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Utopia, Arcadia and the Forest of Arden

Abstract: In *Utopia* (1516) Thomas More created a humorous world with a serious purpose. His invented republic was a place where existing conventions and structures did not exist, allowing the positing of alternatives. The creation of alternative worlds which satirise or critique contemporary society is a technique employed by writers in most genres, in most periods and in most cultures. More's work is interesting for us in this context at least in part because of the likelihood that Shakespeare was familiar with it. When he created The Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, for some of the characters there are utopian elements in their experience of that place. But Arden is not only a putative Utopia. Arden also contains elements of the pastoral Arcadia, again drawing upon ancient precedents, but more recently explored by English poets Edmund Spenser in *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) and Philip Sidney in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1593). This article interrogates the use of Utopian and Arcadian elements in the creation of one of Shakespeare's most complicated plays. Like More's *Utopia* its intention is comic. Like Sidney's poem it is romantic, but unlike both of them it is ultimately about returning to a real world, with new perceptions of who we are, not as a society but as individuals.

Keywords: Shakespeare and utopia, arcadia/utopia and the Forest of Arden, transformative wilderness, *As You Like It*.

When Shakespeare wrote his plays there was no expectation that they would be printed, let alone pored over and studied. But after the publication in 1623 of the special Folio edition of *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, edited by his friends after his death, scholars and students have read, analysed and dissected the plays. In the four centuries since his death Shakespeare has been spread around the world, and is now seen, heard, and read in languages unknown to him and in cultures and media undreamt of by the Elizabethan English. Instead of one theatre company, the Lord Chamberlain's/

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King's Men, performing the play from time to time as part of their repertoire, there are now thousands of productions of Shakespeare's plays all over the world every year, each one seeking to arrive at its own special interpretation. But the greatest difference between Shakespeare's time and the present is that nowadays the plays are closely analysed. The Head of Education at the Royal Shakespeare Company once told this author that at any given moment research indicates that approximately 147 million people are studying Shakespeare's plays and poetry around the world (2017). While many of those studying the texts are doing so at an introductory level in school, at more advanced levels they are not merely studied, but forensically dissected by scholars. This is a level of scrutiny to which a busy playwright in the commercial London theatre could never have expected his plays to be subjected.

One of the purposes of this scholarship is to contextualise Shakespeare's writing, to trace influences, to relate his writings to the details in his own cultural landscape, in order to attempt to home in on his intentions and meanings. But as scholars today examine Shakespeare in this light, the danger is that the academic, with vast libraries to draw upon, can seek for and find relationships which were never intended to be there. When Shakespeare used other writers as sources for his plays he generally did so quite blatantly, often transcribing passages almost verbatim. Yet modern scholars will sometimes discuss Shakespeare's writings in relation to ideas, sources, and concepts far outside his experiences, intentions or knowledge. Following a desire to understand and contextualise, the danger exists of over-attribution and an excessive desire to categorise.

As You Like It is a play which is often discussed in terms of two concepts, which may be conveniently referred to as Utopia and Arcadia. A simple internet search will throw up a very large number of articles, at all levels of complexity, which examine the play in the light of these two ideas. Despite the popularity of the first, Utopia, in this context, it is of questionable validity in looking at *As You Like It*. The second, Arcadia, however, is useful as a starting point for looking at the play.

To deal first with Utopia, in the first scene of *As You Like It*, Charles the Wrestler describes the exiled Duke and his followers in the Forest of Arden as "fleet[ing] the time carelessly, as they did in the Golden World" (1:1:103). This, together with the speech about life in the Forest uttered by the Duke himself (2:1:548 et seq.) about their life in the forest, have been taken by a number of authors as a starting point for discussion of the Forest of Arden as an idyllic, bucolic world, far away from the corruption of the court.¹ But to describe it as Utopian stretches the word beyond breaking point: even though different generations use the same words to describe what can be very different ideas,

¹ All line numberings are from the Open Source Shakespeare editions.

a word coined by an author, as it becomes more widely used, leaves behind the context for which it was created. One such word is *Utopia*. The word was created in the eponymous book by Thomas More, to describe a fictional country. The title page expresses the hope that the book will be received as being “as entertaining as it is instructive” (1516). Since the year of its creation the seriousness or otherwise of More’s depiction has been debated, but certainly the name of his fictional country, *Utopia*, is derived from Greek, meaning “Not Place,” and several of the names in the book are of a similar provenance. Examples would include his narrator Raphael *Hythlodæus* (“dispenser of nonsense”), the river *Anydrus* (“not water”) or the chief magistrate *Ademus* (“not people”). More’s later martyrdom and sanctification have sometimes led subsequent commentators to take the book more seriously than More clearly intended, but More had a lively sense of humour, as his friend Erasmus attested. In one of his letters he says that “from earliest childhood [More] had such a passion for jokes that one might almost suppose he had been born for them” (Allen 16). More and Erasmus had worked together on translations into Latin from the Greek writer Lucian just over a decade earlier, and the real antecedent for More’s subsequent book is Lucian’s *A True Story*, written at some time in the Second Century CE. This model consists of “a familiar conversation raising a serious problem, followed by a fantastic traveller’s tale describing an imaginary place in which the problem is solved” (Turner 7) In this respect More’s *Utopia* has more in common with books like *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) than a more serious political treatise such as Plato’s *Republic* (375 BCE).

The world which More’s *Hythlodæus* describes is run along strictly controlled lines in an attempt to achieve more perfect social relationships. It is a welfare state, in that everyone has food to eat, clothes to wear, drab though they may be, somewhere to live, is educated and has healthcare. The working day is only six hours. On the other hand, material needs are met on a rather basic level, it is impossible to travel without a permit, and women are required once a month to kneel before their husbands and confess their failings. It is worth pointing out that there is no equivalent requirement for husbands. In *Utopia* there is virtually no privacy, pre-marital sex is punished by celibacy for life, and adultery by slavery. Repeat offences are subject to the death penalty. More, himself famously ascetic, wearing a hair shirt until the day he died, was interested neither in material things nor sex, but knew that the same could not be said of most of his readers. For satirical purposes he took some of his ideas to extremity. Thus, in *Utopia*, More follows Lucian and anticipates Swift, in depicting extremes in order to castigate vice.

But this is not what the word *Utopia* has come to mean in succeeding centuries. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (<https://merriam-webster.com>) defines *Utopia* as “a place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government and social conditions.” *Utopian* fiction often depicts idealised settings, where social and

political harmony exist. What Utopian science fiction and 18th-century travellers' tales have in common with More's Utopia is the idea that such a society is remote from our own, either geographically or temporally, and it has found different solutions to what are, for readers, recognisable problems. A lot of Utopian fiction, however, takes itself far more seriously than More's Utopia. The word Utopian has frequently become used, whether that use is correct, as a term to describe perfect societies, with connotations of unattainability. "Utopian" is also used as a disparaging term for an impossible pipe dream, as well as the aspirational term for an ideal society to be worked towards. The second definition offered by Merriam-Webster is "an impractical scheme for social improvement" (ibid).

Anyone attempting to approach Shakespeare's Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* as a Utopian setting has an extremely difficult task ahead. This has not prevented some commentators from trying. To give but one example, Farrar (2014) in *Utopian Studies*, a journal specifically dedicated to such explorations, does so. But while his discussion of Utopian concepts and their application in the real world is fascinating, he is less successful in convincing that the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* should actually to be regarded as Utopian. If one abandons More's specifics, and takes the modern definition, of that which Merriam-Webster cited above calls "a place of ideal perfection," while a discussion of the Forest of Arden can begin in those terms, almost immediately the Forest diverges from such a description, and Farrar comes ultimately to this conclusion.

The role of Arden in *As You Like It* is not to represent an ideal. The role of the Forest is, like the wood outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the island in *The Tempest*, the heath in *King Lear*, to act for characters as a transformative wilderness. In these spaces the normal structures and rules of society, the standard codes, and patterns of behaviour, no longer apply. Characters cannot rely upon the deference due to their positions in society but must be thrown upon their own inner resources to achieve desired outcomes.² The Forest of Arden elicits differing responses from different characters. When Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone arrive, they are exhausted. It has been arduous to get there, and now they have no shelter. Touchstone says "Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I; when I was at home I was in a better place; but travellers must be content." (2:4:734-5) While a refuge from pursuit by Frederick's men, it is hardly initially a welcoming shelter. When Orlando and Adam arrive they too are exhausted, and starving. Orlando describes the forest as "Uncouth," "bleak" and a "desert" (2:6:882 et seq.) He later describes it as a "desert inaccessible," "savage" and canopied by "melancholy boughs" (2:7:1003 et seq.). As the play

² For fuller discussion of this point see Paterson (1-18).

goes on their opinions modify, but the Forest is an environment where considerable dangers, such as venomous serpents and hungry lionesses, can lurk.

It must be said that the definition of “forest” itself, in Shakespeare’s time, differs from the present day. Most modern definitions of forest presuppose a lot of trees. In standard contemporary usage, such as that of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, a forest is defined as an area of land “with tree crown cover” (Winson online). An article, published by that organisation, *What is a Forest?* (2011) offers a history of the origin of the word, originally a jurisdictional term dating from the Merovingian period. It originally meant royal game reserves, where the King and his retinue hunted deer, which contained both wooded and unwooded areas. The “forests” were placed outside the run of everyday legal writ, and could not be “cultivated, exploited or encroached upon” (ibid). Forests were subject to a different set of laws. Some of these laws are familiar to modern day audiences through, for example, the widely popular stories of Robin Hood, where deer are the property of the Crown, and killing them can be subject to draconian punishments. But there are other “forest laws” which remain in force in England even up to the present, such as the right of Foresters in Southern England’s New Forest (dating back to the eleventh century) to keep herds of ponies in the landscape.

Trees in forests could not be cut down, nor could the land be used for cultivation, but within their confines there were areas which were not wooded. These areas of untitled heathland were also defined as forest. On these areas of heathland some ruminant livestock could survive. The New Forest in Hampshire is an example of this. Domesticated cows might not always flourish, but hardy sheep, and of course deer, for whom the forest reserve existed, could.³ The FAO definition referred to above classes both mixed native woodland and planted monocultures as forest, but in the everyday usage of landowners and forest managers, trees which are cultivated at the same time, such as those planted all over the Scottish Highlands by the Forestry Commission, are referred to as “plantations,” whereas “forest” tends to mean native, mixed growth.

So, when Shakespeare talks about the Forest of Arden, he is referring to a place which is wild and uncultivated, which contains both trees and open areas, where game is plentiful, equally importantly lies “outside the common juridical sphere” (Winson online). These parameters are all inherent in the term. But this is not just any forest. It is the Forest of Arden. Shakespeare’s Arden is an ambiguous, transformational place. It is simultaneously the Forest of the Ardennes, in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, and the forest near Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare’s Arden is different from both in significant details, although it draws upon both at different times. In the source Shakespeare

³ In larger forested areas, such as the enormous Białowieża, in Poland and modern-day Belarus, even larger ruminants such as bison survived, and continue to do so.

drew upon in writing the play, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), the forest is in France. As a Londoner, Lodge cannot be assumed to know the Warwickshire Arden in any detail, if at all, however in his text he spells the forest "Arden" rather than "Ardennes." While it would be wrong to suggest that the groundlings were avid readers of published fiction, many of the educated in Shakespeare's audience would have been familiar with at least the outlines of the story. *Rosalynde* had been a highly successful book, having run to three editions in nine years by the time Shakespeare wrote his play. In the way that present-day cinema has a voracious appetite for adapting best-sellers, with varying degrees of fidelity, the theatre in Shakespeare's time had a constant thirst for raw material to adapt, and often plundered literature. Shakespeare generally transcended his literary sources, but he scoured both fiction and non-fiction for the basis of almost all his plays. *Rosalynde* was what would nowadays be referred to as a "hot property." To use it as the basis for a play would have been something of a coup. Amongst those who had heard of the book, the story was known to take place in France.

The Warwickshire Arden is the forest from whence Shakespeare's mother's family came, and from which her premarital name was derived. Shakespeare knew Arden, and his depiction of life in the fictional forest is informed by that familiarity. Although the names of most characters are French, the vivacity of the scenes in the forest reflects a world of Shakespeare's own experience. The European Forest of Ardennes gave scope for the exotic, the English Arden gave opportunity for closely observed detail in his delineation.

In Shakespeare's play the first the audience knows of Arden is in the conversation between Charles the Wrestler and Oliver de Boys quoted above. In this exchange Charles describes the Duke's Exile:

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. (1:1:100-104)

The Duke originally departed with "three or four loving lords" (ibid, 89), but now has amassed a more sizeable following. The reference to "the old Robin Hood of England" is immediately evocative, using the well-known cultural reference to a folk hero as shorthand to describe a lifestyle, where according to legend exiles and outlaws flocked to Sherwood Forest, and lived as "merry men" by poaching the King's deer. This story, told and retold in ballads, tales and dramas, was as widely known in Shakespeare's time as it is today, but the fact that Charles adds "of England" by way of explanation for Oliver allows for the idea that the play is taking place in the Ardennes. Charles' description of the Duke as living "carelessly" like Robin Hood is then underlined by the first scene

which takes place in the forest, 2:1. The exiled Duke opens the scene with a speech praising their life in Arden:

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
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?
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
The seasons' difference; as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
'This is no flattery; these are counsellors~
That feelingly persuade me what I am.'
Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it. (2:1:548-565)

This speech certainly paints an interesting picture of Arden. It does not say that everything is perfect. It merely says that the things which were wrong with life at Court do not feature in the forest. The Duke prefers the cold winds of winter to the envy and flattery of Court. He is subject still to flattery, if not envy, partly because he is exiled with only the very most loyal of his followers, who have left everything to accompany him. He talks of the sweetness of "the uses of adversity," while comparing their life to a venomous toad, albeit one which wears a precious jewel in his head. He ends the speech with "I would not change it," but in practice he returns to the Court without demur when he can do so.

After he has given his pronouncement on their situation, an immediate contrast is drawn with one of their number who does not find the uses of adversity sweet. The Duke expresses a sadness that the deer, native to the forest, must die to provide them with food, and the First Lord begins to tell of the "melancholy Jaques" (575), who takes this sentiment even further. Jaques is a courtier who sees them all, the Duke included, as interlopers, who do "more usurp/ Than doth your brother who hath banish'd you" (ibid). Jaques is the voice of one who does not join in the game of being Robin Hood's Merry Men. Amiens can fulfil the role of Sherwood's Alan-A-Dale for the Duke's band: the other lords who accompanied the Duke into exile, and the young men who have subsequently joined him, can find a niche in the forest court, but Jaques is unable to pretend along with them.

This forest court is not a society which operates within Utopian principles. As outlined above, More's *Utopia* gives everyone sufficient food, shelter, clothing, education, and medical treatment when required. Arden provides food—if you kill it, shelter—which, according to the Duke, does not necessarily keep out the winter wind, and clothing perhaps, but there is no suggestion of education, other than that provided by “books in the running brooks” (546) and “sermons in stones” (547). When Orlando and Adam arrive, they are cared for, so some sort of medical care is possible, but *Utopia* provides material comfort without excess, at the expense of a range of very repressive laws. *Utopia* has a democratic, elected government. Arden does not. Everyone defers to the Duke. In *Utopia* discussion of politics outside the confines of the political system is subject to the death penalty. The aforementioned punishment for fornication, lifelong enforced celibacy, that for adultery of enforced slavery, and the thought that repeat offenders are put to death, are less likely to be laws found tenable by the merry men under the greenwood trees. For many inhabitants of the Forest of Arden, either native or exiled, falling in love, looking for a mate, is one of the main occupations, and certainly Touchstone has fornication in mind. He goes to elaborate lengths to ensnare Audrey while making sure that he is not going to be entrapped in his turn by entering a genuine marriage. If *Utopia*'s laws on inter-sex relationships were to be enforced in Arden neither Thomas Lodge nor William Shakespeare would have much of their stories left.

But not all of Arden is wilderness in this way. Tracts of it are home to shepherds and their flocks. This draws *As You Like It* closer to the realm of English pastoral literature, rather than to *Utopia* itself or any of its derivatives. Shakespeare had read at least some of More's writings, having based his characterisation of Richard III very firmly on More's book on the subject (1510?), and having probably, if not incontrovertibly, contributed to the play *Sir Thomas More* which was presented at Henslowe's Rose Theatre in the early 1590s. He is considered by some scholars, such as Goldstein (1987), to discuss Utopian ideas, in the sense of a different and ideal political structure, in Jack Cade's episode in *2Henry VI*, (4:8:115-119) and in *The Tempest*, where Gonzalo speaks about what he would do if he had “plantation of this isle” (2:1:150 et seq.). In the first he is being satirical, and in the second he is transcribing Montaigne (*Of Cannibals*, 1580) rather than More, so these examples, and the absence of any real connection between *As You Like It* and More's text scarcely point to a strong influence of Utopian ideas on Shakespeare's writing. On the other hand he definitely knew several works of pastoral writers, and indeed within *As You Like It* directly references Marlowe's pastoral *A Passionate Shepherd To His Love*, (1599) posthumously published not long before Shakespeare wrote his play.

In English, pastoral writing is similar in many ways to that of the classical writers and is strongly influenced by that of the ancient world. Originally based upon Grecian *eclogues*, or dialogues between shepherds, it echoes poems such as those of Theocritus (310-250 BCE), and subsequently made widely popular in the Roman world by writers such as Virgil, in his *Eclogues* (44-38 BCE). It was the Roman writer who transferred the setting of these pastoral dialogues to Arcadia, in Greece, by his time regarded as a symbol of an idyllic rural paradise. The genre was revived in Europe by poets such as Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, eventually also adopted by dramatists such as Torquato Tasso, and then by early novelists and writers of romances such as Montemayor and Cervantes. The pastoral genre arrived in England from both Italian and Spanish sources. After both Petrarch and Boccaccio had written pastorally-inspired works, in 1504 Jacopo Sannazaro wrote his *Arcadia*. This publication really cemented many of the conventions of the pastoral upon which later writers built, although it was also the later additions of Spanish writers which helped form the English tradition. In Sannazaro the characters are all genuine shepherds and shepherdesses, not some courtiers in disguise. Spanish writers like Jorge de Montemayor added that and other similar devices, as exemplified by his *Diana Enamorada* (1559), and their influence was also felt in France, where later Honoré D'Urfe went on to write *L'Astrée* (1607), one of the most influential early novels in that country. In England it was Edmund Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) which began the fashion for the pastoral, and many poets, including Shakespeare's friend and rival Marlowe, his old adversary Robert Greene and his Warwickshire friend and compatriot Michael Drayton, wrote pastoral works, Sir Philip Sidney creating, in his two versions of *Arcadia*, (1585(?) and 1593), the work which came to epitomise the genre in English poesy. When he did so, Sidney acknowledged his influences in taking Sannazaro's title.

In the pastorals the protagonists are usually shepherds, and there is often the juxtaposition of opposing interpretations of love, honour, death, and other such themes, debated as in the duologues of the classical models. Pastorals generally present an idealised view of life in the country for primarily urban consumption, a life free from the stresses and unpleasant interactions of life in the city. In these Arcadian settings the clichés are that shepherds and shepherdesses spend their time playing upon their pipes and falling in love. The simplicity of life in the Country is contrasted with the venality, envy and strife of the Town. The names of the shepherds and shepherdesses in English pastorals often betray their origins in the mythology of Arcadia. Although this is a simplistic agglomeration of clichés from works the best of which are far more nuanced, the large number of pastorals or Arcadian romances by writers less gifted than Sidney or Spenser can demonstrate the prevalence of these and similar stock devices. While a contemporary scholar is likely to be familiar

with the many subsequent parodies of pastoral writings, when in the 18th Century the pastoral had become a tired and ridiculed genre, in Shakespeare's time the pastoral, particularly following the successes both of Lodge's *Rosalynde* and of Sidney's second posthumous version of *Arcadia* (1593), was highly respectable, widely admired and very popular amongst the educated. Sidney's untimely death at the Battle of Zutphen in 1586, followed by his elaborate state funeral, created a further myth, that of the warrior-poet, and his influence became even greater, as almost every English writer of substance penned words in his honour, and his writings were avidly read.

When Shakespeare came to write *As You Like It* he was not just adapting a best-seller, he was adapting one which was part of a fashionable genre, and therefore had several of what would nowadays in the cinema be called "elements" to build upon. But Shakespeare had a deep and intimate knowledge of rural life, and did not fall into the clichés, although he played with the pastoral conventions with great skill. His Forest of Arden is populated by a shepherd and shepherdess, Silvius and Phoebe, both young, and an older figure in Corin. It also contains Audrey and William. Of these, the couple with a connection to Arcadia are the first two. Their names evoke that Latin version of the Arcadian world, Silvius being a Latin name drawn from the word for Forest. The name Phoebe is a Latinised version of a Greek name too, Shakespeare having, as Jonson said in his poem in memory of Shakespeare (1623), "Small Latin and less Greek" in his background. Both names fit easily within the conventions of English pastoralism. Although the name Corin, too, is based upon a Latin name, Quirinus, it is used in a form which sounds more Celtic. The name, which has been used by parents in Britain ever since the time of the play, may well have been invented by Shakespeare. William, being his own name, and Audrey, a name of Anglo-Saxon origin, locate those two characters firmly in the Warwickshire Forest.

Shakespeare's source, Lodge's story, itself stands upon the shoulders of others. He drew for a few incidents in his plot upon the same source, the medieval English poem *Gamelyn*, that Chaucer had been familiar with when writing the *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). In that poem the story of the three sons, and the hero entering the wrestling, and then escaping to the forest to join a band of outlaws, feature. Lodge wrote the story while on a sea voyage. He was adventurous and eager for martial glory, and sailed on several voyages, going on to sail both to Brazil and around the Straits of Magellan. He whiled away the tedium of such long voyages by writing, and he wrote *Rosalynde* during a voyage under a Captain Clarke to the Canaries and the Azores in 1586. It was eventually released in 1590. Lodge's *Rosalynde* has more in common with his friend Robert Greene's pastoral *Menaphon* (1589), published just the year before, than it does with Sidney's *Arcadia*, but the pastoral, the Arcadian ideal, was widespread in literary England at that time.

Shakespeare removes some of the less important actions from the original and curtails the story to a manageable dimension to fit onto the stage. He adds characters which, in the main, do not get in the way of what remains largely, although by no means completely, Lodge's plot. He does, however alter the cast. Lodge's characters have very different names. Rosader becomes Orlando, Saladyne becomes Oliver, Torismond becomes Duke Frederick, the exiled Duke in Lodge is called Gerismond, Celia is Alinda, and Silvius is Montanus. In that particular case, instead of relating him to the Mountains of Arcadia as Montanus Shakespeare relates him to the Forest of Arden as Silvius. Corydon becomes Corin, a more down-to-earth name. The names he chooses for the men of the de Boys family coincide with those from the well-known French epic, *La Chanson de Roland* (11th century). De Boys is a French name, meaning "of the woods," and there was actually a de Boys family in England, in Kent to be precise, in Shakespeare's time. But the names of the characters, the father Rowland (Roland), the older brother Oliver, and even Orlando, which is the variant of the name Roland used by Ariosto in his version of the same story, *Orlando Furioso* (1532) all echo this classic French poem. For an author looking for some names to replace those in the original which would immediately suggest France the Chanson provided them. One can only speculate as to Shakespeare's reasons for doing so, but Saladyne, the name in Lodge's story, for the popular theatre audience might well have sounded like Richard the Lionheart's opponent from the Crusades, and Rosader and Rosalind are close enough to each other in sound to cause potential confusion when spoken in a crowded theatre.

Greg, in the Introduction to his edition of *Rosalynde* (1907, xviii et seq.) offers a number of conjectures as to the provenance of some of Lodge's ideas, but he does not believe that there were other direct literary sources. He does, however, recognise the stock nature of some of Lodge's story elements. "The proud shepherdess and the lovelorn swain and the girl in page's attire were already traditional" (xix) when *Rosalynde* was written. He then goes on to speak of how the differing conventional types in Lodge's story were used by Shakespeare:

It would seem as if, by placing side by side the masquerading court pastoralism of the main plot, the refined Arcadian tradition to which we owe Phoebe and Silvius, and the boorish if sympathetic rusticity of his addition to the cast, Shakespeare intended to bring the whole graceful figment to the touchstone of reality and hint at the instability of the ideal and convention of which he nevertheless made use. (xxi)

Shakespeare took a considerable amount from Lodge, but he also added and changed a great deal. His Arden is different from Lodge's. Lodge's forest is

more straightforwardly Arcadian than Shakespeare's. As already stated, Lodge was a Londoner, and the world of *Rosalynde* reflects the existing predilections of the largely urban audience for the pastoral as well as adding considerably to the storehouse. Lodge uses the existing conventions and adds to them. Shakespeare is a writer who often makes use of conventions and conventional elements, but seldom leaves them unaltered. At times he may draw attention to those devices, and in *As You Like It* he definitely does, but Shakespeare's characters transcend the conventions in which they are rooted. Taking Greg's words quoted above, the "masquerading court pastoralism" includes Rosalind and Celia, as Ganymede and Aliena, buying the sheepcote and becoming shepherds, although they make sure that they continue Corin's employment to attend to the real work involved. They arrive in Arden with enough money to buy their position in the Forest society, which is more than any of the other exiles in the play are able to do. They are playing a role as pastoralists. Silvius and Phoebe, as Greg says, represent the "refined Arcadian tradition" and Audrey and William the "boorish if sympathetic... addition." Phoebe as the scornful shepherdess and Silvius as the heartbroken lover are familiar types in Arcadian romance. Audrey is a comic character of a fairly standard provenance, rooted in this case in the Warwickshire countryside. William's character is likewise a standard rustic comic type, although sharing the name of his creator, it is tempting to look for some additional self-deprecating humour derived from the association of his name with the author, a country boy who had come to the big city years before with the hope of becoming an actor.

Shakespeare adds other characters too, and they are the source of much that is best in the play. Touchstone and Jaques are both figures of Shakespeare's invention. While the Duke and his followers accept and make the most of their exile to the Forest, Jaques is the one among them who is most outspoken. When the Duke laments the killing of the deer, necessary as they feel it to be for food:

...yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,
 Being native burgers of this desert city,
 Should in their own confines with forkéd heads,
 Have their round haunches gored. (2:1:571-4)

it is the First Lord who reveals that the "melancholy Jaques" takes the idea further, expanding it to the point that he "...in that kind swears you do more usurp/Than doth your brother that hath banish'd you" (ibid, 577-8). Jaques' "melancholy" is the source of much entertainment on the part of others in the play, but it is not particularly amusing. He makes serious observations. His famous aria on the Seven Ages of Man (2:7:1137 et seq.) is actually moralizing. The Duke and the Lords expect Jaques to moralize. "Did he not moralize this spectacle?" the Duke asks (2:1:593), knowing full well that Jaques will have

done so. Jaques is entertaining because he moralizes, and “in these sullen fits... he’s full of matter” (ibid, 618). Moralizing is, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, “to comment on issues of right or wrong, typically with an unfounded air of superiority.” The Cambridge English Dictionary offers as a definition “to make judgements about right and wrong, especially in a way that does not consider other people’s ideas and opinions.” Both these definitions are absolutely appropriate in the case of Jaques. This sets Jaques up to be contrasted with the other Lords, in (2:5), where he comes out on top, against Orlando in (3:2) where he is bested by the young man, and eventually with Rosalind herself in (4:1). This is shaping into a worthy contest of wit, but it is interrupted by the arrival of Orlando. Jaques is not seduced by the idyllic view put forward by the Duke, he is upset by the destruction of the balance of nature around him by the exiles, and for him the best thing in the Forest is when he comes across another outsider, in Touchstone, who is another character given to moralizing. Yet at the end, despite his reservations about life in the Forest, he elects to stay rather than return to the Court.

Touchstone’s view of this supposed Arcadia is expressed to Corin:

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 private it is a very vile life. Now in respect that it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect that it is not the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it suits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach. (3:2:1134-43)

He waits for a reaction. “Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?” (ibid). Touchstone is looking for diversion, even for a sparring partner. Their discussion parodies the duologues in the Eclogues of the classical and pastoral poets. Corin’s simple philosophy does not give him the stimulus he seeks. Touchstone’s philosophising is a game, a mental exercise. As they debate the nature of life in the Forest, Corin’s more realistic, day-today perspective is easy meat for the sophistry of Touchstone. Touchstone needs another occupation, and before long he finds it in Audrey, a goatherd. No one can pretend that Touchstone’s intentions are honourable. In Arcadian poetry there is much of love and heartbreak, and there is sensuality and desire too, but Touchstone is not motivated by ideals of love. He deliberately seeks out the worst clergyman he can find, in order that the marriage he enters into will not be binding when he has grown tired of it. His role in this Arcadia is not a love-sick shepherd. It has more in common with that of a satyr in lustful pursuit of one of the less glamorous nymphs. His attitude to Audrey begins to change, partly because he has to see off a rival, when William comes along to claim her. But neither the characters in the play nor the audience can have much confidence in their union

as a genuine and lasting one. During the play's denouement Jaques tells Touchstone baldly that "thy loving voyage is but for two months victualled" (5:4:2587-8).

The characters which Shakespeare introduces are all at odds with the conventions of the pastoral. His source fits in with the genre, and Shakespeare explores some of those elements which Lodge has given him, but he questions and undercuts them at every opportunity. Arcadia harks back to "the Golden World," as Charles called it in (1:1:104). The ideal upon which Arcadia is based is a world of simplicity which has been lost. The Golden World is in the past, a throwback to a more innocent time. The ideals put forward in Utopian writing tend to lie in the future, in that it is hard to argue that perfection in social relationships has been achieved in any known society. But although they differ, Utopia and Arcadia have in common the fact that are both seeking a perfect world. Other writers of the time, such as Michel de Montaigne, saw in the idea of the "noble savage" a glimpse of a society uncorrupted by civilisation. His *Des Cannibales* (1580) represents a coming together of the Arcadian and Utopian idea, with a simpler, uncorrupted society which also demonstrates what are, in European terms, visionary social relationships. It must be said these social relationships sit alongside other practices which are less attractive to European readers, such as the practice of eating one's enemies. Although the expression "noble savage" was not used in English until Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* in 1672, Montaigne's *Essais*, (1580) and the ideas within them were well known amongst the educated. Francis Bacon, to name one, cited Montaigne's *Essais* as influences upon some of his own later essays. Montaigne was translated into English by John Florio in 1603, and Shakespeare certainly knew Florio's translation of *On The Caniballes*, as he based Gonzalo's "Had I plantation of this isle..." speech in *The Tempest* (2:1:852, 857 et seq.) very closely upon it, but he also knew French, and if he had not read Montaigne in the original he almost certainly knew people who had.

Shakespeare's Forest of Arden is not Arcadian any more than it is Utopian, but it circles round the conventions of the pastoral. It also extends and upends another convention, that of the girl disguised as a boy. The truly radical element in *As You Like It* is in the way it weaves around ideas of gender. Shakespeare has other plays in which girls dress up as boys, but in *As You Like It* he takes the audience along the boundaries between the sexes in a far more blatant way. In *As You Like It* a boy actor playing a girl disguises him/herself as a boy, who then role-plays a girl to teach the would-be lover of the girl how to woo her/him. The stock device of the disguised girl is virtually nowhere else taken as far as this. When Orlando is practicing wooing Ganymede as Rosalind, much of the humour in the scenes comes from the confusion of the roles, but the gender ambiguity leaves other areas of potential confusion. Maybe Orlando is actually in love with both Ganymede and Rosalind. Whether or not this is

the case, the contemporary practice of having Rosalind played by a woman rather than a boy undoubtedly changes the play from what it was in Shakespeare's time.

Arden is not an easy place to live, but it can have a profound effect upon those who take shelter within its boundaries. If many of the characters in the play who enter its demesne are fleeing oppression, they find a safe world in which to explore their own identities, wishes and desires. The Forest of Arden changes things for everyone who enters it. Orlando's mooncalf love for Rosalind is transformed gradually by Ganymede's education. Silvius becomes a less clueless lover, and Phoebe learns from her cruelty. A later exile, Orlando's elder brother Oliver, one of the play's earlier villains, is transformed by his experience when he gets there. Having been maltreated by the usurping Duke Frederick, and given a threatening ultimatum, he too heads for the Forest, where, like the other exiles, he also falls into extremity. His extremity is not merely hunger and privation, it involves a snake and a lioness, creatures which are to be found neither in the European Forest of Ardennes nor in the Warwickshire Arden, but which are found in this transformative wilderness. He is rescued by his brother, whom he has wronged grievously, and with his gratitude and repentance, he and Orlando are reconciled. But this takes place off stage. The audience do not see it. These incidents are reported.

Setting aside the appearance of Hymen, the Greek god of marriage, whose appearance requires separate consideration, the next human person to arrive at the boundaries of Arden is Duke Frederick, with a "mighty power assembled" to attack the Forest and capture his brother hiding there. But he meets an "old religious man," is in short order converted, sees the error of his ways and decides to return the Dukedom to his brother, and the lands he has confiscated to their rightful owners. This, crucial to the winding up of the various plots, takes place offstage. It is significant that this too is reported, by Orlando and Oliver's brother Jaques, the second son of Sir Rowland de Boys, who appears out of absolutely nowhere, for the sole purpose of delivering a message which resolves most of the outstanding threads of the play.

This resolution, as artificial as anything in Euripides, is Shakespeare's own invention. The actual solutions to the various outstanding difficulties in the plot come via a *deus-ex-machina*, although rather than Hymen, the actual *deus* who does appear, resolving the plot, that function is provided by Jaques de Boys. To speculate as to the actual role of Hymen is interesting. To a cynical spectator the unions to be celebrated are all quite sudden. Orlando has suddenly found his Rosalind was the boy he has been wooing in her stead. Celia has instantly fallen in love with Oliver, who has suddenly converted and become a virtuous person. Phoebe has agreed to marry Silvius, because she has just found out that the boy Ganymede, with whom she was in love, is actually a woman, and Touchstone and Audrey are, as has been established, a couple

whose relationship is built upon shallow foundations. The arrival of a god of marriage is more necessary than usual to cement these unions together. Hymen's first speech makes this clear:

Peace, ho! I bar confusion;
 'Tis I must make conclusion
 Of these strange events
 (5:4:2518-20)

There is certainly scope for confusion, but Hymen will sort it out. The marriages having then been fixed by divine intervention, the resolution of the plot is now the priority, and it is at that point that Jaques de Boys appears. As soon as the news is given that Frederick has renounced his illegitimate claim, and that the Duke is restored, everyone unquestioningly decides to leave and go back to the Court. Despite the Duke saying "I would not change it" (2:1:565) he immediately does, and all his followers go with him, including Orlando, Rosalind, Celia, Oliver, Jaques de Boys, Touchstone, Audrey, Amiens, First Lord, Adam, and every one of the other lords and foresters, leaving Silvius, Phoebe, Corin but also, to everyone's surprise, Jaques.

Despite his professed unhappiness with the life of the exiles in Arden, he does not want to return to the Court. He wants to remain in the Forest and has no desire to take part in the dancing and celebrations. He plans to seek out Frederick, because "out of these convertites/ There is much matter to be heard and learned" (2580-1). Jaques sees for himself the magical, transformative effect of Arden, and he wants to remain there, initially at least in the company of the person most completely transformed within the Forest. He leaves the stage, there is then a dance, and Rosalind steps forward for an Epilogue. Shakespeare wrote epilogues for thirteen of his plays, but in *As You Like It* the epilogue is different from all of the others. It is spoken by a female character, who by the end of the speech has clearly stated that the person speaking it is not a woman. "If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me" (Epilogue.2608) The artifice is being deliberately pointed up.

The entire resolution of the play, the ravelling up of the threads of the plots, the acceptance of implausible marriages along with what the audience can accept as true love, the appearance of messengers out of the blue, the sudden conversion of hitherto unyieldingly wicked characters, the arrival of a Greek deity in an ostensibly Christian forest, and then the speaking of an epilogue which shows that things have not been as they seemed in any case, all add up to a different kind of ending. The implausibility of it all need not be a problem in the theatre. The feelgood factors in the attainment of a happy ending can be allowed to overcome the unfeasibility, and audiences can even be given scope to applaud each outcome. It is readers, and in particular scholars, who are more

likely to criticise the artificiality, such as some of those quoted by Wojciechowska. In the theatre it can be construed as giving a popular and emotionally satisfying ending. It is, after all, “as [they are being invited to] like it.” That which is a problem in the study can be a benefit in the theatre.

Arden is not Utopia, nor is it Arcadia. The play’s idealised resolutions are blatantly, indeed joyously, artificial. It is futile to yearn retrospectively for lost Golden Worlds, just as it is futile to imagine unattainably perfect future societies. But within the theatre transformation and resolution are possible, whether like Duke Frederick, abruptly and off stage, or in front of the audience and gradually, like Orlando. People can be redeemed, and wounds can be healed. In the theatre perfect resolution and perfect relationships are attainable, if only for a fleeting moment, because a playwright can wave a pen and make it so. Arden is neither the aspirational Utopia nor the nostalgic Arcadia, but it is a place where “perfect” solutions can be created. In the theatre it is possible to both make fun of the artificiality of genre conventions and allow the emotionally satisfactory achievement of idealised resolutions at the same time. Theatre’s ability to simultaneously juxtapose word, action and image gives scope for ambiguity which Shakespeare utilises in the Forest of Arden to a greater extent than almost any of his other plays. He takes a popular literary success, written as an Arcadian romance, and as he explores the story he questions, undercuts, and satirises the very conventions with which he plays so successfully. Shakespeare’s play resolves itself, not in respect of ideal literary worlds, but in the Wooden ‘O’ of The Globe, the world which was Shakespeare’s own.

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