



2012 Issue No. 21 — Rethinking the Seasons: New Approaches to Nature

Armidale's Imported Autumn

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In the mid twentieth century a man called Alwyn Jones brought seasons to the streets of the New England tableland town, Armidale, in northeast New South Wales, Australia. Jones was a local accountant, appointed to the New England University College in 1940. He became an active civic member and formed the Armidale Progress Association and the Armidale Improvement and Beautification Committee in the early 1940s. Jones initiated the planting of nine thousand trees throughout Armidale over a five decade period. He was the artist that coloured the landscape in its vibrant hues.

When Jones first arrived in Armidale he was disappointed at the lack of foliage, having “experienced the beauty of the trees in Bathurst and Orange, two cities on the central tablelands with a climate similar to Armidale” (Jones 129). To Jones’s dismay Armidale had “virtually no street trees” and “practically no autumn colour” (129). Believing that “something needed to be done” (129) to improve the drab country town, Jones lobbied with the City Council to begin a tree-planting and street beautification program that would import a variety of trees, particularly species with deciduous colour, into the town. Jones emphasised the importance of autumnal aesthetics in developing civic pride (134) as well as promoting tourism, noting that both Bathurst and Orange had visitors that came to see the colour of the town’s trees in spring and autumn (129).

Jones’s imaginative insight has seen Armidale become known as a place of vivid colour. With a tourist catch cry of “The City of Four Seasons,” Armidale prides its reputation on its iridescent streets and parks. In the early 1990s the City Council and local business community developed the ‘four seasons’ slogan as a marketing theme and autumnal displays of yellow and red foliage became prominent in advertising material. In the mid-1990s the local University of New England adopted a red autumn leaf as its logo, aligning University publicity with the tourist dialogue (Smith, Borgis and Seifert 265).

The commercial use of four season imagery is a kitsch display of the city’s “natural attractions” aimed at drawing more tourist dollars to the region. Nonetheless, many of Armidale’s citizens seem to happily engage with their autumn themed environment. The townspeople continue to host an annual “Autumn Festival” to celebrate the changing complexion of their imported botanies. Each March a vibrant street parade begins a three day festival where jumping castles, bagpipes, pancake breakfasts, markets and puppet shows form a ritual that marks temporal flow experienced through spatial transformation.

While Jones did not have a background in horticulture, he was passionate about growing colourful trees that could withstand Armidale’s harsh climate, which led him to develop a

cosmopolitan aesthetic of autumn. The large number of species that line Armidale's streetscape is too extensive to list in its entirety here, but a small selection demonstrates the global range of the flora. The town is now filled with American sweetgums (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) native to eastern North America, Mexico and Central America; Chinese pistachios (*Pistacia chinensis*) native to central and western China; Claret Ash trees (*Fraxinus angustifolia* subsp. *oxycarpa*) native to South Australia; European Ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*) native to most of Europe; and almond trees (*Prunus dulcis*) native to the Middle East and South Asia.

Armidale's tree-scape is celebrated in tourist dialogue and by the townspeople through the Autumn Festival. But this celebration makes no mention of the tree-scape's exotic provenance and gives the impression that the trees are indigenous to the area.

Growing up in Armidale in the 1990s, I never knew, never contemplated the idea that the town ever looked any different. The fiery orange, reds and yellow that painted my teenage years seemed endemic to the land. Looking now at the brilliant colour I try to picture the barren streets of Armidale in the 1940s, and it feels as though I am trying to remember a scene from an old black and white film. Trying to picture Armidale pre-colonial settlement is even more difficult. The passage of time is played out in the parks to a seasonal dance of colour while *la longue durée* remains hidden from view.

This paper argues that despite its vibrant transformation of the landscape, Armidale's imported autumn limits the ways Armidale citizens can connect with their surrounds. Whether the imported trees are regarded as kitsch tourist draw-cards, or beloved and expressive botanies, they represent the imposition of a four season model of change onto highly diverse indigenous Australian environments. The orderly progression of four even seasons fails to capture the rich complexity of seasonal transformation in the region, and so obscures nature's becoming. Acknowledgement of the historical contingency of Armidale's four seasons opens up possibilities for embracing alternative modes of change. This paper therefore proposes a wider cultural recognition of the multiple human and nonhuman agencies involved in the construction of Armidale's seasonality.

Seasons and bodily rhythms

Seasons provide a rhythm for terrestrial life. Changes in the temperature and hue of quotidian existence remind us of the nonhuman life that surrounds and envelops us: cycles of growth, death and rebirth that permeate all living creatures. To contemplate the pattern of fallen orange autumn leaves is to ponder the ongoing dance of earthly life and death.

The aesthetics of deciduous seasonal change are borne of connectivity and the complex interactions of botanies with their environment. Summer is green with chlorophyll – that generative pigment that takes the rays of the sun and turns them into food. As hours of light in the day become fewer and the air cools with autumn winds, the veins of each leaf begin to close, and chlorophyll degrades. Beneath the deep green of a summer leaf are hidden colours – yellow xanthophylls and orange beta-carotenes – that reveal themselves in autumn skies. Accompanying these yellows and oranges are reds and purples – anthocyanins - produced in late summer through a combination of bright summer light and each tree's own aging process. Autumn colour comes from within and without, and acts as a signal to insects, birds and a variety of mammals to hail an oncoming winter.

The colourful change of seasons is an example of Mikhail Bakhtin's 'chronotope' that expresses "the inseparability of space and time" (84). The year is a metamorphosis from green, soft leaves, to loud crackling red and yellows that fall into piles of crumbling cellophane-like colour in parks and fields so that finally all that is left is a bare skeleton of bark and tree bones silhouetted in the winter grey. Then, in spring, the branches flower. All this visceral, tangible change "thickens

time” so that time “takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible” and “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time” (84).

In seasons, the passage of time is witnessed through changing states, that is, through transformation. Bakhtin describes the temporal sequence of metamorphosis as a “line with ‘knots’ in it” (Bakhtin 113). These time-knots portray the entire life of a being through distinctive moments of crisis. Rather than the mundane tick-tock of linear time, the seasons show “sharply differing images” of the one tree, the one place. Time is “not merely technical, not a mere distribution of days, hours, moments that are reversible, transposable, unlimited internally, along a straight line” (119). Instead time is integrated and whole. The passage of time is made clear through moments of crisis and rebirth (115) – through tangible earthly change. This is the fullness of the chronotope. Edward S. Casey observes how the human experience of time is also one of transformation and embodied stages. Time is felt through differing states of corporeal existence, and it is only when we notice discrepancies between these states that we infer the passage of time, for example, in “getting older.” Time “in our bodies” and “in our bones” does not flow as a linear sequence, but is an experience of metamorphosis that resonates with the rhythms of the seasons (Casey 182).

Seasonal change materialises cycles of life that are shared across human and nonhuman bodies. Bakhtin writes of stages that apply to individual life and to “the life of nature”: states of pregnancy, ripening, old age, and death, all of which are “profoundly chronotopic” (Bakhtin 208). Human and nonhuman, individual organism and earth, are bound together through the metamorphosis of space through time. In these intimate corporeal connections time “is sunk deeply in the earth, implanted in it and ripening in it . . . fleshed out, irreversible” (208).

The resonances between seasonal transformation and embodied stages of human existence are taken up by Henry Thoreau in his essay on a different New England autumn. The “Autumnal Tints” of America’s New England inspired Thoreau to write an extended paper celebrating the brilliant autumn foliage. This New England autumn was a native one, and, according to Thoreau, too much ignored by a utilitarian city-dwelling culture. Thoreau implored American citizens to recognise the metamorphosis that grips the countryside in October, believing deciduous trees can be teachers and preachers of lessons in life and graceful death. These are lessons open to all as “All children alike can revel in this golden harvest” (Thoreau 272). The democratic teachings of the autumn tree are, according to Thoreau, moral lessons that get to the heart of what it means to be mortal in an ecological community. He writes that deciduous trees “teach us how to die” and wonders “if the time will ever come when men, with their boasted faith in immortality, will lie down as gracefully and as ripe” (270). For Thoreau celebration of the symmetry between human life and the life of nature can enhance sensuous connection to the earth.

These embodied connections are more tenuous in Armidale, where the chronotopic expressions of change are discordant with the indigenous environment. Thoreau’s New England celebration resonates strongly with Armidale’s seasonality, but it is important to remember that the shared experience of metamorphic change through the colours of “Fall” indicates the dislocation of temporality from the native environment.

Indigenous Seasons

A summer in New England is radically different from a summer in Sydney. I live in Sydney now and find the summers here unbearably hot and sticky because the heat seeps into everything including the night air. In New England summers are warm and dry and the nights are cool. Australia has a climate that is extremely diverse, and includes ecological zones of monsoon tropics, desert, savannah, alpine and temperate regions.

Before the imposition of the four season calendar, indigenous Australians marked the seasons by

observing environmental interactions. Seasons were not symmetrical in duration, like the even three month European seasons, but could range from a few weeks to a number of months. Indigenous people also noted longer-term weather patterns that run considerably longer than the yearly cycle – the Mudong, or life cycle, covers eleven or twelve years, for example (Bodkin *Lost Seasons*, qtd. in Kingsley). Instead of abstract measurements, empirically observed behavioural changes of different life forms such as sharks breeding or wattle flowering, signaled seasonal change. Certain plants acted as “bush calendars” (Clarke *Aboriginal Plants* 55), alongside keenly observed animal behaviours which occur only at certain times of the year (Bodkin *D’harawal* 22). In the Yarralin area of the Northern territory, for example, if flying foxes are moving from the inland bush to the rivers and nesting the pandanus palm trees the onset of rains is imminent (Bureau of Meteorology). In the Sydney area koala fighting signals that the weather will soon be extremely hot: ‘the bigger the fights, the bigger the noise, the hotter the weather’ (Bodkin *Lost Seasons*). Aboriginal seasonality also includes observation of celestial movements which are associated with the ripening of particular fruits or the visitation of certain animals (Clarke, “Ethnometeorology” 87). Unfortunately indigenous weather knowledge in the New England region is not well recorded, probably due to intense European colonisation of the area (99).

		Aboriginal Seasons			
Month	European Seasons	Minang SW WA Temperate	Arrente Central Australia Desert	Gadgerong NW NT Monsoon Tropics	Tasmania NE TAS Cool Temperate
DEC	Summer	Beruc	Uterne	Bandenyirrin (cont)	Wegtellanyta
JAN		Meertilluc		Mayurr	
FEB					
MAR	Autumn	Pourner	Alhwerrpeurle	Nguag/Gagulong	Tunna
APR					
MAY					
JUN	Winter	Mawkur	Alhwerrpa	Nguag/Gagulong	Tunna
JUL					
AUG					
SEP	Spring	Meerningal	Ulpulpe	Bandenyirrin	Pawenya peena
OCT			Uterne urle		
NOV					

Image above from the Bureau of Meteorology website:
www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/Indig_seasons.shtml

The Indigenous Weather Knowledge project (graph pictured above) is seeking to preserve Aboriginal seasonal knowledge at a time when climatic awareness is indispensable. IWK is funded by the Australian Research Council and aims to record 50,000 years of weather observation, knowledge of weather phenomena, weather patterns and long-term environmental changes by indigenous Australians. These weather observations are unique to specific locations. This means that a season cannot be universally applied because it is intrinsically emplaced. The

emplaced ecology of seasons reflects the indigenous worldview that life is sustained by connections and relationships between all living things (Graham 187).

Indigenous Australian author Melissa Lukashenko argues that human attunement to the chronotopic cycles of nature is necessary to find intimate belonging in place. This intimacy can be forged over time through the cultivation of “circular relationships” (64) between diverse beings. For Lukashenko, seasonal change is a performance of ecological connectivity, and it is therefore vital to be able to answer these questions about your home place:

How does your home look and feel in summer? In the cool months? In the rain? In the dry? How does each tree in your yard express these differences? How do the birds and the animals? How do the ocean and rivers change with the months? How do you? (64)

Four colonising seasons

These context specific and localised weather knowledges are distinctly more responsive to the native environment than the orderly progression of a four season calendar. The rich diversity of Australia’s climate suggests that one seasonal model to cover the entire country is an abusively simplistic homogenisation of space and time. It is as if a table of four even seasons has been placed over the passage of time in much the same way that grids of bitumen lines were laid over the ‘deep indigenous narrative lines’ of country (Muecke 192). This colonisation of time mirrors processes of colonial territorialisation and its “construction of Australia as a blank to be drawn on” (Ryan 101).

Armidale’s parks and streets have been reshaped to aestheticise a four movement passage of time, expressing a colonial discourse of seasons. Ecological feminist Val Plumwood has charted the way gardening ideals in Australia have been deeply influenced by the twin forces of colonialism and commodification (*Decolonising*). The tree planting throughout Armidale can be viewed as a kind of large scale civic gardening, where certain plants have been cultivated to “improve” the aesthetics of the township. Colonialism influenced the choice of trees which reflect Eurocentric ideals of beauty with little attention given to the surrounding indigenous bush. Commodification allows the colonial aesthetic to be realised by creating the conditions for geographically and culturally mobile plants that do not require adaptation to any single, unique, homeplace (*Decolonising*). That the trees were planted in order to ‘boost [the Armidale] City and capitalise its natural advantages’ (Jones 131) reveals the trees to be ‘commodities of betterment’ that are disposable and intersubstitutable human endeavours: environmental sustainability, aesthetic pleasure, tourism or civic engagement.

When Jones embarked on his “improvement” and “beautification” schemes, he paid little attention to the possible environmental impacts of his idealised trees on the surrounding ecosystem. The *Pistacia chinensis* which Jones made popular in home gardening has since been implicated in problematic biological invasions of surrounding bushland. The plant is rapidly establishing a large, wild population (Smith, Borgis and Seifert 272) that threatens the regional distinctiveness of local biotas with consequences for biodiversity, ecological and human health (263). Australia has a disastrous environmental history of introduced species annihilating indigenous inhabitants. Fifteen percent of the continent’s wild flora is now comprised of alien species, a number that continues to increase (Smith, Borgis and Seifert 263), and Australia has the highest rate of indigenous mammal extinction in the world. These ecological consequences are inextricably linked to the social devaluation of indigenous Australian plants and animals in favour of a “star-cast of highly adaptable exotics” (Plumwood, *Decolonising*).

Armidale citizens are passionate about their exotic plants and the removal of trees from public places has repeatedly provoked citizen outcry (Smith, Borgis and Seifert 273). Val Plumwood’s

concept of a “shadow place” (*Shadow Places*) finds an unusual application in this circumstance, as Armidale’s immediate bushland surrounds are neglected in favour of the colourful urban centre. A shadow place is a disregarded place that lies beyond a singular idealised home-place. Plumwood argues that ecological justice depends on respect for shadow places, whether or not they inspire great passion. While it is certainly positive that the Armidale people have developed strong emotional connections with the nonhumans that share their town, when this care is forged at the expense of surrounding ecosystems it becomes problematic. This is further complicated by the way the trees are embedded in a discourse of progress that emphasises human agency and mastery over nature.

The titles of Alwyn Jones’s organisations: ‘The Armidale Progress Association’ and ‘The Armidale Improvement and Beautification Committee’, reflect a teleology of modern development. In this linear temporal paradigm, time is perceived to be simultaneously atrophic and progressive: time erodes the present causing decay which is overcome through razing what is there and starting anew. This temporal praxis is predicated on the notion that it is always desirable to remake the world into something newer and better envisioned in abstract thought (Mathews, “Letting the World”). Environmental philosopher Freya Mathews argues that the distinction between a natural unfolding of events and the imposition of abstractly conceived ideas onto the world is the criteria for distinguishing nature from artifice. Seeking to avoid human/nonhuman, nature/culture binaries, Mathews argues that ‘nature [is] whatever happens when we, or other agents under the direction of abstractive thought, let things be, while artifice is what happens when such agents redirect events towards their own ends’ (“Letting the World”). In this conception Alwyn Jones’s deciduous trees are artificial because they are the planned outcome of human agents acting under the influence of abstractive thought. While the trees are living and agential organisms, and their seasonal colour is responsive to environmental changes, the colonial discourse in which they are embedded collapses antipodean imagery into the trees’ body. Autumnal colour in Armidale streets is therefore an abstraction because it is a simulacra of a distant land. Dislocated from continuities of time and place, and deeply embedded in the four season model of change, Armidale’s deciduous trees are floating commodities of modern progress. This mechanistic worldview sustains a feedback loop of human disconnection from the nonhuman world, where control and cultivation of nature produces illusions of human autonomy and the mindlessness of nonhuman life (Rose 162).

The manipulation of Armidale’s parks through the planting of exotic deciduous trees is a materialisation of what Alfred North Whitehead termed ‘the fallacy of misplaced concreteness’ (*Science* 51). By constructing the town’s aesthetics to reflect a four season model of change, a calendrical abstraction of temporality is mistaken for the concrete reality of environmental transformation, leading to the materialistic reduction of nature. This differentiation of time from nature, from environmental cycles, and from space altogether is facilitated by a mechanistic worldview where the nonhuman world is not considered to be animate, or to embody a dynamic telos of growth.

Trapped in a cycle

Calendrical seasons are measured in abstract linear time, with a twelve month year cut up into four evenly spaced segments. These space-time boxes are symmetrical, similar to the visual representation of temporality through days on a calendar in even square spaces. In this temporally manicured form, the metamorphosis of the corporeal tree makes time seem cyclic and predictable.

Bakhtin has observed that cyclical time limits the generative capacities of growth, making it impossible to achieve an authentic “becoming” (Bakhtin 210). In a repetitive cycle, growth becomes “a senseless running-in-place at one historical point, at one level of historical development” (230). Each year Armidale’s urban centre repeats a colonial Groundhog Day where

Eurocentric aesthetics dominate the townscape and prevent generative and open processes of becoming. This cyclicity presents the landscape as finished and closed. Within the midst of a cycle it is difficult to imagine a future or a past. The four season model of change appears as a perpetual present dampening awareness of indigenous ecological cycles that would otherwise be noticeable. Anna Tsing, in her beautiful essay "Arts of Inclusion, or How to Love a Mushroom," writes of "arts of noticing" that lead to "arts of inclusion." By arts she means "practices" that must be learned and crafted. An "art of noticing" is cultivated by an attunement to the rich complexity of nonhuman life, which derives from immersion in foreign worlds that evoke new sensations and new thoughts. Like Lukashenko, Tsing encourages a lived engagement with environmental complexity. Arts of noticing and arts of inclusion come from "passionate immersion" (Tsing 19) in the lives of nonhumans. Central to this attunement is an acceptance of the "indeterminacy" (Tsing 19) of nature and a resistance to human attempts to control and shape it. If the passage of time appears in a manicured and predictable relationship to the earth, this fosters arts of expectation and arts of routine behaviour that disconnect humans from the sporadic and indeterminate behaviour of nature.

My critique of Armidale's imported autumn is not based on the notion that the deciduous trees are unnatural because of their migratory origins, but that they are abstract because they create an illusion of human mastery over nature and present a temporal stasis that is inimical to becoming and growth. To survey the landscape as though it were a stand-alone, static image with no future or past is to blind ourselves to its multiple temporal dimensions, and the multiple temporal worlds that are held within it. It is to deny both human and nonhuman agency within the landscape by implying that it is now somehow an untouchable and unchanging place – achieved, final, non-negotiable.

A possible alternative to this temporal stasis is to consider Armidale's cyclic deciduous tree-landscape as an *event* (Massey 46) taking place. Here I am affirming Alfred North Whitehead's observation that "nature is a process" (*Concept of Nature* 53). Whitehead's process philosophy challenges the notion of time existing prior to nature. He writes that "There is time because there are happenings, and apart from happenings there is nothing" (244). Time is deeply chronotopic and earthly, and trying to find a time outside nature's becoming is like trying to "find substance in a shadow" (66). Understanding nature as a process allows us to see features of the present landscape as "happenings, as moments that will again be dispersed" (Massey 46). This vision of place emphasises indeterminacy and the commingling of past, present and future in land. Doreen Massey describes this understanding of place as a "meeting place rather than as always already coherent, as open rather than bounded, as an ongoing production rather than pre-given" (Massey 34). Warwick Mules advocates an aesthetic of place that "exceeds the boundaries of landscape" (208), by not providing a sense of completion but instead celebrating interconnectivity (207). This is a kind of relishing of the landscape-becoming at the present moment in "the outrageous specialness of the current conjunction, this here and now" (Massey 42).

Armidale's colourful parks and streets are socialised natures, the result of human/nonhuman collaborations. The paradigm of nature as an event produces a multi-temporal thickness that acknowledges the impact of past and present agents on the shaping of place. Bakhtin argued that cyclicity was inimical to becoming because the "forward impulse" of historical time was limited by the cycle, preventing a wider understanding of generative growth (210). One possible antidote to the cyclic orbit of Armidale's seasons is recognition of the historical agencies involved in their construction. A wider cultural remembrance of Alwyn Jones could begin a decolonising movement to restore the temporal rhythms of nature's becoming to Armidale's streets and parks.

Alwyn Jones won three local awards for his efforts in beautification – The Citizen of the Year Award (1994), the Centenary Medal (2000), and the Freeman of the City (2002) (Armidale Express, 1). Despite this formal recognition he is not a widely known local figure and Armidale's autumn trees appear indigenous to the town as a result. Remembering Alwyn Jones would begin a

decolonising process of witnessing the treescape of Armidale as an inter-species collaboration that is not natural nor unnatural but emergent, open and unfinished. This decolonisation must also involve a recognition of Aboriginal seasonality (the seasonality of the Aborigines, the indigenous people of Australia) and temporal rhythms which fall outside the four season model of change. Aboriginal seasonality recognises the agency of the more-than-human world and the division between natural and cultural events is less pronounced in Indigenous weather patterns because 'the whole cosmos is alive and communicating' (Rose 5).

Ecological Remembrance

Remembrance of Alwyn Jones and recognition of Aboriginal seasonal patterns aligns with an ethic I term "ecological remembrance," involving the recuperation of lost times and forgotten environmental agents. This remembrance makes reconciliatory moves across species and cultures, and is predicated on the belief that memory is a powerful tool for forming connections between disparate times, places and lives. Ecological remembrance aligns with Rod Giblett's vision of a "conservation counter aesthetic" that values all sensorial engagements with the environment and challenges the nature/culture divide (44). Moving beyond the primarily visual transformations of deciduous seasonal change, it is possible to cultivate arts of noticing which engage with patterns of touch, sound, taste, and smell outside a four season chronotope.

In a model of ecological remembrance, Armidale's exotic civic garden could become what Val Plumwood has termed an "adaptive garden." Plumwood proposed the adaptive garden as an alternative to the colonising aesthetic of many Australian gardens, and to the fundamentalist all-native garden. The adaptive garden is responsive to the surrounding environment and all its human and nonhuman inhabitants, past and present. Plumwood writes:

The adaptive garden represents a negotiation or dialogical relationship with surrounding elements, both of natural and of cultural heritage, including the past. The adaptive garden must come to terms with the way the so-called 'cultural landscape' is embedded in the natural landscape around it, and with the larger sphere of more-than-human presence and agency. (*Decolonising*)

Recognition of the "mind in nature" (Plumwood, *Active Voice* 125) is vital for adaptive gardening and for ecological remembrance. Plumwood has argued that the hyper-separation of mind and matter in reductionist materialism robs nature of creativity. She implores humans to 'reanimate the world' by recognising the intentional agency of nonhuman life as it unfolds – emphasizing, like Whitehead, that nature is not inert or static but in a transformative process of becoming. In the case of the Armidale autumn trees, part of this agency recognition must involve the remembrance of Alwyn Jones as a mind in nature. Recognising agency in humans and nonhumans awakens us to the connections between minds and the world, and the rhythmic chronotopes that envelop us all. Despite being envisioned in human abstract thought, Armidale's deciduous trees actively maintain their own lives and reproduce, extending lines of kin through space and time. They are helped in this by mutualistic relationships with other beings, such as birds who spread seeds and humans who plant them in their own private gardens. An underground world of rhizomatic roots and soil organisms invisible to the human eye stretches each tree's life deep into the subterranean earth. Autumn colours are a celebration of this intimately entwined dance of nature which paints the world red, gold and orange in patterns of transformation.

Melissa Lukashenko argues that intimate knowledge of seasons reflects meaningful belonging in place. This comes through long stretches of generational time, as people "grow into place," and come to know the cycles of change that seem to flow like clockwork. But then, she writes:

something else happens. The tree that has always burst into blossom in September

decides to dry up and stay barren. The ocean brings a torrent of dead mutton birds to South Golden Beach for the first time in six years. . . . We learn that the natural world is infinitely variable, and that we can *never be wholly sure* of our knowledge. There is always room for error and doubt. . . . In short, with enough time, we do learn the country, but with an even longer time we also learn to be humble about what it is possible to know. (64)

Lukashenko is speaking of wonder – that inspiring mix of surprise and curiosity at mysterious happenings beyond our knowledge. Deborah Bird Rose has argued that mystery is a necessary property of any holistic system. This is because it is impossible to remove oneself from the system one is part of, ensuring that the system in its entirety remains perpetually beyond our comprehension. One interesting outcome of this is that, if conceptualised accurately, mystery is a cause for celebration because it indicates the integrity of larger systems. In contrast, predictability signals crisis because it indicates a loss of connectivity (Rose, “On History” 163).

The four seasonal beats of Armidale’s urban centre are predictable *only* if we ignore the temporal rhythm of their entire milieu, including surrounding ecologies, historical agencies, and many complex collaborations between beings of the present and past. The transformations of Armidale’s iridescent trees are by no means metronomic, nor are they confined to a four movement annual symphony. The Armidale tree-scape is in a process of continual metamorphosis and becoming. The un-manicured generations of trees forming their own communities in surrounding bushland is just one example of an agency beyond human control – a creativity working to a temporal beat that is not easily measured in weekdays and calendar months.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Armidale’s deciduous autumn trees have been planted to reflect a four season model of change that obscures the agency of nonhumans and indigenous temporal rhythms. Applying Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of the chronotope, I have explored the links between spatial transformation and the passage of time in the metamorphosis of seasons, and argued that the cyclicity of Armidale’s tree-scapes creates an illusion that the region conforms to colonial aesthetics of time and place.

I have proposed a wider cultural remembrance of Alwyn Jones as a decolonising movement which disrupts this repetitive four season model of change. The ethic I have termed “ecological remembrance” aligns with Val Plumwood’s notion of “adaptive gardening” in its respect for the creative agency of the more-than-human world. Ecological remembrance rejects anthropocentric focus on human management and design and celebrates the unique collaborations which occur in multi-species environments. Through ecological remembrance and adaptive gardening, Armidale’s cyclic chronotope can develop a poly-chronic, multi-species thickness.

Through approaching the four season model of time as an event taking place – a process which involves multiple human and nonhuman agencies, the anthropocentric loop of calendrical time breaks open, allowing for a richer attunement to the temporal rhythms of the region to develop. From such attunement comes the possibility of restoring mystery and wonder at Armidale’s chronotope. This is a humble fascination with the temporal dimension that pulses through all of us, a thing we call “time” which we cannot truly measure, except by the feel of it flowing through our bodies and our lives.

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