘read’ as a metaphor.”39 Allegory thus offers both enormous satisfaction, since we seem to have encountered the root of all meaning, and enormous frustration, since that meaning is blocked.40 This objectified picture, a recitation from memory, paradoxically supplies access to something deeply remembered, extremely detailed and extremely elusive, a sort of

37 Mitchell discusses Shelley’s “On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery” in relation to gender confusion with female snakes and vaginal mouths on men; one might also compare Viola’s “worm i’ th’ bud”: “If ekphrasis, as a verbal representation of a visual representation, is an attempt to repress or ‘take domain’ over language’s graphic Other, then Shelley’s Medusa is the return of that repressed image, teasing us out of thought with a vengeance” (173). The passage in As You Like It seems an announcement of “that which we are not to look upon,” although I am uncertain to what it refers. See also Bryan Wolf, “Confessions of a Closet Ekphrastic: Literature, Painting and Other Unnatural Relations,” Yale Journal of Criticism 3 (1990): 181–203.


40 As Joel Fineman suggests, there is a formal affinity of allegory with obsessional neurosis (both incompletable), “which, as Freud develops it in the case of the Wolfman, derives precisely from such a search for lost origins, epitomized in the consequences of the primal scene” (“The Structure of Allegorical Desire” in Greenblatt, ed., 26–60, esp. 45).
screen memory perhaps. It represents what cannot be represented by giving it an artificial form seemingly at odds with the movement of dramatic plot yet mysteriously capable of moving it forward, not directly, as the scenes between Rosalind and Orlando do, but indirectly and allegorically, as if by magic.

As You Like It carries a theory of theatrical production within it—as it insistently enacts disruption and the various ways in which any character, scene, or abstract idea might be represented. The impossibility embedded in ekphrasis and in a scene such as this awkward transitional scene suggests that it is impossibility of representation which is being dramatized: in the crossing-over and conflict between the visual and verbal; in the picturing and especially “unpicturing” of pastoral; in the fracturing of character into highly visual and highly verbal aspects. In other words, Shakespeare's plays repeatedly draw attention to failure, to the overcoming of failure, and to failure again—the failure to construct the very thing that the play sets out to construct. Thus each of the familiar techniques by which Shakespeare calls attention to the construction of the plays also reveals how each device, whether linguistic or visual, ultimately fails to represent fully or falls short: the play-within-the-play; the use of scripts within the script (Hamlet's letter to Horatio, Viola's memorized speeches of courtship, Rosalind's lessons taken directly out of rhetoric books); the endless references to roles and costumes; the insertion of ekphrasis, which interrupts the forward movement of plot; and the homology between acting and acting or play (playing around) and the play. Moreover, Shakespeare's plays continually emphasize what cannot be said (“I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth” [King Lear, 1.1.91–92]) and what cannot be pictured: no matter how many efforts are made in Hamlet, for example (including but not limited to the dumb show and “The Mousetrap”), the primal scenes of penetration (of intercourse and of Hamlet Senior's murder) remain unseen—elsewhere,

42 Fletcher argues that especially in the chance happenings in pastoral, accidents of fortune seem to be caused by something magical or occult: “Whenever fictional events come about arbitrarily through the workings of chance (accidents) or are brought about by the supernatural intervention of a superior external force (‘miracles’), this accident and this intervention have the same origin, in the eyes of religion and poetic tradition. . . . accidents always are the work of daemons” (187).
43 According to Keir Elam, “there is a further historical dimension to Shakespeare's verbal self-mirroring, a dimension that is not so much theoretical as cultural and artistic. Formal self-reflection is one of the dominant features of baroque art in all its forms, and there is no question that the poetics of Shakespearean comedy, in its pursuit of structural and rhetorical complexity, is governed by the spirit of the baroque. The pleasures of Shakespeare’s eminently self-interrogating dramatic art are in this respect the same pleasures derived from the mirroring games of the visual and other art forms of the period” (Shakespeare’s Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984], 23).
represented by other murders. The fact that saying and seeing are often in opposition to one another, one undoing the other, contributes not only to the gap between them but to the instability of representation itself. One might turn to Bottom's assertion that although a “ballet” might be made of his dream in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, nothing could truly capture it: “The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballet of this dream” (4.1.211–14).

To conclude: the allegorical content of ekphrasis argues that the act of acting is itself a type of allegory: that which must be interpreted and which remains nonetheless unreadable. Even as costume itself announces the contingency of character, so it underscores theater's reliance on deception and allegory. In fact, the entire mise-en-scène must be read as worldview, or, to put it another way, the play as a whole must be read even as one reads a single act such as the more obviously emblematic plays-within-the-play. Often it seems obvious that what occurs in small is emblematic—but not so obvious that the entire play might be read in similar fashion, not, as has been argued, as Christian or any other totalizing allegory but rather as decidedly feigned and strange. Puritans opposed to Shakespeare’s theater had a clear sense of the dangerous and deceptive nature of the plays, and, indeed, the plays themselves ask for such interpretation.

Each of the plays-within-the-play focuses on a set of lovers, Orlando and Rosalind, Phebe and Silvius, Phebe and Rosalind, Touchstone and Audrey, Oliver and Celia; and each is “counterfeit,” that is, in each, someone is fooled or disguised or misapprehended or rendered artificial in a way implying that all this coincidence adds up to something. Taken together, they seem to suggest that a world (not just the world of the court or of Arden) is being presented which must be interpreted, that something is behind what is seen. Things are not what they seem not only because Rosalind is dressed as Ganymede, but because throughout the play every character and scene is rendered purposefully artificial and “elsewhere”: one sees what is onstage and also bears in mind what is offstage or only in the mind. Perhaps there is no way to mount a play without its evoking the idea of a veil, behind which must

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44 Discussing “The Mousetrap” in *Hamlet* as Shakespeare’s most profound examination of mimesis, Robert Weimann states: “The Mousetrap itself becomes . . . a self-conscious vehicle of the drama’s awareness of the functional and thematic heterogeneity of mimesis itself. Such mimeses . . . provokes differing levels of contradiction, such as that between speaking and acting, or that between theory and practice, which, in their turn, link up with the thematic conflict, associated with the central figure of the play, between discourse and action, conscience and revenge” (“Mimesis in Hamlet” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, eds. [New York and London: Methuen, 1985], 275–91, esp. 279–80).
be something, something that is always hidden and screened from view. As You Like It, for all its comic ingenuity, also conveys a sense of something erased and missing, some deep aspect of character, some golden world: the Robin Hood days of “yore” (the old order that is represented and destroyed again and again in plays such as Lear), the incarnation of the sacred. Shakespeare’s theater can be understood as compensatory in many ways for cultural loss, most obviously the loss of magic ritual as represented in the appearance in this play of the god Hymen, the female potency of Rosalind/Ganymede, the conversions of Oliver and Duke Senior. Rosalind articulates her ability to perform magic at the end of the play and thus articulates not Shakespeare’s creation of saints or idols (although it was idolatry that the antitheatrical writers opposed) but rather that which must stand in for such: “I can do strange things. I have since I was three year old conversed with a magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable” (5.2.59–62, emphasis added). Rosalind reminds an audience of what is missing. I concur with C. L. Barber’s view that the play “reflects the tension involved in the Protestant world’s denying itself miracle in a central area of experience. Things that had seemed supernatural events, and were still felt as such in Rheims, were superstition or magic from the standpoint of the new Protestant focus on individual experience.” Shakespeare’s theater then becomes a variation on memory theater, structurally organized to keep before the eyes of the audience what is missing or about to disappear—hence the focus on and the erasure of the potently visual whether on stage or page. The audience is asked to see with the mind, to call up and remember that which is not literally present, and to accord it complex meaning and weight. Perhaps what we “see” is necessarily elsewhere. Visual moments are as weighty and disturbing as they are because they tend to evoke images missing from the culture, especially images fraught with allegorical and mysterious meaning.