



As You Like It



sources
argument
dramaturgy

Copyright Infringement 2

Wrestling 3

Cross-Dressing 8

Robin Hood 19

Love as Mental Illness 25



Copyright Infringement

As You Like It appeared on the Register of the Stationers' Company on August 4, 1600.

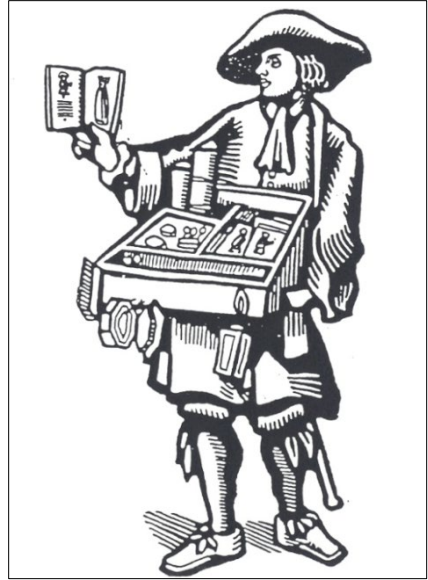
It was designated a work "to be stayed."

This put an embargo on publication until the Stationers were satisfied that the author owned the copyright.

The ban was never lifted. The play was an obvious copy of Thomas

Lodge's *Rosalynde*, published in 1590. Lodge himself plagiarized *Tale of Gamelyn*, sometimes printed with *The Canterbury Tales*. *Rosalynde* and *Tale of Gamelyn* contained all the intertwined plots, and all the characters except Touchstone and Jaques.

As You Like It was quietly inserted in the First Folio in 1623, but its publication was technically illegal. To this day, *As You Like It* is an unenforced violation of English copyright law. ©



Wrestling



Wrestling was a main event at English country fairs in the Middle Ages. In the cities, wrestling was associated with cockfights and bear-baiting.

Cromwell banned it as a sinful pleasure.

Wrestling was legalized in the Restoration, until Queen Victoria banned it once again.

The Victorian ban was lifted only recently to allow the import of its American cousins WWE, Ultimate Fighting, and Mixed Martial Art cage-fights.

*But is there any else
longs to see this broken
music in his sides?
Is there yet another dotes
upon rib-breaking?
Shall we see this
wrestling, cousin?*



Devonshire wrestlers were notorious for “showing the toe” – *i.e.*, kicking. This was permitted in Devon but not in Cornwall.

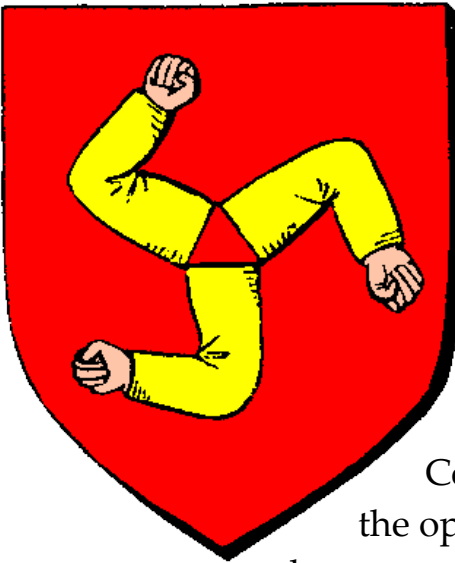
Many Cornishmen would not wrestle Devonshire opponents, who they considered dirty fighters.



Supporters of Devonshire style argued that the Greeks used to kick in their bouts. So they claimed Devonshire tactics were “classical” *because* they were more violent.

An 18th century account of a wrestling match at the Eagle Tavern on City Road, London:

The florid chubby-faced Devon man was all life in the ring, holding himself erect, and offering every advantage to his opponent. The sallow sharp-featured Cornwall man was all caution and resistance, finding himself in such a way, that his legs are inaccessible to his opponents, and waiting for the critical instant when he can spring in upon his impatient adversary.



Cornwall's banner in the Hundred Years' War taunted the French that Cornish troops were brutal wrestlers.

Cornish style originates from the Celts. It is always held in the open air. The umpires are known as sticklers. Traditionally the challenge takes a form of throwing a cap in the air, and whoever wants may pick it up.



A traditional variation continues to this day among English schoolboys.



In "stampers" or "cutlegs," boys grapple into an embrace and try to stamp on each other's toes.

"Stampers" is probably the ancient ancestor of the rugby scrum.

Lancashire wrestling was particularly barbaric.

Lancashire rules prohibited throttling and the breaking of limbs, but left everything else to free-style mayhem. Wrestling continued after the contestants hit the ground. An aristocratic observer complained to a Crown Committee of Inquiry in 1698:



A Lancashire wrestling match is an ugly sight: the fierce animal passions of the men which mark the struggles of maddened bulls, or wild beasts, the savage yelling of their partisans, the wrangling, and finally the clog business which settles all disputes and knotty points, are simply appalling.



Cross-Dressing



I thank God I am endued with such qualities that if I were turned out of the Realm in my petticoat I were able to live in any place in Christendom.

Elizabeth I, *Answer to Parliament* (October 1566)

Midway through the reign of Elizabeth I, English women began to struggle against their subordinate status on an unprecedented scale. Adopting male dress was a public sign of dissent.

Some social historians point to the increase in educated women during the sixteenth century; others to Puritanism, which preached spiritual equality between the sexes.

Middle-class women could not simply abandon an unwanted husband and live as they pleased. They could, however, imitate the “impudence,” “insolence,” and unisex fashions of their aristocratic sisters and the representatives of their sex who peopled the Elizabethan stage.

*Susan Shapiro, *Feminists in Elizabethan England* (1978)*





Behold the Presidesse oth pilfring Trade
Mercuryes second; Venus's onely Mayd
Doblet and breeches in a Uniform dresse
No Female Humourist a Kickshaw messe
Heres no attraction that your fancy greets
But her FEATURES please not wad her FEATS.



*I could find in my heart to disgrace my
man's apparel and to cry like a woman;
but I must comfort the weaker vessel,
as doublet and hose ought to show
itself courageous to petticoat:
therefore courage!*

Elizabethan women often wore breeches, doublets, and daggers, and cut their hair short. It is difficult to estimate their numbers. However, one indication is the extent of the male backlash.

From 1580-1625, an astonishing number of pamphlets, plays and broadsides condemned the “plague” of women in male dress. Male supremacy had never before had to fight for its life.

*Why, the doublet
serves as well as the
best, and is most in
fashion. We're all
male to th' middle,
mankind from th'
beaver to th' bum.
Tis an Amazonian
time; you shall have
women shortly tread
their husbands.*

Thomas
Middleton,
*A Mad World My
Masters* (1608)



*The women also there have dublets and Jerkins...
buttoned up the brest, and made with wings, welts, and
pinions on the shoulder points, as mans apparel is, for all
the world, and though this be a kind of attire appropriate
onely to man, yet they blush not to wears it, as if they
could as well chaunge their sex, & put on the kinde of
man, as they can
weare apparel
assigned onely to
man, I think they
would as verily
become men
indeed...*

*Wherefore these
Women may not
improperly be
called
Hermaphroditi,
that is, Monsters
of bothe kindes,
half women, half men.*



Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583)

James I was obsessed with fear of “mannish” women. He believed the English social order was under attack by an army of female transvestites. He ordered the Church to suppress them:

*Ministers of my
Churche shall inveigh
vehemently and
bitterly in theyre
sermons against the
insolencie of our
women, and theyre
wearing of brode
brimd hats, pointed
dublets, theyre haire
cut short or shorne,
and some of them
stilletoes or poniards,
and such other
trinckets of like
moment, and that yf
pulpit admonitions
will not reforme them
I wold proceed by another course...”*



James I, *Instruction to Bishop of London*, 1620



Shakespeare's was the last generation of English theater that could show cross-dressing favorably. By 1620, the Jacobean theater joined the churches in James I's culture war against uppity women:

Our pulpits ring continually of the insolence and impudence of women: and to helpe the matter forward the players have likewise taken them to taske, and so too the ballades and ballad-singers, so that they can come no where but theyre eares tingle: and yf all this will not serve the King threatens to fall upon theyre husbands, parents, or frends that have or shold have powre over them and make them pay for yt.

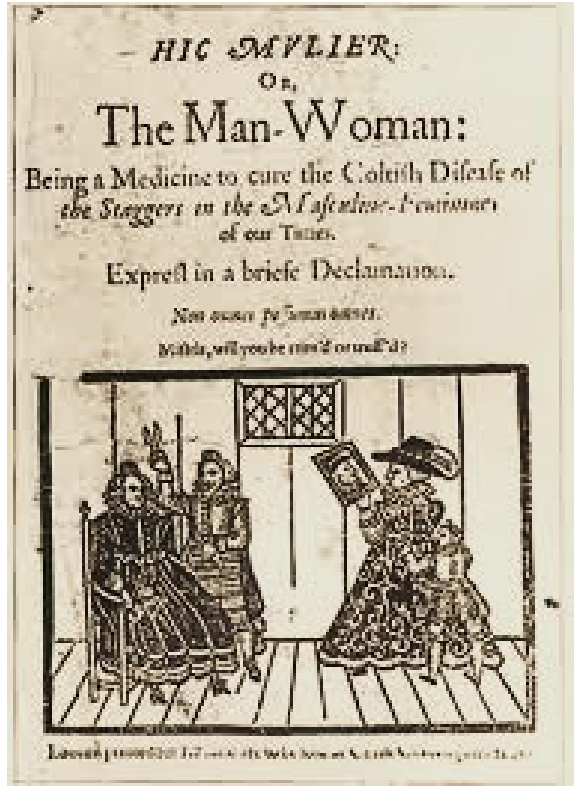
Lord Chamberlain's Report to James I, 1620

The Privy Council commissioned a propaganda leaflet, *Hic Mulier*, or *The Man-Woman* (1620):

These Dangerous, Unnatural, and Unmanly times: wherein as sundry of our Mannish, Impudent, and inconstant Female

sexes, are Hermaphrodited, and transformed into men; not only in their immodest, shameless, and audacious carriage, (which is now the very manners and Courtship of the times;) but even in the unnatural Tonsure, and Odious, if not Whorish cutting and Crisping of their Hair, their natural veile, their Feminine glory, and the very badge and Character of their subjection both to God and man.

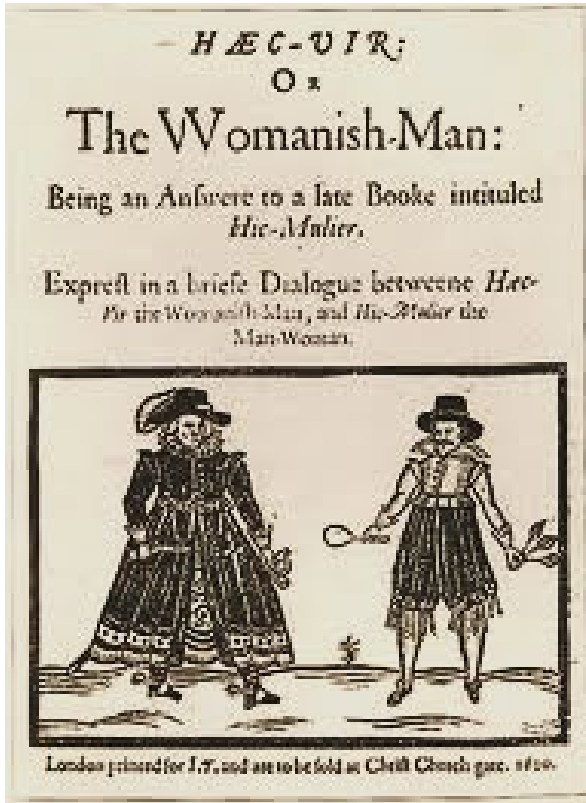
Copies were disseminated in churches and schools.



An anonymous reply appeared, apparently written by a woman using an unlicensed press.

Haec-Vir, or The Womanish Man (1620) argued that

the campaign against women's liberty was the result of men's own gender insecurity.



The author implied what many had rumored – that while James I hated women, he secretly wore women's clothes.

The pamphlet was banned as sedition. But it was a huge success on the black market.

Haec-Vir was clearly influenced by Shakespeare's Rosalind, Emilia, and Beatrice:

What slavery can there be in freedom of election? or what baseness, to crowne my delights with those pleasures which are most suteable to mine affection... Now for mee to follow change, according to the limitations of mine owne will and pleasure, there cannot bee a greater freedome. Nor do I in my delight of change other wise then as the whole world doth, or as becommeth a daughter of the world to doe.



We are as free-borne as Men, have as free election, and as free spirits, we are compounded of like parts, and may with like liberty make benefit of our Creations: my countenance shall smile on the worthy, and frowne on the ignoble, I will hear the Wise, and bee deafe to Ideots.



The Rehabilitation of Robin Hood

They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.

Shakespeare's audience knew the same Robin Hood legend we know from Errol Flynn.

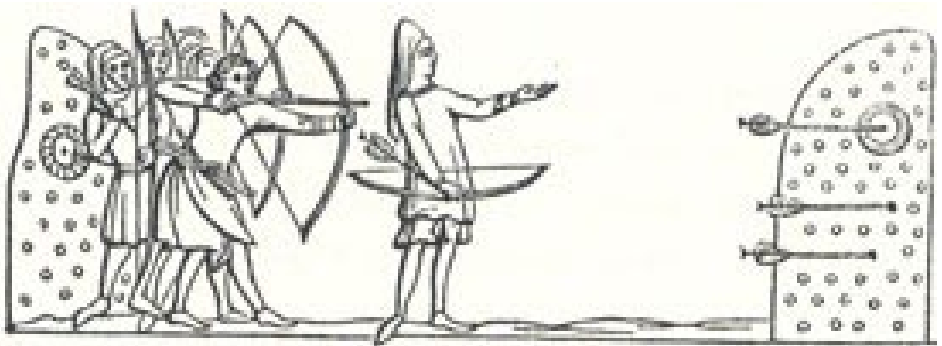


It would do well to set the deer's horns upon his head, for a branch of victory.

But the Robin Hood legend had only recently gone through a complete reversal. Before the 16th century, the official version made Robyn Hode a murderous criminal, like Jesse James.



In the medieval story, Guy of Gisbourne was the hero, a chivalrous knight like Roland or Gawain. The story praised his victory over Robyn Hode, a renegade who incited peasants to murder their masters. Robyn Hode's retreat into the Forest was a fall back to chaos, a hellish underworld outside the civilizing care of Crown and Church.



15th Century woodcut exalting noble archery over peasant game-shooting

The story of Gisbourne's defeat of Robyn Hode reinforced decrees against "disloyal" peasants. Edward III's Statute of Labourers (1351) punished farm workers who fled to the forests on strike for higher wages after the Black Death:

Whereas late against the malice of servants, which were idle, and not willing to serve after the pestilence, without taking excessive wages, it was ordained by our lord the king that such manner of servants, as well men as women, should be bound to serve, that the same servants refusing to serve in such manner should be punished by imprisonment of their bodies.



Guy of Gisbourne, slayer of the outlaw Robyn Hode



That the said servants having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and singular covetise, do withdraw themselves unless they have livery and wages to the double or treble of that they were wont to take to the great damage of the great men, and impoverishing of all, whereof the land-lords prayeth remedy.

The politics of the Robin Hood legend changed during Elizabeth's reign.



By 1588, England had no defense against Philip II's Spanish armies except the Atlantic Ocean and the unorthodox tactics of her navy - piracy and ambush. Spain regarded Sir Francis Drake's privateers as outlaws, and the English ambush of the Armada with fire ships as a war crime.

Elizabeth answered Spanish threats like an outlaw:

The use of the sea and air is common to all; neither can a title to the ocean belong to any sovereign or private persons, forasmuch as neither nature nor public use and custom permit any possession thereof.

Elizabeth I to the Spanish Ambassador (1588)

We forget how weak Protestant England was. But for Drake's fire ships and three days of bad weather in the Channel, Philip's army would surely have landed at Southampton. It would have been unstoppable. Shakespeare and Jonson would have vanished from time, and in their place the Inquisition would have been masters of London.



George Orwell, June 1940

After the Armada's defeat, the Robin Hood legend became a useful metaphor for Drake's defense against the Spanish.



Plays, poems and ballads turned Robin from thug to hero.

Nature was no longer a terrifying hell where rebels were exiled.

It was now a magical place where Providence confounded tyrants.



We find many coded references to the Armada in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies. But the traces are also there in his romances and pastoral works.

Prospero's confusion of his enemies, the magical overthrow of tyranny in the forests of Arden and Athens – these images could only make sense to an audience who had experienced delivery by a Natural providence, through outlaws who lived free within Nature.

Davies, England after the Armada

Shakespeare had come full circle from the medieval sermons against original sin:

*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?*



Love as Mental Illness

Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do: and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too.

Many of Shakespeare's plays treat love as a form of madness.



This was not a poetic device. It was the prevailing diagnosis. The leading medical treatise of the time classified romantic love as a mental disorder.



*A beautifulle object
attractinge the eye opens the
bodye to the infection. Thus it
dries and cools the bodye with
melancholy bile. Excessive
mentall action spreads black
bile through the bodye, which
deepens despair. The patient
myst avoide honey, cakes,
sweet wine and sleepinge in
soft beds.*



Dr. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)



James I's cousin Arabella Stuart died insane after she secretly married a young Oxford scholar; James had forbidden the match as unbecoming to the lady's lineage. They managed to escape and reach the French coast, where they were arrested, brought back to England and imprisoned as

lunatics. Arabella then refused all sustenance and died in the Tower of London in 1615.

The patient must not have access to sonnets or love stories while the maladie is yet uncured.

Burton,
Anatomy of Melancholy
(1621)

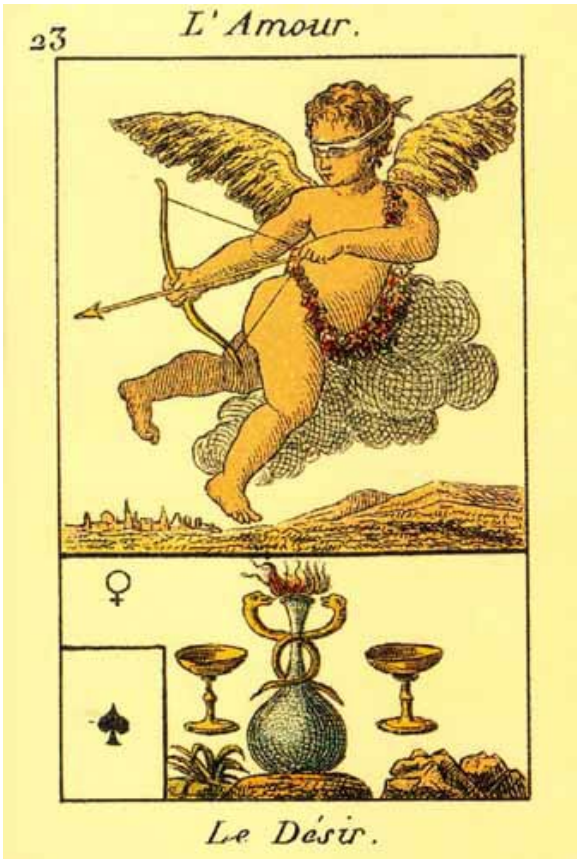


Yet Dr. Burton
and the 17th

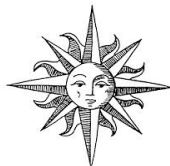
Century medical profession opposed harsh laws
against elopement:

Neither the law nor the physician should refuse the sufferer the object of desire in marriage, in accordance with both divine and human laws, because the wounds of love are cured only by those who made them.





*that same wicked bastard of Venus
that was begot of thought,
conceived of spleen and born of madness,
that blind rascally boy that abuses every one's eyes
because his own are out,
let him be judge how deep I am in love.*





DIRECTED BY
BRIDGET
FRYE

Dream Role Players ◇ June 2022 ◇ Cambridge MA

Robin Abrahams	Jaques
Michael Anderson	Duke Frederick/Corin
Meg Boeni	Rosalind
Lisa Burdick	Duke Senior
Caroline DeBrotta	Amiens
Danielle Dorrego	Phebe
Lauren Elias	Celia
Lou Fuoco	Adam
Freeman Kirshen	Page
Eric McGowan	Orlando
Mary Parker	Charles/Audrey
Elizabeth Ross	Touchstone
Shawyoun Shaidani	Oliver
Robert Thorpe III	Silvius/Le Beau
Nick Gould	Fight Choreographer
Rachel Veto	Stage Manager

For full cast bios go to
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