

Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* and the Canary Islands

Tomás MONTERREY
University of La Laguna

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to examine different hypotheses about the sea-voyage of Thomas Lodge to the Canaries and Azores, during which he wrote *Rosalynde*, the main source text of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. In order to date the voyage, biographers of Lodge have always traced the activities of Captain Clarke, whose name is mentioned in the dedicatory epistle; whereas they have completely ignored its destination, as well as a dubious farming practice of the inhabitants of Tenerife. This paper will revise the three main theories proposed on this matter by taking into account the studies in the history of the Canary Islands, such as the pirate attacks and the proceedings of the Court of the Inquisition. It will also be suggested that the Forest of Arden was largely inspired by the vegetation of woods and fields of the Atlantic archipelagos. The landscape, and arguably the myth, of the Fortunate Islands offered Lodge an incomparable Arcadia to construct his Arden, which Shakespeare kept intact when he translated Arden to the English soil for the comedy that culminates with the representation of the ideal order of the world by means of the four weddings at the end of the play.

KEYWORDS: Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde*, Tenerife, William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

The pastoral romance *Rosalynde, or Euphues' Golden Legacy* – the main source text of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* – was written by Thomas Lodge during a voyage to the Canaries and Azores ('Terceras'). In the dedicatory letter to Henry Carey (first Lord Hunsdon) he claimed that: "Having with Captain Clarke made a voyage to the island of Terceras and the Canaries, to beguile the time with labour I writ this book" (Lodge 1907: xxvii).¹ This expedition, by any reckon, must have taken place between 1585 and 1588, but the exact date of this voyage is still uncertain. Since the identity of Captain Clarke

¹ *Rosalynde* was first published in 1590 and reedited several times in that decade. All quotations are taken from W.W. Greg's edition, *Lodge's "Rosalynde" Being the Original of Shakespeare's "As You Like It"* (New York 1907).

seems the sole known fact, many hypotheses have been suggested – often in relation to whether Lodge wrote his two plays before, or after, Marlowe's *Tambourline* was first performed in 1587. For example, F. Fleay linked Clarke's expedition with Drake's attack to Cadiz in 1587, although there is no evidence that any captain with that name participated in this raid (Paradise 1970: 36). K. Wilson also wrote in passing that he embarked in 1587, but she offered no further detail (2000: 7). W.W. Greg suggested a later date, 1588, considering his literary evolution (1907: xvii). Sidney Lee followed Greg for his entry of Lodge in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

N. Burton Paradise, Edward Tenney and Elaine Cuvelier offered an in-depth discussion of this matter in their biographies of Thomas Lodge. Their respective versions of the voyage are exclusively based upon Captain Clarke's activities; whereas the Atlantic itinerary and a textual reference to Tenerife have never been considered. In this essay I shall attempt a revision of the three main versions about this voyage in connection with the history of the Canary Islands. I would also like to suggest that the landscape of the Atlantic islands influenced Lodge's construction of the Forest of Arden, and therefore it could also influence Shakespeare's re-elaboration of pastoral Arden.

Lodge's straightforward introduction of Captain Clarke to the dedicatee of *Rosalynde* indicates that he was no stranger to Lord Hunsdon, either for his commercial dealings or for his naval merits. Nevertheless his name is hardly mentioned in the documents of the age. As far as it has been investigated, no Clarke ever took part as a captain in any of the voyages to the Canaries led by Cumberland, Raleigh or Drake; but we do know that Lord Hunsdon's eldest son, George Carey – as well as Raleigh – supported privateering expeditions to challenge the ban on trading with Protestant countries set by Philip II in 1585.

In Richard Hakluyt's collection, Captain Clarke is only mentioned in the narration of R. Grenville's expedition to Virginia in 1585 (Paradise 1937: 37), as commander of the *Roebuck*. In their way to America, the five boat fleet was dispersed by a storm off Portugal, and Captain Clarke is believed to have reached the shores of the Canaries to repair some damages. In 1931, N. Burton Paradise identified this episode with Lodge's arrival in the islands. He argued that Lodge did not continue to Virginia, but returned to England on another ship before September 1585, because in that month he "is described in the documents of a lawsuit" (1937: 37). However,

according to the history of the Canaries, the ship was probably amended at the desert little isle of Lobos, between Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. Lobos offered an ideal shelter for the English privateers in case of an emergency. It was also there where they used to leave messages for other English sailors inside canes that they stuck on top of the volcanic hill (Torriani 1978: 65). Following Rumeu de Armas, no vessel of Grenville's fleet is known to have stopped at any inhabited port of the islands. In any case, they simply sailed through the archipelago towards the Caribbean Sea (Rumeu de Armas 1991: 35; see also Morales Lezcano 1967: 342-343).

In 1984 E. Cuvelier, too, suggested that Lodge embarked to the Atlantic islands in 1585, though not with Grenville to Virginia, but in a less ambitious mission supported by George Carey. She argued that its appointed destination would not have been the Canaries, but the Azores, a favourite area for the English pirates to intercept the Spanish convoys loaded with wealth and precious goods from America. Thus, retired in the middle of the Atlantic, Thomas Lodge would have found a more pastoral landscape to write *Rosalynde* than on the rough sea – as he claimed in the note to the readers – “when every line was wet with a surge, and every humorous passion counterchecked with a storm” (Lodge 1907: xxix). Cuvelier identified this expedition with the one when the French pirate J. Challice collaborated with Captain Clarke. This collaboration is known because the lawful French owners of the goods taken by the pirates complained at the High Court of Admiralty and the subsequent legal process went on throughout the year 1586. Cuvelier took this information from Quinn's *The Roanoke Voyages* (Cuvelier 1984: 101-102), but the Atlantic islands are never mentioned in the long quotation she delivered. If this shorter voyage took place before the departure of Grenville's expedition to Virginia in April 1585 (Cuvelier 1984: 101; see also Andrews 1964: 96), it seems unlikely that Captain Clarke reached the Canaries and Azores, and returned to be ready for America. It would be much more credible that he sailed along the Western French coast as far as St. Jean de Luz at most (see Cooper 1921-22: 975).

From a literary perspective, it has been objected to both these theories that *Rosalynde* took quite a long time to be published, considering that in the meantime Lodge wrote two plays (one with Robert Greene) and his *Scillae Metamorphosis* appeared in 1589 (Rae 1967: 40). Elaine Cuvelier – by insisting that her hypothesis underlines the fact that Captain Clarke's voyage was made under

the auspices of George Carey – implicitly rejected the version proposed by Edward Tenney in 1935, though she declared it quite convincing, save for his idea that the voyage was supported by the London merchants John Bird and John Newton.

E. Tenney's reconstruction (1935: 97) was based on documentary evidence from the proceedings of the High Court of Admiralty. Tenney says that the "only known voyage" commanded by Clarke departed from England on 1 November, 1586. The expedition consisted of a 250-ton warship vessel named *Gold Noble* with more than 110 soldiers and sailors on board. Apparently their objective was "to take whatever prize the sea afforded." Though they achieved their target, the voyage was a kind of Odyssey. The sea was rough in Biscay. Further south, they captured several boats loaded with commodities, which they sent to England intact. They were attacked by Spaniards and pursued up to the coast of Barbary. They suffered a shortage of provisions and many became sick. Fresh food was purchased at a high price in "Sancta Cruce," a port identified by Tenney with Agadir. From this place, and since no further relation was given, Tenney completed the second half of the journey with the information provided by Lodge himself in the dedicatory epistle of *Rosalynde*. Thus, they would have sailed to the Azores via the Canary Islands, and would return to England by the summer of 1587. In the next year, following Tenney, "the *Gold Noble* helped battle the Armada."

In this context, "Sancta Cruce" or "Santa Cruz" is an ambiguous name, because the capital city and port of Tenerife (the biggest island in the Canaries) is also called by that name, "Santa Cruz"; and, besides, Tenerife is mentioned within the text of *Rosalynde* in a simile uttered by Aliena during a conversation with her beloved Saladyne:

Men in their fancy resemble the wasp, which scorns that flower
from which she hath fetched her wax; playing like the inhabitants of
the island Tenerifa, who, when they have gathered the sweet spices,
use the trees for fuel; so men, when they have glutted themselves
with the fair of women's faces, hold them for necessary evils, [...]
(1907: 130)

This simile is as central as the name of Captain Clarke to shed some more light on Lodge's voyage. It demonstrates that the writer was actually in Tenerife and that the event reported in his

passing statement really happened there and in no other place he might have visited; otherwise he could have mentioned that other place, since none of the Canaries had a literary tradition in English. As a matter of fact, this very text is the earliest instance where Tenerife is ever mentioned in a relevant piece of the English literature. Furthermore, it is surprising that this place-name of the modern world, the only one in *Rosalynde*, comes up so naturally in the mediaeval cultural milieu of the Forest of Arden and in the renaissance pastoral language of the romance, with numerous references to the Classical world.

By mentioning this agricultural practice of Tenerife, Lodge implies that the voyage had not exclusively military purposes, but also commercial, despite his insistence on having become a soldier. The presence of soldiers aboard is justified on the grounds of the Spanish ban on trade with the English and Dutch, whose vessels were treated and fought as enemies. Despite this ban, merchant relations with the “Lutherans” were never wholly interrupted in the Canary Islands. The English kept on trading either under false identity or as a clandestine activity.² This explains why, despite the low number of English boats that officially arrived in the islands, there was plenty supply of Canary wine in London (Lobo Cabrera 1995: 48-49). In fact, even though in 1587 Drake’s shadow hovered menacingly over the islands as a nightmare (Rumeu de Armas 1991: 38), governors knew and permitted this clandestine commerce, especially at Garachico (on the Northwest coast of Tenerife), trying to keep a difficult balance between the defence against pirate attacks and the protection of the existing economic order.

The unusual farming practice, which Lodge witnessed, offers a significant clue about the particular place they arrived at. Unbelievably, though, Lodge was not fantasising when he claimed that farmers destroyed the trees once their fruits had been collected in order to use them as fuel. It is certain that the words “sweet spices” and “trees” may refer to such a variety of both literal and figural meanings that it is impossible to determine whether he was describing activities related with the sugar cane, or with the vineyards, the only two products from Tenerife that were well-

² For instance, after Drake’s attack to Cadiz in 1587, five vessels approached the Western island of El Hierro and wanted to trade with the native inhabitants pretending to be Catholics and Irish (Viera y Clavijo 1982: 49). Sometimes they claimed to be French or Flemish merchants, or more simply a Portuguese played the role of Captain (Fajardo 1998: 110).

known amongst the Elizabethan readership. With respect to the sugar cane, in some regions the fire to cook the syrup was fuelled with the same canes once the sweet juice had been extracted; but not in the Canaries, where forest wood was normally burnt for the sugar production. However, they could have been used occasionally for that purpose when, for instance, in the decade of the 1580s sugar cane plantations were giving way to vineyards (Alberti 1912: xvii). But what is really astonishing is that the simile could also be referred to the vineyards, which I strongly believe it does.

In his book about the Canary wine trade, Lobo Cabrera pointed out that, “en torno a noviembre se arrancaban aquellas cepas viejas o que no eran productivas” and he added a piece of information which demonstrates that the farming activity referred to by Lodge was also recorded in historical documents “en 1589 y 1591 son arrancadas las cepas de dos parrales de Telde, hasta la cantidad de cien cargas, de modo que la tierra quedara dispuesta para volver a ararla de nuevo, y llevadas al ingenio de Telde” (1993: 33).³ Although this episode occurred in the island of Gran Canaria, this agricultural technique must have also been put into practice in November, by the sloppy vineyards near the busy port of Garachico, where two sugar mills still existed,⁴ in the Northwest corner of Tenerife.

During the time span from 1585 to 1588, the proceedings of the Inquisition Court in the Canaries gave notice of two English expeditions which arrived near Garachico. Of course, there is no ground to assert that Lodge participated in any of them, but it would have happened in a very similar way. In November 1586, a letter by English pirates was intercepted. It was addressed to Jofre (Geoffrey) Lopes, a well-known English agent resident in Tenerife. Apparently the pirates had contacts in La Rochelle and gave Lopes news of some relatives. They asked him to negotiate the rescue of a low ton vessel

³ My translation: “By November farmers used to pull up the old or unproductive vines. In 1589 and 1591 two vineyards in Telde were pulled up, totalling a hundred loads – so that the earth would be ready to be ploughed again – and taken to the sugar mill in Telde.”

⁴ During the years that Lodge could have arrived in Tenerife, there were two sugar mills in Daute, one on the West and other on the East side of the port of Garachico. The latter was built by the Ponte family just in the 1580s. The biggest sugar mill in Tenerife was in Adeje, on the South of the island. It was plundered by English pirates in 1586 and completely destroyed by a storm three years later. The sugar mill of La Orotava near another active port on the Northern coast had considerably reduced its production by then.

and a barque loaded with wine that had been captured on the Western coast. They also bid to sell some wheat and barley they carried on a caravel. The other event took place possibly in March 1588. Two English ships and a French one arrived in Tenerife. The foreigners exchanged products with the fishermen and inquired for the English agent Jofre Lopes as well. They must have stayed long enough to make friends with the local fishermen, as these took off their hats to greet them and had fun playing with their swords. But on this time, the Court of the Inquisition, to its major disappointment, was not informed of the furtive visitors (Fajardo 1998: 108-109). There are many coincidences between these accounts, such as the arrival of a little fleet, the French connection, and an ambiguous military/commercial purpose. Nevertheless, the first story has more affinities with Tenney's version of Captain Clarke's voyage, for example the tuns of "sack" they took from "a French barque of 'Olonia'"; or the 80 ton Spanish boat they captured off Cape Blanco loaded with fish, that they managed to send it back to England intact (1935: 97); or, curiously enough, their simultaneity, November 1586, though many English merchants usually came to Tenerife in this month to load the new wine (Steckley 1981: 26).

Tenney's explanation tallies with the historical records of the Canaries, and it offers a much more convincing account than Paradise's and Cuvelier's versions. At the same time, if Lodge's decision to take up arms in the autumn of 1586 is considered, Tenney's proposal also makes sense. It is normally believed that Lodge set on board to overcome his mean financial resources; however, after the Babington plot and the onset of the process against Queen Mary of Scotland in October 1586, London was no longer a safe place for those under suspicion of being a Catholic, like Lodge himself, who had already been in prison in 1582 presumably for a charge connected with his religious beliefs (Paradise 1931: 19). Under this light, the theme of exile in *Rosalynde* gets much more prominence.

Apart from the simile of the farming practice, Lodge's romance variously shows the influence of the Canaries and Azores. The most obvious one is the name of the shepherd Montanus, who dwelt in the Forest of Arden and used to write his passions on the trees. Undoubtedly, Lodge must have been deeply impressed by the mounts in the islands of Tenerife and Pico, where the highest summits of Spain and Portugal respectively are located. Although it was an Italian name, Lodge called his character Montanus in order to

identify him with the existential/social/literary realm he represented in the novel. On adapting the romance for the stage, Shakespeare changed the name of all male characters, and Montanus became Silvius, that is, a name literally identified with the surrounding environment, wholly Edenic, of Arden. Shakespeare's renaming the male characters underlines the Humanist up-dating or modernization of Lodge's story that still imbibed Mediaevalism. Silvius, like Montanus, symbolises the natural inhabitant of the Forest of Arden and, as such, he shares its goodness and purity, as well as its pristine passion and ingenuousness. Silvius, thus, stands in the cardinal point diametrically opposed to Touchstone, who has no corresponding character in *Rosalynde* for the sake of decorum.

The less conspicuous influence, but the one which Shakespeare translated with greater accuracy, is the configuration of Arden itself. Stuart Daley demonstrated that the forest in *Rosalynde* and in *As You Like It* share a common name and an equal disinterest in depicting the French authentic vegetation of the Ardennes or Perigord. With respect to *Rosalynde*, Daley stated that the woods "composed of beech, myrtle, pine, cypress, and olive, among others, belong to a long tradition more answerable to rhetoric than to botany" (1985: 24). On the contrary, Shakespeare transplanted the vegetation described by Lodge into the English soil, because, on the one hand, it was primarily inspired by the forests in Warwickshire, and on the other each species could be symbolically interpreted by the Elizabethan audience. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that Lodge's trees and landscape owe more to the fertile groves and exuberant forests of the Atlantic Islands, than to any other in England or in France. Obviously, wood vegetation is termed with familiar English names. It is certain, though, that pines also form part of the islands forests, and there are local species similar to myrtle trees and willows. However, what is really astonishing is that the fruit trees, such as pomegranates, grapevines, lemons or citrons, mentioned in *Rosalynde* are characteristic of the Atlantic islands fields, largely cultivated in that age by Portuguese farmers. The episode when Rosader met Gerismond and his loyal men "sitting all at a long table under the shadow of lemon trees" (Lodge 1907: 60) might be reminiscent of Lodge's own experience with his mates, perhaps in the Azores. Besides, olive trees – now rare in the Canaries despite recent plantations by governmental projects – abounded at the end of the sixteenth century, when they were being sown everywhere, as Torriani said in his description (1978: 142).

It is evident that both Lodge and Shakespeare provided their respective forests with greater significance by turning the place of exile into an arena of love. For Roberts, Arden is the forest of reconciliation, a return to innocence (1977: 121). Indeed, Lodge's Arden was conceived as a realm of exile, though not one of deprivation. It is rather a space preserved from tyranny, and thus a realm isolated, protector, Edenic – like Azores or the Canaries, or the Fortunate Islands, as they were called from Antiquity. In *As You Like It*, at the beginning of Act II, the Duke declares: "And this our life, exempt from public haunt,/ Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,/ Sermons in stones, and good in everything" (1968: 70). In Lodge's pastoral romance, the Edenic Forest of Arden is above all a space where sonnets, eclogues, madrigals, and songs spring up almost spontaneously; but what Lodge draws, Shakespeare emphasises by turning the forest into a dramatic space, where the ideal cosmic order of Nature finds a perfect balance as represented by the four weddings at the conclusion of the comedy.

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Author's address:

Facultad de Filología · Universidad de La Laguna · Campus de Gijajara ·
38071 La Laguna
jmonterr@ull.es