

# Time Honoured

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## **Abstract**

*The vast majority of literature and practices in environmental education focuses on places and spaces. Little attention has been paid to time and temporalities as elements of environments, and the ways in which how we experience time affects our experience of place. This paper is an examination of the ways in which reflection on time can be incorporated into environmental education through a case study based on a workshop and continuing research project at Marylake Retreat Centre on the Oak Ridges Moraine in Ontario, Canada.*

## **Résumé**

*La très vaste majorité de la littérature et des pratiques en études environnementales met l'importance sur le lieu et l'espace. On a peu porté attention au temps et à la temporalité en tant qu'éléments des environnements, ni des façons par lesquelles l'expérience du temps influence notre expérience d'un lieu. Cet article examine les moyens par lesquels la réflexion sur le temps peut être incorporée dans l'éducation écologique par le biais d'une étude de cas fondée sur un atelier et par un projet de recherche continu que le Marylake Retreat Centre dirige sur la moraine d'Oak Ridges en Ontario (Canada).*

**Keywords:** time; temporality; environmental education

Time is made up of many different states of consciousness, of symbols from human life. This means that time is also a sphere of language, like a landscape, the place you make for when you try to comprehend, in particular, those elements in the world concerned with its change. Like all linguistic landscapes, time is not just a matter of words or linguistic significance. It is also colors, tones, rhythms, touch, tension, relaxation, and scent. (Hoeg, 1994, p. 259)

## Introduction

The theme of “time” has been much studied, much pondered, but in comparison to notions of “space” and “place,” it has hardly formed a sustained theme in environmental research or in environmental education broadly defined. The immediate irony is that there is little time in which to sit back and consider time, given the demands of our social institutions, schedules, and lives. More pertinently, time is so pervasive and yet so paradoxical—so hard to grasp—that it requires a decisive effort to turn our attention to it, unlike

more readily established spatial and geographical approaches that comprise the vast bulk of environmental studies. For example, the idea of going on nature study walks is something with which virtually all students of the environment are familiar. However, these excursions typically take place within the confines of a “production schedule,” which “moves items through a series of events in linear lock-step fashion” (Wein & Kirby-Smith, 1998, p. 8). Moreover, students are then encouraged to pay attention to the characteristics of the local ecosystem, the places walked and so on. What is missed is the deliberate act of paying attention to the phenomenology of a different kind of time that such excursions can afford.

Further, classrooms as fluorescent-lit boxy rooms, devoid of plant or animal life, have often been critiqued as sterile sites for learning about the rest of nature; and attempts have been made to create more congenial spaces. Additionally, as we discuss shortly, the tacit ways in which students come to understand time as linear, progressive, and potentially oppressive, through the orchestration of curricula, deadlines, and upward movement through grades with the promise of graduation is a theme commonly addressed; however, this theme has hardly been connected to our relationship with the rest of nature, and the ways in which classrooms themselves lack “temporal depth and breadth.”

A further theme that has been examined is the correlation between success in school and student time consciousness. And yet, this is often taken at face value to mean simply that while learning to follow schedules and meet deadlines at school, students are thereby being taught the skills necessary to enter the work world, or to pursue higher education. Complicating this view, Carol Anne Wein’s study of early childhood education teachers and centres demonstrates how the tacit acceptance of “the routine,” or “the organization of time as a rigid production schedule” (1996, p. 337) worked against holistic curricula and teachers’ aims of developmentally appropriate practices which foster student uniqueness and sense of agency. She writes,

How does the organization of time as a production schedule, fragmented into short periods of specific activity, obstruct developmentally appropriate practice? It prioritizes the clock-based routine and the teacher as the keeper of the routine. By prioritize I mean that it makes keeping the routine the dominant activity in the setting. It teaches children that the teacher, as the keeper of the routine, has dominance because she stops and starts their activity. The main message is regulation to an adult schedule, and this overwhelms all other activities. What is overwhelmed is the tolerance for individual variation in activity and in pace, and spontaneous activity with its own rhythm of inception, concentration, and natural closure. What such a schedule does, above all, is remove ownership of activity from children. (Wein, 1996, p. 397)

Corroborating Wein’s findings is the work of Cesar Augusto Rossatto in examining the experiences of a group of students, one in the United States and one in Brazil, noting how those with an optimistic view of the future, antic-

icipating best possible outcomes, as opposed to those with a fatalistic, pessimistic view of the future, were able to imagine and enact open and creative futures of possibility for themselves. Further, he examined how hegemonic time construction in classroom practices can foster either pessimistic or optimistic time consciousness, depending on whether time is measured as a “succession of days” to be used well or wasted, or “as an accumulation of transformative experiences that enhance agency” (Rossatto, 2005, p. 25). A question we ask, then, is how does the tacit temporal curriculum shape the capacities of individuals and groups to imagine and enact alternate temporal relations with the rest of nature, particularly without falling into the anthropocentric view that time in relation to nature is a pure social construction that can be freely chosen by individuals or societies?

In relation to environmental education per se, the topic of time is often indirectly addressed through asking students to choose a “special spot” that they visit on a regular basis during different times of the day and seasons. Still the focus is generally on how the place and its beings *are* during those times, rather than explicitly directed towards multiple *experiences of time in place* (Lynch, 1972). Time is also indirectly addressed through the multiple opportunities that food and agriculture studies, particularly school gardens, offer students to engage with their local environs, sources of sustenance, and our relationship to the rest of nature *vis-à-vis* seasonality. Repeatedly, however, studies of the potentials of school garden projects as sites of environmental education point to the inexorable press of routine: it is hard to squeeze food-growing activities into an already jam-packed curriculum in any meaningful way. Additionally, such activities are often not deemed “academic” enough and so must take place during the lunch hour or after school when it can be hard to engage students for a variety of reasons. In addition, in climates such as Canada’s, the timing of the school year does not mesh with the growing season. Students are completing the school year just at the point when they might begin reaping the fruits of their labour and understanding by witnessing the full cycle of growth from seed to sprout to plant, and the celebrations that can accompany harvest (Bell, 2000, 2001; Torreiter, 2005; Waslander, 2006). Ironically, the timing of the school year is historically linked to giving students time off in the summer for harvesting!

Tackling these difficulties can seem insurmountable. Time is so elusive and yet has so much authority in our lives: it can appear impossible to question, let alone contemplate the changes that would be enacted were we to ask: can we alter the length and timing of the school year, the length and schedule of the school day? Even to contemplate this immediately reveals how enmeshed education is in the machine of contemporary time practices, and vice versa: the working lives of parents are a constant negotiation between the time demands of school and the time demands of work, and yet they are both operating within the same set of assumptions.

We might ask the same question about nature. When do we get to

enjoy time with the rest of nature? Again, it is parceled out and scheduled: the Sunday morning walk with the dog, the recuperative hour in the garden, the weekend in the park, the couple of weeks during the summer at the cottage. More pointedly for our paper, when do students get to experience nature, to overcome what Richard Louv nicely refers to as the growing “nature deficit disorder” (Louv, 2005)? Our concern is not only that students do not spend time with the rest of nature, but that they do not experience and reflect on the nature of time *in* nature.

We ask then, what does it mean to be engaged in continuing, concerned, and sustainable relationships with the rest of nature in temporal terms? Asking this question in the context of environmental education ultimately leads to contemplating what seem to be impossibly large transformations; and yet, as many authors have demonstrated, any major shifts in cultural worldviews and practices have been accompanied by changes in how time is experienced, understood, and organized (Rifkin, 1989; Zerubavel, 1981, 1985).

In our research, we have deliberately sought to examine time and times as elements of the environment. On the one hand, we are very aware of the extraordinary diversity of approaches to time in the various literatures and have been building upon some of these (Bergson, 1999; Husserl, 1991; Kohak, 1984; Merleau-Ponty, 2003; Ouspensky, 1997; Ricoeur, 1984; Zerubavel, 1985). But we have also been working towards what happens when we pay attention to, or explore, our immediate sensibility of time—what we call “time honouring.” To grapple with this we, and a group of graduate students, have been working on exploring time in one place. This one-place-based work is anything but a simplification; it has almost immediately uncovered layers and depths and kinds of time that we will be discussing in the case study section of this paper. This is in part because we have chosen (or it has chosen us) a “time-rich” place: The Marylake Retreat Centre on the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It has turned out to be (as we suspect of many such places) a continuously unfolding paradoxical place thick in the presence of times present, past, and future, and senses of timelessness.

This article is less of an “essay” per se, and more of a pause in an ongoing reflection during which we stop to say, “this is where we’ve come so far, and we invite others to join with us in this conversation.” Given the complexities and mysteries in which we have found ourselves, anything else would be grandiose. The rest of this reflection is in four parts:

- a furtherance of the discussion of the ways in which time is commonly understood in Western cultures and introduced in education,
- a critique of these understandings and concomitant temporal practices in pedagogical terms through an examination of Peter Hoeg’s *Borderliners*,
- a description of our Marylake case study, and
- reflections and conclusions on intimacy and temporality in the context of our relationships with the rest of nature.

## Time: What Is It?

The experience of time is—as has been noted by many philosophers, physicists, and religious figures—extraordinarily strange. In Western culture, in order to keep time tamed, it has been generally assimilated to related concepts of space. But as Henri Bergson (1999) and others have pointed out, a moment of reflection will show that space and time have less in common than we conventionally think. Passing through time is not like moving in space: there is an arrow of time, and it is not remotely clear what the status of “now” is—at every moment “now” is disappearing and appearing, amidst the uncertain whereabouts of the past and future (Ansell Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002; Durie, 2000). Just as every culture has ways of understanding and living in time through calendars, clocks, or cyclically-repeated rituals, our responses to time are culturally informed, and saturated in taken-for-granted spatial metaphors—as we have done in the sentences immediately preceding. Spatial metaphors can be found in many cultures. In Maori culture, to cite just one example, the past is what we face and the future is what is behind us.

In Western traditions we have come to think of time as linear—as moving from a Big Bang 13-15 billion years ago that (among other things) seems to have created time and space into which it could move, and subsequently carries all in its wake towards an equally distant time in the future when it will all somehow run down. But along with that, we have a sense of time in layers, paleo-chronologies of various kinds, which inform empirical histories. We have historical time, pre-historical time, and geological time, in recognizable sequences that can be dovetailed together.

Moreover, the scientific revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and afterwards has been obsessed, down to the nanosecond, with measuring time. “There ... exists a space of time so brief that it is impossible to calculate with anything less. This—10 to the 23 seconds—constitutes the greatest lower bound for the attribution of significance to regular processes. It is known as the *atomic chronon*” (Hoeg, 1994, p. 249). And we are, of course, very familiar with the industrial offshoot of the preoccupation of measuring and allotting time: the organizing of work and life according to the clock and concomitant timetables (Rifkin, 1989; Zerubavel, 1981).

At the same time we live time cyclically in the movement from day to night, through the seasons, in yearly repeated events: the beginning of the school year, religious and secular holidays, like Labour Day, Easter, and March Break. Nonetheless, overall there hangs an image of time as a neutral, endless, somehow forward moving, undifferentiated ticking in which human and natural events that we deem as “major” are publicly recorded and remembered. It is extremely difficult for us anymore to contemplate this whole spatialized chronological apparatus, so internalized has it become.

An environmental philosopher who takes up in earnest the question of the relationships of time and nature is David Abram (1996), who argues that

space and time are so interwoven that spatial metaphors illuminate temporal experience and vice versa. Abram's work sketches out various ways in which spatial metaphors (such as "horizon") are temporalized in languages such as Hopi. Unlike with Bergson, whose main complaint is that the experience of time is betrayed by spatial language, Abram's discussion suggests to us that there are more creative ways of working with the interplay of space and time, that the main problem is the use of abstracting language of any form, not spatiality per se.

### Temporal *Borderliners*

In his novel *Borderliners*, Hoeg (1994) delves into many of the themes touched on so far, but with the embodied nuances that narrative can reveal, particularly in the relationship between time consciousness and intimacy. He describes time from the point of view of three institutionalized children—Peter, his beloved Katarina, and August, a deeply troubled and violent child whom Peter has been asked to mentor during their time at Biehl's Academy. Peter slowly uncovers the "plot"—that the school is experimenting with linear Time to socialize "borderline" students into regular classrooms and eventually the outside world. The novel is really an extended reflection on temporality and education, where time, Hoeg writes, comes to run through your veins like blood in the unswerving insistence on the daily timetable somehow meant to carry you along, advance you progressively:

When all the days were the same, when they recurred and recurred, and were planned out ten years into the future, why did you feel that time was passing, that it was linear, that your school days were a kind of countdown, that time was a train that you must and ought to be fit enough to hang on to? I think it was because of the insistence on achievement. Otherwise it is impossible to explain. (Hoeg, 1994, p. 226)

Peter reflects further on linear time that it is,

. . . unavoidable, it is one way of hanging on to the past. Like points on a line—the Battle of Poitiers; the Black Death, 1347; Columbus discovering America; Luther at Wittenberg; the beheading of Struensee, 1772. And what I am writing here, this part of my life, is also remembered in this way. But it is not the only way. The mind also remembers stretches, fluid passages, connections between what has once happened and what is happening now, regardless of the passage of time. If you grow up in a world that permits and rewards only one form of memory, then force is being used against your nature. (p. 258)

After rereading Hoeg's novel, one of the authors (Campbell) asked her son, Chad, now 23, how he thought he had learned about time in school. His responses sent chills up her spine in their resonance with Hoeg's account. "First of all," he said, "I learned that time is major events. That's what you learn; that

life is made up of major events that you need to know. Second, we were told that time is our key to success. If we follow the schedule of the school day, even when we are not there, we will be successful in life. I learned on my own that time can be experienced differently. When you are bored, you can make time speed up” (personal communication, November 17, 2006).

Peter learns that if you let your mind go blank, time can be made to disappear, and through his relationship with Katarina he learns how resting with the sound of a beloved’s breath can embody the passage of time—a time when one feels totally present and indispensable—as if all of life had led up to and will follow from this moment. It was this understanding that made Peter want to live during his several months of incarceration and isolation after leaving Biehl’s Academy.

In the conversation with Chad, he ended by saying: “when I fell in love I discovered that time takes on a different quality. Something opens between two people where all the things that constantly press in on you—the need to constantly get things done, to achieve—falls away. Without these experiences of another kind of time, life would be meaningless” (personal communication, November 17, 2006).

What would happen if we began to take such intimate temporal experiences seriously in the context of environmental education? In particular, how do we foster intimacy with ourselves, another person, being, or place? These are the questions that subtly began to open in the context of our case study.

Environmental education may be defined as the contemplation and practice of different understandings of relationships between human cultures and the multiple beings and places that comprise the earth we inhabit. Relationships are made possible by and “rest in” the unseen temporal patterns that guide our opening and closing to one another (whether an “other” be a person, bird, or the rising sun).

How do students learn about time in the context of environmental education? It can range from discussions of the time it takes for a living cell to reproduce, the lifespan of a fly and other species, the movement of glaciers across the land that shaped it as we now know it, forest succession, the time before fossil fuels run out, the time it will take for nuclear waste to decompose, time as concern for the needs of future generations. And yet, all of these phenomena and concerns, even nature walks as noted, take place within the confines of a taken-for-granted clocked timetable—the daily, weekly, yearly routines of moving from class to class. How do these phenomena become meaningful in students’ own existence when time is generally not experienced as their own? But more poignantly, how can students begin to understand and form relationships in the context of the “deep ecological time” concomitantly revealed by glacial deposits and the persistence of nuclear waste when experiences of other temporalities have not been explored and validated in their day-to-day life?

Indeed, how is the rest of nature encountered in temporal terms within schools? Perhaps most dramatically as disruption: the thrill of a freak snow-storm when school is cancelled, a flash of lightning and a crash of thunder announcing an advancing storm, a bird flies by the window—a brief, but legitimate turning away of one’s attention away from the blackboard. Moments such as these can bring awareness that there are other times, other rhythms that can override “the schedule”—what a relief!—an opening, in Hoeg’s terms, that maybe there are larger temporal contexts to life, and that one’s own “storms” might mean something after all—might override that undying rhythm of the timetable.

### A Case Study: Marylake

Approximately half an hour north of the city of Toronto boundaries is the 850-acre Marylake Retreat Centre, owned by the Catholic Augustinian Friars. Among the unique features of this place are remnant buildings from the days when there was a working dairy farm—housing feral cats and swallows, a soaring monastic shrine, stations of the cross leading to a hilltop wooden chapel dedicated to Mary, a Retreat Centre, and a lake surrounded by a forest that is now part of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail. It is fair to say that this land is rustic and mostly peaceful, except on summer weekends when large family and religious groups gather to picnic, and during special Catholic holy days. The resident population is a handful of elderly monks, and nun assistants who are from Mexico. To the south of the property, suburban sprawl is evident.

A year and a half ago we both found ourselves working with graduate students all engaged in some form of work on time (Barber, 2005; Brown, 2006; Stark, 2006). Initially we considered holding a conference to bring together a variety of academics and practitioners working in the broad area of time, nature, and society. However, as our own conversations had shown us, discussion of time can quickly become highly abstract, disconnected from day-to-day environmental and social concerns, and multi-disciplinary to the point of meaninglessness—e.g., a physicist, poet, ecologist, and philosopher each expounding on their view of time, but for what purpose? This led us to consider grounding a common project in a local place. A year earlier, two participants in the group (the authors of this article) participated in a workshop on religion and ecology. This workshop, we felt, fostered meaningful reflection, not only through the effective use of ritual, but because of the place it was located: Marylake.

Consequently, we designed a workshop at Marylake in June of 2006 to bring our group together for an extended period. To begin to grasp the multiple times of Marylake, we decided to begin with an approach that combined the “layering” approach of landscape architects such as Ian McHarg (1992) with the multiple histories approach of French *Annales* his-



torians such as Fernand Braudel (1972), along with Paul Ricoeur's (1983, 1984, 1985) understanding of the interweaving of fiction and history in attention to genre. This indicated that initial research ought to be carried out into the history of the site from geological time to the present through available materials, ranging from topographical maps and historical testimonies to trail handbooks. Our initial list looked something like this:

**1. Geological time: 1 billion to 13,000 B.P.**

Pre-Cambrian followed by Silurian/Ordovician sediments uprooted and rearranged by glacial movements (from 1,000,000 to 13,000 B.P.)

**2. Geographic time (thousands of years): 13,000 B.P.**

Forest arrival—boreal forest (spruce and pine -15,000 -11,000 B.P.)

Mixed forest (white pine, etc.) - 6,000 B.P.

Deciduous forest after hemlock drought - 6,000 B.P.

Lower Aquifer water in 1000's of years

**3. Long ecological time (thousands to hundreds of years: ecosystem foundations)**

600 B.P. (1400) - Little Ice Age - white pine returns

1800 B.P. - gradual return of mixed forest, now beginning clearances

1850 B.P. - forest clearances

1880s-1920s - gradual abandonment of farming as soil deteriorates

1837-1937 - 80% of streams become intermittent because of baseflow problems

**4. Long historical time (thousands to hundreds of years)**

Native presence/settlements (B.P.)

Toronto designated city -1834, watershed destruction begins 1840

Conservation efforts (county forests, etc.) - 1910s-1920s

**5. Mesoscale ecological time (hundreds of years: forests, larger cycles)**

Shift into mixed forest, back to predominately pine, back again

Removal of largest white pines through selective logging

Animal regimes unknown, presumably thinning of local fauna, replacement by domesticates

**6. Mesoscale historical time (hundreds of years)**

Forest, farm management changes

**7. Microscale ecological time (seasons to days to hours)**

Periodic cycling of forests, flowers, animals, insects, soil, water

Interruptings: Changes in forest cover, weather, storms, accidents

## **8. Microscale historical time (months to weeks to days)**

## **9. Natural or ecological time**

The times, rhythms, and cycles of the natural world prior to our impositions and involvements

## **10. Phenomenological/hermeneutical time**

Time as variously lived, experienced, and interpreted by humans and other beings

## **11. Spiritual time**

Various experiences of eternity or a sense of timelessness; of all times past, present, and future simultaneously existent; inspirational flashes or moral understandings that seem to cut through the flow of time

## **12. Ritual time**

Ways which serve to open us to varieties of spiritual times

In varying ways throughout the workshop we attempted to, or found ourselves, engaging with time in these multiple dimensions. We list them here to give a sense of the initial diachronic categorizing device we then complemented with our synchronic “now” experiments. We will not dwell on the categories at this point, or try to be overly precise in our definitions, as that is not our current aim and is the subject for another paper.

Each day of the workshop began with a smudging and prayer ceremony given by an Anishinaabe Pipe Carrier, and PhD student, Robin Cavanagh. Robin explained that when we give thanks to All of Creation we are asking All of our Relations, past, present, and future, to be with us and guide us in our actions and reflections, and they are.

This was followed the first morning by a presentation on the geological and ecological history of the Oak Ridges Moraine, focusing on the above-mentioned layered approach to the long history stretching back over a billion years, and reaching to the momentary time in which we were present. Following this was presented the social history, noting the lack of accounts of First Nations in the area prior to the arrival of mainly Scottish and Loyalist settlers in the 1840s, the subsequent extensive deforestation of the area to establish farms, continuing through the buying of the property by Sir Henry Pellat, who made his money in founding the electricity system in Toronto and southern Ontario, his bankruptcy and selling of the property to the Basilians; and the handing down of the land to the Augustinians who were asked by the Archdiocese of Toronto to establish a Shrine to the Virgin Mary, and who practiced dairy farming and undertook extensive reforestation over the years.

Later on that same day, we went round the circle and participants shared their understandings and experiences of time. Temporal elements of

natural systems were considered. Cavanagh discussed seasonality and the dislocations of the move into Western time, including the elimination of seasonality in foodstuffs. It was noted that not only were there various approaches to and languages of temporality, but even within something so apparently monolithic as capitalist, production time, there were multiple time demands that came into conflict with each other, not to mention adaptations and “opting out” that buffered people from the full application of chronological time. We came to a shared conclusion well-expressed by Hoeg:

Time refuses to be simplified and reduced. You cannot say that it is found only in the mind or only in the universe, that it runs only in one direction, or in every one imaginable. That it exists only as biological substructure, or is only a social convention. That it is only individual or only collective, only cyclic, only linear, relative, absolute, determined, universal or only local, only indeterminate, illusory, totally true, immeasurable, measurable, explicable, or unapproachable. It is all of these things. (Hoeg, 1994, p. 259)

Consequently, there was no consensus on what would constitute a “touchstone” time, or a time freed from the demands of chronological time. As one participant, Kristin Stark, expressed: “There as many times as there are beings.”

From time to time some version of a romanticist notion was expressed, that if we were placed in the local ecosystem for a long enough period of time, then we would come into some kind of synchronization with it. We would be “temporally detoxified.” However, we did not have time (!) to put this Thoreauvian hypothesis to the test. And yet participants, each in their own way, variously relating to Bergsonian, DeLeuzian (DeLeuze & Guattari, 1987), Merleau-Pontyan, Ouspenskian, Yogic, and Buddhist works, conveyed a sense in which it is impossible to speak of or categorize and catalogue time *per se*. Experientially it is as if all beings and times—past, present, and future—are in our midst, as expressed in the opening prayer. A sense of humility, of intimate presence(s)—romantic in a full loving sense. And there was a sense of timelessness, eternity, or even “flowing eternity” associated with this intimacy, though we could not decide on the “best” term to use.

This sense of intimacy was deepened on the second day of the workshop. After the morning prayer we experimented with a “soundscape” mapping, based on the work of Murray Schafer (1994). Three groups comprised of four participants each silently headed off in different directions across the grounds of Marylake carrying tape recorders—each person taking turns holding the microphone as they walked. Following that, groups were asked to draw their invocations of the pathways they had walked, while the multiple recordings, now together as the overall synchronous soundscape, were replayed. Meditative listening intimately highlighted the synchronous multiple beings and lives in and surrounding Marylake—whether in the open fields, the sky, crunching gravel along the roads, in the swallow-filled barn, by the

lake and the working pumphouse, or under the forest canopy.

There were a number of types of active ritual over the two days, ranging from the initial and closing prayers, to Buddhist meditation, meditative walking, and yoga exercises. Various examples of temporal rituals were discussed (e.g., Joanna Macy's and Molly Young Brown's (1998) ritual of speaking to a person in a future time about the difficulties and hopes of the present). Our final experimental ritual, initiated by Robert Brown, involved giving participants hand mirrors, and asking them to reflect on the reflection in the mirror, including the appearance of the present, and the passing of time as reflected in the changes on one's face. For some, it was an experience of poignant intimacy with self; others reflected on their surroundings reflected in the mirror.

### Reflections and Conclusions

Our initial meetings, field trips, and this workshop are the beginnings of our work and, not surprisingly, have raised far more questions than answers. As noted, we began conventionally with categorizations of time, but very quickly—or very slowly—found ourselves confronted by aspects of time (and “timelessness”) experience that defied our categories. The first question was: did it really matter where we were? There have recently been a number of calls for “slow time,” as in the Slow Food and Slow Cities Movements, and there are any number of religious traditions that value paying attention and slowing down to experience the details of life. Does slowing down in a particular place matter?

Our initial answer is yes, though our work is not about slowing down and “stopping to smell the roses,” *per se*. Obviously the place we were in was special, and uncharacteristic of city or suburban life. Moreover it *is* a retreat centre, and had the aura of such a centre about it. Nevertheless, we found ourselves enticed by the extraordinarily long geologic and cultural history of the area. We were also made constantly aware of the specialness of the site by the faint noise of the traffic from the major highway off in the distance. We were reminded of the grinding of the machine of modernity on all sides around us. Moreover, because the site is home to friars and nuns, there is evidence of how their religious order “orders” its daily times—times of eating, worship, work, and rest, always with an eye to remembering the sacred.

This mixing and overlapping and disruption of different time experiences, even in—or especially because—of the time-rich place we were in, challenged us. Like children in a classroom, these temporal disruptions kept turning us away from what we'd attempted to affix on our own reflective “blackboards.” In light of these experiences, two other, perhaps even more relevant accounts of time have come to inform our work. The first is provided by Michel Serres who speaks of turbulent time or—to adapt the geological

metaphor—times that overlap, break into each other, slash chasms through each other, fold over each other (Serres & Latour, 1995). We found ourselves having to negotiate the twists and turns of different times, not as one sedimentary layer over another, but in much more multifaceted and intricate arrays. The second, different, account of time is Taoist or synchronous time, which, to adapt Jungian analysis, means the resonance between inner “self” time and outer “world” time (Coward, 1996), something that Peter in *Borderliners* sought after and felt resting in the rhythm of Katarina’s breath.

It was attention to time that led Peter in *Borderliners* to question ethical relations with others; in intimacy with Katarina and August he found another tempo that led him to what was, for him, the hardest place of all—intimacy with himself. Intimacy begins with oneself in attending to whether we are full of energy, tired, in need of conversation or silence. In so attending, other senses and contexts of time than the urgency of our to-do-list are allowed to open, like the sense of time slowing down to almost stillness when we are walking on a summer’s eve with someone we love. Attending to the rest of nature around us and our communities is more than identifying tree species, knowing the geological history and social history of the place we live—all of this becomes compartmentalized into the temporal bounds of our schedules, and means little, unless we can foster the open senses of presence that intimate time affords—in which we truly begin to attend to other beings and elements, and the temporalities that we do and might share.

We are not proposing then that we know what natural time is, and that somehow it is just a matter of attuning our lives and the school year to this time. The question is how we can foster intimate time—with ourselves, others, and the rest of nature, so we can collectively, with all of our individual and culturally different senses of the time, begin “time-honouring” or attending to temporal relations that foster ongoing, concerned, and just relationships amongst and between ourselves and the rest of nature.

For instance, while the monastic schedule followed by the nuns and friars at Marylake may seem to be worlds away from the schedules of schools and working lives, the irony is that these same schedules originate not only from the Industrial Revolution, but are degraded adaptations of the ritualization of time that became prevalent in religious orders during medieval times. We have found in the course of both our workshop and overall research that the practice of ritual can provide both an entry into, and a focal point for, exploring and making visible multiple, and even seemingly conflictual temporal orientations. Indeed, ritual practice has proven to us to be a path for conjoining the concerns that we have articulated in this paper about intimately reconnecting with the rest of nature and one another through time-honouring practices. Paradoxically, we have found that working with such time-honouring practices is a profound way of honouring the mysteries of time itself.

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