



Body's Death or Body's Banishment?:¹ The Time Philosophy and *As You Like It*

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Abstract

In *As You Like It*, Court and Arden are two different settings where people have different experiences of life. Court is an epitome of the realistic world and the pastoral forest of Arden is a symbol of the lost paradise—Eden. In these two settings, time is a topic discussed frequently by the characters through the whole play. The characters hold different views of time and some of the views change with the transform of setting. Time in realistic world is linear time which devours man's life little by little, while time in Arden is circular time which makes man feel eternity and tranquility. In addition, time experienced by the persons in love is changeable and elastic which is an intermediate state between the linear time and the circular time. This kind of multiple time philosophy reflects the characters' various world views and outlooks on life.

Key words: Time philosophy; Shakespeare; *As You Like It*

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¹ Quoted from Friar Lawrence's words about the Prince's judgement on Romeo: A gentler judgement vanished from his lips: Not body's death, but body's banishment. (3.3. pp.10-11) All references from *Romeo and Juliet* are from William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. In G. Blakemore Evans (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

INTRODUCTION

In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare depicts the contrast of two different worlds—court, the realistic world and Arden, the ideal pastoral world. According to Evelin Banhard (Banhard, 2008), the contrast of these two worlds is embodied in “the different between, on the one hand, institutions of strict order and rules, which depict city or court life, and, on the other hand, a less prescribed life style, a space where the limitations set by urban civilization do not apply and everything and/or anything is possible, that is country life.” He believes that “Conscious human life, i.e. the life of culture, also demands a special space-time structure, for culture organizes itself in the form of a special space-time and cannot exist without it.” It is obvious that Shakespeare creates a special space-time structure (Arden), in which the contradictions of the realistic world can be reconciled and changed to be harmony, with the help of pastoral tradition of English literature. The philosophy of time is an important theme in Renaissance literature. The poets generally depict time as the images of a scythe, a sandglass, a dragon biting its tail or a circle of zodiac, and sometimes an old man². In traditional cosmology, time can be divided into two kinds: linear time and circular time (Hu, 2001). The linear time is finite and decay, while the circular time is infinite and eternity.

Quinones (1965) claims that there are three basic conceptions of time in Shakespeare's works: augmentative time, contracted time, and extended time. In the sonnets, in the histories, comedies, tragedies, and the last plays, drama is made from the characters' attempts to deny, control, escape or understand the real, relentless, and irreversible activities of time. In *As You Like It*, there is more than one concept of time, which, in dramatic

² The images of time can be seen in Hu Jialuan's *Starry Heavens: English Renaissance Poetry and Traditional Cosmology*. and Luo Yimin's *Time's Scythe: A Thematic Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

terms, means that there is more than one "time-sense". In this drama, the characters such as Jaques, Duke Senior, Orlando and Rosalind hold different views about time, which create the various even contradictory concepts of time. Jaques's famous speech "All the world's a stage" is subject to the universal concept of time in Renaissance—time is a destroyer. However, Orlando says "there's no clock in the forest" and Rosalind says "Time travels in diverse paces with diverse persons", which expresses different views of time from Jaques. Thus, we can find the multiple senses of time: The realistic linear time, the ideal circular time and the intermediate situation which exist respectively in court, Arden and human mind. The linear time is an objective process in which things come into being and cease. Against this there is a concept of "timelessness," which roots in pastoral tradition and symbolizes the eternity of Eden. Distinct from both of these concepts there is psychological time which is not a single concept but rather a series of concepts expressing the specific time-sense of individual characters. The interior, private time of individuals is the intermediate state between man's time of the realist world and the eternity of the ideal paradise.

1. THE COURT CLOCK: A WORLD OF REALISTIC, LINEAR AND POWER TIME

According to Plato (1961), the linear time can be measured: "Days and nights and months and years" are all units of time, and time is a copy of Eternity its movement by numbers. Plato also says that things moving in "the sensible world" are "the forms of production of time". Time "revolves according to a law of number." That is to say, time progresses by predetermined and constantly repeated patterns and orders. Thus, the universe moves according to such units as hours, days, months, seasons, and years, which creates past, present and future. People can use some tools, such as sundial, sandglass and clock, to measure time. In *As You Like It*³, the court is the epitome of the sub-celestial world, in which time is measured by the manmade tools. According to Rawdon Wilson (Wilson, 1975), Touchstone's comments upon the passage of time, as reported by Jaques (2.7.139-143), are both a statement of the nature of objective time. This objective time obtains in the world beyond Arden, and, in their quality of pathos and lament, an indication of his inability to adjust to the forest world. The objectivity of time can be found in the conversation between Jaques and Touchstone:

"It is ten o'clock. Thus we may see", quoth he, "how the world wags: 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,

And after one hour more' twill be eleven; and so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe, and then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot, and thereby hangs a tale." (2.7. 22-28).

Touchstone's description of the linear time is related to "hour", the unit of time, and number. The linear time is like a straight line and the linear movement includes constant change. Aristotle (1941) holds that the movement of the straight line means change, which means the process generation and corruption. So we ripe and rot until death' coming. Similarly, Jaques' reflections on the seven ages of man also indicate a bondage to the world of linear time: "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."(2.7.139-143) Like Touchstone, Jaques cannot lose his awareness of time of the realistic world although he is in Arden. During the limit life, man should play his roles in different ages, from infant, youth, middle age to an old man. At last, a man will disappear totally: "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything (2.7.165)." In the realistic world represented by court, time has strong power to destroy all the lives. Man's life will decay and ruin with time's slipping, just like the sand in sandglass. So Oliver says to the old servant Adam: "Get you with him, you old dog." Adam replays: "Is 'old dog' my reward? Most true, I have lost teeth in your service. God be with my old master! He would not have spoke such a word" (1.1.85-89). That is the miserable fate of human being due to God's punishment. Nobody can escape "time's scythe"⁴: No man is immortal, so time always triumphs.

Herrman (1994) argues that time is a tool of patriarchal oppression in *As You Like It*. To fight with the destructive power of time, people procreate offspring and through the link of generation man derives from the past and communicates with the future. Patriarchal leaders seek to compensate for the fact that they "rot and rot" from "hour to hour" by reproducing the status quo with each generation, passing on wealth and privilege to their first-born sons. Through the process of inheritance, then, men in power defy their enemy, time, maintaining the power structure indefinitely. Since the male elite are able to transcend time, and those below are not, these powerful men are able to use time as a tool of oppression. By presenting time as the enemy, setting deadlines for submission which must be met in order to avoid capital punishment, the patriarchal leaders claim time as their own advantage. Orlando, for example, has no role in society because he is not the first-born son and, therefore, inherited little things from his dead father. Oliver uses

³ All references from *As You Like It* are taken from William Shakespeare. (2000). *As you like it*, New Cambridge Shakespeare. In M. Hattaway (Ed.). London: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ See Shakespeare, W. (1998). *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. In K Duncan-Jones, (Ed.). London: Thomson Publishing Company. The author claims that "nothing' gainst time's scythe can make defence" in Sonnet 18.

his status to destroy his younger brother, of whom he is extremely jealous. Oliver has “trained [Orlando] like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from [him] all gentleman like qualities” (1.1.63-64), stripping him of any chance for success in the court. As a result, Orlando is a social misfit—a man with no status. So, by the end of the second scene, the impoverished youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys finds himself victimized by “a tyrant Duke” (1.2.240) and “a tyrant brother” (Montrose, 1981). Lack of wealth and the proper power; and since men are defined by these standards in a patriarchy, he has no valid role in society. In either case, patriarchal control over time through inheritance alienates Orlando from his own life. So Orlando is a loser in the secular world, not because he lacks ability or virtue, but because he doesn’t have the chance to change his status.

Things are the same for Rosalind in the court, which is a perverse world, where brother plots against brother and virtues become “sanctified and holy traitors.” It is a world ruled over by the usurping Frederick, who banishes his elder brother and keeps his niece only so long as convenience allows. When he fears Rosalind as a threat to the fame and popularity of his own daughter, he drives her out just as Oliver plans to kill Orlando out of jealousy. Duke Frederick’s status in the hierarchy allows him to actually surpass the aging process by imposing capital punishment on his subjects. The Duke threatens Rosalind with death, not through any guilt of her own, but simply through her relationship to her father. As in any patriarchal society, the daughter is defined by the status of her father, and since her father is Duke Frederick’s enemy, she has no worth. Delivering his ultimatum, the Duke demonstrates his control over time by setting a deadline for Rosalind’s flight from the court: “Within these ten days if that thou beest found/ So near our public court as twenty miles,! Thou diest for it...” (1.3.38-41). As sovereign, the Duke claims time as his executioner, reminding Rosalind again, “If thou outstay the time, upon mine honor,! And in the greatness of my word, you die” (1.3.84-85).

In realistic world, time is threatening human’s life, both on the aspect of nature and society, especially for the weak group. So, Rosalind and Orlando, with their followers, choose to leave for Arden to look for another kind of life.

2. THE MERRY ARDEN: EDEN, ETERNITY AND THE IDEAL CIRCULAR TIME

The first appearance of the life led by Duke Senior and his fellows in the Forest of Arden occurs early in the play in the dialogue between Charles and Oliver. Oliver has decided to use the wrestler to rid himself of Orlando, but first he inquires into the “new news at the new Court” (1.1.77). Charles recounts what Oliver already knows: the

new Duke has driven out the old Duke, and a number of lords have voluntarily accompanied him into exile. For no apparent reason, Oliver next inquires into Rosalind’s position, and then asks where the old Duke will live. Charles replies:

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 their time carelessly as they did in the golden world (1.1. 120-125).

Charles describes Arden as Robin Hood’s forest and the golden world, which is a pastoral style different from city. According to Michael Hattaway,⁵ “forests not only challenged economic and cultural expansion but kindled nostalgia for civilisation’s origins in a lost golden world.” “the ‘pastoral’ mode of the ‘forest’ represents a condition - or state of mind - rather than a place.” The pastoral life in forest is usually related to the golden age or Eden. Both classical and Christian cultures shared a belief in an original state of human perfection, in which man lived effortlessly and in complete harmony with nature, free from time, change and death. In *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry* (Rivers, 1994), Isabel Rivers argues that the classical and Christian earthly paradises have certain important characteristics in common. There are no seasons; the time is perpetual spring. Man does not work to survive; the earth gives up its produce spontaneously. The land flows with wine, milk and honey. Agriculture, trade and travel are unknown. There is abundance of vegetation and water. There is no conflict between man and man or man and nature; there is no decay. However, the paradise doesn’t exist in the realistic world any more. The paradise that is lost in Milton’s epic is both a physical place and a state of mind; the paradise that is regained is only the latter. The mount of paradise is washed away in the Flood, never to be found again; the new earthly paradise, as Michael explains to Adam, is to be an inner one. Paradise as a physical place, the heavenly paradise, will not be recovered till the end of the world.

So, we can say that Arden is a symbolic Paradise, not a real one. As people can’t go back to Eden, we need to find a fictive one or a state of mind. In this fictive paradise, time loses its objectivity in the real world. Michael Hattaway⁶ argued that

Moreover, with its allegiances to Utopias and lost golden ages of innocence and justice, pastoral occupies not just a special place but a special time, what Mikhail Bakhtin termed a “chronotope”. Time in this forest without a clock, where “some kind of social space replaces a physical landscape”, is a measure for play rather than for work, and delineates time as it is imagined and

⁵ Hattaway, M. (2000). The editor of *As You Like It*, which belongs to New Cambridge Shakespeare series and was printed by Cambridge University Press. See his discussion of forest in the introduction of *As You Like It* on pp.4-6.

⁶ Ibid

remembered rather than as it is calibrated in a regulated society.

It seems that human who live in forest can escape from time's scythe of the realistic world. So, without the threat of time, they can persuade virtue, knowledge and love freely. At their first meeting, the dialogue between Rosalind and Orlando depicts the condition of the time in the forest: "I pray you, what is't o'clock?", "You should ask me what time o'day: There's no clock in the forest." (3.3.253-255) For Orlando, Arden is a place that is totally different from court. In court, his social status is so low that he is even not a gentleman because he can't get a good education. And his life is miserable because Oliver wants to kill him and Duke Frederick denies his father's fame and his ability. But in Arden, Orlando is accepted by Duke Senior and his follows and he can woo his lover freely. The destructive and oppressive linear time has lost meaning and time is cyclic measured by sun and characterized by peace and eternity.

The attempt to recover paradise is sometimes used as a metaphor for the struggle for individual moral perfection. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (Spenser, 1980), the quest of the Red Cross Knight takes the form of a journey back to Eden, with the defeat of the Satanic dragon, the freeing of the besieged inhabitants of the country, and a temporary recovery of original innocence. The betrothal of Red Cross to Una has political and theological as well as moral connotations, but Red Cross's victory over the dragon is achieved largely because he has conquered himself. In *As You Like It*, Duke Senior is usurped and exiled by his brother Frederick. In the rustic forest, he doesn't plan to revenge and take back the power. On the contrary, he enjoys the pastoral life greatly:

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. (2.1.1-16)

Duke Senior's remark that in Arden they do not feel the "penalty of Adam" suggests the nature of the time in Arden. The "penalty of Adam" is, presumably, decay when the linear time is no longer a concern and is not felt or perceived. The "seasons' difference" is objective and

absolute, but given the attitudes proper to Arden it is not necessary to feel a concern for this change. Duke Senior believes that the life of Arden is sweeter and freer than the envious and hypocritical life of court. He assimilates himself to Adam who has gone back to Eden. For Duke Senior, he doesn't fear the change of season, and the icy fang and cold wind of winter is regarded as the test for his virtue. The most important thing is that he can gain knowledge from the trees, brooks, stones and even everything, which helps Duke Senior to achieve moral perfection. In the forest, there is no clock. The time is measured by the movement of sun and moon and other stars. So the linear time can not felt here and the circular time becomes the people's time conscious. So, in this symbolic Eden, Senior lives like a hermit, getting rid of the chaotic and decayed city life. When Duke Senior finally returns along with the others to court (despite his earlier assertion that he would not change his "life exempt from public haunt"), he returns not only because his dukedom is ready to receive him, but also because his soul has got conform and tranquility from the forest. Tested by adversity, his soul achieves the station of harmony and his virtue is polished.

The special time sense of Arden provides this kind of temper, or balance, which is the real "magic" that makes Duke Frederick decides to give the kingdom back to his elder brother and that Orlando have the opportunity to rescue Oliver from the mouth of lion. In Arden, the consciousness of linear time measured by clock is transferred into the cyclic time measured by sun but perceived by mind. Time as a tool of oppression has lost its function and meaning. Along with the disappearance of district order and class boundary, the confliction and hatred is remitted and healed by virtue and love.

3. NOUS MATTERS: THE TIME OF GOD AND MAN, A BINARY COIN PHILOSOPHY

In Shakespeare's day, time's image usually appears as a scythe, standing for the objective power of change and destruction. Jaques' speech is a simple reflection upon the passage of time, since it is within time that the change of growth and degeneration occurs and it is time which measures this change. According to Rawdon Wilson (Wilson, 1975), the distinction between time and change can be collapsed and time appears as the source of the objective change. This "conflation" of a rigorous philosophical distinction was a part of the Renaissance literary tradition, but it also had its roots in the writings of Aristotle. Aristotle argues that "time is not simply the measurement of motion, but also the "condition of destruction" in which being emerges into existence and passes away. Further, it is, as a "kind of number,"

contingent upon a knowing mind⁷. The internal dialectic of Aristotle's position arises from the constant play between the objectivity of time (as the correlative of motion) and its relativity (as the correlative of a knowing mind). The relativity of time or we call it psychological time, stressed by later philosophers in the Augustinian tradition, has a firm basis in Aristotle's analysis of time. Wilson (1975) argues that the sense of objective time in *As You Like It* gives way to the subjective, or interior, time-sense associated with Arden. This interiority of time in Arden implies that, in comparison with the time sense of the polity, Arden will appear as timeless and that, within the forest, time will appear as a relative factor, varying from mind to mind.

In *As You Like It*, the psychological time is mainly reflected by the young lovers—Rosaline and Orlando's consciousness of love. Compared with the linear time and circular time, psychological time appears as a relative factor, varying from mind to mind at different occasions. The dialogue between Rosaline and Orlando's first meeting in the forest indicates that time is a very important part of their love.

ROSALIND I will speak to him like a saucy lackey, and under that habit play the knave with him. [To Orlando] Do you hear, forester?

ORLANDO Very well. What would you?

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 diverse paces with diverse persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal. (3.3.250-263)

Rosalind's awareness of time is related to the preoccupation imported from the "outside" world, but is different from Touchstone's view of time's destructive power of "ripping and rotting", and Jaques' speech of Seven Ages which describes a man playing many parts in his life and suggests that his speed, or "pace," will vary along with his role. Jay L. Halio (1962) argues that Rosalind's awareness of time is the awareness of a girl in love and impatient for the attentions of her lover. The awareness of time in love is perceived by mind, not by clock and sun. Rosalind thoroughly accounts for duration,

or the perception of time, which, unlike Jaques' portrait of our common destiny, is not the same for everyone. So, for the young maid who is waiting for her wedding, "Time's pace is so hard that it seems the length of seven year." We can find the similar time consciousness about love in *Romeo and Juliet* (Evans, 2003). Romeo's first utterance in the play conveys the very clear implication that the flow of time is neither absolute nor unvarying but a function of the emotional state of the individual:

ROMEO Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO But new struck nine.

ROMEO Ay me, sad hours seem long. ...

BENVOLIO ... What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO Not having that which, having, makes them short. (1.1.152-155)

According to Ricardo J. Quinones (Quinones, 1965), the anxiously expectant Juliet frequently faces the passage of time. In one soliloquy (2.7.1-17) she waits for the Nurse to bring back news of the marriage plans. Normal time is too slow for her desire: "Love's heralds should be thoughts, / Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams..." Love tries to achieve and then maintain its moment, but in so doing it runs up against the larger time that it would deny.

Rosalind starts their dialogue with the question "what is't o'clock?" and Orlando replies "You should ask me what time o'day: there's no clock in the forest." (3.3.258-59) The difference between "clock" and "day" indicates the difference between city and country, which shows Orlando's time consciousness, has changed after his entering Arden as he has abandoned the linear time measured by clock and accepted the cyclic time measured by celestial bodies in Arden. Orlando's reply shows that they have different kinds of time consciousness and that he doesn't really understand time's meaning for lovers. While Rosalind has a clear concept of time for lovers, claiming that "sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock". For lovers, the love between two souls can surpass the linear time of the secular world. Lovesick makes every minute is as long as an hour, because waiting extends the feeling of time. While, the time for meeting is so short that time always passes rapidly. It seems that Rosalind plays the role as tutor who instructs Orlando to understand the meaning of love and to be a considerate and mature lover.

Rosalind is most concerned with the perception of time by the lover, and her behavior is in marked contrast to Orlando's. She controls the rhythm of the progress of their love and plays the role as Orlando's timekeeper. When he fails to keep his appointments, she suffers both pain and embarrassment that are relieved only by the greater follies of Silvius and Phebe that immediately follow. When he finally does turn up an hour late as if to dramatize his belief that "there's no clock in the forest" (3.3.259),

⁷ See Aristotle, *Physica*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. In R. McKeon (Ed.). New York: Random House, 1941, pp.292-99. Also, in Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*. New South Wales: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1946. Aristotle argues that "if nothing but soul, or in soul reason, is qualified to count, there would not be time unless there were soul, but only that of which time is an attribute".

Rosalind rebukes him severely:

ROSALIND Why, how now, Orlando? Where have you been all this while? You a lover? And you serve 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 thousand part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him that Cupid hath clapp'd him o' th' shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole.

ORLANDO Pardon me, dear Rosalind. (4.1.30-40)

On one hand, a real lover may divide a minute into a thousand parts and will never break any part of them, as time for lovers' meeting is so precious that they hope to achieve eternity on that moment. On the other hand, they sign for the preciousness and short of the time for meeting and struggle with the tyrannical linear time's erosion. The time consciousness in love seems to be an intermediate state between God's time and man's time as the lovers always try to get rid of the destructive power of the objective and reaches a situation of harmony and eternity.

CONCLUSION

In *As You Like It*, there are more one time sense, such as the cynical realist—Jaques's linear time, the idealist—Duke Senior's circular time and Rosalind's interior time. The contrast of different time-senses reflects the different space-time structures of court, Arden and human mind. Compared with the objective time in court, the time-sense in Arden works outward from the mind rather than measured by the change of matter, and finds its chief external show in the consciousness of love. Thus, the sense of interior time which becomes possible within Arden, precisely because it is not correlative to objective change and it mirrors a state of mind. For most of the characters, the sense of destructive linear time gives way to the peaceful circular time associated with Arden or the psychological time of their minds, except Jaques. The shift in attitudes toward time which occurs between the court and Arden is, then, largely a shift from a strict ordered and unjust society to an ending of harmony and happiness. During this progress, every one finally finds

his proper position, and achieves an ideal state. From this we can see Shakespeare's expectation of an ideal society.

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