

# Rosalind: A Woman Character Created by William Shakespeare and He Made The World to Love Her

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**Abstract:** Rosalind is one of the best created woman characters by William Shakespeare loved much not only British but all over the world who loved and imagined both inner and outer beauty of a woman. Being in a disguise Rosalind created her identity throughout the play *As You Like It*. Rosalind seems to make a lot of ridiculous assumptions about what it means to be a weak character but she suggests that women are prone to crying and that it is a man's primary duty and responsibility to comfort women. She is serious as well as comic in this play. This paper depicts Rosalind's appealing personality both to the readers and spectators in theatre.

“All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.”

— **William Shakespeare, As You Like It**

“The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.”

— **William Shakespeare, As You Like It**

ROSALIND says in *As You Like It* as: I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman, but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat. Therefore courage, good Aliena. (2.4.4-8)

When we start and go on reading the play unwillingly we fall in love with her. Shakespeare carved Rosalind which is considered as the richness and depth of character presented in this play. Shakespeare appreciated a lot by critics. Jonson's eulogy that "he was not of an age but for all time", is by no means an exaggeration. He may even apply Shakespeare's own words about Cleopatra to his works "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale Her infinite variety." Each age has interpreted Shakespeare in its own way and understood with contemporary society. And the old criticism again has lent itself to new interpretations and borne more criticism in its turn.

Among other aspects of Shakespearean drama, the characters have proved a fertile ground for critical endeavour. In fact, the field is boundless and inexhaustible. Ruskin held the view that there are no heroes in Shakespeare, only heroines. Still, criticism has not in favour of male characters any of his plays.

Most of the readers, researchers and critics have been studied under the superficial categories of romantic, sentimental, historical, and so on. Otherwise they have been studied in a chronological order. Renowned acclaimed actresses have contributed their share by giving their impressions of the characters they have enacted in many of the plays written by Shakespeare. These actresses gave right justice to the character at the same time they made Shakespeare to become popular in literary field.

Therefore a close and systematic study of the women characters in Shakespeare's plays leads us to think that they might make an interesting subject of study under a classification based on fundamental relations as Daughters, Lovers, Wives, and Mothers. Shakespeare has presented, in all, twenty Mothers,

and all suffering mothers. But the smallest group is that of Daughters. There are in all fourteen daughters, who can be broadly grouped as Rebellious and Submissive daughters. The subordinate characters of the various plays, however, cannot be ignored at all. (Sarojini Shintri)

John Dryden, as long back as the 17th century, wrote that Shakespeare wrote for men only, while Beaumont and Fletcher for women. Coleridge, in his series of lectures on Shakespeare, strongly objected to this remark little expected in so sane a critic as Dryden. "I wish to begin by showing, not only that this is not true, but that of all writers for the stage, he only has drawn the female character with that mixture of the real and the ideal which belongs to it; and that there is no one female personage in the plays of all his contemporaries, of whom a man, seriously examining his heart and his good sense, can say 'Let that woman be my companion through life: let her be the subject of my suit, and the reward of my success.'" (S.T. Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare page-418)

Shakespeare's representation of women, and the ways in which his female roles are interpreted and enacted, have become topics of scholarly interest. While seldom occupying the center of his plays. But there are few exceptions include Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The heroines surpass the limit of expectation of the readers and audience.

Shakespeare's most favorably portrayed women possess characters that are tempered by negative qualities. They suggest that this indicates that Shakespeare was not free of misogynistic tendencies that were deep-seated in the culture of his country and era. Within the texts of the plays, charges of promiscuity are

often leveled against young women, for example, and women occupying positions of power are frequently portrayed as capricious and highly corruptible.

Rosalind is the beautiful daughter of the exiled Duke Senior and niece to his usurping brother Duke Frederick. Her father is banished from the kingdom which breaks her heart. She then meets Orlando, one of her father's friends' son and falls in love with him. After angering her uncle, she leaves his court for exile in the Forest of Arden. Disguised as a shepherd named Ganymede, Rosalind lives with her sweet and devoted cousin, Celia (who is disguised as Ganymede's sister, Aliena), and Duke Frederick's fool Touchstone. Eventually, Rosalind is reunited with her father and married to her faithful lover, Orlando.

“Rosalind is one of Shakespeare's most recognized heroines. Admired for her intelligence, quick wit, and beauty, Rosalind is a vital character in "As You Like It." Most commonly seen next to her beloved cousin Celia, Rosalind is also a faithful friend, leader, and schemer. She stays true to her family and friends throughout the entire story, no matter how dangerous the consequences. Rosalind dominates the stage. Her true decision-making skills can be seen in the last scene of Act V (5) where she has to present herself as Rosalind to her father and to Orlando, but at the same time change Phebe's opinion to marry Silvius. She is the main character of the play who extracts the clarity of important traits in other characters”.(wikipaedia)

In Shakespeare's play 'As You Like It,' the character Rosalind is an example of ingenuity, good humor, and patience. She also proves to be a truly loyal friend. In this lesson, we will learn more about this admirable heroine. , Celia, escapes with Rosalind to a cottage on the edge of the Forest of Arden. Through her wisdom and wit, Rosalind not only survives but thrives through her difficulties.

Shakespeare considers the nature and manifestation of Love in all of his comedies. Love was a big issue in his day, because the idea of marrying someone for love (rather than to create an alliance between families or to secure financial stability) was just becoming an actual possibility. At the beginning of the play, Orlando and Rosalind meet and fall in love at first sight, a common occurrence between romantic leads in a Shakespeare comedy. So this part of their "relationship" is quite ordinary. However, they later meet in the forest of Arden. Rosalind, by now, is disguised as a boy (Ganymede), so, at least for the time being, their relationship has no way to proceed in a conventional way.

Another point to be noticed here that, Orlando is not the only a person who is ready to open his mouth to utter his opinion but Rosalind also proposes to teach him about the art of Love. It is during this process, when they are alone together as equals (since Orlando assumes that Rosalind is Ganymede and his male equal), that they are able to get to know one another as people rather than simply the objects of each other's affections. Therefore As You Like It is a comedy, and therefore is required to end in a wedding, so we know that Rosalind and Orlando will wed at the end of the play. However, it is this interesting twist of the two of them deepening their feelings for each other during their honest interactions while Rosalind is disguised as a boy that gives their love it is unique flavor.

To begin with the play, Orlando and Rosalind meet at the wrestling match and fall in love at first sight, a common occurrence between romantic leads in a Shakespeare comedy. So this part of their "relationship" is quite ordinary. At the forest of Arden Rosalind is disguised as a boy (Ganymede) therefore

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Rosalind offers herself as a tutor in the ways of love to her beloved Orlando. Rosalind's talents and charms are on full display. At that moment when they meet under very different circumstances; Orlando treats Ganymede as a teenage boy, and confidently talks to him about his love for Rosalind. Ganymede teases Orlando about this woman he is in love with and promises to cure Orlando of his love, provided that Orlando courts Ganymede as if he were Rosalind. Orlando agrees to play this game of mock courtship. The first thing that makes the situation interesting is that although Orlando doesn't see through Rosalind's disguise at all and is completely convinced that Ganymede is male, he finds himself strangely fascinated by the youth, and even attracted to him. Rosalind clings to the part of Ganymede because of the freedom it allows her. In her boy's disguise, she escapes the limitations of being a woman the conscious object of Orlando's love. She learns a great deal about herself, about Orlando, and about love itself which she could not have done within the normal conventions of society.

John Kerry, the US secretary of state, decided to single out a character from the works of William Shakespeare, he made a surprising choice: Rosalind, the quick-witted and cross-dressing heroine of the comedy As You Like It. “Rosalind, who ‘promised to make all this matter even’, stands out as perhaps the greatest diplomat in all literature,” Kerry writes in an essay commissioned by the British Council. “She navigates her own personal traumas of exile, banishment and disguise with tenacity, patience and good humour.”

Kerry, a Vietnam war veteran and longtime Massachusetts senator who was beaten by George W Bush in the 2004 presidential election, belongs to a long line of American politicians – including Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and John F Kennedy – who have revered Shakespeare. Rosalind also demonstrates both wit and ingenuity when she decides to disguise herself as Ganymede, a young gentleman. She escapes with Celia, who is disguised as a shepherdess. Rosalind's disguise is so good, that she even fools her father, who she meets later in the forest. Again, we see her selfless nature as the girls and Touchstone (the court jester) journey towards the Forest of Arden. Rosalind is extremely weary, but her new role as Ganymede helps her keep her focus off her own problems. She says, 'I could find in disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman; but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat: therefore courage, my heart to good Aliena!' (2.4). Regardless of her own weary discomfort, Rosalind takes her eyes off of her own feelings and focuses on the needs of others. Rosalind decisively buys the cottage at the edge of the woods. Banishment may have disillusioned someone of lesser strength, but Rosalind takes charge and makes the best of a very difficult situation. She finds shelter and food for herself and her companions. She brings her understanding of everyone's situation and interests to bear with patient preparation and negotiation (John Kerry)

Rosalind is a particular favorite among feminist critics, who admire her ability to subvert the limitations that society imposes on her as a woman. With boldness and imagination, she disguises herself as a young man for the majority of the play in order to woo the man she loves and instruct him in how to be a more accomplished, attentive lover a tutorship that would not be welcome from a woman. There is endless comic appeal in Rosalind's lampooning of the conventions of both male and female behavior, but an Elizabethan audience might have felt a

certain amount of anxiety regarding her behavior. After all, the structure of a male-dominated society depends upon both men and women acting in their assigned roles. Thus, in the end, Rosalind dispenses with the charade of her own character. Her emergence as an actor in the Epilogue assures that theatergoers, like the Arden foresters, are about to exit a somewhat enchanted realm and return to the familiar world they left behind. But because they leave having learned the same lessons from Rosalind, they do so with the same potential to make that world a less punishing place.

Only because of good character trait Rosalind displays is her obvious humble spirit. She demonstrates this through her loyalty to her cousin Celia. Her father has just been exiled, and yet Rosalind is willing to stay in order to be a companion to her cousin. Rosalind must have felt torn between the father she loves very much and the uncle who cheated him out of his throne, but she doesn't show any bitterness. Rosalind and Celia have been inseparable since they were very young. Rosalind accepts this role, regardless of her own deep sadness over her father's banishment. She does admit her feelings to Celia in Act I, but resolves to forget the condition of her [estate], to rejoice in [Celia's]' (1.2).

No doubt Rosalind's wit is sharp. She proves herself to be a fun companion, cousin, and friend to Celia. In the beginning of the play before the banishment, both girls tease about the enigma that women are either beautiful and loose, or unattractive and honest, and wonder why women can't be both honest and beautiful. In addition, both girls have great fun

finding and reading the love notes to Rosalind hanging from tree branches in the Forest of Arden, not to mention the 'schooling' Rosalind gives to Orlando.

Rosalind (played by a male actor in Shakespeare's day) closes the show and asks that everyone applaud. Though she'll not beg, she promises that, if she were a woman, she'd kiss anyone in the crowd who had good breath and a solid beard. She assumes that all such people would applaud her as she left the stage, maybe out of relief at not having to make out with a male actor, maybe excited by the possibility of fun times with this adventurous gender-bender.

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