

THE MELANCHOLY JACQUES

James Cushing

I got mad, and then attended *As You Like It*.
The whole theme of the play – society, law, exile –
and the man next to me spoke of his
antique business...the usual billing and rebooting
costs...I heard myself say things I'd stored up
for really nervous occasions...And rereading
the play, actually staring at pages waiting for them
to do something they didn't do last time, I felt
a stand of oaks leaning with exhaustion
and resentment at the world that planted them there.
It's an obedience culture now, when people dance
in lines, kicking and turning in unison for hours.
Clearly, they've neglected the swimming pool.

Green leafy weeds grow six, seven feet out of
brackish water, serpents live in the ooze at the deep end,
evil-smelling golden insects buzz over giant leaves.
Such chaotic times! I hold my right hand out to you,
waiting for you to “get it,” but you’re looking
into a mirror, and the summer sky gleams behind your
head. Do we tremble at this roaring fury, or relax into
the fragrance of the mid-August night? Do we love
the moment’s signature beneath the bill of leaves?
Are you disappointed in the oxygen, the circles
leaves draw as the wind shifts their centers?
Did you want the leaves to be bells, *ching-ling*,
chang-lang? You inspire thunderstorms and broken pipes.
Something must be waiting, ready to run.