

Shakespeare, Nature and Time – Moving in Time together with you all at Westhay, Wootton and Charmouth.

As I moved in Nature once again I remembered how important it is for me to be in it. My childhood was spent climbing trees and playing in the garden or nearby woods, building dens with my childhood soulmate Dickie next door!

How well Shakespeare knew that. *As You Like It* – one of his sunniest Romantic comedies, kept coming into my mind. I said that the Forest of Arden was a magical place, but that's not really it – it's magical in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – being inhabited by Oberon, Titania & Puck and all the Fairies – but in *As You Like it*, the Forest is more *real*. In both plays the *real action* takes place there, not in the court or in the town (which are places of stern rules and retribution). It is in the Forest where the real things happen, whether with Fairies or foresters and shepherds.

The real things of the heart and soul – falling in love, finding Nature's reality and rhythm. Here's the banished Duke's opening Act II

DUKE SENIOR

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 but 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 every thing.

There's no clock in the Forest!

Later on moving Through Time and letting Time Move Through Me I remembered Rosalind – in disguise as the boy Ganymede, calling out to Orlando, who does not know she is in the Forest and 'in man's apparel' :

ROSALIND

I pray you, what is't o'clock?

ORLANDO

You should ask me what time o' day: there's no clock in the forest.

ROSALIND

Then there is no true lover in the forest; else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock.

ORLANDO

And why not the swift foot of Time? had not that been as proper?

ROSALIND

By no means, sir: Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal and who he stands still withal.

ORLANDO

I prithee, who doth he trot withal?

ROSALIND

Marry, he trots hard with a young maid between the contract of her marriage and the day it is solemnized: if the interim be but a se'nnight, Time's pace is so hard that it seems the length of seven year.

ORLANDO

Who ambles Time withal?

ROSALIND

With a priest that lacks Latin and a rich man that hath not the gout, for the one sleeps easily because he cannot study, and the other lives merrily because he feels no pain, the one lacking the burden of lean and wasteful learning, the other knowing no burden of heavy tedious penury; these Time ambles withal.

ORLANDO

Who doth he gallop withal?

ROSALIND

With a thief to the gallows, for though he go as softly as foot can fall, he thinks himself too soon there.

ORLANDO

Who stays it still withal?

ROSALIND

With lawyers in the vacation, for they sleep between term and term and then they perceive not how Time moves.

There is no clock in the forest! – but the ticking of the Wootton Clock gives me a Pavlovian reaction – desire to MOVE INTO LIFE!!!! There we're not pursued by our obsession with Time and punctuality – driven even harder these days by email and e communication. BUT Time is very pertinent especially for Lovers! When Orlando is late for their next meeting:

ROSALIND

Why, how now, Orlando! where have you been all this while? You a lover! An you serve me such another trick, never come in my sight more.

ORLANDO

My fair Rosalind, I come within an hour of my promise.

ROSALIND

Break an hour's promise in love! He that will divide a minute into a thousand parts and break but a part of the thousandth part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him that Cupid hath clapped him o' the shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole.

As we listened to the Waves on the Shore, I was very much reminded of a theme I have been pondering of late too... Thank you Frances for the lovely opportunity and the play and LISTENING on the Beach...

Sonnet 60

Like as the waves make towards the pebb'l'd shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.