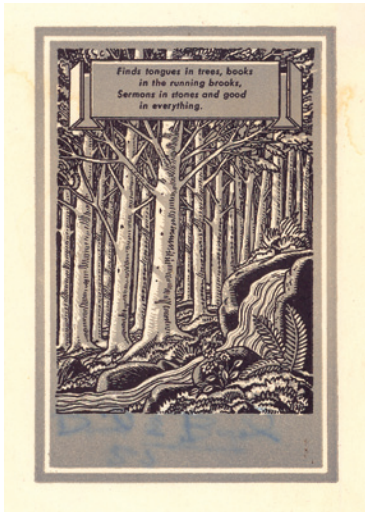


The world within

*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.*

—*As You Like It*, Act II, scene 1

This bookplate, belonging to Dr. David Bond, a member of the faculty of the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business, depicts a forest setting inscribed with a quote from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. The bookplate is commercially produced, with Dr. Bond's signature written in blue ink, and is one of three Bond family bookplates held by UBC Library Rare Books and Special Collections (including a bookplate belonging to Kener Bond, Dr. Bond's father).

The selected passage takes place in the Forest of Arden, to which the character Duke Senior has been banished. Rather than finding grief in his exile, the Duke realizes that this forest is a refuge from the superficial and stifling life at court. He speaks of the restorative powers of this isolated natural world where "good in every thing" can be found; indeed, the wilderness is alive with the joys of language—tongues, books, sermons—whose pleasures far outstrip the false flatteries and deception he previously knew. Rather than struggling to escape the wilderness, the Duke finds delight in his reduced circumstances and appreciates the wisdom that this life bestows.

The bookplate, whose image can be read as a depiction of the Forest of Arden, is a lovely metaphor for the withdrawal from public life inherent in the act of reading. To read is to make a private and solitary journey into a world which, like Shakespeare's mythical forest, can be full of wonder and discovery; it is an activity which demands the valuing of isolation over social engagement, of mind over body.

Although this retreat from the public into the private can be seen by as escapist (and certainly the act of reading is escapist in the best sense of the word), it is also enlightening, for once the commitment to a book is made, the reader can find solace, joy and rejuvenation in its pages. Within the Forest of Arden the Duke experiences an alternative world that emphasizes freedom in contrast to his restrictive and mannered former life at court; likewise, reading is a liberating act that can take readers beyond the confines of their experience, perspective, and even beyond the bounds of their own life and time.

Some scholars have argued that the Forest of Arden is a transformed Garden of Eden, a soothing paradise that characters are welcomed into rather than expelled from, and this bookplate subtly echoes that idea. The trees, brooks and stones of the quotation are drawn clearly and with little ornamentation, and the image is calming.

Earlier in *As You Like It*, the Duke refers to the other forest dwellers as his "brothers in exile," and this bookplate welcomes fellow readers to their own private Forest of Arden, a chosen exile of quietude and intellectual pleasure where one can rise above the minor and mundane details of daily life.

This bookplate, more than simply announcing ownership of the book itself, serves as an entrance to the experience of reading, and is a demarcation between the world within the book and the world without.

~ Jessica Starr is a student at the University of British Columbia in the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies. She volunteers at Rare Books and Special Collections at UBC Library, digitizing their Bookplate Collection.

The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.