Rosalind and Celia as the Victorians Liked Them: Womanly Heroines in the Forest of Arden

Laura Tosi

Abstract
In this essay I discuss narrative remediations of *As You Like It* written in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, addressed to female child and teenage readers. I focus on Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1850-52) and a selection of adaptations written in the short-story format made popular by the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807). While Cowden Clarke's prequel depicts a fictional world in which female friendship is both a protection and a trigger for female agency, the tales in the Lambs' tradition are more explicitly tributary to a folktale configuration. They use tropes already present in the play: the sibling rivalry, the forest setting, and emphasize the characters' moral polarization. The Victorian ambivalence between female modesty in the private sphere and independent and vocal womanhood in the public sphere, which was worrying Victorian society to some degree, seems to have been projected and made more acceptable in all these retellings; female characters combine domesticity with intellectual vivacity, initiative with good breeding, and agency with propriety.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, adaptation.

Ever since Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), the first attempt to mediate and remediate Shakespeare in fictional form for children, young female audiences have been an important part of the history of children's adaptations or appropriations of Shakespeare. In the "Preface" to the *Tales* the author (probably Mary) declared that the intention was to

> make these tales easy reading for very young children [...] for young ladies too it has been my intention chiefly to write, because boys are generally permitted the use of their fathers' libraries at a much earlier age than girls are, they frequently having the best scenes of Shakespeare by heart, before their sisters are permitted to look into this manly book (Lamb 2007: 3-4).

In the second edition of the *Tales* (1809), an "Advertisement" restricted its ideal audience to "young ladies advancing to the state of womanhood" (Lamb 1809: iii): it seems that a relationship between prose adaptations of Shakespeare and girls was established very early. Any discussion of nineteenth-century narrativizations needs to take into account the fact that when prose narrative versions of Shakespeare started to appear, female critics of Shakespeare were developing ways to discuss Shakespeare's female characters as if they were idealized models of real human beings with which girl readers could identify (Tosi 2013: 11). As has been established for some time (with critical studies such as Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1989) and the anthology *Women Reading Shakespeare* (1997), edited by Thompson and Roberts), the popular dissemination of Shakespeare's plays was never an all-male phenomenon. In the Victorian and Edwardian ages, not unlike what happens nowadays with retellings which revise and update gender roles, heroines acted as sites of projection for different constructions of femininity.

In my essay I discuss narrative retellings of *As You Like It* written in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and addressed primarily to female child and teenage readers. I focus primarily on Mary Cowden Clarke's prequel version, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1850-52) comparing it with other character-oriented semi-fictional accounts of the play, but I also consider a selection of narrative adaptations written in the short-story format made popular by the Lambs. I investigate how the Victorian ambivalence between female modesty in the private sphere and independent and vocal womanhood in the public sphere, which was worrying Victorian society to some degree, seems to have been projected and made more acceptable in these retellings. In the second part of my essay I focus on the way these retellings make use of fairy tale motifs, such as the forest, which becomes the ideal setting for a Rosalind who, for all her freedom of speech, turns into an example of a well-brought up Victorian lady.

Victorian women were involved in the study and dissemination of Shakespeare's plays in various capacities: through children's and adults' editions, actresses' memoirs, critical articles in journals, and the establishment of reading groups for women. Gail Marshall (2009) has perceptively analysed the way Victorians firmly believed in the relevance of Shakespeare's cultural inheritance to women especially

– as if the difference and the distance between Shakespeare and the Victorians were easily overcome, and the Bard, properly mediated, could inspire Victorian girls on how best to be feminine (or "womanly", a favourite adjective of the period). The hugely popular *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical and Historical* (1832), by Anna Jameson was instrumental in establishing a tradition of female character criticism in the nineteenth century (Ruskin's "Of Queen's Gardens" appears to be affected by this critical tradition when he writes that "Shakespeare has no heroes; only heroines", 1864: 114).

In her catalogue of Shakespeare's heroines, Jameson divides Shakespeare's female characters into four categories: characters of *Intellect* (which includes Portia, Isabella, Rosalind and Beatrice), characters of *Passion and the Imagination* (such as Juliet and Ophelia), characters of the *Affections* (Desdemona, Cordelia), and characters of *History* (Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth). Celia is not included in this catalogue even if she co-stars in Cowden Clarke's prequel as in the play; the choice of excluding her was followed by Mrs Elliott's *Shakespeare's Garden of Girls* (1885), which borrows Jameson's structure of a portrait gallery of model female characters. And interestingly, Henrietta Palmer, in *The Stratford Gallery, or the Shakspeare Sisterhood* (1859) starts Celia's portrait with a disclaimer that "the pensive sweetness of Celia's character is too apt to pass unappreciated [...] her wit would be distinguished, were it not in direct juxtaposition with the pyrotechnic displays of the rattling Rosalind" (69). Cowden Clarke's husband Charles, who wore the Shakespearean pants in the family, in an 1863 essay, contrasts patronisingly "that pretty squirrell, the pranksome Rosalind" with "the sedate" and "devoted" Celia (35). Celia is generally defined in opposition to Rosalind, and even now critics (with some exception, such as Calvo 1994) tend to forget that Celia is often quite adept at decision making and that she is linguistically sophisticated, among other things. But in the Victorian period, as well as now, she is unquestionably second best to Rosalind, who is the most vocal of Shakespeare's female characters and through the education of Orlando, offers the unusual behaviour of a heroine not only in love, but of a woman who behaves as a teacher in love (while Celia is not allowed to develop in this respect).

Jameson contrasts Rosalind with other characters of the Intellect, such as Beatrice. She writes that Beatrice's wit is "like the lightning,

dazzling but also alarming, while the wit of Rosalind bubbles up and sparkles like the living fountain, refreshing all around" (150). She associates her with pastoral innocence and sensibility and tries to justify Rosalind's openness – hinting that some of her expressions have been objected to (151). As has been noted, Jameson's heroines "are simultaneously treated as 'real' and as idealized role models who embody values or ideology" (Russell 1991: 41). But Jameson, who was to be very significant for Cowden Clarke's work, is not the only one to compare favourably Rosalind with Beatrice. For example, in 1898 Georg Brandes saw Beatrice as more aggressive and challenging (2005: 100) than Rosalind. It appears that as witty and assertive heroines went, Rosalind always won over Beatrice, although Rosalind's talkativeness often needed to be argued for and validated: as early as 1817 Hazlitt could not help confessing that "the silent and retired character of Celia is a necessary relief to the provoking loquacity of Rosalind" (1838: 282).

The other intellectual heroine which typically provided a contrast to Rosalind was Portia, who, according to Victorian critics, satisfied all the requirements of the period for decorum, intellectual agency, womanliness and verbal capacity. As Jameson put it, "Portia is dignified, splendid and romantic; Rosalind is playful, pastoral and picturesque" (149). Portia was another Victorian favourite, possibly because she combined the New Woman's capacity to speak up in the public sphere with the readiness to give it all up for love like a true romantic heroine. In 1887 a girls' magazine, "The Girl's Own Paper" set up an essay contest on the subject "My Favourite Heroine from Shakespeare"; the most popular was Portia, who inspired more than one third of the entries (Rozmovitz 1998: 31-33).

As You Like It, in particular, was a very popular play on the Victorian and Edwardian stages and the actress Helen Faucit contributed substantially to its popularity by interrupting the coquetting tradition in favour of a representation of the character as a Victorian gentlewoman (Foulkes 2003: 153). One may be surprised at the way this play was considered suitable to impart moral lessons. As Cynthia Marshall (2004: 36) has argued,

> Although *As You Like It* has come to seem, by the early twenty-first century, a play whose attitudes towards social custom are potentially quite subversive, for the Victorians, it was a model of propriety, civility

and ethical virtue – just those moral lessons the growing middle classes demanded from Shakespeare.

For the Victorians, the play's rustic evocation of a rural Arcadia may well have provided an idealization of the English landscape at a time of urban and colonial expansion, and of course Rosalind, taking a dominant position in courtship, could evoke the New Woman's aspirations to greater freedom (Foulkes 2003), not to speak of Rosalind's male outfit which would have displayed the actress's legs to advantage, which was customary, and apparently much appreciated, in burlesque and pantomime (Jackson 1979).

In this context of cultural ambivalence regarding Rosalind (dazzling New Woman vs talkative lady bordering on shrew) it is not surprising that Victorian and Edwardian narrative adaptations of *As You Like It*, especially Mary Cowden Clarke's prequel, should use this character to address issues relevant to a predominantly female implied reader.

We can roughly identify two kinds of narrative retellings of Shakespeare's plays for the young:

1) those by the Lambs and their Victorian followers (and many contemporary authors who rely on the structure of the short story collection). They include very little creative material and can be considered primarily as reductions or abridgements, and

2) those by Mary Cowden Clarke (and a number of contemporary Young Adult novels) which expand Shakespeare's plots by providing extra information and generally add prequels, sequels, new characters and narrative units to the original plots.

In both categories the key element is provided by a narrator who often appropriates the characters' words as his own and intrudes with comments and interpretations, so that out of the multitude of (often contradictory) viewpoints offered by the play, a unified version of character and plot is presented to the child or teenage reader. By changing a dialogical theatrical form into a linear monological narrative these versions generally narrow the spectrum of interpretations, and add motivations which explain the characters' words and actions, often at the expense of complexity. The Lambs in particular tend to divide characters into good and bad according to the logic of the fairy tale; each character is introduced through a label which immediately clarifies his or her moral traits.

The main challenge that adaptors of all ages need to meet is how to simplify and/or make sense of adult concerns as they are dramatized in Shakespeare's plays. In order to offer children and young adults the experience of reading Shakespeare in a safe and entertaining form, some authors do not "cut", censure or abridge the original text, but rather include different kinds of supplementary and extra-textual information. They actively fill in the gaps: they describe events that *must have* happened off stage, in the mysterious speculative world that precedes or follows the performance, but of which there is no trace in the play. It is in the nature of narrative retelling to supply extra information: the most creative retellings of Shakespeare are, in a way, nothing but recreations of several imagined off-scenes added to the original plots (Tosi 2016). This is the stuff of fan fiction, the desire to explore and expand the "as ifs" of literature (the Goodreads website, for example, lists more than 100 contemporary Young Adult novels based on Shakespeare, which loosely borrow Shakespearean plots). Of course creating an extra-textual past which precedes and explains a character's behaviour in the play is still what many Shakespearian actors do, in order to make sense of their character's choices. And did: Helena Faucit, possibly the most famous Rosalind of the Victorian age, in her memoir, imagines a past in which Rosalind's bearing

> made her dear to the people, who had probably found out by this time that they had made a bad exchange in the humorous Duke for the amiable and accomplished ruler whom he had supplanted. [...] We see that, *before the play opens*, the thought had been present to his [Duke Frederick's] mind that Rosalind must stay no longer at his court. (1899: 241, my italics)

Actors, as well as teenage readers, need a back story.

Mary Cowden Clarke was one of the most remarkable female scholars of Shakespeare of her age and had already an established career as an editor and philologist when she published her collection of 15 novellas reconstructing the childhood and teenage years of a number of Shakespeare's female characters. Speculating on the heroines' past or future lives, supplying characters' actions with motivations and causal links and releasing female characters from their pre-destined theatrical spaces, were the points of departure for her imaginative journeys. Like the collections of prose retellings

from Shakespeare for children in the tradition starting with the Lambs' *Tales*, Cowden Clarke's prequels are characterized most conspicuously by the transposition of one genre (drama) into another (prose fiction). However, *unlike* the Lambs' *Tales* and most Victorian/Edwardian children's Shakespeares, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* is characterized by massive use of addition and expansion devices: what is most noticeable about Clarke's endeavour is the attempt to provide motivation (Brown 2005: 95). Mothers, often absent in Shakespeare, are often the co-protagonists of many novellas in which the reader is given access to the effects of maternal influence on the heroines and ponders on the way this relationship affects their future behaviour. It should not be forgotten that mothers were also the recipients of these tales, which were suitable for family reading. The theme of education (which is so crucial in *As You Like it*) in these tales is central, as we follow in detail the heroines' emotional, intellectual and sentimental education (or lack of it). In Clarke's tales the heroines' future choices are determined primarily by their family environment, and secondarily by their peers, teachers, and mentors. There is a very clear proto-Freudian slant: we could almost say that heroines are deprived of their personal responsibility and ability to choose by the determinism of their family milieu. Every novella ends with the heroine's first words in the play, as if Cowden Clarke, after her own work of recollection and gap-filling, had wanted to hand them over to Shakespeare, and let the plays themselves instruct Victorian girls in the Bard's values. Victorian girls first came to know about Shakespeare mainly through the home. Rarely, if ever, except in the case of girls' theatrical families, did they discover Shakespeare first through the theatre (Marshall 2009: 13).

In Cowden Clarke, invented female characters provide doubles of the central characters who mirror the heroines' experiences, and characters that are only mentioned in Shakespeare's plays become fully developed in the tales, such as Rowland de Bois, Oliver and Orlando's father. In "Rosalind and Celia: the Friends" Cowden Clarke generates a tale of female friendship that involves a newly invented female character, Flora de Beaupré (equally a victim of unchecked patriarchal power) in a series of successful practical jokes which involve crossdressing. But she is not the only invented character. The friendship that develops between the mothers of

Celia and Rosalind, construed as doubles for their daughters, appears to be far more solid and rewarding than the relationship they have established with their husbands. When an accident forces both ladies to spend a few weeks in a cottage in the forest with their baby daughters, they enjoy the pastoral setting of the forest deeply. Rosalind's mother even breastfeeds both infants, and after the death of Celia's mother, brings up Celia as her own. Until her own death, she acts as an emotional guide for both girls (on mothers in Clarke, see Barber 2013). The happy time the mothers spend in the woods is framed as a typically female Arcadia, in which the "pure delights of a golden age" with "shepherds and shepherdesses, rustic swains and foresters, careless maids and happy damsels" (Cowden Clarke 2009: 266) are preferred to the male world of scheming, advancement and ambition at court pursued by their husbands, and most tenaciously by Celia's father.

The novella shows us the banishment of Duke Gaston, a Prospero figure who has neglected his duty to his people because of grief for his wife's death, "guilty of a weakness, a selfishness unworthy of a ruler who had the happiness of others to consider" (Cowden Clarke 2009: 282), as his good friend Rowland de Bois unavailingly reminds him. But it is their friend Flora who plays the part of damsel in distress in a subplot which condemns tyrannical attitudes, and which recalls Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) minus the disguise as, among other connections, the setting of both novella and gothic novel is the pleasant seat of La Vallée. In Radcliffe's *Mysteries*, Emily St Aubert, a young Frenchwoman who is orphaned after the death of her father is pressurized – but this is possibly an understatement – by a relative to marry against her will, after the attachment she has formed with the noble Valancourt, an army officer, is discovered. In Cowden Clarke Flora, a close friend of Celia and Rosalind's, betrothed to the noble Victor St André, an army officer, is locked in a tower by her brother until she agrees to marry the foolish Chevalier Fadasse. Rosalind and Celia kidnap the knight and take him to a fairy tale palace for the time necessary for him to miss the wedding with Flora. Flora then marries Victor St André, but then is left by him quite suddenly as he needs to join his regiment. Mistreated by her angry brother, she escapes to Rosalind and Celia's palace in disguise. There she pretends she is her own male cousin who resembles her a lot (a *Twelfth Night* moment).

Under this disguise she makes a slanderous lady fall in love with her, to reject her afterwards by uncovering her true identity. Later, still in disguise, she questions her own husband about the rumours of infidelity repeated by the lady. The novella rests on a possibly higher array of improbabilities than the play, but the focus on female friendship, the repeated references to the court-nature opposition and especially the heroines' agency and independence of mind refract the Shakespearean characters through the Victorian lens of emotional wisdom, wifely duty, and "the complicated influence of patriarchal control on [...] female adolescent identity" (Osborne 2015: 7). It is "obvious" that Rosalind in particular "must" have capitalized on Flora's crossdressing venture, in which she learns, among other things, to free herself from a cruel relative (a necessary skill for several characters in *As You Like It*) and especially to teach a husband how a wife should be treated.

In her novella Cowden Clarke does not make extensive use of folktale tropes – her prequels are constructed according to the logic of realism that was characteristic of the novel, unlike several Victorian and Edwardian short story collections in the Lambs' tradition, which tend to borrow folktale motifs and structural components, and are addressed to a less clearly defined gendered readership. The popularity of these adaptations may be explained by the fact that knowledge of Shakespeare's plays became part of the curriculum when schooling became compulsory in 1870. As Gary Taylor has put it, "By the nineteenth century a familiarity with Shakespeare was expected of every educated person: the sooner aspirant middle-class children could acquire such knowledge, the better. Shakespeare was thus forcibly transformed into a children's author" (1989: 207). Some of these abridgements borrow freely the style and the characterization typical of folktale, as in the opening to Ada Stidolph's "As You Like it" in *The Children's Shakespeare* (1902):

> There lived in a certain country, many years ago, two brothers.
> One was a Duke, and a very good, kind man; but the other brother was a hard, cruel man, who hated his elder brother, whom at last he turned out of his castle and banished him (80).

Or the opening to Alice Spencer Hoffman's version in *The Children's Shakespeare* (1911):

There was once a wealthy and honourable nobleman of France named Sir Rowland de Boys. He had three sons, Oliver, Jacques, and Orlando, and when he died he left the two younger ones to the care of Oliver, giving him the greater part of his money (106).

This is the typical "Once Upon a Time" opening formula of many folktales, not to speak of the fact that the three brothers negotiating the father's inheritance is a typical folktale motif, recorded most famously by Perrault in "Puss in Boots" (1697) (which derives ultimately from Gianfrancesco Straparola's collection of novellas *Le Piacevoli Notti*, published in Venice in the 1550s), in which the father leaves the first son the mill, the second an ass, and the third what appears to be a useless cat. The Grimms' "Three Brothers" (1812) has a similar opening: after all, it is a truth universally acknowledged in folktales that it is always the youngest, most naive, uneducated and often dumbest brother, who gets the princess. Which is precisely what happens in *As You Like it*: the youngest, uneducated son who needs to leave home to seek his place in the world ends up marrying a princess. The motif of the three sons is further reiterated in the play, most notably in the wrestling match in which all the sons of an old man are seriously hurt; Celia appears to be aware of this typical folktale convention:

Le Beau: There comes an old man with his three sons –
Celia: I could match this beginning with an old tale. (I.ii.113-14)

This comedy (not unlike *King Lear*, with the three daughters' love test) is already set in the unlocalized setting and vague "pastness" of folktale where characters, as the folklorist Max Lüthi writes, "lack any relation to past and future, to time altogether" (11). As Orlando tells Rosalind, "there is no clock in the forest" (III.ii.293) and this timelessness of the forest is in sharp contrast with the "time-ridden preoccupations of court and city life" (Halio 1962: 204). Even if we tend to see this play now as placing "a prophetic finger on the pulse of the future" (Dusinberre 2016: 1) in its subversion of gender roles, it has been shown to be relevant to the contemporary controversies of his time, from enclosure riots (Wilson 1993) and primogeniture tensions in Elizabethan social life (Montrose 1981) to the crisis developing around Essex, the queen's favourite (Dusinberre 2003:

411). Of course, what is really relevant and immediately recognizable to the Victorian/Edwardian child reader and his or her experience is the folktale scenario and the sibling rivalry, with an unambiguous and reiterated folktale polarization between wicked brother Oliver and good brother Orlando, which is then repeated in the relationship between the two Dukes. A clear-cut division between good and bad characters is a feature typical of folktale and fairy tale, and also of these narrative retellings, which emphasize the moral polarizations already present in the play.

In these retellings for children, sometimes the violence of the opening row is softened, as in Hoffman (1911: 107), where it becomes just a "quarrel"; in other cases the symbolic power of the wrestling match to prove masculinity can be described in terms that recall a chivalric tournament of romance. Often the narrator, as is typical of these texts, intrudes with explanations and justifications:

> I think I can tell you, children, why he [Oliver] hated his brother so. It was because he was jealous of him, and saw that the people loved Orlando more than himself (Stidolph 1902: 84).

In some cases the narrator offers an explanation for Oliver's cruelty, as in Richardson's version (1871): "Oliver [...] had become soured and morose that nature had not treated him more kindly. He was neither handsome nor intellectual" (216). The child reader may wonder what Celia saw in him.

As in Shakespeare, the incipits of these narrative abridgements are revealing of the way the story will develop, implicitly asking the reader to focus on a story line or a pair of characters: Gordon Sim's *Phoebe's Shakespeare* (1894), for example, rearranges the story in chronological order and starts with the old Dukes' quarrel (following the Lambs' Ur-narrative retelling, which starts with "an usurper, who had deposed and banished his elder brother, the lawful duke", Lambs 2009: 53):

> Once upon a time there were two brothers. One was a rich and great Duke, and a good man who governed his country wisely and took care of the poor people. [...] The other brother's name was Frederick, and he was as wicked and cruel as the Duke was kind and noble. (Sim 1894: 99)

As for Oliver's and Duke Frederick's sudden change of heart and "conversion", they belong more to the world of romance and fantasy than folktale – the Victorian example that immediately comes to mind and that could resonate in the young readers' minds of the later adaptations as it was hugely popular, is that of Scrooge and his sudden emotional transformation in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) – a change of mind whose "psychological credibility", as has been noted, "is only made possible by the techniques of fantasy" (Prickett 1979: 59).

Other retellings of the play focus on the relationship and friendship between Rosalind and Celia and their status as fair maidens or/and princesses. This is from Constance and Mary Maud's 1913 *Shakespeare's Stories*:

> A long time ago there lived in France two fair maidens named Rosalind and Celia. They loved each other so well they were inseparable as two cherries on a stalk, and whether waking or sleeping, never were happy out of each other's company. (3)

At the end of Hoffmann's version, we see a Cinderella-like transformation of identity that depends on clothes, "no longer shepherd and shepherdesses, but princesses, dressed in rich robes, and decked with jewels" (1911: 134). As in Perrault's "Cinderella", in *As You Like it*, clothes make the woman as well as the man: it is Cinderella wearing the appropriate dress that triggers recognition, on the part of the Prince, that she is the ideal wife and a Princess (in Perrault's version, the dress has to be produced again at the end of the tale, for the final recognition). The end of *As You Like It* is also characterized by a surprise anagnorisis which is dependent on the clothes worn by the character revealing true identities. Rosalind's entrance with Celia, dressed like the princesses that they are (with Hymen, who is always excised in the children's versions), allows Orlando and everyone else to recognize both gender and social identities. The fact that Rosalind states she has been brought up by a magician (on Rosalind and Renaissance magic see Rackin 1987, Beckman 1978, and Cirillo 2003) also adds to the fairy-tale atmosphere of the play. This is an aspect in which children's adaptations are obviously interested, as the unravelling of the crossdressing is generally treated like a playful expedient which provides general

surprise and amazement. Unsurprisingly, the young reader is never invited to reflect on sexual ambivalence – Rosalind "remains a woman" throughout the tale. In some cases, the inconsistency of the failure to recognize Rosalind is blamed on Orlando's naïveté, as in Surtees Townsend's *Stories from Shakespeare* (1899):

> The chatter and laughter ceased as two figures were seen drawing near through the wood. One was Aliena in her wedding dress, the other was a tall, fair, blushing maiden, dressed like a princess. [...] Orlando sprang forward with a cry. It was Rosalind herself. But where was Ganymede? Ah, now he saw it all. How blind he had been not to have known the pretty boy was Rosalind herself all the time, and how stupid not to have seen in Aliena the Princess Celia (223).

The multiple weddings at the end (although almost never do these versions keep all four couples: the Lambs, for example, only focus on Celia and Rosalind – Touchstone and Jaques are also eliminated) reaffirm and consolidate both the convention of restoring the social harmony of comedy with marriage and the folktale standard happy-ever-after. The celebration of the institution of marriage appears to be the appropriate ending for both comedy and folktale. As may be expected, the unassimilated and solitary Jaques is often absent from the tales, or given a very minor role as a "grumbler" (Richardson 1871: 223); his satiric vision and choice of a single life clearly undermine the value of an ending that celebrates the status quo by reassigning Rosalind to husband and father (Gay 2008: 91 and Bracher 1984: 235).

The other folktale trope that is present in the play and is exploited to the full in the narrative retellings is the forest (which is also given much space in Cowden Clarke's amplification): pastoralism gets translated or adapted into a typical folktale setting (Halio 1962). A lot has been written about the forest of Arden in the play and its symbolism, from green world to Arcadia, from pastoral to paradise, to metaphor of the theatre itself (Scoufos 1981: 215). And of course Shakespeare draws on romance tradition to present the forest as a landscape of transformation (Saunders 1993).

In folktales the forest can be a dark and dangerous place, or a place where one escapes from danger and hopes to find a magical refuge (such as "Snow White") but also finds new unexpected forms of danger in what looks like a familiar place (see the witch's house

in "Hansel and Gretel"). It also blends with the forest of legend and folklore; Robin Hood, living in the greenwood, has affinities to the enchanted forest trope, and the dichotomy court vs forest, one of the most widely investigated topics of the play, can be found in literary fairy tales of the period. It is the case of George Mac Donald's description of the liminality between the world of the forest and that of the castle in "Little Daylight" (1871), a literary fairy tale inspired by "Sleeping Beauty":

> No house of any pretension to be called a palace is in the least worthy of the name, except it has a wood near it – very near it – and the nearer, the better. Not all round it – I don't mean that, for a palace ought to be open to the sun and wind, and stand high and brave, with weathercocks glittering and flags flying: but on one side of every palace there must be a wood. And there was a very grand wood indeed beside the palace of the king [...]; such a grand wood, that nobody yet had ever got to the other end of it. Near the house it was kept very trim and nice, and it was free of brushwood for a long way in; but by degrees it got wild, and it grew wilder, and wilder, until some said wild beasts at last did what they liked in it (MacDonald 2003: 50).

As in MacDonald, *As You Like It* stages the opposition between the cultivated world of the court and the wild space of the forest. Although the forest in the play is a genteel place that can host a sophisticated company of exiled gentlemen, it can also be worryingly savage, as in Orlando's words "I thought that all things had been savage here" (II.vii.107), and give shelter to dangerous animals such as snakes and lions: walking or falling asleep in the forest can be fatal.

The retellings make the most of the forest trope and its traditional folktale associations. Thomas Carter's *Stories from Shakespeare* (1910) in particular stresses the strangeness and mysteriousness of this setting, a liminal place which alternates between pleasant Arcadia and a place of wild things and danger: "The forest is [...] wondrously pleasant to dwell in, but it is also a desert inaccessible whose melancholy boughs induce despair and sombre views of life. [...] A strange forest, but withal very beautiful, nowhere, yet everywhere, unknown" (1910: 106-97). Richardson, for example, emphasizes the Arcadian and harmonious side of the forest of Arden and combines it with the abundance of the legendary Land of Cockaigne: "When they wished for food, the wood was full of

birds, and game of all kinds. [...] Close by [...] a small river flowed among clustering trees, in whose depths sported abundance of fish [...] so that they lacked for nothing which could please or tempt the appetite" (1871: 211-12).

Sim stresses the calm, home loving life in the cottage for the two cousins – thus emphasizing, simultaneously, the enchanted aspect of the forest trope and the domestic qualities of the ladies, who keep house like true Angels of the Cottage:

> Rosalind, and Celia, and Touchstone, were quite settled down in their little farm, and, although they were such great ladies, they managed to keep house very well. Touchstone helped them with the rough work in the cottage, and Celia milked the goats, and looked after the chickens, and cooked. And Rosalind made the beds, and swept the floors, and lit the fires. (1894: 115)

In both fairy tales and adaptations of *As You Like It* of the period the forest is the place in which one can meet dangerous animals, as well as human helpers or opponents; a favourite place for a prince's or princess's quest, and for losing or finding the traveller's path or one's destiny. It can work magical transformations on the people who walk through it: it can be empathetic and reassuring, or it can let the demons of the past emerge. If in fairy tales the forest is the typical setting in which princesses and fairies operate, in the play Rosalind moves freely in the forest partaking of both fairy-tale roles: she directs, instructs and educates the couples of the play in her capacity as a quasi-magical princely helper.

To conclude. If we compare the short story adaptations with Cowden Clarke's prequel, it appears that the latter depicts a fictional world in which female friendship is both a protection and a trigger for female agency – it is a world in which men are either authoritarian, distant from or cruel to their wives and sisters (such as Duke Frederick and Flora's brother) or plain weak, inadequate, and neglectful, like Rosalind's father or Flora's husband. The forest is an Arcadian place in which the female utopia of friendship built by Celia's and Rosalind's mothers can thrive – a safe haven, untouched by the violence and plotting of the men's court. The ladies and their daughters are untainted by any form of rusticity, and their status of gentlewomen remains unchanged – when Celia's mother loses her

milk as a consequence of the accident, baby Celia cannot bear to be breastfed by Phoebe's mother, a simple shepherdess: "the patrician child cried for food, but seemed to disdain it from a plebeian source" (Cowden Clarke 2009: 263). Even in the middle of the forest Victorian decorum is observed. The invented story of Flora's distress is the not untypical occurrence of a Victorian gentlewoman refusing to accept an arranged marriage with a fool, but in Cowden Clarke it is a network of enlightened and resourceful gentlewomen that rescues her from this unhappy fate. The things Rosalind and Celia learn in their "Girlhood" years equip them for their future dealings with patriarchal authority, banishment and rejection, but still within the boundaries of gentility and respectability. Cowden's prequel celebrates female resourcefulness, producing revised and empowered gender models which address and become relevant to a double audience of mothers and daughters, models which inevitably end up appearing far more Victorian than early modern.

The tales in the Lambs' tradition are more explicitly tributary to a folktale configuration, and use to great advantage tropes already present in the play – the sibling rivalry and the forest setting; they emphasize the characters' moral polarization. All ambiguity is avoided and improbabilities are subsumed and resolved in the timeless world of folktale where Celia and Rosalind change from princesses into shepherdesses or young men, and back into princesses effortlessly and nonchalantly. There is no need to worry about consistency as in folktales magical transformations are very common: "the numinous excites neither fear nor curiosity" (Luthi 1986: 7). Clothes very effectively work as agents of change: the character's real identity will be revealed to the world when the wrong clothes are discarded and the appropriate ones are put on. As in Cowden Clarke, in these shorter retellings the womanly heroines are real princesses "inside" even when they milk the goats, and maintain their Victorian dignity even when they woo in man's clothes. As Mrs Elliot wrote in *Shakespeare's Garden of Girls* (1885), "And yet with all this power of observation and capacity of expression, she [Rosalind] surrenders herself to the mastery of love with a self-abandonment that never oversteps the modesty of maidenhood" (98). All versions of Rosalind and Celia for children of this period appear to be as fully integrated in the folktale mode as they are in the Womanly mode, one that for Victorian readers combined domesticity with

intellectual vivacity, initiative with good breeding, and agency with propriety.

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