In search of the 'Eco-Symbolic': An application of the Jungian concept of the symbol to meaningful encounter with the other-than-human

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Abstract

In 1934 Jung wrote that early man, having not yet separated his experience into antithetical parts, lived in a world where "spirit and matter still interpenetrate each other, and his gods still wander through forest and field" (CW8, para. 682). He suggested that within the unconscious it is possible to discern the remnants of this archaic mode of thought, with its characteristic tendency to interpret environmental phenomena from a symbolic perspective (CW8, para. 309, CW18, para. 585, and elsewhere). Although, for Jung, the symbol is generally treated as an inner product of the psyche, practitioners of ecopsychology and other nature-based practices often report how elements of the natural environment can mirror or express the inner concerns of the individual in ways that recall the symbolic products of dream, fantasy, creative activity and myth. These encounters can be profound and impactful and may carry with them the sense of a psyche emplaced in dynamic interrelationship with the other-than-human world.

Through conceptual research and empirical study, I investigate whether Jung's descriptions of the symbol can provide an effective way to interpret such meaningful encounters with the phenomena of the natural environment. My findings are discussed in relation to their relevance for depth psychology, their potential to inform effective nature-based practice and for how they might contribute to our understanding of the relationship between psyche and its containing environment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Through my experience of working therapeutically in outdoor environments and my involvement with the field of ecopsychology I have developed an interest in the way that environmental features can demonstrate relevance to an individual by a significance for, or a representation of, their inner psychic state. In the literature of ecopsychology and its allied disciplines (ecotherapy, wilderness therapy, etc) and in reports of nature-based therapeutic practice it is possible to find a number of descriptions of nature providing a resource in which aspects of the personal psyche may be encapsulated or reflected back in a way that contributes to ongoing psychological processes (e.g., Berger 2016, Linden and Grut 2002, Hasbach 2016, Kelly 2016, Kerr & Key 2012, Sahlin 2016).

In my own delivery of nature-based support I have witnessed and worked with a type of experience that I have come to think of in terms of a *'symbolic encounter'*, i.e., an interaction with a specific environmental feature that triggers a connection to some 'deeper' or meaningful significance, and in this way provides material for personal insight. These meaningful connections present themselves as simultaneously deeply rooted in the presence of place and the other-than-human *and* of transcending the material world in a way that might allow the external forms of nature to give new layers of meaning (and stimulus) to individual concerns or areas of focus. It can certainly seem at times as if nature is happy, even willing, to reflect and symbolise whatever most needs to be processed for each person, in each moment.

In his 2009 article for *Therapy Today* on therapeutic practice within natural settings Martin Jordan writes of how nature can act as a "mirror" – reflecting back to a person "aspects of themselves and their relationships" in symbolic and metaphorical ways that may "invoke feelings and thoughts which can then in turn aid the process of inner reflection." (Jordan, 2009, p. 30) Externally significant representation, Jordan explains, "can take the form of encounters with trees, plants and animals" and, furthermore, through working in an external landscape "new internal landscapes" can emerge in a way that "reflects, sustains, challenges and supports the person on their therapeutic

journey" (ibid). In one example of how this might be articulated, the description by torture survivor Omar Hajo, in an article for the Metro newspaper, of how he gradually found a sense of recovery and hope through his participation in a therapeutic horticulture project, is reproduced below:

> "I have learned and shared so much with the gardening group, and I will forever be grateful for the hope and happiness it has provided, and the link it gives me to the homeland I can't return to. Now, I look back at the very first plant I grew in the UK. It was a sunflower and I realise how significant that is. I've come to learn that sunflowers signify optimism, positivity and peace. That's exactly how I feel now."
>
> (Mustafa, (2022)

Psychotherapist Jenny Grut relates in her book 'Healing Fields' how working with torture survivors and refugees in a natural setting offered her numerous opportunities for engaging in "rich, symbolic communication" with her clients (Linden & Grut, 2002, p. 20). Where verbal communication was not sufficient, or too difficult, a natural object might, in her experience, express a client's experience "more eloquently than words" (ibid.) with the process of accessing nature this way making it possible to "very quickly … access deeply traumatic events and to work on the most difficult feelings" (ibid., p. 12). Various activities involved in horticultural work such as weeding, watering, sowing seeds and composting could, according to Grut, hold representative potential for individuals working in the gardens; for example, the act of turning compost could be used as an analogy to the turning over of things in the mind, thus creating the opportunity to generate something of value (ibid., p. 76).

Terrapsychology[1] pioneer and author Craig Chalquist writes of how "archetypes and the mythic images they attract haunt and inhabit the natural world" (2014, p. 254), and suggests that nature

1 An approach to depth psychology that embraces the non-human world and explores how terrain, place, element and natural process may present through the human psyche through activity, narrative, myth and folklore.

may ‘speak’ to us through the symbolism that is “the metaphoric language of dreams, symptoms and the deep unconscious” (ibid., p. 258). In ‘The psychology of the child archetype’ Jung touches on a similar thought, saying ““at bottom”, the psyche is simply “world”” and (as he tells us the writer Kerényi is “absolutely right” in saying) “in the symbol the *world itself* is speaking” (Jung, CW9i, para.291). This is, I suggest, an unfamiliar standpoint for the Jungian idea of the symbol, with its more usual appearance in dream, myth and imagination rather than the manifest world, and it presents for me the question of whether Jung’s approach to the concept can provide an appropriate theoretical framework in which to understand the experiences of nature-based practice. How might the concept of the symbol, as formulated by Jung, be understood within this context of the ‘symbolic encounter’ with other-than-human phenomena? Susan Rowland has proposed that the Jungian symbol, by virtue of being “both soma and history” can weave “the individual psyche into the fabric of the world” (Rowland, 2015, p. 90). In discussing the role of symbols in literary criticism and eco-cosmodernity she describes them as part of the vitality of the planet through which we are able to “communicate with nature” (Rowland, 2018, p. 169).

Theoretical contexts

In places, Jung seems to express a nostalgia for the symbol-imbued environment that he sees as the natural province of a ‘primitive’ or ‘archaic’ psyche (for example CW9i para.454, CW15, para.12, CW18 paras. 584-586). His descriptions of the landscape of early, or Indigenous, peoples show an environment populated with demons, spirits, mythological beings and ancestors. Whilst from a ‘modern’ perspective we cannot know how it is to live in a world where “In that stately tree dwells the thunder-god; this spring is haunted by the Old Woman; in that wood the legendary king is buried; near that rock no one may light a fire because it is the abode of a demon; in yonder pile of stones dwell the ancestral spirits…” (Jung, CW10, para.44) we can still, according to Jung, see its survival in the unconscious (ibid.). We are able to access this realm through the symbolic material of dreams, where inner representations “bring up our original nature” and “express their contents in the language of nature” – a “strange and incomprehensible” tongue far removed from the “rational words and concepts of modern speech” (CW18, para.586). This state, that for Jung is comparable

to the *participation mystique* of early peoples as described by Lévy-Bruhl (CW13, para.122, CW13 para.66, and elsewhere) is one in which, for the Indigenous dweller at least, the "country he inhabits is at the same time the topography of his unconscious" (CW10, para.44).

I have explored elsewhere (Brown, 2022) how an understanding of Jung's approach to numinous or symbolically charged elements of nature involves tracing the variations in his thinking on the relationship between psyche and environment. As well as taking a position that "the withdrawal of projections" (e.g., CW11, para.140) is a prerequisite for a psychologically mature consciousness – i.e., one that is not "naïve" or "archaic" (as CW10 paras. 131-132, CW13 para.122, CW16 para.466, and elsewhere) Jung also questions whether there is, in fact, a "field of original identity" (CW7, para.329) or "transpsychic reality … underlying the psyche" (CW8, para.600, n. 15). In his discussion of Jung's attitude to 'mind' and 'earth' David Tacey speculates that Jung's "scientific persona" recoiled from the "idea of demons and spirits, despite his "second self" being able to "embrace them and treat them with more respect than his scientific training would allow" (2009, p19). Tacey (in a similar position to my own reasoning, Brown, 2022), believes that Jung came to reconsider his ideas on early symbolic representation and to envision a future where "a new symbolic order will come into being" (Tacey, 2009, p. 19). He suggests that "new symbolic systems" are now needed – systems "appropriate to our advanced post-scientific view of the world" (ibid. p. 20) that might enable us to move past the idea of "infantile" forms that have previously "governed the representation of chthonic forces" (ibid., p. 19).

Stephen Aizenstat believes that Jung's idea of the 'collective unconscious' might be applied, in an expanded sense, to include the ecological sphere, suggesting that the task of Depth Psychology today is to "extend the work of Freud and Jung to include consideration of the psyche of nonhuman experience" (1995, p. 95). The pioneering ecopsychologist Theodore Roszak has made similar observations and, according to Ralph Metzner, observed that Jung had originally included "prehuman animal and biological archetypes" in his explanation of the collective psyche, only later coming to "concentrate primarily on panhuman religious symbols" (Roszak, 1992, as cited in

Metzner, 1995, p. 62). Andrew Fellows, in his discussion of the application of holism to the navigation of the Anthropocene age in Main, McMillan and Henderson's 'Holism, Possibilities and Problems', makes a call for a new understanding – a *metanoia* – that can provide a "synthesis of Jungian psychology with current approaches to the mind-matter problem, Earth systems science … and the principles of deep ecology" (Fellows 2019, p. 31). Fellows locates this potential development in a theory of holism that understands psyche and matter as (in the words of Jung) "two different aspects of one and the same thing." (ibid.) Similarly, in 'Jungian Psychology and the World Unconscious' Aizenstat speaks of a new generation of depth psychologists who take a "wider view of psychic life into consideration" (Aizenstat 1995, pp. 96-97) and how by devising "research methodologies, particularly phenomenological approaches" that "explore how the human being interacts with the "voices" of others who share the Earth", we can cultivate "different ways of listening" that make it possible to "differentiate without separating self from world". (ibid., p. 99)

These considerations place research into the environmentally-encountered symbol – informed by depth psychology – in a significant position to contribute towards such new approaches and paradigmatic understandings. The issue of how we address the perceived division of mind and matter – or, as articulated by Hilary Prentice, the separation of 'Ecos' and 'Psyche' – (Prentice 2012, p. 176) has come under scrutiny in much of ecopsychological discourse with the 'alienation' from nature that results from a prevailing experience of separation being, in places, described as pathological (e.g., Buzzell 2016, Chalquist 2009, Roszak 1992, Rust 2004a) and as a significant contributing factor to our cultural failure to live in balance with our containing environment. James Hillman, in his foreword to Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth/Healing the Mind, asks how psychology ever became a field in which the human soul was seen as "divorced from the spirits of the surroundings" (Hillman, 1995, p. xxii) and maintains that if we pay attention to thinkers including Freud and Jung we can understand how "the most profoundly collective and unconscious self is the natural material world" (ibid., p. xix). In this way, perhaps, we can once again come to

recognize “a subjectivity” in the presences of “animals, plants, wells, springs, trees and rocks” (ibid., p, xxii).

The structure of this thesis

In the following chapter (Chapter 2) I will be reviewing the literature of ecopsychology and its allied fields with the aim of gaining a clear overview of the way environmentally-encountered symbolic material is treated in relevant research and descriptions of practice and understanding how a nature-based symbolic encounter might be located within the existing sphere of ecopsychological thought. I will then (in Chapter 3) discuss the methodologies I intend to use for a further examination of the concept of the symbol. Here, I will be looking at how I intend to investigate Jung’s understanding of the concept of the symbol and to identify his definitional criteria. I will then show some of my thinking with regards to epistemological and theoretical bases from which to undertake an empirical research project and I will briefly describe how I have reached a study design in which nature-based reflection might be evaluated for incidences of symbolic perception. In Chapter 4, I will be seeking, through a conceptual study of his work, to locate Jung’s explicit and implicit portrayals of the symbol and to understand these within the broader context of his thinking. In particular I will be addressing how Jung understands the dynamic aspects of the symbol and how he assigns symbolic understanding to specific modes of thinking, language, and stages of evolutionary development. I will also be asking where the symbol as understood by depth psychology seems to suit application to such material and where it may appear as more problematic. This conceptual study will be undertaken to reach an operationalisation of terms by which precise and transparent thematic analysis of the environmentally-encountered symbol might be carried out. To this end, findings will be used to inform the design of an empirical research project through which such phenomena can be examined and interpreted.

From my review of ecopsychological literature and from this conceptual reading of Jung, I will then demonstrate (in Chapter 5) how my empirical study has been designed to effectively evaluate

experiences of symbolic perception or representation within ‘natural’ settings. I will show how my enquiry into Jung’s work has been used to construct a set of categories for a thematic analysis of empirical data and how I have allowed for the inclusion of inductive as well as deductive data in my thematic evaluations. Taking into account Aizenstat’s stance on phenomenological approaches (1995, as noted above), the discussions on method in Vakoch and Castrillón’s ‘Ecopsychology, phenomenology, and the environment’ (2014) and in particular Chalquist’s description of method with relation to Jung and Goethe in that work (2014, pp. 253-255) I will describe my process of devising a methodology that has taken this “holistic-descriptive” research method into account and allows for participants to engage in a reflective and immersive practice within an experimental setting. As will be further detailed in this chapter, I have used the methodology of the ‘object interview’ and a base and have departed from it by eliminating the presence of an interviewer, allowing participants to directly engage in a dialogue of free association with a chosen feature or aspect of the natural environment. I will discuss how, at this time, I have limited the study to test the spontaneous rather than the elicited emergence of symbolic material.

The outcomes of this study will be presented and discussed in chapter 5 with an analysis of the findings of the code manual data alongside the use of illustrative examples. This chapter will additionally note where study parameters have necessarily been limited and will make recommendations on possible developments or revisions for furthering this research. Empirical study findings will be further discussed in Chapter 6 where I will address to what extent Jung’s descriptions of the symbol can be appropriately, or informatively, applied to this study in particular or ecopsychological thinking in general. From this I will go on to consider what these findings might tell us about interpreting the symbolic encounter in natural, other-than-human settings. The conclusions reached in this research will be discussed with the aim of providing a constructive basis from which to make recommendations for future therapeutic practice. I will also show where this study may generate useful questions or observations regarding a wider application of the Jungian concept of the symbol, and I will highlight where further theoretical and empirical investigation may contribute to a fuller understanding of this area of enquiry.

Chapter 2: Perspectives from Ecopsychology; a Literature Review

Introduction

In the following chapter I will be setting out an overview of the various practices and disciplines that align themselves with ecopsychological thinking, with the aim of examining current positions and key ideas and, in particular, understanding the focal topics of research and publication to date. As a relatively new area of thought, ecopsychology can be seen to encompass a great variety of approaches and applications, as well as new terminologies that are coming, gradually, to find consensus usage.

In order to give a background understanding for this rapidly developing sphere of study and to provide a framework within which my own research can be coherently located, I will briefly discuss some of the origins and original thinking that led to the emergence of ecopsychology as a theoretical stance. I will also look at some of the key issues and conversations that have attended the formulation of 'ecopsychology' as an idea, as well as those that have accompanied its development towards becoming an established field and a recognised therapeutic modality. There will be a description, and examination, of these central concepts and an indication of where they may be particularly pertinent to my enquiry.

A review of the literature will show how ecopsychology, having grown largely out of environmental concerns, was initially interested in understanding psychological responses to ecological pressures (both individually and collectively), with further attention being given to demonstrating the efficacy of nature-based[2] therapeutic interventions. Whilst psychodynamic concepts and terms originating in Analytical Psychology are employed across the existing literature and in conference presentations, I will show that there appears to be limited detailed enquiry into

[2] In light of theoretical debates around the use of the word 'nature' as artificially separating human existence from the environment I will be using the terms 'natural environment', 'nature-based' and 'other-than-human' wherever possible.

how evidence from nature-based therapeutic practice might inform traditional analytic interpretations, or into how nature-based therapeutic practice might draw more effectively from existing psychodynamic theory. Specifically, it will be demonstrated that although reference can be found to the importance of metaphorical and symbolic frames of reference in nature-based work, questions of how, or why, this way of interpreting the natural environment may be so significant, or how such perceptions arise in the psyche, are not noticeably addressed.

By demonstrating a need for further enquiry in this area my aim is to highlight where ecopsychology's findings to date might most usefully contribute to a theoretical discussion of nature and the symbolic within the context of depth psychology. From this basis I hope to show how investigating the psychological mechanisms of a symbolic perception of natural phenomena may generate useful and relevant contributions to psychodynamic theory and may also enable a refinement in the use and understanding of symbolic representation within nature-based practice.

Ecopsychology: The roots of a new approach

Definitions of Ecopsychology are, from the start, problematic. “Many threads weave the Ecopsychology tapestry” as the UK website ‘Ecopsychology.org.uk’ says. Not only do its psychotherapeutic practitioners come from a wide range of backgrounds, settings and approaches – Transpersonal, Transactional, Body Psychotherapy, Depth Psychology – to name just a few, but authors and theorists, as well as sources for published papers, are drawn from an extremely wide range of circumstances and academic disciplines. The formative impulse to initiate a conversation between ecologists and psychologists, or ecologists and psychotherapists, evolved independently in the UK and the USA, adding an additional layer of complexity to the theoretical mix. In addition, there are debates on whether Ecopsychology should, in fact, be regarded as a field, (Jordan & Hinds, 2016) a discipline (Scull, 2008, Roszak & Metzner, 1993, as cited in Schroll, 1994), or perhaps even a social science critique (Schroll 2007, p. 35).

One of my key motives for understanding the development and evolution of Ecopsychology is to trace how its theoretical origins have influenced the studies and applications that have so far been its primary focus. In particular, its American beginnings in ‘deep ecology’ and the conservation movements of the 1960s were a significant factor in the thinking from which a number of early principles were formed. Deep ecology, having grown out of radical environmental activism and the philosophical writings of Arne Naess – who proposed the valuing of all life irrespective of its usefulness to humans – was primarily concerned with placing the individual within an ecosystem and applying ecological wisdom (‘ecosophy’) to the way that individual lived their life (1989, pp. 134-137). Early efforts to explore how this philosophy might be applicable to psychological understanding included discussion groups and courses with a variety of titles such as ‘transpersonal ecology’, ‘psychoecology’ and ‘green psychology’ (Dolley et al, www.confer.uk.com).

Roszak, in his 1992 work ‘The Voice of the Earth: Discovering the Ecological Ego’, was the first to use the term ‘Ecopsychology’ in an attempt to address an apparent gulf between the psychological

and the ecological aspects of modern thinking. Schroll, in his chronicle of ecopsychology's origins, describes Rozsak's determining features as a "synthesis of ecology and psychology", "the skilful application of ecological insights to the practice of psychotherapy", "the discovery of our emotional bond with the planet", and "defining "sanity" as if the whole world mattered" (Schroll, 2007, pp. 29-30). Roszak himself described the impetus for this new synthesis as growing out of frustrations felt by ecological activists – that actions and education were not enough to prompt widespread change. He says:

> "I got around to asking a pertinent question: if environmental abuse has become the psychopathology of everyday life in our time, might psychologists not have something of value to offer environmentalists who are seeking to change people's behaviour?... I called what they might collaborate in creating 'ecopsychology', not with the intention of launching a new school of psychology, but rather with the hope that environmental relations would become as integral a part of every therapeutic orientation as family relations have become."
>
> (Roszak, 2009, p.34)

In 'The Voice of the Earth: Discovering the Ecological Ego' (1992) Roszak addresses the situation with reference to Freud's 'Psychopathology of Everyday Life' and proposes that the ecological destruction that is the psychopathology of our current times is an "anguish" of the "ecological unconscious" that he speculates Freud "would not have had a name" for. Roszak suggests that "At this level we discover a repression that weights upon our inherited sense of loyalty to the planet that mothered the human mind into existence" (ibid.). It is, he believes, a peculiarity of modern western society that the 'inner world' has been split from the outer and that the soul has been displaced from its previous status as "densely embedded in the world we share with animal, vegetable and mineral, and all the unseen powers of the cosmos." Nowadays, the sphere of soul is restricted to "psychology, the study of human experience as it can be gleaned from confessions made on a psychiatrist's couch" (ibid.). In his seminal work 'The Voice of the Earth: an

Exploration of Ecopsychology' Roszak provides eight core principles to be considered for the foundation of a new *Ecopsychology*. These are:

1. That the core of the mind is the ecological unconscious.
2. The contents of the ecological unconscious represent the living record of evolution.
3. The goal of ecopsychology is to awaken the inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that lies within the ecological unconscious.
4. The crucial stage of development is the life of the child.
5. The ecological ego matures toward a sense of ethical responsibility with the planet.
6. Ecopsychology needs to re-evaluate certain "masculine" character traits that lead us to dominate nature.
7. Whatever contributes to small scale social forms and personal empowerment nourishes the ecological ego.
8. There is a synergistic interplay between planetary and personal well-being.

(Roszak, 2001a, pp. 319-320)

Despite recognising Roszak as having created the first broad definition of Ecopsychology, Schroll does not believe that Roszak's work adequately conveyed the multidisciplinary spectrum of enquiry to be taken into account, or considered the potential contribution of "Indigenous science" (2007, p. 30), (what is meant by this will be discussed later). Schroll's own connection with the field came about, he says, through his realisation that "the real starting point toward healing the social and environmental crises begins with self-confrontation and self-examination" and the need to "examine the worldview influencing our attitudes and our behaviour" (ibid.). Schroll saw the high rate of 'burnout' amongst activists as a result of the fact that their motivations were "simply reactionary and symptom focused" (ibid., p. 31); crucially they did not address root causes. "Trying to heal each one of these separate symptoms is a never-ending task because the system keeps breaking down amidst our efforts to heal it", he observes (ibid.). In Schroll's view

ecopsychology could provide not just a new theoretical orientation, but a "coherent philosophy of life that enables people to sustain and nurture themselves" (ibid.).

In 1994 John Seed, founder of the Rainforest Information Centre and a Deep Ecology trainer, presented a paper to the Ecopsychology Symposium at the Australian Psychological Society's 28th Annual Conference where he defined Ecopsychology as a "psychology in service to the Earth. Eco, Psyche, Logos" (Seed, 1994). Like Roszak (1992, cited above), he believed an inability to recognise environmental issues was symptomatic of a form of collective pathology or "dis-ease" (Seed, 1994). In 1998, with an international group of authors, Seed published 'Thinking like a mountain, towards a council of all beings', basing this title on the observation of ecologist Aldo Leopold that unless we can learn to "think like a mountain' and prioritise the interests of the ecosystem over the short-term interests of humans disaster is "inevitable" (Seed, 1998). His suggestions were not exclusively aimed at a restoration of the environment and employing psychology to encourage an ecological outlook – he also thought that each individual had "a deep longing for reconnection with the Earth" and that the repression of this longing gave rise to the behavioural reaction of "host of displacement activities". He went on to question whether the establishment of an authentic connection between "soul and earth" might not itself fulfil the need for therapeutic remedy (Seed, 1994).

In the UK the roots of Ecopsychology were also to be found partly in the world of radical politics (i.e., the Transition Town movement which sought to facilitate community transition to non-oil based lifestyles at a local level) and partly in the socially and politically aware sections of the psychotherapeutic communities. One organisation that was particularly involved in developing the field was the organisation 'Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility', formed in the mid 1990s, in the words of founder member Andrew Samuels, to: "incorporate the psychological into the sociopolitical" (2003, p. 151), and to "try to locate psychotherapy and counselling in their sociopolitical context" (ibid.). The PCSR Ecopsychology sub-group, with a membership that included Hilary Prentice, Tania Dolley and Mary-Jayne Rust (who went on to

become influential figures in the UK ecopsychology scene) came together with a "shared … commitment to weaving together psychology, ecology, politics and spirituality" (ecopsychology.org.uk) and explore an interest in the work of deep ecologists such as John Seed and Joanna Macy. (Macy being another key figure in early ecopsychology who co-authored 'Thinking Like a Mountain' with Seed and who founded the influential 'Work that Reconnects' workshops). Over time the group developed into an active network that wrote articles and papers for publication, ran workshops, provided speakers for conferences and developed links with similar initiatives in the USA and elsewhere. At the present time (of writing) it operates primarily through a national web-based network of over 2000 members (the Ecopsychology UK ning website), and an annual outdoor conference centre gathering.

A suggestion for what might constitute a theoretical consensus on Ecopsychology given by psychotherapist Mary-Jayne Rust in her 2004 article for Resurgence magazine was the: "fundamental belief … that our current dilemmas result from the Western paradigm in which we humans regard ourselves to be the dominant life form" and where "we treat the rest of life as a resource to be used for our benefit, alienating ourselves from nature in the process" (Rust, 2004b). Like Roszak (1992, 2009, pp. 33-34) and Seed (1994) Rust proposed that this alienation should be seen, fundamentally, as a pathology. Writing in 2004 on 'Creating Psychotherapy for a sustainable future' she described how:

> "A movement called ecopsychology has emerged in the last two decades, attempting to connect psychological and ecological worlds… It speaks about the psychological roots and impact of our current environmental crisis, of the healing power of nature, of the insights that a psychological approach has to offer towards the current paradigm shift, and more ... ecopsychologists are developing a wide variety of practices, including working with people outside, on the land, in the wilds, in order to experience and explore the human-nature relationship... Other practitioners are expanding and challenging our current

> psychotherapeutic methods in urban settings, looking at the role of the other-than-human world in developmental and psychological health."
>
> (Rust, 2004a, p. 52)

A concurrent development in the late 1990's was the renewed interest being shown in the mental health benefits of spending time in, and carrying out activities in, natural environments. The therapeutic use of outdoor activities, in particular gardening-based 'Horticultural Therapy' had previously been popular in the 1940s and 50s for the treatment of hospitalised war veterans and had gone on to be a feature of many mental health care facilities as a form of occupational therapy (Messer Diehl, E. R., 2009, Wise, J., 2015**)**. Interest in developing or researching this practice had been in decline for some time when the charity Mind launched its 1999 'EcoMinds' initiative with a five-year lottery-funded pilot project that aimed to "support organisations to put the whole idea of ecotherapy on the map" (Paul Farmer, 2014). In 2015 Mind published their booklet 'Making Sense of Ecotherapy' which set out their thinking and the various approaches they promoted for using nature as a therapeutic intervention.

Jordan, writing in 'Ecotherapy, Theory, Research and Practice' about the two 'divergent forms' of Ecotherapy that can be found in the UK, describes the first type as being initiatives such as those overseen by the EcoMinds programme with its attempt to bring interventions based in horticulture, green exercise and conservation into statutory (and other) mental health care settings, with the second type being that defined (notably by Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009) as the *applied form* of Ecopsychology (Doherty, 2016, p. 20 & Jordan, 2016, p. 58). Jordan points out that although Mind proposed ecotherapy sessions to include some type of psychological therapy this was often not carried through with the resulting method being more that of occupational therapy than psychotherapy (ibid., p. 59). In practice, as Doherty (2016, p. 20) notes, and as will be illustrated further below, there can be a great deal of overlap between the aims and techniques of these different approaches.

Outdoor educators such as Dave Key (2009, 2012) in the UK and wilderness therapy practitioner Robert Greenway (2009) in the USA also brought insights from working 'on trail' as did the UK organisation Wilderness Foundation who offer remedial outdoor work and journeys with young people. John Scull suggests that the use of "wilderness experience as a psychological tool", beginning in the 1960s with teachers such as Greenway, was one of the immediate precursors of ecopsychology (2008, p. 72). David Key and Mary-Jayne Rust worked together for a number of years formulating some of the first integrated approaches between psychotherapy and outdoor 'experience', with a series of courses in Scotland and at Schumacher College. These initiatives generated widely respected models for practice and led to further developments such as WWF's Natural Change Project. Nick Totton, another proponent of 'wilderness experience' brought his background in Embodied-Relational therapy into his 'Wild Therapy' approach (Totton, 2011, 2014) and contributed significantly to UK ecopsychological discourse. Some of the insights gained from taking people into non-urban or less artificially cultivated spaces for nature-based interventions also fed into wider therapeutic conversations on 'taking therapy outside'.

Practitioners doing so have, to date, tended to work in one of three ways: Either taking groups into natural settings ('on trail') as in Wilderness Therapy, taking individual clients into outside spaces and incorporating the natural environment into the therapeutic process, or providing a regular outdoor facility such as a horticultural project or walking group in which some degree of mental health support will be provided. Although it might be supposed that the second of these is the most likely to engage with psychodynamic practices such as depth psychology, the distinctions are not always so clear cut. Many wilderness journeys combine elements of psychotherapeutic work with bushcraft or survival skills and (as related in personal conversation during conferences) facilitators of some early 'survival' oriented expeditions were obliged to find therapeutic support due to the spontaneous surfacing of difficult material in wilderness settings. Horticultural projects working with clients who have survived trauma (such as the Natural Growth Project facilitated by Jenny Grut, mentioned in the Introduction above, p. 9) may also draw on depth psychology to guide participant experience and make effective use of therapeutic space.

In his chapter 'Theoretical and Empirical Foundations for Ecotherapy' in Jordan and Hinds' 'Ecotherapy, Theory, Research and Practice' psychologist Thomas Doherty provides a breakdown of the features that might be expected in ecotherapeutic practice despite the diversity that exists "both in theory and based on a survey of extant approaches" (2016, p. 15): For the work to be undertaken with ecological consciousness or intent, for the work to utilize natural settings, activities or processes as an integral part of the therapeutic process, for the work to focus on ecological aspects of self, identity and behaviour and for the work to take place somewhere on the scale of personal to planetary relationship with nature (ibid.). The work, according to Doherty, does not necessarily have to take place in an outdoor setting, although it will feature some inclusion of the 'other-than-human' or incorporate working with a sense of place (ibid.). He suggests that at its most basic ecotherapy (here he is again referring to a therapeutic focus) "welcomes the ecological aspects of self, identity and behaviour into the psychotherapeutic arena" (ibid.).

With such a wide range of origins and practices it is perhaps inevitable that there is an on-going conversation about what constitutes an ecopsychological practice or an ecopsychological approach to therapy. A lot of early thinking and philosophy did not grow directly out of psychological or psychotherapeutic experience and was aimed more at challenging what was seen to be something of a complicit 'status quo' within established psychological thought. Even the naming of the field has been subject to debate and new terminologies, or critiques of old ones, are a fairly constant feature of ecopsychology networks. Consequently, the researcher is faced with a confusion of terminology, of understanding and of practice, which needs to be addressed to a certain extent before any specific enquiries might be made[3].

One of the problems that has been identified in looking at the natural environment as a contributor to personal wellbeing is that it can be seen to put the individual in the position of nature *consumer*

[3] In order to minimise confusion, I have opted to use the term 'ecopsychology' throughout this work and to reserve use of the term 'ecotherapy' for therapeutic interventions in nature, unless referring to a cited author's own words.

(where wellness is yet one more commodity that can be provided by the natural environment), and thus as diverting the entire ecopsychological movement away from its roots in Deep Ecology's ecosystemic view of existence. The wide variety of disciplines that fed into the early development of the field – and that continue to be a part of its formulation now – also work against the possibility of establishing a consensus location within existing academic discourse. It might even be argued that the attention given to gathering a wealth of disparate thinking under one 'umbrella' and in debating the terminologies and various concepts thus assembled, has delayed in-depth ecopsychological analyses within the different disciplines themselves. In particular, I will aim to show how, despite informing some of the earliest theoretical speculations, psychodynamic thinking has not yet fully benefitted from the opportunity to engage critically with the field of ecopsychology, or fully examine the ways in which depth psychology may already be addressing some of the key concerns of the ecopsychology 'project'.

Ecopsychology: Theoretical positions and research focus

Theoretical positions

From an overview of its history and development it can be seen that there was no clear originating 'home' or theoretical origin that could clearly locate ecopsychology as an emerging field within an existing academic discipline. In addition, there are now a large body of practitioners coming from different modalities who might regard themselves as aligned with an ecopsychological way of working. As a result, one question that has arisen is if the practice of ecopsychology (or ecotherapy when taken as an applied form) is to evolve into a recognised therapeutic approach would it benefit from being more clearly theoretically framed? Another, perhaps more philosophical, but I believe more central, enquiry is: What, precisely, is the reason that meaningful therapeutic encounters with nature are so beneficial? This second question must in some respects imply a consideration of the first – in what disciplinary area might an enquiry of this kind be most usefully investigated?

It is interesting to note that alongside the gathering of a wide net of 'allied' disciplines under the banner of ecopsychology, the one place where it might be thought to find a 'natural' home – i.e., psychology – has apparently not seen a great deal of in-depth engagement. Craig Chalquist questions whether mainstream psychology is even an appropriate arena for exploring the "lived relationship between the human and nonhuman" as it "remains too entrenched in mind-body and self-world dualisms" (2009a, p. 69) – the very models that he believes have played a role in the sickness and disengagement of the modern psyche. He argues that "unchecked empiricism is itself a kind of trauma, a defensive intellectualized retreat from encountering the world's richness on its own terms" and that a rather more useful view of reality would be 'transjective', i.e., one that is "co-created in the very acts of researching, conserving, analysing and healing." (ibid., pp. 69-70).

John Scull, who had seen and documented much of the early development of the field, felt "early ecopsychologists claimed, with some justice, that mainstream psychology had paid very little attention to the human-nature relationship" (2008, p. 76). Roszak had not been optimistic about

'mainstream' psychology's acceptance for the new thinking and had denounced the psychiatric world as having "little to teach us about our place in the natural environment" due to its being "as alienated from the living planet as the rest of our society" (Roszak, 2001b). In Roszak's view its role, for generations, had been solely "to soothe the anguish of the urban-industrial psyche" (ibid.). John Seed was also doubtful of the suitability of psychology for the purpose of reorienting mind within the natural environment, labelling it: "last of the social sciences to acknowledge the environmental crisis" (Seed, 1994). It appears that the reservations of the early thinkers – who had been largely influenced by environmental movements and concerns – reflect their view of the 'mainstream' as somewhat complicit in promoting the unhealthy planetary existence they sought to challenge, despite one of Roszak's originally stated aims being to creating a new collaboration between environmentalists and psychologists (2009, p. 34).

Another drawback with positioning ecopsychology firmly within the field of psychology has been seen as restricting it to a scientific model that does not allow an adequate appreciation of subjective, anecdotal experience. Scull sees in ecopsychology's "emphasis on ecology and relationship" a rejection of "both dynamic psychology's traditional emphasis on the individual self and scientific psychology's mode of explanation in terms of simple cause-effect relationships" (2009, p. 76). Totton places the range of extant theories on two axes, with the polarities of 'human centred' and 'other than human centred' on one axis, and the polarities of 'scientific' and 'poetic' on the other. 'Human centred', in his framework, covers therapeutic approaches that focus on the wellbeing of the person whereas 'other-than-human centred' approaches consider the whole 'web' of existence including the world beyond humanity (Totton, www.confer.uk.com). Totton places the scientific pole in opposition to the 'poetic' because evaluations from a 'scientific' perspective, in his view "implicitly privilege reason over emotion, intuition and sensation", unlike the poetic theories, which do the "exact opposite". 'Poetic' theories treat mythology, literature, art, dreams and individual narratives (material which Totton places in the category of 'anecdotal evidence', i.e., derived from subjective reporting) as equally valid to the evidential data of neuroscience, ecology, psychology, and other 'scientific' disciplines (ibid.). Jordan believes that an important

goal for the field is to contribute to a theoretical grounding that will enable it to grow further and to develop "epistemologies of a broad ecotherapy based on sound practice and coherent research" (Jordan, 2016, p. 2). He acknowledges that there is a potential difficulty with phenomenological accounts being regarded as valid empirical evidence, but argues that both positivist and inductivist positions are important in understanding and legitimising the work, it not being possible to progress effectively without either (ibid., p. 3). Buzzell and Chalquist are of the opinion that the most useful perspective will be a "balance of empiricism and anecdote" (2015, p. 184)

According to Buzzell and Chalquist it is due to Ecopsychology's beginnings in a "counter-cultural conversation between psychotherapists, environmentalists, activists, writers and educators", that it retains something of its rebellious nature and lack of structure resulting in a situation which has "prompted calls for hard-core empiricism, mass popularization and legal certification" (ibid.). However, recognising that "most who identify as ecopsychologists" have some training in one of the psychologies or in mental health practice they acknowledge the contribution of "over a hundred years of experiment and practice focused on understanding and healing the human body-mind-psyche in its relationship to self (and) the human community" that might be found in existing bodies of thought ibid., p. 183).

There are growing suggestions that Ecopsychology would benefit from revisiting some of its early links to depth psychology, with Buzzell and Chalquist identifying a need for it to "remember its psychological roots more accurately than psychology textbooks do: that Freud took country walks with his patients and used a therapy dog … and that Jung in many ways was the first ecopsychologist" (ibid., p. 184). John Scull regards Roszak's original ideas as being perhaps better described by the terms "ecopsychiatry" or "ecopsychoanalysis" due to Roszak's adoption of the "dynamic psychology of Freud and Jung in his conceptualization of the field" (Scull, 2008, p. 73). He suggests that the majority of Roszak's 'eight principles' show an acceptance of Jung's analytical psychology, in particular the idea that the "core of the mind is the ecological unconscious", the contents of which represent a "living record of evolution" (ibid.).

In 2001 Roszak, looking back at the early formulations of ecopsychological thought, proposed that: "A rising generation of therapists – Freudians, Jungians, Gestaltists, Transpersonalists, and Humanists are ready to reexamine [*sic*] their schools" and to find a new direction and context: a paradigm that "gives life and mind a new central status in the universe" and to speak "for the long lost Anima Mundi" (2001b). In 2009 he wrote: "The courage with which Freud faced the radical madness of modern life in *Civilization and its Discontents* is rare. He was prepared to psychoanalyze our entire culture" (Roszak, 2009, p. 36). In Roszak's opinion, ecopsychologists must be prepared to do the same.

Research focus

A great deal of evidence has been building from research studies across a wide spectrum of disciplines of the efficacy of practices that might fall under the banner of Ecopsychology (or Ecotherapy as the applied form). According to my investigation to date, the two main authors to have looked comprehensively at where Ecopsychology/Ecotherapy stands in terms of research evidence are Craig Chalquist in the USA and Martin Jordan in the UK. Chalquist has published two overviews – the chapter 'Ecotherapy Research and a Psychology of Homecoming' in his 2009 book 'Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind' edited with Linda Buzzell(2009b) and his 2009 paper for the journal Ecopsychology: 'A look at the ecotherapy research evidence' (2009a). In this paper Chalquist describes Ecotherapy as "a relatively new field with ancient roots and an impressive set of preliminary research findings" (2009a, p. 69) and notes that a growing body of evidence from such research was showing almost exclusively positive results for these "treatment modalities that include the natural world" (ibid., p. 64).

Martin Jordan's book, edited with Joe Hinds, 'Ecotherapy, Theory, Research and Practice' is the more recent of the two, being published in 2016 with the aim of "building a robust theoretical, experiential and practice-driven understanding of ecotherapy by bringing together a diverse … array of researchers and practitioners, and thus drawing on a broad range of philosophies and positions" (2016, p. 3). Both authors refer to the collected research as 'ecotherapy'; an attempt at defining some parameters by placing ecotherapy as the applied version of ecopsychology, as mentioned above. From this stance, Jordan (2016) regards ecopsychology as: "an important epistemological basis for the practice and theory of ecotherapy" (ibid.). This distinction is, however, not entirely accepted by all in the field(s) – Hayley Marshall (ecopsychologist and transactional therapist), in reviewing Buzzell and Chalquist's 'Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind' observed that despite it making sense for 'ecotherapy' to incorporate a varied base of inter-related practices there is a problem in terminology that results in "a lack of clarity about what some nature-based therapies actually are" and a parallel "clinical and theoretical confusion occurring out

in the field" (www.centrefornaturalreflection.co.uk). In practice, techniques and interests become shared between therapeutic modalities with (for example) licenced psychologists working with nature-based dream imagery, or transactional therapists enabling imaginal encounters with environmental objects. Fisher, (writing as a contributor to Buzzell and Chalquist's book in his chapter 'Ecopsychology as Radical Praxis') argues that "distinguishing ecopsychology from its application as ecotherapy is to "overly separate our theory and practice" (2009, p. 61), looking instead for an integration that recognises the idea of 'applying' a practice as an illusory assumption that we can "know the world independent of our involvement in it" (ibid.).

Chalquist's 2009 journal article gives a wide overview of research that can be seen as relevant to ecotherapy (and, correspondingly, to ecopsychology), showing several themes that apply across the various diverse fields and approaches that are mentioned (2009a). The research bibliography for Chalquist's chapter 'Ecotherapy Research and a Psychology of Homecoming' (in Buzzell & Chalquist, 'Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind', 2009b) is similarly varied – disciplines that feed into the research described in both these overviews include Clinical Psychology, Medicine, Anthropology, Philosophy, Geography, Environmental Psychology, Public Health, Biology, Therapeutic Horticulture, and more. It is noticeable that Psychoanalysts and Psychotherapists are in the minority among the cited works for both publications. A similar pattern can be seen in Jordan and Hinds' 2016 'Ecotherapy, Theory, Research and Practice', which draws on both research studies and practitioner perspectives from backgrounds as diverse as Buddhist philosophy, humanistic, and existential psychotherapy, art therapy, equine therapy and therapeutic horticulture. Where the authors in this work present their ideas on the theoretical position and epistemologies of ecopsychology/ecotherapy these, again, reflect the variety of approaches that can be taken.

There does seem to be a shared sense that this variety is not necessarily a negative thing, but part of the process of a field still defining itself. Rust in 'Daring to Dream? The Grounding of Ecopsychology in Public Debate, Global Alliance, Language, and Practice" (2014) refers to the "ever-expanding field of study" as one needing to be to be "experienced, dialogued and

articulated" with the unpacking, challenging and debating of terms as a way to further refine and ultimately understand the field. Totton suggests that people drawn to the field are relatively comfortable with complexities and might keep the "lines of communication open in the hope that a new synthesis will emerge" (Totton, www.confer.uk.com).

What is noticeable in the observations and reports of those working in these diverse fields is that, in some cases, despite projects not having any deliberate *psychodynamic* orientation anecdotal evidence often demonstrates the ways in which the natural environment can become an interactive metaphorical canvas for therapeutically significant experience. Deborah Kelly's investigation of nature-based approaches to palliative care (as described in Jordan and Hinds' book) demonstrated how natural settings not only act as containers for supportive work with clients, but could also provide a meaningful space in which nature represented aspects of life, death and illness (Kelly, 2016). In 2011 Kelly undertook a heuristic pilot study aimed at understanding how nature, metaphor and imagination might be used in palliative care provision and to study how practitioners experienced this type of work. Her research study provided facilitated groups in local woodland for people living with life-threatening illness, where participants were given the opportunity to engage with nature through meditation, ritual, creative exploration and seasonal storytelling. The results were reported to be *psychologically* transformative, despite the intervention being aimed at support and reflection rather than as psychotherapeutic provision (ibid., p. 86).

Comparable findings of therapeutic insights being prompted by seeing the self, or human processes, reflected by the natural world are recounted by the environmental psychologist, Eve Sahlin in her study of nature-based rehabilitation. Sahlin researched the Swedish model of nature-based rehabilitation (NBR) in which a combination of activities and traditional medical rehabilitation methods are integrated into a nature/garden context. Her study focused on the 'Green Rehab' programme at the Gothenburg Botanical Garden, which provided activities such as guided relaxation, art therapy, nature walks, garden activity and nature handicraft, along with group and individual therapeutic conversation, for individuals suffering stress-related mental disorders. She

relates how the changes and polarities within nature can be seen to speak to cycles within an individual's life, as where a client describes, in interview, the following experience:

> "In November, I attended the first guided nature walk during my rehabilitation. The guide stopped at a spot in the forest and scratched away the brown autumn leaves which covered the ground and some closely knotted small sprouts that emerged just above the surface were revealed. These are, said my guide, wood anemones awaiting spring and their flowering. Now (in May) on my last nature walk before I left Green Rehab, we visited the same place again and now the wood anemones were in full bloom and when I saw them I realized that it was me – I was the wood anemones."
>
> (Sahlin, E., 2016, p. 98)

Another project – the Healing Forest Garden Nacadia, initiated by the Forest and Landscape (forestry) centre at the University of Copenhagen, drew on sensory experience, horticultural activities, mindfulness practice and the use of "nature-related stories and symbols" to prompt and integrate helpful insights from the natural world for those suffering stress-related problems. Dr Adrian Harris, recounting the project's work in his 'Mindfulness in Nature' conference presentation (Confer, 2016), noted that the cycle of the seasons could be seen to provide a powerful model for human life that could enable a reconciliation with the forces of change. He described how nature-inspired realisations, such as the simple practice "of caring for plants over a period of time and accepting that some of them will inevitably fail to thrive despite our best efforts", helped people to "get a real sense of acceptance and build that acceptance into their lives." (ibid.)

A recent study published in the 'Journal of Experiential Education' investigated, from a practitioner perspective, how individuals might "perceive, experience and actively work with nature to serve therapeutic goals" (Mayseless & Naor, 2020, p. 197). The study was conducted with 26 nature-based practitioners from different countries and professional backgrounds, and used grounded theory to analyse a series of semi-structured interviews. One of the researchers' aims was to

expand on the existing body of knowledge demonstrating the *general* efficacy of being and working in nature, and to produce findings that included practitioners' understanding of how the natural environment gave significance and meaning to a client's experience and how the natural world itself played a role as "co-therapist" or "teacher" (ibid., pp. 186 & 185). They found that for 15 of the 26 study participants nature's influence was described as "involving a process by which personal/internal aspects of self are mirrored through external elements and landscapes in nature" (ibid., pp. 190-191). Mayseless and Naor analysed the practitioners' approaches along a spectrum of engagement: At one end, in which the natural world became an active participant, nature was perceived as a living entity able to directly communicate with the client through what the practitioners defined as "dialogue". At the other end nature was perceived by practitioners as providing a potential source of metaphor that could be intentionally drawn into the therapeutic dynamic. (ibid., pp. 191-192)

As can be seen, research examining the therapeutic possibilities of natural environments demonstrates that there can be a significant representative role for other-than-human phenomena. Interactions with the other-than-human world that generate meaningful and personally therapeutic awareness for participants is often described as a use of 'metaphor' or 'symbol', or as a 'mirroring' of individual concerns. As will be discussed further, in place the terms 'metaphor' and 'symbol' seem to used interchangeably without any further clarification of their use, and in a way that suggests a dynamic exchange of some sort with the natural world.

Emplaced psyche and the 'Ecological Self'

Arne Naess is credited with formulating the idea of the 'Ecological Self', which he describes as an awareness of one's 'ecological identity' and as a capacity for identifying with the ecosystem (Seed et al, 1988, p. 20). According to Kerr and Key "the ecological Self model suggests that we are deeply woven into a complex web of physical and metaphysical relationships" (2012, p. 64). Naess has called this web a "gestalt ontology", a place where experience is no longer "atomistic" and goes beyond our perception of self as other, or separate, from the surrounding environment (1989, pp. 134-136).

In his argument for Ecopsychology as Radical Praxis Andy Fisher observes that "both ecopsychology and critical psychology tell us that the purely interior, personal self is a bad fiction, that psyche dwells in something much larger" (2009, p. 67). John Seed in his 1994 Ecopsychology Symposium paper argues that the reason "psychology is sterile and therapy doesn't work" is that the 'self' that psychology describes and "purports to heal" doesn't exist: "It is a social fiction. In reality the human personality exists at the intersection of the ancient cycles of air and water and soil. Without these there IS no self and any attempt to heal the personality that doesn't acknowledge this fundamental fact is doomed to failure" (http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/seed.htm). Wilderness guide Robert Greenway suggests that, although Roszak proposes a need to find an 'ecological unconscious' "if the unconscious at the depth of our species' memories of living the in the wilderness truly connects with natural processes, then the ecological unconscious is as "ecological" as it is "psychological" – it connects to our surroundings, to the balances, cycles, patterns, and relationships that are described by ecology" (Greenway, 2009, p. 137).

Author Martin Jordan explains Roszak's (1992) explanation of an 'ecological unconscious' as a "place where our inherent reciprocity and connection to the natural world exists as the centre of our being" (Jordan, 2012, p. 134) and proposes that: "the human and the natural need to be re-imagined in order to understand and develop ecological subjectivities suited to merging and emerging

postnatural contexts" (ibid., p. 133). For Jordan the 'ecological self' is "a fundamentally decentred space, located in a matrix of relationships" where nature and subject form a "complex assemblage" (ibid., p. 144). There is, he says, a need to "re-imagine the ecological subject" as we move further into an age (a 'complex present') where we cannot continue to position the subject in relation to nature in a simplistic way, and where the environment "can no longer be positioned as a passive backdrop" to our existence (ibid., pp. 133 & 135).

Rust talks of an 'eco-psyche-system' and our more widely encompassing 'vast selves' in which we know ourselves as part of a "whole earth-body" (2004a, pp. 52 & 55). She relates the experience of a rock-climber who has a transformative sensation of feeling himself to be one with the rock he is climbing to a passage in Jung's in Memories, Dreams and Reflections in which he describes feeling himself to be a part of the surrounding landscape. Here, Jung says:

> "At times it feels as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and in the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons."
>
> (Jung, 1967, as cited in Rust, 2004a, p. 59)

The rock climber describes his own experience in the following words:

> "I felt this incredible wave of warmth, like diving into a tropical sea. … followed by a feeling of intense calm … I felt myself fall … alarmingly backwards into the rock, merging with the rock face behind me. I melted into it, and I was suddenly aware that I was no longer a separate human form perched high on a granite wall – I was the granite wall. I could not feel myself as separate."
>
> (Key, 2003, as cited in Rust, 2004a, p. 59)

Rust believes that Jung intended his concept of the Self to be understood as part of a wider system – an energetic matrix containing both matter and spirit – possessing its own intelligence, something akin to the Chinese concept of the Tao (2004a, p. 53). Jung, she says, is "one of several psychotherapists who names the larger 'being' that we inhabit" and who sees our connection with it as essential to healthy development and healing (ibid.). In describing how Jung called this larger being 'the Self' with a capital 'S' in contrast to the self with a small 's' in which the greater Self was reflected, she wonders if part of the problem we have in understanding Jung's formulation is his connection of the greater Self to 'God'. This, she says "is confusing in a culture where God is seen as separate from physical matter, or when spirit is primary and matter arises out of it." As a result, "it has become rather mystical, divorced from physical manifestations" (ibid.).

Western culture, in its earlier philosophies, had touched on more integrated, interdependent ways of seeing the world. Rust references Roszak's understanding of Plato's *Anima Mundi* as "the whole of the cosmos as a single great organism", one which possesses "feeling, intelligence and soul" (ibid.). But, she says: "we have no frame for understanding and valuing such experiences within our culture, other than madness." The climber who is quoted above was, she tells us, unable to talk about his experience for two years, from his fear of being misunderstood (ibid., p. 59).

Dave Key, the climber in question, when he eventually shared his experience with other climbers, was "surprised to find that they *all* understood" – all had experienced similar moments of oneness and elation, all had experienced similar states to the one that for Key "had no place in my own world, it fitted no structure, could take no form - it made no sense" (Key, 2003, p. 11). These "deeply healing" encounters, Rust tells us, "often go entirely unacknowledged in the process of psychotherapy". Some psychotherapists, she suggests, might frame the climber's experience of oneness with the rock as "a regressive yearning for a mother-baby merger experience, the rock simply being a mother object, not a being in its own right" (2004a, p. 59). Rust believes there is a need to acknowledge such experiences within the psychotherapeutic process and for them be recognised as part of adult maturity, rather than exclusively regressive. (ibid.).

Key went on to work with Mary-Jayne Rust and later with integrative psychotherapist Margaret Kerr. Through their work as facilitators of wilderness expeditions they found that leading people into 'wild territory' on an 'outer' journey could, at the same time, initiate an 'inner' journey into both the personal and collective unconscious, with these terms being used in a way that appear directly influenced by Jung's formulation of the psyche (Kerr & Key, 2012, pp. 65-66). In such a process of discovering an altered sense of self the physical and the metaphysical can, in their experience, "become inseparable" (ibid., p. 66). They observe that "being part of that wild pattern changes our sense of self. "I" as a "part" becomes different because of the whole" (ibid., p. 65)

Describing themselves as aligned with 'Transpersonal' theory, Kerr & Key (ibid., p. 63) note that "much of Transpersonal Psychology has been centred on the human realm" giving rise to a need for a "wider theoretical frame" (ibid., p. 64). From the disciplines of Transpersonal Ecology and Ecopsychology as well as the Deep Ecology movement they see a model of a transpersonal Self[4] being presented that is "part of the entire body of the Earth, both physically and metaphysically": an "ecological Self" that "aligns our psychological sense of *who* we are with the biological reality of *what* we are" (ibid.). This 'Self', which they use in capitalized form to contrast it from the self, or being, centred on the personal ego, is conceived of as a "wide, interconnected, open transpersonal" sense of being (ibid.) that has possible connections with Jung's idea of the collective unconscious (ibid., p. 74). In Jordan's opinion, thinking of "the earth as having a psyche and everything 'more-than-human', such as plant, animal and mineral life, having a soul" is strongly linked to Jungian thought and "ideas that Jung espoused in his therapeutic work". (2014, p. 367).

Robert Greenway also writes about the sense of the mind 'opening' in wild settings, once one's basic needs have been met. He believes that "if the wilderness journey is well structured, there might be space for rediscoveries of human-nature relationships arising from the unconscious"

[4] Whilst this transpersonal 'Self' is one embedded in a greater whole, it is not precisely equivalent to Jung's idea of the Self, although as noted by Jordan, similarities do exist.

(2009, p. 138). Transpersonal theorist John Davis notes that empirical studies on wilderness and adventure excursions (e.g., Stringer & McAvoy, 1992 and Beck, 1988) show the reporting of transpersonal and ecstatic states featuring a 'sense of oneness' to be a common feature (1998, pp. 71-72). This was found to be the case even when trips were taken without any explicit psychological orientation with participants reporting "feelings of awe and wonder" and "thoughts about spiritual meanings and eternal processes" (Kaplan and Talbot, 1983, as cited in Davis, 1998, p. 72). Davis sees a need to study these "transpersonal characteristics and consequences of nature experiences" with further empirical research in order to create a bridge between "ecologically-oriented" psychologies. He suggests that such research will, as well as considering aspects of transpersonal psychology, "require the integration of research methods drawn from across the behavioural and human sciences" and might enable the grounding of subjects expressed in common speech as, for instance, 'sacred places' or 'spiritual connection with the earth' in academically appropriate ways. (ibid., p. 73)

Enabling the theoretical articulation of these wider experiences of the 'Self' is also something that interests Mary-Jayne Rust, particularly within therapeutic dialogue. She says: "I have been suggesting ways in which we can extend this reconnection to the earth, by being more receptive to an ongoing relationship to place, to other-than-human beings, and to various other aspects of our relationship with nature, both developmentally and in the present" (Rust, 2004a, p. 60). Although these relationships and experiences can be shown to exist, she says, they are neither articulated or "recognised as an important part of shaping the psyche, nor of the healing process" (ibid.).

At least one contribution to understanding the role of the natural environment from the perspective of developmental research and theory has been made by Psychoanalyst Marianne Spitzform in her paper 'The Ecological Self: Metaphor and Developmental Experience?'. Starting from the premise that psychoanalytic clinical work is marked by the absence of a framework for the role of the natural world, Spitzform suggests that whilst "the complexity of the ecological self makes a strict definition elusive" we all possess an intuitive sense of what the term might mean (2000, p. 267).

She notes that while we might (as expressed in common parlance) **"**go to mountains, or water, or open space "to find ourselves' again""; to relax, or find solace; the fact that "there has been little research or theory devoted to such propositions" leaves us "forced to speculate on the ways in which findings on *human* relatedness and attachment might apply to engagement between humans and the more-than-human world" (ibid., p. 268).

Spitzform proposes that a developmental framework might usefully be employed in considering what is meant by the term 'ecological self'. She discusses how the I-Self experience is "rooted in the body" which "in turn learns of the world through senses and interactions, and makes meaning as it moves about, both geographically and temporally" (ibid., p. 274) with adaption and skill development relying on an exploration of human and non-human world (ibid., p. 267). For Spitzform an "I-self experience with a diverse array of more-than-human others involves the child in a process of differentiation and integration through exploration of sameness and difference with other living creatures as well as inanimate objects" (ibid., p. 283). This relatedness to the natural environment is, she thinks, "so fundamental" that "for many individuals it recedes to the background of unfolding experience" (ibid.).

Despite finding developmental models to be useful places to locate the idea of an ecological self, Spitzform finds that because object relations theory has "focused upon human-human representations," it has overlooked "self experience that emerges out of dynamic engagement with the 'more-than-human' world" (ibid., p. 273). She considers it "unfortunate" that "the term ecological self is 'static'", as this implies an end point in the development of the individual (ibid., p.274). Spitzform suggests that the term 'selving' as proposed by Irene Fast (in her 1998 book of the same name) might be more consistent with "newer dynamic models of consciousness", such as those put forward by Gerald Edelman, by providing the view of self as an "unfolding interactional process" (Fast, 1998, Edelman, 1989, & Edelman, 1992, as cited in Spitzform, 2000, p. 278).

A dynamic model of the psyche as a key element of the ecological self is perhaps implied in the reference to self's containment within natural cycles, as made by Seed and Greenway (as noted above, p. 35). Seed, in his 1994 presentation seems to refer to the dynamic nature of the relationship when he says: "only actual beings, natural beings, can be healed by life flowing through them, social fictions can't". Others, (such as John Davis, 1998) also emphasise the importance of recognising the psyche's dynamic interaction with the forces of the natural world. Davis describes the nature of existence as its "dynamic flowing dimension" (1998, p. 85) and notes how, in experiences of nonduality, the world may be felt "as a flowing, dynamic unfoldment" (ibid., p. 84). Doherty, in 'Theoretical and Empirical Foundations for Ecotherapy', introduces the theoretical stance of ecotherapy as one focussed on "systems, wholes and interdependence", with an 'ecocentric' attitude that contrasts with the "more normative and unacknowledged anthropocentric-biased nature of psychotherapy and counselling" (2014, p. 14).

Although a systems perspective might be thought of as an eminently suitable context for the psychology of an ecologically embedded self, David Orr (In his foreword to Buzzell & Chalquist's 2009 work) notes that this way of thinking is only "gradually being accepted" by mainstream thought, with its preference for focusing on "discrete parts" and there being "a considerable leap from understanding systems in the biophysical world to regarding ourselves as a part of that world, grounded in our evolutionary past and rooted in nature" (2009, p. 14). Doherty believes that in recognising of the interplay of both natural and human systems we are looking for "a holistic and fundamental experience of identity, mental health and wellbeing". (2016, p. 14) Holism is a key element, according to the Salem Press Encyclopaedia of Health in differentiating the new "radical ontological enquiry" of Ecopsychology from what has gone before. In their definition a holistic approach proposes "the interconnectedness of all aspects of the world within a reciprocal and synergistic whole", with a therapeutic value to overcoming the dualistic perspective that alienates individuals from nature. They note that, as a radical approach, this holistic focus is the least established within traditional psychology (2019).

In their study investigating 'environmental identity' Hinds & Sparks report that, as well as promoting environmental behaviours and increasing participants' sense of wellbeing, immersive encounters with nature demonstrate perspectives that "emphasise the inclusion of nature within people's cognitive representations of the self" and appear to be "strongly related to affective connection to the natural environment" (2009, p. 182). Hinds and Sparks relate their findings to Edward Wilson's *Biophilia* hypothesis which explains our "innate need to affiliate with nature" as the result of our "long evolutionary development within it" (ibid., p. 181), with this long co-evolution also being the reason that we so often feel soothed and restored by natural settings. Wilson, in his explanation of the theory, proposes that "the biophilia hypothesis goes on to hold that multiple strands of emotional response are woven in symbols composing a large part of our culture" (1993, p. 31), suggesting that these find expression in the "dreams and stories of evolving cultures (ibid., p. 34) and persist as unconscious influences on our behaviour (ibid., p. 32).

Other writers see an ecological significance to our development as a species: Greenway suggests that we possess a "mostly repressed ecological unconscious" – the legacy of "an eons-long evolutionary path that contrasts sharply with our acculturated view that we can indeed separate from nature" (2009, p. 135). He believes we have a "lost capacity to feel for the natural world" and in addition to carrying childhood memories of nature we "carry memories of the oceanic – the experience of being in the womb – in our psychic depths" (ibid.) For Prentice a key part of recognising ourselves in "the web of life from which we emerge" is to be aware that we are formed out of the stuff of the earth and therefore share its "extraordinary creation story" and its "heritage" (2003, p. 33). For her the paradoxical "pseudo 'disconnection'" we feel between ourselves and the natural world is the result of our "consensual, institutionalized and lived, reality" (ibid., pp. 41 & 42). Noticing how we inevitably reproduce this in ourselves is, she says, "highly informative" (ibid., p. 42)..

Language, indigeneity and the meaningful landscape

This way of experiencing the world as an *ecological self* has parallels: Aboriginal peoples, according to Craig Chalquist, have always sensed something similar, hence the "frequent mentions of sacred sites and nature spirits in the ancient myths", reflecting "deep, symbolically rich, and highly resonant connections" in the natural environment. (Chalquist, 2009b, p. 80) Roszak also looked back to a worldview that predated what he calls the "western, biomedical model," in which the idea of a continuity between psyche and land was accepted in the same way that there could be said to be a continuity between a 'submerged' portion of the mind and the physical body (Roszak, 2001a, p. 78). He describes the existence of a 'sacramental realm' of folklore and myth, where "in local lore, a river, a mountain, a grove may take on the personality of a tribal elder, a presence named and know over the generations". (ibid,, pp. 76-77) Other writers, some of whom have shared ancestry with first peoples, have explored the links between Indigenous language and their 'symbolic' and 'resonant' connections with the lands in which they live, and it is on their work that this section will focus, with the aim of further understanding how an Indigenous worldview (or 'science') might interpret meaningful interaction with the natural world.

In the literature of Ecopsychology there are a number of references to how the individual might benefit from a more 'Indigenous' style of relationship with the land. Rust, in her paper Creating Psychotherapy for a Sustainable Future asks why we "disidentify" from the larger "eco-psyche-system" and from a description of self that "weaves self, culture and nature together into a seamless whole" such as might be found in Indigenous tradition (Rust, 2004, p. 52). Prentice suggests that ideas of psyche and earth might be seen as "appropriately interwoven" in Indigenous society (Prentice, 2012, p. 188) where "beliefs, practices and cosmology are all rich in the understanding that we are in no way separate from the earth from which we spring" (ibid., p. 176). Roszak suggests that "if our relations with nature are as deeply failed as the environmental crisis suggests, we may have to look for help wherever we can find it, including insights long absent from our own society" (2001a, p. 75). "Insights from 'primary peoples" include, according to

Roszak, the idea of 'sanity' being a state of balance between the human and non-human worlds and the existence of a "*transactional bond*" in which "body as well as mind participates in an animistic world view." (ibid., p. 79)

Although Roszak notes that (as anthropologists caution) care should be taken when inferring prehistoric tribal practice from what may be found today (Roszak, 2001a, p. 77) traditional curative practices can be viewed as embedded in "a place and a history, in the rhythms of climate, in the contours of a landscape where the birds and beasts have been close companions for centuries" (ibid., p. 76). Here, the natural world is populated by sentient beings: "the mountain speaks, the bear speaks, the river speaks, the rainbow signifies, the eclipse is a sign" (ibid., p. 82). "No Jungian archetype" – for all their sophistication – Roszak claims can "do justice to what the buffalo means to the Sioux or the seal to the Eskimo… If one is to honor the spirits of nature, one must hold discourse with them…. One must speak and hear their language." (ibid., p. 81) This is an animistic context in which the "ailing soul" that seeks guidance from a traditional healer can find their experiences "contained within an intricate symbol system" in which they can "feel securely at home" (ibid., p. 89).

Jeanette Armstrong, in her chapter 'Keepers of the Earth' in 'Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind', addresses the contribution made by language to creating such a 'symbol system' and a sense of integration with place. As an Indigenous Okanagan speaker, she describes how the Okanagan language is thought of as "the language of the land", with the Okanagan words for "our place on the land" and "our language" being one and the same (1995, p. 323). Okanagan people, she says, recognise they are one part of earth, and without this recognition there is no joy – "we need place in this sense to nurture and protect our family/community/self" (ibid., p. 324). "The way we survived is to speak the language that the land offered us as its teachings", Armstrong explains, "to know all the plants, animals, seasons, and geography is to construct language for them" (ibid., para. 323). The Okanagan language, in her words "creates links by connecting active pieces of reality rather than isolating them"; components of speech describe "pieces of ongoing

reality that stretch away from the speaker" like a "sphere sliced into many circles" (ibid., pp. 318-319).

The idea of language and land being unified is a theme that is repeated in other studies of Indigenous culture. Lewis Williams, describing the relationship of the Māori with their native environment in 'Reshaping Colonial Subjectivities Through the Language of the Land' notes that the most distinguishing feature of Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) is that "Māori regard the act of speaking their mother tongue as a 'worlded' gathering of entities intimately related to place, space and time" (Mika, 2016 and Mika & Stewart, 2017, as cited in Williams, 2019, p. 174). This, she says, is probably the primary defining attribute that sets it apart from "languages like modern English, which are grounded in Cartesian or separatist views of reality" (2019, p. 174). Language, for the Māori, "is not in the Western sense representative of an inert world but rather calls into presence a deeply animate world." (ibid., p.180)

Also significantly different to 'western' or 'Cartesian' forms of expression, is the way the semantics of such languages are formed. For Armstrong it makes more sense to think of the Okanagan language as a system of "sounds that revive components of reality" so that language "remakes little parts of a larger on-going activity" – the "vast thing that is continuing, in which we are immersed". (1995, p. 319) In this way the language might be seen as "a system in which syllables are animated describers of pieces of activity and can be combined to develop meanings that then give a more complete picture" (1995, p319). For example, she describes how the Okanagan word for 'family' as well as suggesting immediate kin, also contains the meaning of past generations and of place, and contains the sense of "land/us/survival". (Armstrong, 1995, p. 319)

Williams describes how the Māori language similarly embeds deeper meanings and "critical intergenerational information about all aspects of life, including traditional knowledge, tribal memory, historic events, behaviour and personal achievement" (Whaanga & Wehi, 2016, as cited in Williams, 2019, p. 174). Individual words may contain within them a range of implicit

associations – for example the Māori word for waterfall "wairere" also contains meanings that refer to a range of movements: fly, flow, leap, rush, descend, etc, with the word 'rere' "[bringing] water to life as an animate being which has a range of movements" (ibid., p. 178). These related meanings reflect that in Te Ao Māori universe and life are seen as interconnected by a "unitive fabric of energy" *including* the spoken word (ibid.). Williams quotes a Ngāi Te Rangi leader who in describing using the Māori language as speaking "more metaphorically", says: "I think looking at the sea and land, it's much deeper than what the eye sees … it definitely impacts the way I think about things … I am often referring to something in the way the sea moves … I often talk about the waves, because our people are such sea people" (Williams, 2012, as cited in Williams, 2019, p. 176).

David Lawlor, writing in the European Journal of Ecopsychology on the beliefs of the Huichol people of north-central Mexico and their ritually significant trinity of 'deer', 'maize' and 'peyote' describes how anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff refers to this as a constellation of symbols, in which:

> "The understanding of this unity, the identification of the referents of the symbols and relationship between them, the function of the identification of the symbols with each other so that they form a single complex … constitute the most difficult and the inescapable challenge in the study of Huichol ideology."
>
> (Myerhoff, 1974, as cited in Lawlor, 2013, p. 21)

Lawlor comments that "it is this symbol complex of unity that informs the Huichol of who they are as a people and how they relate to the location where they reside and journey to. This circle of life and the tasks and ceremonies it initiates connect the Huichol to the landscape and allow them to formulate a sense of place based on meaningful, significant interchange with their environment of which they are a part" (2013, p. 29). For the Huichol the "very landscape is sanctified" with its features such as caves, springs, mountains, rivers and cactus groves "elevated to cosmic

significance" and any distinctions between elements of the natural world being "illusory" (Myerhoff, 1974, as cited in Lawlor, 2013, p. 26). In this worldview plants and animals "become only labels, conventions, mere human categories of thought" because here it is recognised that "Man *is* nature, he is an extension of it" (ibid.).

A deer-corn-peyote symbiotic trinity is described by Lawlor as governing the Huichol relationship with the land, and informing their sense of place. This sense of place, according to Lawlor, is "not limited to the common meaning of the phrase understood in Western academia", but is a sense of place that "speaks to the immediate relationship with the land and a sense of place and relationship in regard to the overall universe, world and cosmos" (2013, p. 21) and which affords the community "resiliency, rootedness and meaning" (ibid., p. 19). Lawlor quotes the definition given by Eisenhauer, Krannich & Blahna of 'sense of place' meaning "the connections people have with the land, their perceptions of the relationships between themselves and a place" and as being a concept that "encompasses both its "symbolic and emotional aspects" (Eisenhauer, Krannich & Blahna, 2000, as cited in Lawlor, 2013, p. 21). Thus, there is a sense of being embedded in place because there are meaning and feeling values associated with a given location. Rather than it being a 'cultural construction', or superficial contrivance, Lawlor argues, "it is essential to note that sense of place can also be viewed in a manner such that one's sense of place is subconsciously created and solidified by the elements of the natural environment that have thus informed culture, which has, in the end as in the beginning of the cycle, informed one's sense of place" (2013, p. 22).

Language in the Māori worldview is also closely linked to the 'whakapapa' – the "genealogy" or "kinship with other beings", which for Williams places it in contrast with what she calls the "colonizing worldviews" that "position language as the representation of discrete objects or entities" (2019, p. 176). Māori philosophy "views language as bringing the world "into presence"", by gathering meaning rather than being "an instrument for singling out any one thing" (Mika, 2016, as cited in Williams, 2019, p. 176). Within Te Rao Māori the "interconnected totality" of things can be experienced as culminating in a single utterance. (ibid.).

Armstrong also refers to the possible range of embedded meanings relating to a single expression. She relates the following: As a child she overheard a conversation between her father and grandmother about the new townsfolk in the valley. Her father said of the newcomers that they were “wild” and would “scatter anywhere”. She knew, as a native Okanagan speaker, that an interpretation of this comment which contained the full range of its meaning, would give the resulting interpretation that “their actions have a source, they have displacement panic, they have been pulled apart from themselves as family (generational sense) and place (as land/us/survival)” (Armstrong, 1995, pp. 317 & 319). Also contained within this constellation of meanings of ‘wildness’ and ‘displacement’ would be the implicit understanding that, for an Okanagan, their worst fear is “to be removed from the land that is their life and their spirit” (ibid., p. 324).

Williams suggests that Indigenous language can demonstrate a way to rediscover this way of being – to a “reindigenization” of the psyche. She believes that ecopsychology, with its interest in the interrelationship of culture, wellbeing and environment, has a role to play in elucidating how “Indigenous languages might enliven, shape, and consolidate human subjectivities and agency for sustainable futures” (2019, p174). By showing how “Indigenous languages can harness the embodied, interconnected (but often less conscious) nature of human experience through place-oriented worldviews of language which shape human subjectivity”, it may be possible, she says, to “ facilitate deep relational changes in human thinking and behaviour” (ibid., p. 179).

This “collective work” of reindigenization involves the “reshaping” of “colonial subjectivities” (hence the title of this work) as the “worldviews underpinning” Indigenous languages are “at odds with the modernist views of reality that underscore many culturally dominant languages such as English” (ibid., p. 175). Indigenous language can, Lewis proposes, provide a “key means of addressing the dissonance between ontology … and epistemology” by acting as “a medium for mediating and connecting the reciprocal and reflexive relationship between our embodied experiences of place and the ways in which we construct and articulate our relationship to place.” (ibid.)

Williams makes a useful distinction between the 'recollectivist' dimension of ecopsychology, i.e., a "remapping" of an "embodied sense of human psyche through ceremony, stories, arts-based approaches" and "simply being one with country" and the 'critical' dimension that provides a "remapping of sociohistorical narratives" by "the disruption of dominant settler narratives of the ecology of culture and place" through "repositioning Indigenous narratives of country, culture, and kin" (Williams et al., 2017, as cited in Williams, 2019, p. 177). She proposes that the use of Indigenous language needs to be attuned to the way in which it arises "from specific places and… convey[s] unique sets of human-ecological understandings and relationships" (2019, p. 175). The recollective dimension of ecopsychology have, for Williams, "much in common with Indigenous onto-epistemologies", particularly where its theoretical approaches are "aligned with relational psychology and participatory worldviews" (ibid., p. 177). What Lewis terms our 'Life-World' is, she says, "inherently an alchemical one" as "energy (including consciousness) and matter are mutually transformative" (ibid.). We can access this awareness, she suggests, from 'holistic' or 'expansive' understanding of the natural environment as well as through the "metaphysical world of visions and dreams" (ibid.).

Craig Chalquist has written extensively on how the modern/westernised individual might attempt to reconstruct (or 'recollect' to acknowledge Williams' terminology) this embodied sense of connection and meaning within the natural landscape. Regarding his approach of 'terrapsychology', he explains that "emplaced stories not only have the capacity to hold scientific and experiential knowledge together, but also form the weave that binds up the reality of *our* place *here*" (Chalquist, 2009b, p. 81). He recalls that when he began to study places imaginal personifications would often enter his dream life with greetings, warnings or information (2009b, p. 79). Such 'terrapsychological' fieldwork and research "calls for the deep study of the presence or soul of place, including the things and creatures within its ambit" and a recognition of its influence on the formation of our identity. (Chalquist, 2009a, p. 70). According to Chalquist we get to know a place by learning its history, prehistory, geology, climate, recurring motifs in artwork and infrastructure as well as by tracking "our dreams and moods while there", and in this way themes

begin to appear and “long-standing patterns” emerge (2009b, p. 80). Chalquist suggests that, given our accustomed reliance on “relatively simple and literal causal relations” we still know little about how “environmental resonances or parallels” are “carried on bridges of symbol and metaphor” (ibid., p. 81).

“As embodied humans deeply situated,” he says, “we are because we are *somewhere*, a somewhere not dead or inert but addressing and informing us continually” (Chalquist, 2009b, p. 8). However, unlike Indigenous peoples who, in the words of Lawlor, “through the development of a sense of place, constructed both culturally and organically, … have managed to bring meaning to their lives; to bring meaning to places they inhabit and visit; and to construct a worldview that is symbiotic and ecologically conscious” (Lawlor, p. 24) we are disadvantaged in that “we lack not only the thousands of years of stories and land-based experiments that link Indigenous people to their lands”, but in addition “any real understanding of the loss this entails for us as well as for them.” (Chalquist, 2009b, p. 81).

Alistair McIntosh is one of the relatively limited number of people who have explored the implications of this loss in the recent history of the ‘developed’ world. In his work in the Scottish Islands he uses an approach that he calls “re-membering, re-visioning and re-claiming” as a way of “reclaiming the collective psyche” and, like Williams, proposes that there is a need to understand the effects of the colonization of land as something that goes hand in hand with “colonization of the mind” (1997, p. 30). McIntosh quotes the Assynt crofter’s leader Alan MacRae in saying: “For any Indigenous people their nature is all wrapped up in the land”, with the land being “nothing other than the natural nature in which the human nature comes to know itself” (ibid.). McIntosh theorises that the Gaelic language and its bardic tradition was once “central to maintaining the mythopoetic reality of the peoples” and that it provided, through nature poetry and language structure (each letter of the alphabet representing a tree), a codified system of sustainable ecological relationship. The bards, he suggests, were “in touch with the equivalent of our songlines and dreamtime” (ibid., pp. 28-29).

It can be seen that there is significant use of the term ‘symbol’ in various descriptions of Indigenous languages and their integrated relationship with the land – from the containing “symbol system” described by Roszak, to the “symbol complex” of Lawlor and Myerhoff. Here, the suggestion seems to be that a more ‘symbolic’ way of encoding the natural world is representative of a more integrated sense of being, the ‘symbol’ being a focus for multifaceted, interwoven, layers of meaning containing intrinsic reference to the psychocultural terrain. A single term may contain repositories of information that are culturally, ecologically, mythologically and metaphysically understood by the speaker and do not need explicit additional reference; the semantic merges into the eco-systemic, merges in to the relational and into the spiritual and these facets cannot be easily separated out. As Chalquist observes, it may be that a new, evolving, vocabulary can allow us to “express these deep, symbolically rich, and highly resonant connections psychologically” (2009b, p. 80). Further research in addition to anecdotal narrative, he intimates, could help us understand how “places reach into the human psyche far more deeply than our cultural filters”, currently, “allow us to recognize” (ibid., p. 79).

‘Symbolic’ encounters with the other-than-human

As I have illustrated, therapy practitioners and wilderness guides who work with the natural world report that the environment can constitute a rich resource of material that bears meaningful significance to an individual. Describing this dynamic, Prentice and Rust observe: “The world around us seems uncannily to mirror what may be going on for us in our inner worlds and, furthermore, often seems to have something rather useful to say to us about it” (2006, p. 45). Although the representational dynamic in which this occurs has been variously described as ‘mirroring’, or a ‘metaphorical’ or ‘symbolic’ depiction, it seems to establish the natural environment as in some way able to provide meaningful ‘external’ manifestations of ‘inner’ psychological dynamics. The word ‘symbol’ is widely used in this context, although (despite the inevitable variety of frameworks and interpretations that follow from different theoretical approaches within ecopsychological practice, as previously noted), there is limited definition of how the term itself is being understood. In the following overview I will consider how usage of the concept of the ‘symbol’ has been employed to describe the experience of finding a metaphorical ‘mirroring’ in other-than-human phenomena to firstly, gain clarification into how the idea of the symbol might be treated within the context of nature-based work and, secondly, to locate where enquiries into further understanding of such phenomena might be usefully take place.

Hayley Marshall writes of how some clients “explore aspects of the landscape that match and illuminate their internal experience” with the result that “structures of landscape” can become “enduring reference points”, functioning as ‘gathering places’ for parts of the psyche that need integrating and, ultimately, providing an “internal holding environment” (2016, Conference Presentation). In her chapter in Jordan & Hinds 2016 work she suggests that “the qualities and processes contained withing the external spaces of natural environments” can “help promote an expansion of an *internal space*” in which “more conscious and new symbolic processing” might be achieved. (Marshall, 2016, p. 158). Chalquist references Kellert and Wilson’s observation that we have a “need to affiliate with the rest of creation through metaphor”, but that there is a deeper sense

in which signifying, for example through animals, arises from “the same type of psychic experience as myth, poetry, and religion whose language is also symbols” (Kellert &Wilson, 1993, as cited by Chalquist, 2009a, p. 67).

Wilderness guide Dave Key and psychotherapist Margaret Kerr describe a “layered and interconnected nature of unconscious contents in the psyche and in the land” from which meaningful resonance can spontaneously emerge for participants (2012, p. 71). They report how participants in wilderness journeys “discover symbolic forms in the landscape, mirroring their individual and collective situations” and reflecting stages in “both the psychological and the physical journey” (ibid.) In their report for the 2008-2009 Natural Change Project (developed with WWF Scotland) Kerr & Key note that although a “starting point for members of the group in their relationship with nature was the desire to get to the top of mountains, or across rivers to other places” these “technical, consumer and combative approaches to nature” could be seen to gradually give way to a “more reflective and symbolic understanding” (2009, p. 17). This deepening relationship would often be expressed as participants later reflected on their experience. They relate how one participant experienced a deep symbolic connection with a tree that he imagined was around his own age and whose life experiences might resonate, or be compared, with his own.

A similar experience is described by ecopsychologist John Scull, who had encouraged a client to take solo nature walks in between their individual therapy sessions, paying attention to anything that held her interest. He writes how on one occasion she encountered “a very old and damaged tree” in a grove of younger healthy ones and realised she was “looking at a family” where seedlings from the old tree had grown up around it. She realised that “at first the old tree had provided shade and protection to the seedlings. Then its shading had motivated them to grow tall, seeking light. Now that they were strong and healthy, the older tree could peacefully decay”. As she was contemplating this insight a woodpecker came to the old tree and prompted a further realisation that the old tree still continued to support life (2009, p. 145). She also described coming to see that older trees could be viewed as beautiful, interesting, and complex and that sometimes it

was the young trees that were viewed as disposable, and that people too might gain value with age. As a cancer sufferer who was experiencing intractable depression over her poor prognosis she also described realising, as she paid attention to waves, rotting leaves and fallen logs, that death and transformation were part healthy, natural cycles of life (ibid., pp. 144-145).

The idea of finding resolution to problematic issues by seeing one's own life processes reflected in natural phenomena has been frequently noted by other practitioners. Jones, Thompson & Watson describe how in their nature-based work in acute mental health care they find that "natural environments are rich in visual imagery, metaphors and symbols to support healing and transformation" (2016, p. 168). In her discussion of the resources available for one-to-one therapy in outdoor settings Patricia Hasbach emphasises the relevance of 'nature language' (2016, p. 142) and the role of imagery and metaphor in the therapeutic process. (ibid., 139-140). Deborah Kelly observes how the "multiplicity of metaphors and analogies" provided by nature in not only the physical turning of seasons, but also in its "associated folklore and myth" could assist facilitators in containing their clients' (and their own) understanding of life and death. (2016, p. 95)

Kelly, employing the 'mirror' analogy, explains the dynamic in the following way: "Nature… offers us a mirror, reflecting beauty and ugliness, health and disease… the ecological damage outside can mirror the physiological damage inside. Wild winds can match our rage; cold mists, our despair" (2016, p. 87). She draws on the thinking of depth psychology to describe a moving from "surface" or "ego" experience "where language is literal and the mode of knowledge is scientific and rational" to a deeper awareness where "the mode of knowing is intuitive and the language that of symbol and metaphor." (ibid., p. 85). Researchers in her palliative care project found nature to be significant in both "symbolic and literal form", she says, with the journey through natural spaces reflecting participants' movement through life and through the therapeutic process (ibid., p. 95). She reports how: "a sense of temenos, of sacred space, was facilitated by the woods, and by the journey to the woods, and by the journey towards death" with each threshold taking the researchers and group participants "into more 'sacred ground'" (ibid.).

Sahlin, in her study of nature-based rehabilitation, also found that working with nature could generate symbols and metaphors for people's 'inner' states (p. 105) Participants, she explains, "saw themselves mirrored in nature's processes and found models, symbols and metaphors relating to their own life world" (ibid.). One client gave the following description of an awareness reached by noticing natural phenomena: "The one minute nature is sparkling with beautiful colours and the next it is rotten and dead. This makes me reflect a lot about that it may be okay to have a period in your life when you are in dissonance with yourself and not feeling so good… because nature is formed that way" (ibid.). Another activity at Sahlin's project involved the replanting of small seedlings. She describes how this procedure "could be interpreted as a symbol of self and the participants' vulnerable state in the rehabilitation process" (ibid.). One participant, who had recently started back at work after an extended sick leave, pointed out that "you must be careful of the little plant that is to be replanted so that it has the strength to keep on growing" (ibid.). Sahlin interpreted her expression of care for the plant as a "conscious or unconscious wish to be met with the same care as she herself had given the seedlings" and to be "nourished by understanding from her environment" when she herself was 'replanted' back into her everyday life. (ibid.)

Writing on how nature-based rehabilitation revealed existential dimensions for participants by providing models and metaphors for their own lives Sahlin says: "Nature opened up, enabling existential reflections to emerge which affected the participants' self-image and also how they looked upon their life and their situation" (ibid.). Experiences during the guided nature walks, she says, "opened the participants' eyes and mind to beauty of nature and to nature's faceted and ingenious interplay", giving them "comfort and hopes for the future" and helping them "to see their situation in new and constructive ways" (ibid.). In my own experience of working in community ecotherapy at the Essex 'Dig It' project, I witnessed a similar process, where a participant gained new acceptance of the loss of his child by miscarriage through his involvement with the planting of seed trays. His moment of recognition of the parallels between human embryos and seedlings,

where not all seeds planted might survive to become fully grown plants, gave him a metaphor through which he was able to contain his experience fully for the first time.

As shown above in the description of the anemones (p. 33) and in the case of Omar Hajo mentioned in the Introduction (above, p. 9) a participant in a nature-based programme might spontaneously discover the representative relevance of an element of nature for themselves. At other times the significance of an environmental representation might be recognised by a facilitator observing participant behaviour and introduced into the discourse as appropriate. This is a distinction that outdoor practitioners and researchers have commented on, with Kerr and Key, for example, stating that it is possible for "the resonance of unconscious and ecological elements" to "arise spontaneously" through image and symbol, as well as, on occasion, to be "more deliberately sought". (2012, p. 71). In my own experience, having witnessed both these dynamics, I have found that the relevance of an environmental container of meaning may sometimes also emerge through a process of shared curiosity, exploration and dialogue.

Mayseless & Naor, whose research study with practitioners was discussed above (pp. 33-34), also draw a distinction between the spontaneous emergence of symbolic material and instances where the practitioner is more proactive in suggesting meaningful correspondences to the client. In the latter, the term 'symbol' is still employed, with the practitioner being described as "mediating the symbolic input so the individual gains personal insight." (2020, p. 192) As an example of this type of 'symbolic interaction' they include the following account from a nature-based coach who took part in their study:

> "I invited [the client] to make a fire, they made a pile of wet leaves and kept trying to light it and I said, this won't burn because the leaves are wet, and asked why did you get wet leaves?, they said it was the closest thing around, so I asked how is that like your life? well I just do whatever's close rather than going to look for the good material, that's how my

> relationships are, that's how my business is … so here we have the opportunity to re-pattern that right now and try something different, what would you do different?"
>
> (ibid., p. 191)

The experience of the client then going to collect the dry leaves and lighting the fire was reported to initiate a discussion of how the same tendency applied to the client's life, using the metaphor and "the patterning of seeing how nature works" to make, as Mayseless & Naor describe it, a "symbolic connection in physical form" (ibid.).

Mayseless & Naor used the category of 'symbolic interaction' in their study as one of the key criteria for ways in which aspects of the natural environment may influence the therapeutic process. They found that for 15 of the 26 study participants elements of the natural environment were described as "mirroring" personal or internal aspects of the self (ibid., pp. 190-191), and for 13 of their participants the influence of nature was visible through a "process of symbolic interaction" (ibid., p. 191). As one participant told them:

> "The main thing about nature therapy is that nature is a mirror – for our inner psyche, physical nature, psychological nature, spiritual nature and mental nature … so what's really neat about getting people into nature is when they can start to see how nature reflects themselves … there's a whole story there, a whole interaction between us and nature that comes out."
>
> (ibid.)

At the end of the spectrum where 'symbolic' material was seen to emerge spontaneously participants sometimes reported a view of nature in which it became a living, active, agent in the therapeutic process with "a personal dialogue occurring between humans and nature" (ibid., p. 190). Here there is a sense of relationship and opening up that might be said to correspond to the 'ecological self' of ecopsychological theory. Although Mayseless & Naor do not identify as

ecopsychologists or ecotherapists themselves their work is informed by theorists like Jordan, Totton and Hasbach and they refer to Jordan's definition of nature as a "*vital space* or a living third" (Jordan, 2014, as cited in Mayseless & Naor, 2020. P. 186), this being a container that can be seen to evoke "powerful conscious and unconscious metaphors through real-life encounters that confront the client with various issues in concrete and material form" (2020, p. 186).

Jordan proposes that the "inside always relates to outside, or vice versa" and asks – "how does the outside become the inside?" (2018, p. 139). "The starting point for understanding human-nature relations" he says "leaves us with problem of how subjective interiors and objective material exteriors come into some form of communication" (ibid.). Even the act of asking such a question may, in his opinion, reinforce the 'binary dualisms' that ecotherapeutic practice aims to move beyond, as "if we view the Cartesian self as an invention of the enlightenment, which drove modernism down the path of separating things out in order to get a better view of them, then it is quite a challenge to find spaces where we can view interiors and exteriors without setting up the same binary dualisms which positioned us in the first place" (ibid.). In accessing the therapeutic potential of the natural environment, we must, then, "fall back on interiors" such as: "How do I feel about this?", "What psychological and historical frames do I bring to this contact with nature?", "What symbols and metaphors resonate with my personal emotional narrative?". Alternatively, Jordan suggests, we might move outwards, engaging with the environment through our senses, for example: "How does my body feel in this process?", "What visual and sensory stimulus do I encounter?" (ibid.) Or, if we adjust our understanding to encompass a more dynamic view of nature, a "process of becoming, rather than the concrete end point positioned as material reality" we can then, according to Jordan, see "the self or subject" beginning to mirror nature as a "relational process, folding and unfolding in spatial temporal locations, which are both interior and exterior" (ibid., p. 142).

Kerr and Key suggest that it is through language that we may "try to abstract" experiences of being in a 'gestalt' reality "into dualistic forms" (2018, p. 65), although the "nondual nature" of such

experience “takes us beyond language – deep into the realm of Being” (ibid.). Working with an ‘invitation’ to participants to “step into the space where landscape and psyche meet in symbol and metaphor” they relate how in wilderness work the collective unconscious can be seen as reaching beyond shared human elements to a “primordial gestalt” where “the metaphysical and the physical may become inseparable” (ibid., p. 66). For wilderness therapy pioneer Greenway, it is possible to think of multiple modes of knowing, each useful for different stages of growth. He says: “When one is alert to the bridge between nature and culture within every word, metaphor, and symbol, language not only stores experience and becomes abstract but floats in the field between cognitive activity and the context through which one moves” (2009, p. 134).

One feature that does seem to accompany the nature-generated symbolic encounter is the sense of immersion in the surrounding environment – the experience of ‘oneness’ – and, on occasion, the sense of nature being somehow an active participant in the therapeutic dialogue. The symbol is not just ‘standing in’ for something that it shares characteristics with, as the metaphor might, but links the individual to a greater whole, to the ‘ecological self’ that does not experience itself as separate from the world around it. Whilst it might be assumed that the ‘directed’ form of interaction brings the experience closer to a ‘metaphorical’ perception and that the spontaneous emergence of material is, in contrast, ‘symbolic’, this seems to be too rigid a line to draw. In restricting the definition of the symbolic encounter to spontaneous experience (i.e., not therapist directed) a lack of significance may be given to the equally profound and immersive experiences of participants guided towards therapeutic insight. It is apparent that both experiences can take the therapeutic process deeper than that of the metaphor as simple ‘figure of speech’ or familiar cultural motif.

In these contexts, the ‘symbol’ seems to be revealed as more than a simple referent, somehow more embodied than the abstract signifier of a material object and possessing a ‘deeper’ sense of meaning or relevance to the preoccupations of the experiencing individual. The term ‘mirroring’ is, as seen, frequently used, but again this is not purely a representational encoding – it is a case of a mirroring with *personally meaningful significance*. In other words, the mirrored object or process

resonates with an inner reality in a way that prompts insight and realisation. There is something going on between the external world of nature and the inner dynamics of the individual psyche. That further investigation and clarification of these concepts is needed seems clearly indicated by the interchangeable use of the words ‘symbol’, ‘metaphor’ and ‘mirror’ in such contexts, as well as by the absence of any detailed analysis of how the terms themselves are being employed.

There is also, I suggest, the need for a theoretical framework in which these descriptors can be more fully defined, in which the dynamic role of the symbol in the psyche can be comprehended, and in which the psychological implications of the symbolic encounter can be coherently understood. Where these experiences contain the quality of the ecosystemic they also, I believe, echo Roszak’s desire for a retrieved *Anima Mundi* and present a need for a psychology that is comfortable containing the relational and the holistic, alongside the recognition of a dynamic unconscious, in its interpretation of the symbolic encounter. To date, however, nature-based encounters with ‘symbolic’ phenomena have not been conceptually investigated from the perspective of depth psychology, and it is to the potential of such an enquiry that I will now turn my focus.

Chapter 3: Methodology, Phenomenology and the environment

Introduction

Conceptual Considerations

As seen my review of ecopsychological (and associated) literature, there is a significant amount of interest in the way that nature can appear to reflect or meaningfully represent aspects of the 'inner' life of an individual. Quite often, as illustrated in the material, this intersubjective dynamic is described as 'symbolic', 'metaphorical' or as both simultaneously. However, despite widespread recourse to the term 'symbol' in descriptions of meaningful encounter with the other-than-human there has been, to date, little in the way of consideration of how the concept itself is being interpreted or employed. Specifically, there has been no in-depth *conceptual analysis* of the term symbol in conjunction with the works that utilize it in the context of nature-based practice.

It may be that the challenge of locating any one specific theoretical frame in which to define a concept with such wide usage has discouraged any such endeavour. But there is also, I suggest, the sense of an unspoken assumption that the meaning of the word 'symbol' is to be, somehow, implicitly understood. Do we even need to question its meaning further? Although the likelihood of a correlation between the idea of the symbol and the idea of the metaphor might be amply demonstrated by the interchangeable use of the words, any standard definition of the word 'metaphor' still does not make clear how the term adds to, subtracts from, or equates with, in the concept of the symbol. Given the "many threads" that "weave the ecopsychology tapestry" (ecopsychology.org.uk), and the many perspectives from which the concept of the symbol might consequently be understood, discussions of symbolic incidences and their dynamics would undoubtedly benefit from some prior attempt at a clarification of terms. As noted by Anna Ursula Dreher in her book 'Foundations for conceptual research in psychoanalysis', it is particularly important to gain a clear understanding of a concept when there is communication between disciplines, as fruitful exchanges are not possible "without such explicit or implicit rules of use" (Dreher, 2000, p161).

Given the significance accorded to Jung in the ecopsychological sphere, it is perhaps surprising that there has not so far been an examination of the psychodynamic or Jungian view of the symbol in an ecotherapeutic context. As shown in my review of the literature, in the opinion of Scull (2009), Rust (2004a), Chalquist (2015) and Jordan (2014), among others, Jung was credited as having some affinity with an ecological understanding of psyche, i.e., one in which it is seen as something part of a greater whole and meaningfully contained within this wider system of being. In addition, use of the term 'symbol' in the ecopsychological field often appears to suggest the presence of unconscious dynamics and cultural or collective meanings, such as would be expected in a Jungian approach. In locating a theoretical framework within which to analyse the concept of the symbol more closely I have, therefore, considered the findings of my literature review as well as taken into account Jung's position as a prolific and recognised writer on the subject of the symbol, acknowledging specifically his detailed discussions on how the symbol is to be distinguished from other psychic or linguistic products.

Empirical Considerations

Another recurrent theme in the ecopsychological literature was the significant role that ecopsychology (and its allied disciplines) could play in addressing a psychological re-envisioning of the relationship between the psyche and its containing environment. In highlighting the need for this type of reappraisal, a number of writers and theorists have proposed that this may be an appropriate time to develop methodological approaches, and construct studies, capable of contributing to these developing paradigms. Marianne Spitzform, in her work addressing developmental considerations in relation to the concept of the ecological self (Spitzform, 2000), suggests that clinically relevant methods of enquiry might contribute to further expansion and amendment of psychoanalytic theory. Although in Spitzform's work this means a revisioning of developmental theory in particular, her discussion also touches on ideas of how natural places become meaningful to us and how they relate to our representational worlds, suggesting that for these questions too, a clinical and/or empirical perspective might be sought.

John Davis, writing on the transpersonal dimensions of ecopsychology, argues that it is possible (and necessary) for these "characteristics and consequences of nature experience" to receive further "academically appropriate" study and for empirical research methods capable of integrating and bridging disciplinary positions to be developed (Davis, 1998, p. 73). Robert Greenway speculates that with "well-structured programmes" there "might be space for rediscoveries of human-nature relationships arising from the unconscious" (2009, p138) and Scull proposes that experiential, speculative and practical applications of ecopsychology that seek to "formulate a language and set of models of the human-nature relationship" have the "potential for breaking down barriers between many disparate approaches to the human-nature relationship" (2008, pp. 77-78). For Fernando Castrillón, it is in phenomenology that a theoretical method "most suitable … for speaking the human relation to nature", and most appealing to ecospychologists, can be found. This method, according to Castrillón in his Introduction to 'Ecopsychology, Phenomenology and the Environment', is capable of "elucidating, describing, and deepening" our relationship with nature and to 'unearth' the "often hidden elements of our encounters with the rest of nature" (Castrillón, 2014, p. 2)

In designing my empirical method, I will be taking the thinking of these authors into account, in particular considering how to "open up or reveal dimensions of our experience of nature", as Castrillon suggests, and allowing nature to speak, as he expresses it, "via a different and more genuine or authentic register." (ibid., p. 1)

Framing the concept of the symbol

As a result of considering the literature relating to ecopsychology and nature-based practice I have identified a need to investigate the concept of the symbol in a way that will clarify, and provide a valid frame of reference for, the terminology being used to describe a certain type of experience. Consequently, I am looking to depth psychology to provide an appropriate foundation from which to study the significance and dynamics of meaningful encounters with the other-than-human such as have been described as mirroring or symbolising aspects of psyche. In this way, I will be aiming to provide, via a Jungian theoretical framework, a more consistent understanding of the terminology in question and to generate a reliable set of criteria by which the characteristic features of a 'symbolic' event might be recognised. In addition, by following Jung's in-depth studies of the symbol and his treatment of symbolic products as key dynamic elements of the psyche, I will consider, as others have suggested, whether some congruence and common thematic ground may be found between a Jungian and an ecopsychological perspective.

In order to undertake this work, I will be carrying out a conceptual investigation of the symbol as it is found in Jung's writings, and attempting a systematic categorisation of its qualities for use in the design of an empirical study and the subsequent evaluation of study data. The aim of this research will be to reach (in Dreher's terms) an "optimal clarification" of the concept for use in empirical testing, with consideration of both its implicit and explicit use and its development over time (Dreher, 2000, pp. 16-18) Whilst some corpus-based conceptual analyses are designed to evaluate the similarity between two separate concepts within a body of work, this conceptual study will be seeking to identify the features and characteristics of the single concept of the symbol in order to reliably inform a second, empirical, stage of research. I will evaluate the defining criteria obtained through this conceptual study to determine which might be considered 'essential' in revealing the presence of 'symbolic' moments and which features might be more likely to enhance or supplement an identification, rather than determine it.

In order to establish clearly demarcated and workable parameters for this study I will be focusing on Jung's own work (as found in the Collected Works, vols 1-18 and 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections') and, predominantly, on Jung's own definitions of the symbol. In order to reach a clear, coherent and consistent understanding of the symbol in Jungian theory, my process will be to undertake a detailed review of the relevant literature and to identify the key attributes and characteristics of the symbol as described in Jung's writings. As well as paying attention to his own definitions and their possible antecedents, I will be investigating whether any inconsistency or confusion occurs in Jung's discussions of the symbol, and whether any related ideas or concepts may need accompanying clarification[5]. I will also highlight where there is any apparent absence or scarcity of knowledge in Jung's work, in particular, regarding how symbolic material should be understood when encountered in an 'external' natural environment. The supplementary thinking of other authors will be introduced at this stage only where referenced by Jung, with additional perspectives being reserved for a later discussion of findings.

I have taken into account in my study design Dreher's discussion of the use of conceptual research, and her proposal that the following aims, or tasks, are indicated:

1. To clarify ambiguous and still implicit meanings, in particular in relation to other concepts within a conceptual field
2. To preserve those aspects of a concept that have consensual and proven use in psychoanalytic practice
3. To examine the adequacy and meaningfulness of a concept for clinical practice and, if necessary, propose how this might be changed

(Dreher, 2000, pp. 164-5)

Dreher observes that the investigation of a concept may have a "problem solving" and possible "prescriptive" component (ibid., p. 161) and that "conceptual changes or the creation of new

[5] For example, the closely related concept of the archetype.

concepts can therefore be viewed as first attempts towards the solution of problems" (ibid.) with these changes generally being the reduction of ambiguity or improved integration of a concept rather than the emergence one that is completely new (ibid., pp. 169-170). I have also noted Dreher's thoughts on the increased difficulty of "rule guided" (i.e., regulated and clearly specified) concept use, as opposed to "regular use", and her appeal for "well-reasoned *proposals* for a sensible use of the concept, especially where concepts are being used ambiguously" (ibid., p. 162). As I will ultimately be considering whether the Jungian concept of the symbol can be applied to an area in which its existing use is ambiguous, and will be crossing disciplinary boundaries in this endeavour, I am paying particular attention to how to determine my criteria effectively within an existing psychoanalytic (i.e., Jungian) framework, as well as with sufficient clarity and consistency to bring these into the empirical stage of my research.

In working towards a clear understanding of Jung's thinking regarding the symbol I am endeavouring to gain a contextual as well as a conceptual view, where Dreher's observation that psychoanalytic concepts are not determined by rules of logic alone, but are "embedded in historically developed, socially shared language games" and partly depend on consensus use (ibid., p. 160) is taken into account. She notes that although the "entities referred to as concepts" may be subject to epistemological debate on their role and definition(s) it should be possible for the person who has understood a psychoanalytic concepts to be "in a position to subsume phenomena" under them "according to generally accepted rules" (ibid., pp. 157-158). For the "empirical researcher trying to measure psychoanalytic concepts", Dreher advises, they will need to be formulated "in such a way that they can be operationalized" for the purpose of developing "appropriate measuring procedures." (ibid., p. 79)

Hinshelwood & Walker (2019, p172) caution that in psychoanalysis a high degree of inference can be criticised and, similarly, Payne & Payne suggest challenges to the validity of research may often be "based on disputes over whether the indicators adequately characterise the core concept" (2004, pp. 117-118). For Payne & Payne this means that "the process of operationalisation is central to

research design" as we cannot tell whether something is "present or absent, how often it occurs, in what circumstances and what importance it has" without "intermediate constructions" (ibid., p. 117). For abstract concepts, this will mean finding a set of variables by which they can be measured or observed, with each part of a total concept needing to be combined with other indicators (or "operational definitions") in order for a full picture to be obtained (ibid.). Hinshelwood and Walker describe this process as providing "a set of characteristics appearing or occurring together" to "suggest a specific entity or family of entities" (2019, p.172). They describe the formal steps of an operationalisation of terms as:

1. Identifying the significant features of the conceptual entity that is the subject of research
2. Extracting from the existing literature the significant features that will be visible to observation
3. Selecting those features, or patterns of features, that appear to be most crucial to the mental entity
4. Gathering the relevant data that is both relevant for the research question, and will reveal the necessary features; most often being:
    i. Observational process notes
    ii. Recorded free association narrative interviews
5. Searching for moments that satisfy the conjunction of a minimum set of the selected significant features.

(ibid., p. 173)

In view of my purpose in undertaking this conceptual study being the generation of a set of characteristic features by which symbolic events might be recognised I will be seeking to operationalise the concept of the symbol in accordance with these recommendations. Payne & Payne suggest that exploratory studies are a good way of testing a concept and of "discovering and clarifying the components and variations" in its" empirical manifestations" (2004, p. 118). By properly delineating and representing the essential nature of the core concept, well-defined indicators should, they say, be able to contribute to a "plausible narrative of meanings and

interpretations" in qualitative data (ibid.). This process is undeniably more important when the concept being measured or sought is a phenomenon that is not directly measurable or when its existence can only be inferred by other phenomena (ibid., p. 117). I anticipate that, given the nature of the symbol in relation to unconscious (thus not directly observable) dynamics, the existence of a symbolic moment will need to be identified by typical characteristics or manifestations in order to be reliably interpreted. As a result, the refinement of definitional criteria in order to reliably indicate such an event is a requisite step in establishing the required objectivity, reliability and validity of my empirical study and the careful extracting of "significant features" or "patterns of features" (Hinshelwood and Walker 2019, p.173) will need to form the basis of any further investigation.

Advantages of a conceptual method

One advantage of using a conceptual analysis method to investigate a specifically Jungian approach to the symbol is the possibility of refining an understanding of this as an analytical concept within a "conceptual field" (Dreher, 2000, pp. 162 & 164). As noted above, it has been recommended by Dreher and others that it is particularly important to establish clear definitional criteria when applying the use of a concept as understood in one field to another area of operation, with this being relevant to my goal of refining an understanding of the 'symbol' as an analytical concept in order to more accurately informing its application in non-traditional (i.e., nature-based) settings. In Dreher's opinion, where there are issues in understanding concepts "concept-reflecting discourses and attempts at conceptual clarification" should be regarded as "at least as important as the collection and evaluation of empirical data." (ibid., p. 177) Target, in her review of Dreher, adds that "explicit 'operationalisation' of terms and procedures in research" as an attempt to "make sure people are studying the same thing" (Target, 2000, p. 713), is an essential consideration when an amount of 'elasticity' might be said to exist in a psychoanalytic concept (ibid.).

In terms of focusing on Jung's own work, this method provides an opportunity to gain insight into how Jung may have understood the origins, ambiguities and potential future development of the

symbol as a concept and to see where other aspects of his thinking might have informed these conceptualisations. A study of this type that leads into a coherent operationalisation of the concept in question thereby provides the possibility of developing transparent criteria to be used in the analysis of test data – in this instance that generated by a nature-based empirical study that seeks to observe the incidence of 'symbolic' material. This, in turn, can be used to further refine traditional understandings of the symbol and to provide new ideas and potential insights into the usage of the concept in ecotherapeutic practice.

Disadvantages of a conceptual method

Payne & Payne suggest that there is a "tendency for operational definitions to freeze concepts in a fixed way" and limit the "flexibility of response to field encounters" (2004, p. 119). They also note the risk in limiting conceptual characteristics to a set of variables of not covering the "full complexity" of a concept and the attendant danger of a researcher imposing their own understanding on its description (ibid.). Target also highlights the problem of only capturing a limited set of meanings for complex concepts when a conceptual study is not comprehensive, or rigorous, enough (2000, p. 714) and she suggests that a researcher might regard it is not possible to cover "*all* aspects" of a concept, but rather to be explicit enough (by a process of operationalisation) to measure it in a "reliable and meaningful way" (ibid.). Pamplona (2022) lists the inability of conceptual analysis to create new concepts, but only to validate existing ones, as one of the disadvantages of the method, thus limiting the researcher to investigating, rather than expanding, existing theory.

One potential disadvantage in restricting a conceptual study to Jung's writings alone is that newer, perhaps more relevant, developments in depth psychology may be overlooked. This concern will be addressed by keeping more recent thinking in mind in instances where it may illuminate particular aspects of Jung's theory, and by bringing relevant ideas into a later discussion of both conceptual and empirical findings. It also seems reasonable to suggest that the inclusion of thinking that has developed out of Jung's work, or that has evolved from Jungian theory, might also

be more rigorously appraised by starting from a detailed view of Jung's own approach, rather than by attempting to incorporate a variety of viewpoints into a preliminary investigation.

Another possible difficulty is in the very large quantity of material in the corpus that will need to be considered. To manage this large volume of textual data I will be tabulating the key material into preliminary groupings (for example *constellation of meaning*, *unconscious*/*emergent content*) and using these to consider where similarities, or differences, in description occur and to generate an overview of the most prevalent definitional criteria found in Jung's work. A further objective for this procedure is that it may help to counteract the effect of an additional methodological concern – that of there being an unavoidable amount of subjectivity in the selection and analysis of what constitutes relevant or key identifying criteria.

Does nature speak in symbols? Locating an epistemological basis for enquiry

From gaining a clearer understanding of how the concept of the symbol might be viewed and identified in one specific theoretical frame (i.e., Jung's thinking), I will be applying the findings of my conceptual research to an empirical enquiry that will study how encounters with natural phenomena might be interpreted as demonstrating symbolic properties. In particular I will be aiming to elicit, test and measure experience in a natural setting for the qualities that might be anticipated in a 'symbolic' event. A study of this nature will, I believe, need to look for a spontaneous emergence of symbolic material from an encounter with a natural object or setting, and additionally, in view of the theorised connection between a 'symbolic' style of perception and an appreciation of the eco-systemic nature of self, would need to pay attention to the experience of self that is engendered by reflective time in a natural environment. Where meaningful encounters with natural phenomena are reported, it will need to record aspects and qualities of these in a way appropriate to measuring their 'symbolic' equivalence and in a way that also allows nature to have an authentic voice.

One key aim of this empirical research will be to ask whether Jung's concept of the symbol can be usefully employed in understanding, and working with, symbolically-interpreted moments occurring in nature-based encounters. A secondary aim is to ascertain which parts of Jungian theory are less applicable to such experiences, and why this might be the case. As my research has also touched on the relevance of a Jungian view of psyche to the idea of the *ecological self* from ecopsychology, a research method in which 'holistic' or 'ecosystemic' epistemologies can be incorporated is felt to be particularly appropriate. As noted earlier (p. 12), Steven Aizenstat has called for new approaches to research methodology – particularly phenomenological ones – that "explore how the human being interacts with the "voices" of others who share the Earth" and which make possible investigating and listening "from an *eco*centric perspective", differentiating "without separating self from world" (Aizenstat, 1995, p. 99). Similarly, as noted above, John Davis proposes the need to study experiences of nature through an "integration of research methods drawn from across the behavioural and human sciences" that can allow the inclusion of

transpersonal experience (Davis, 1998, p. 4). Additionally, in my literature review I have considered Totton's advice against restricting ecopsychological research to overly scientific methodologies which do not allow for subjective experience – the mythology, literature, art, dreams and individual narratives that "poetic theories" might, in contrast, regard as equally valid (Totton, www.confer.uk.com) and noted Chalquist's caution against an "unchecked empiricism" in which an ideas of co-creation are not accepted into the empirical work (Chalquist, 2009a, p. 69). As noted above (on p. 28), Buzzell and Chalquist propose that the most useful perspective for pioneering work is that which can "balance empiricism and anecdote" (2015, p. 184).

In his paper in Vakoch and Castrillón's 'Ecopsychology, phenomenology, and the environment' Chalquist proposes that Jung's method of amplification has the "capacity for revealing the more-than-personal essence of aliveness of whatever symbol confronts the enquirer" (Chalquist, 2014, p. 255) and he suggests that if nature does indeed "speak" in symbolism – "the metaphoric language of dreams symptoms, and the deep unconscious" – then we might look to "an unhumanized phenomenology" for the "opportunity to reimagine ourselves belonging to a larger organic field of intelligence" (ibid., p. 258). Such an "unhumanized" phenomenology requires that natural objects should be "sought and investigated as they are" and "not to suit observers, but respectfully as if they were divine beings" (Matthaei quoting Goethe, as cited in Chalquist, 2014, p251). Chalquist describes how in the "holistic-descriptive method of research" devised by Goethe, a type of "concrete intuitive knowing" was utilized as a way to investigate the natural world (2014, p. 253).

This "exact sensorial imagination", as Goethe termed it, was a means of perception that could be seen to stand in direct contrast to investigation by way of objectification, manipulation, or the structural imposition of expectations. It was a "new research approach" where "thoughts, images, and speculations" could arise directly from participation with the observed phenomena, rather than the detached perspective of an "onlooker" (ibid). Chalquist explains the method being one in which, as Goethe "gave his full attention to a leaf", he "allowed his deepening attentiveness to it to awaken an inner organ of understanding: the imagination", and in this way, the leaf (and by

implication the method) “embodied a green flow of being whose description anticipated the careful procedures of later phenomenology”. (ibid.)

Goethe, as described here, seems to have anticipated a more ecologically inclusive and systemic way of comprehending our containing environment. His approach might be said to in some way prefigure the ecosystemic perspective of the *ecological self* where individual perspective recognises the place of the psyche within its containing ecosystem. As Chalquist explains, when Goethe achieved a sought after “quality of attentive intimacy” in observing a leaf, the object “…no longer seemed a collection of smaller parts locked together in a kind of counterfeit wholeness” but instead “revealed itself as a network of relationships that enlivened the leaf as a unified being”. To the mind’s “sensitized eye”, the leaf “underwent metamorphosis into a kind of living symbol for kindred plants everywhere” (Chalquist, 2014, p. 253). This idea of a representative and ‘living’ symbol recalls Jung’s description of the archetypal nature of symbols, and it is, Chalquist suggests, through a process of amplification that the “more-than-personal-essence or aliveness” of a symbol (ibid., p. 255) might be revealed.

Kaisa Puhakka in ‘Intimacy, Otherness, and Alienation: The Intertwining of Nature and Consciousness’ (also in Vakoch and Castrillón, 2014) refers to the methodology of William James in which “direct, introspective observation is primary and description is secondary” (Puhakka, 2014, p. 13). In encountering nature, according to Puhakka, we may need to overcome “the elaborations of the structures of consciousness that appear to be unique to our times”, in which a discontinuity between self and other is moulded by our assumption that reality is polarized by a separation between subject and object (ibid.). An introspective way of engaging with our environment, according to Puhakka, can place us in the flow of things, where one is aware on a “moment-by-moment basis” and where the “richness of [such a] flow” invariably “exceeds the vocabulary a language provides for its description” (ibid., p.13). In allowing for the need for the purely observational and experiential we “move into terrains uncharted by language”, a “nonlinguistic” space where the enquirer is asked to tolerate “vagueness and indeterminacy” in

place of “clear articulation and conceptual comprehension” (ibid.). Aizenstat proposes that “inner psychic processes” (which he lists as “dreams, visions, and affective states”) might be “investigated and listened to from an *eco*centric perspective” (as noted above, p. 71) and he suggests that such research might, consequently, explore the “receptive, nonverbal states” that can “foster the ability to hear the diversity of nonhuman phenomena” (1995, p. 99).

Roger Brooke, in ‘Pathways into the Jungian World: Phenomenology and Analytical Psychology’ asserts that Jung, “in line with the phenomenological tradition”, was concerned to address the phenomena of psychological life “in ways that did not violate the integrity of experience” (1999, p. 1). Although, as Brooke points out, Jung was critical of phenomenologists such as Heidegger (ibid., p. 2), his insistence that “the phenomena of experience” should be “accepted on their own terms” shows, for Brooke, a certain amount of affinity with a phenomenological attitude (ibid., p. 6). Jung is described by Brooke as seeing the meaning of phenomena, such as symbols in dreams, as “latencies *within* the manifest phenomena themselves” (ibid.) and as basing his claim of the “scientific status” of his ideas on “the legitimacy of meanings as the fundamental evidence of human experience” (ibid., p. 1). For Brooke, Jung does however, have a problematic idea of the relationship between the “knower” and the “known” and shows least compatibility with phenomenological thinking in his Cartesian separation of “psychological life from the world in which experience takes place” (ibid., p. 6).

Brooke gives the following breakdown of the features of modern phenomenological thinking:

- A commitment to the intuition of meaning as it is concretely given in experience
- A disciplined attempt to allow phenomena to show themselves without being obscured by unquestioned theoretical, cultural, and metaphysical assumptions
- An appreciation of the way in which consciousness and world are mutually implicated

(Brooke, 1999, p. 5)

In considering a methodological approach that will allow meaningful encounter with the natural environment to be studied in light of these observations, I have used both a Jungian idea of the symbolic attitude and the techniques outlined in phenomenological theory to inform the design of an experimental format in which participants can engage both imaginatively and associatively with the natural world.

In my literature review I identified two contrasting approaches to the generation of 'symbolically' meaningful responses by participants in nature-based or ecopsychological programmes. Kerr and Key (2012) refer, in the first case, to an opportunity for the spontaneous "resonance of unconscious and ecological elements" to arise, and in the second case to a meaningful significance being "more deliberately sought" (Kerr and Key, 2012). Naor & Mayseless describe a similar distinction, where in the first approach there is an understanding of nature operating in the manner of a "co-facilitator". This perspective means that the other-than-human is regarded as "a living entity actively intervening through what the practitioners defined as a dialogue" (2021, p. 192) – an explanation that I suggest corresponds with Chalquist's description of Goethe's method. In the second approach, as described by Naor & Mayseless there is an active mediation of the symbolic input, where the practitioner may seek to encourage personal insight by suggesting ways in which the engagement might take place (ibid.).

I find these distinctions to have interesting parallels with Woodward's description of the 'Object Interview' method of empirical inquiry, where the researcher aims for an "elicitation of response" rather than an "extraction of response" (2019). In this method participants are asked to enter a space of "encounter and connection" and to potentially think about things "outside the limitations of literal language" through the use of 'symbolism' or metaphor to "make connections, as we work from the known to the unknown" (Woodward, 2020, p. 40). This is a method of working with objects that is simultaneously personal (memories, associations, etc), reflective, and open to sensory input. Objects are regarded as not "passive" or "inert" (Woodward, 2019), but as provoking and bringing about effects in the people engaging with them. It is an approach,

according to Woodward, that allows one to “understand the multidimensionality of everyday worlds, entanglements of people and things” and the “multi-sensorality” of engaging with the world (ibid.).

This method of relating to an object by allowing responses such as thoughts, feelings, images, fantasies, stories or memories to emerge freely from an interaction with it seems close to both Jung’s use of associative thinking and Goethe’s ‘holistic-descriptive’ method and I believe presents a possible way of constructing research into meaningful encounters with natural phenomena. By adapting the Object Interview technique and deviating from in terms of firstly, basing the activity in a natural setting and, secondly, by allowing an unprompted selection of a focus ‘object’, participant responses can be elicited from direct interaction with the chosen object/phenomenon and a free association of responses can occur that allow for the encountered object to be an active participant in the process of engagement.

Susan Long, in her discussion of the socioanalytic interview, speaks of the interview as a “space of potentials” in which the respondent can “discover the shape and colours of the particular jigsaw piece” that contains their experience (Long, 2018, p. 46). Although in the case of Long’s method, it is social settings and organisations that are the subject of enquiry she expects that many of her points “will also be relevant to other types of interviews”. (ibid., p. 44) In this regard, her observations on the existence of an “unconscious matrix” that can be related to systems theory via a “dynamic field of human systems” (ibid., pp. 43 & 44) demonstrates an interesting parallel with the idea of a dynamic interrelationship between human and ecological dynamic systems. Long suggests that it is through associative method and free association that this network of the ‘unconscious matrix’ is accessed (ibid., p.50).

As I will be working with the assumption that in order to test the emergence of symbolic significances from the natural environment it will be necessary to observe spontaneous psychic effects rather than mediated ones, this method of free association that is object interview led will

feature a limited amount of participant guidance. In order to elicit uninfluenced responses to the natural environment and enable a free, imaginative exploration of the chosen object or phenomenon, participants will not be informed previously of any specific expected study outcomes. Instructions will primarily be general suggestions for nature immersion and selection of focus, leaving open the possibilities for interconnections and meanings to emerge spontaneously. In this way I will be looking for unelicited psychological responses and descriptions of meaningful content that might be evaluated for their 'symbolic' value. This material will be categorised according to a set of qualities informed, initially, by Jung's conception of the symbol. Analysis of the results will aim to ascertain which elements of Jungian theory are found most useful in explaining those experiences in natural settings that might be termed 'symbolic' or that show aspects of symbolic thinking. In the following section the design of my empirical study and the use of thematic analysis to interpret findings will be outlined.

Assessing the symbolic 'value' of the encountered object

In order to ascertain where correspondences might be said to exist between the Jungian idea of symbolic experience and the 'symbolically' meaningful moments which manifest in relation to the other-than-human, I am will be conducting an empirical study that can observe the effects for participants of engaging with the natural environment in a manner that allows them to freely explore their responses and reflections. One of the aims of this study will be to employ a methodology that can enhance open and spontaneous interaction between an individual and aspects (or objects) of their containing environment. It is hoped that study results can contribute to a refined understanding of meaningful nature-based encounter as well as test the applicability of a Jungian understanding of the symbol to the content of such experiences. The study will use characteristics of the Jungian symbol that are gleaned from a conceptual analysis of his work to generate a set of reliable, transparent indicators for use in the identification of symbolic material. These indicators will be applied by a method of thematic analysis to participant generated narrative, with transcripts being coded according to theme appearance.

I have chosen a thematic analysis method as my approach to data interpretation, in part due to its suitability for application across disciplinary and epistemological boundaries (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78) and partly due to its positioning as an approach suitable for "[use] in combination with psychoanalytic conceptualisations" (Hinshelwood & Stamenova, 2019, p.256). Additionally, this style of analysis has been described as able to "go beyond participant-expressed meanings, to the underlying patterns/stories" through incorporating both semantic (explicit) meanings and latent (implicit) meanings in the data and to be "particularly compatible" a phenomenological orientation (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017, pp. 18, 19 & 23). Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that Thematic Analysis provides a theoretical freedom" that makes it "a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). These qualities, in my opinion, position thematic analysis as well suited to the free-association character of the 'object interview' technique that I have adapted for data collection.

The design of the study was informed by the methodology outlined in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane's paper 'Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development' (2006) and as described by Swain in his SAGE publication 'A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research: Using a Practical Example' (2018). A hybrid analytical approach, using both theory and data-driven criteria, was chosen in order to allow "for themes to emerge direct from the data" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 83) and to ensure a degree of rigour in the analysis of transcript data by guarding against an overly subjective reading of findings, especially in relation to the conceptualisation and operational definition of the term 'symbol' in primary Jungian sources. Swain describes this approach to analysis as "ongoing, organic, and iterative", with a requirement for the researcher to be "reflective and reflexive" (Swain, 2018, p. 2). Although the primary goal of the empirical study was to observe whether incidences of 'symbolic' perception or interaction could be said to arise spontaneously in certain settings and/or conditions, it was felt that other thematic qualities should be monitored; in particular features of ecological or 'ecosystemic' awareness (the 'Ecological Self' of ecopsychological thinking) that might be anticipated to arise in meaningful encounters with the other-than-human. As a result, two groups of coding criteria will be employed, with a third group left open for the entry of emergent themes.

The study will list identifying themes in a code manual, in order to promote "coding reliability" and "quality" as suggested in 'The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology' (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 19). Coding will be supplemented with keyword suggestions gleaned from both prior research on pre-existing theory (i.e., Jung's definition of the symbol and ecopsychological observations, as detailed above) – and via categories (themes) that have been reached inductively, through analysis of the study data.

Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun suggest that a qualitative approach to coding and theme development is one where "the subjectivity of the researcher is seen as integral to the process of analysis" (2017, p. 20). In contrast to calls by some theorists for a second coder to code the data in

order to give a good level of coding agreement and reliability in scoring they argue that the presence of an agreement between coders may point more to the fact that they have been similarly trained to code the data than to indicate a higher level of accuracy in coding (ibid.). “Within a qualitative paradigm” they suggest “there is no one right way to analyse data, because there is no single truth” (ibid.). Coding and theme development are, according to Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun’s description, “assumed to be subjective and interpretative processes” (ibid.). Walker & Hinshelwood, whilst acknowledging that established schema may encourage evidence to be “distorted” to fit a pre-exiting frame note that “*unconscious* states of mind are not so easily accessed and not clearly identifiable by questionnaire data without a considerable degree of inference”, with inference itself being “not an invalid logic in psychology any more than it is in the natural sciences” (2019, p. 172).

Although it may appear reasonable to consider interpretative understanding to be, to some extent, unavoidably researcher-led, I will aim to have some means of checking for any interpretative bias or assumptions made during the coding process. The inclusion of keywords under each thematic category is intended to guard against a reading into the material of the characteristics I am expecting to find, and I intend to stay open to the possibility of an unanticipated term needing to be added to the pre-defined (theory-led) thematic categories within the code book as the research progresses. It is also intended that during the stages of theme development there will be a third stage (as in Braun & Clarke’s suggested 3 stages to the work) where “pattern forming and identification” may involve “combining, clustering or collapsing codes together into bigger or more meaningful patterns” (2017., p. 27). In the case of the two main categories of Jungian and ecopsychological coding it is intended that instances of correlation or crossover may indeed provide such opportunity.

Certain thematic criteria may be regarded as indicating the possible presence of symbolic material when occurring in isolation, whereas others may be expected to occur only in conjunction with criteria assigned as primary (or ‘key’) indicators. Hinshelwood & Walker, in putting forward their

steps for the operationalisation of terms (listed above), propose that seeking for conjunctions of significant features will "allow specific and key characteristics to be identified that will define a phenomenon, material or psychological" (2019, p. 173). It may be, they say that "a phenomenon must have all the characteristics …or just a specific proportion, or one or two obligatory criteria and a certain number of possible ones" (ibid.). This approach should result in a "schedule of criteria necessarily present" in order to identify the existence "a particular phenomenon", "process" or "state of mind (ibid.) Accordingly, in my analysis of study data I will be looking for specific conjunctions or occurrences of thematic indicators and in assessing what constitutes a symbolic event I will be following Walker & Hinshelwood's guidance on "searching for moments" that satisfy a "schedule of criteria necessarily present to specify a particular phenomenon…" (ibid.).

In order to test the reliability of those thematic indicators initially determined by conceptual analysis of the symbol, I will conduct a pilot study prior to the main study activity. The conducting of this study will not be intended to generate any data for analysing or gaining insight into the dynamics of the symbolic encounter, but to test the study configuration in an experimental setting and to see where or if any refinements are needed. The application of thematic coding to transcript data will be carefully reviewed, and feedback gained on participant experience, in particular regarding instructions for the period of solo immersive practice required. In this way the final code manual to be used in this study will be informed by both prior research into a conceptual framework and prior testing for its suitability.

Alternative methodologies considered

The most viable alternative method to my chosen methodological route would have been the use of grounded theory to investigate data generated by an empirical research study into participant experience in nature-based settings. This method was considered, but ultimately dismissed for two principal reasons: Firstly, that in order to carry out a research study that could properly be regarded as objective it would have been necessary to start without any preconceived notions, whereas my interest in this topic was already established and framed within existing psychoanalytic thinking

regarding the symbol. My initial research question was how to understand the concept of the symbol within a specific setting, based on existing terminology usage, and my hypothesis was that a Jungian definition and context may provide further insight into tangible individual experience. Consequently, I was beginning from the perspective of having a set notion of what I would be looking for and an existing knowledge that the concept was already being applied in certain fields of practice. As a result, rather than looking for emergent insights from a survey of data such as questionnaire responses or interview transcripts, I recognised that there was a need to interrogate experimentally generated data for incidences that demonstrated characteristic features of the concept in question.

Whilst acknowledging the possible limits of conceptual analysis in being restricted to investigations of existing theory rather than the discovery new concepts, (Pamplona, 2022) I was conscious of Dreher's belief (as mentioned above, pp. 64-65) that in examining established psychoanalytic conceptions the likelihood was that concepts would be clarified or further integrated, rather than newly discovered. Thus, secondly, to allow for the potential emergence of inductive, data-driven findings – as might be expected from a grounded theory method – my empirical study has been designed to incorporate the discovery of additional, unanticipated, variables. This combination of inductive and deductive data generation is thus intended to allow for the possibility of new or unanticipated findings to be addressed theoretically and to allow for the possibility of new insights to emerge from the data.

Two-stage, mixed method research

In her discussion of conceptual research Dreher states that many psychoanalysts considered "the most sensible method" of discovery to be "psychotherapy research that measured, quantified, tested hypotheses, *and* had recourse to experimental designs." (Dreher, p. 166-167, my italics). She points out that "conceptual reflections and the collection of empirical data are always interconnected and related to each other" (ibid., p. 166) and she notes that "reasonable conceptual research" must also "seek to integrate confirmed empirical findings" (ibid., p. 177). Any

"substantial psychoanalytic research", she concludes, "should always consider both *empirical and conceptual* elements." (ibid.) As Target points out in her review of Dreher's work on conceptual research, this type of analysis can help us understand a concept in a different way, but it "does not take away the observation that defining a variable or a technique for a quantitative study" can also "clarify the concept" and that using empirical measures (e.g., with recorded sessions) can add to knowledge in a different way from reading the literature" or from "discussing a concept from a theoretical perspective." (2000, p. 714). Although my intended empirical study is qualitative rather than quantitative in its method the suggested benefits of a combined approach to understanding a concept might be said to likewise "add to knowledge in a different way" and to provide an integrative, evidential, route to conceptual understanding.

Chapter 4: An investigation into Jung's concept of the symbol

Introduction

In reviewing the ways in which ecopsychological research and practice recognise the occurrence of 'symbolic' encounters in nature I have demonstrated that there is a compelling need to locate a conceptual framework in which findings of this type can be suitably positioned and usefully discussed. As previously noted, such a framework would need to be able to take into account the unconscious, transpersonal and holistic aspects of encountering the other-than-human in symbolic form, and to have a way to explain these within a dynamic model of the psyche. With these considerations in mind, and in view of Jung's extensive and recognised work on the symbol as well as my own background of knowledge, I have chosen to focus on a Jungian conceptual approach.

As I am interested in the potential application of Jung's formulation to those practices informed by ecopsychological principles, and as there does not appear to be a precise definition already available in these fields, in keeping with research best practice (Dreher, 2000, as discussed above pp. 61, 66 & 68) my enquiry will begin with a conceptual analysis and clarification of terms regarding Jung's own statements on the nature of the symbol. To this end I will be seeking an in-depth understanding of Jung's definitional criteria, his theoretical use of the concept, and any evolution of his approach over time, as well as attempting to determine how he dealt with the question of symbolic perceptions arising from other-than-human phenomena.

Noting that a dynamic model of the psyche has been considered particularly appropriate for understanding the ecological self (e.g., Scull, 2009, Spitzform, 2000, Davis 1998, as noted above pp. 40-41), I will begin by examining Jung's view of the symbol as a container and nexus of energy within the psyche, and his discussion of the dynamic or energetic aspects of the symbol within the context of 'primitive' perception. I will then investigate how Jung relates this symbolic 'potential' to the universal, mythological or religious manifestations of the collective unconscious that he has termed 'archetypal', in particular his treatment of such occurrences in the physical world of nature.

I will go on to consider Jung's observations regarding 'archaic' forms of language and their relationship to symbolic styles of perception and how these differ, in his view, from other types of signification. Following this, I will look at the correlation of Jung's 'symbolic attitude' with the type of thinking that he terms 'fantasy thinking', his definition of the 'true' symbol as containing an unknown element, and the question of whether the symbolic significance of objects beyond the internal psyche should be specifically understood as the result of projection. I will then ask which, if any, of these aspects of the Jungian concept of the symbol may prove particularly suited or unsuited to its application in the case of nature-based 'symbolic' encounter. Ultimately, I will be asking how the symbol can be detected and measured in real-world environmental settings and how the characteristics by which it is defined might be made explicit and operationalised for empirical investigation. My aim is to generate from this enquiry a set of key criteria to be employed in an analysis of data gathered in a nature-based experimental setting.

Psychic energy and the numinous symbol

Jung brings the idea of an energetic aspect to the symbol into some of his earliest discussions on symbol formation. In his 1912 'Symbols of Transformation' he describes how "symbols act as *transformers*, their function being to convert libido from a "lower" into a 'higher' form" (CW5, para.344) with libido being said to have "functionally the same significance as the concept of energy in physics" (CW5, para.189). Jung also describes the force of libido itself being a "*subjective intensity*", which in common with "anything potent, any content highly charged with energy" will present with "a wide range of symbolic meanings." (CW5, Para.238)

Here, Jung explains, he is using the term libido in a "general" rather than "one-sided" sense (CW5, para. 185) as he considers it to be "impossible to derive the whole mass of psychic phenomena from a single instinct" (i.e., the sexual, as propounded by Freudian theory). He proposes that although the use of the term 'libido' for the "energy concept used in analytical psychology" may "not be ideal in some respects" a continued use of the term is merited due to Freud being "the first to follow out these really *dynamic*, psychological relationships and to present them coherently." (CW8, para.54, my italics) These energetic aspects of instinct seem to be intrinsic to Jung's formative understanding of the symbol which, he says, "has no meaning whatever unless it strives against the resistance of instinct" and gives form to its "undisciplined" nature (CW5, Para.338). Understanding the originating source of symbolic representation is also dependent for Jung, at this stage of his thinking, on the dynamic nature of instinct. He states that: "it is not possible to discuss the problem of symbol-formation without reference to the instinctual processes, because it is from them that the symbol derives its motive power" (ibid.).

In his 1928 work on 'Psychic Energy' Jung proposes that the "energetic value" of the symbol has a "power of attraction" that "represents the equivalent quantum of libido" (CW8, para.46). Unconscious causes will stay as "immutable substances", he suggests, unless they become "symbolically interpreted" and the psyche cannot develop unless these 'causes' transform

themselves into “symbolical expressions for the way that lies ahead” (ibid.). This “symbolic interpretation of causes by means of the energetic standpoint” is necessary for the “differentiation of the psyche” in Jung’s view, due to the fact that “cause alone does not make development possible” (ibid.). Psychic development, he says, “cannot be accomplished by intention and will alone” – it requires the symbol to provide a “quantum” of “attraction” (ibid., para.47). Without this man would live “altogether instinctively and automatically” as demonstrated by the “psychic life of primitives” in which perception is “entirely concretistic and entirely symbolical at once” (ibid.).

By way of an example of the “transformation of instinctual energy” (or ‘libido’) into an “*analogue of the object of instinct*” by ritual activity, Jung describes the spring “earth impregnation ceremony” of the Australian Wachandi people in which “the earth acquires a special psychic value” (CW8, paras. 83-85). In this ceremony an oval hole is dug in the ground and surrounded with bushes. The Wachandi men “dance around this hole, holding their spears in front of them in imitation of an erect penis” and “as they dance round, they thrust their spears into the hole” with shouts that make it clear that “by means of the hole” the Wachandi have made an “analogue of the female genitals.” This ‘canalization’ of energy is, according to Jung, a “magical act for the purpose of transferring libido to the earth” with the “possibility … that man will give it his attention, which is the psychological prerequisite for cultivation”. (ibid.).

Jung proposes that, for ‘primitive man’, perception of the libido is so ‘concrete’ a thing that he even “feels fatigue from [agricultural] work as a state of being “sucked dry” by the daemon of the field.” (CW8, para. 86) A “newly invested” object of ritual, Jung says, “acquires a working potential in relation to the psyche” that “because of its value … has a determining and stimulating effect on the imagination, so that for a long time the mind is fascinated and possessed by it” (CW8, para. 89). He suggests that the only thing that “enables us to explain the remarkable fact of these primitive ideas” is the existence of some concept of energy, although he emphasises this does not mean that “the primitive has an abstract idea of energy” but that “his concept is the preliminary concretistic stage of the abstract idea.” (CW8, para.124).

Further on in his discussion of 'The Primitive Conception of Libido' Jung expands this idea, saying that "much that was taken by investigators animistically as spirit, demon, or numen really belongs to the primitive concept of energy" – that, in fact, there is a "pre-animalistic principle" that corresponds to a 'primitive' idea of energetics. (CW8, paras. 126-7) This "almost universal incidence of the primitive concept of energy" that Jung theorises is, he says, "a clear expression of the fact that even at early levels of human consciousness man felt the need to represent the sensed dynamism of psychic events in a concrete way." (CW8, para. 130). According to Jung it is possible to see "how intimately the beginnings of religious symbol-formation are bound up with a concept of energy" by observing "the most primitive ideas concerning a magical potency", with this being regarded both as "an objective force" and as "a subjective state of intensity" (CW8, para.114).

In his discussion of psychic energy Jung gives a number of examples of belief in a libidinal-type of energy from tribal peoples around the world. Citing McGee's 'Preliminary sketch' of the 'Siouan Indians' he mentions the Indigenous Dakotan conception of '*wakonda*' which, despite being possibly interpreted to signify "mystery", actually contains a far broader span of meaning encompassing – "power, holy, old, greatness, alive" and "immortal" (McGee, as cited in Jung, CW8, para. 115). "The sun", Jung explains, is "*wakond*a", but it is not "*the wakonda*" or "*a wakonda*" but simply "*wakonda*"; "the moon is *wakonda*, and so are thunder, lightning, stars, wind etc". People can be *wakonda* "especially the shaman" as well as "the demons of the elemental forces, fetishes, and other ritual objects" and "many animals and localities of an especially impressive character." (ibid.). The word '*wakonda*', according to Jung's citing of Lovejoy (1906, p. 365), is a term that represents a "diffused all-pervasive, invisible, manipulable and transferable life-energy and universal force." (ibid., para. 116).

Jung (with reference to Hetherwick, 1902) notes that the concept of *mulungu* from the Yaos of central Africa has a similarly broad semantic (and syntactic) range. It can be a cry of surprise when something "astonishing or incomprehensible" is seen, but can also mean "(1) the soul of a man …

after death; (2) the entire spirit world; (3) the magically effective property or power inherent in any kind of object…; (4) the active principle in everything magical, mysterious, inexplicable and unexpected"; and (5) "the great spiritual power that has created world and all life." (CW8, para. 115). The words *oki* used by the Iroquois and *manitu* used by the Algonquins are, according to Jung, other terms imbued with the "abstract meaning of power or productive energy" (ibid., para. 116) and similar views are found "in the *tondi* concept of the Bataks, in the *atua* of the Maoris, in the *ani* or *han* of Ponape" in addition to a number of other examples listed here by Jung (ibid., para.125). In the Mexican Huichol version of this idea Jung sees "a fundamental conception of a power that circulates through men, ritual animals and plants" (ibid., para.121) and in the case of the Australian aborigine term 'churinga' he describes how the term can refer to both a ritual object and the mystical property of an object, as well as, in some instances, to the life force of an ancestor (ibid., para.118). A further example given by Jung is that of the comparable term 'wong' – a force understood by the people of the Gold Coast, to potentially indicate "a river, a tree, an amulet, or a lake, a spring, an area of land, a termite hill, crocodiles, monkeys, snakes, [or] birds." (ibid., para.118).

Here, Jung states that he does not believe a term such as '*wong*' should be interpreted animistically (as spirit or soul) but rather, to show "the dynamic relation between man and objects" (ibid., para. 118). What to the scientific mindset might be a "psychological concept of energy" is for the 'primitive', according to Jung, a "psychic *phenomenon* that is perceived as something inseparable from the object." (ibid., para.127) By his use of the term 'libido analogue' for a symbol that converts energy Jung is intending to convey, he says, "an idea that can give equivalent expression to the libido and canalize it into a form different from the original one" (ibid., para. 92). Mythology, according to Jung, "offers numerous equivalents of this kind, ranging from sacred objects such as *churingas*, fetishes, etc., to the figures of gods" and the nature of these objects as "transformers of energy" is frequently revealed by the nature of the rites that surround them. (ibid., para.92)

Although, over time, Jung's use of the libido concept is less in evidence, an energetic standpoint regarding the symbol does appear to persist in his thinking. In 'Symbols of the Mother and Rebirth', where Jung defines the symbol as a 'transformer' of libido, he relates this mechanism to the underlying dynamics of an unconscious archetype (CW5, para.344). Describing archetypes in this passage as the "numinous structural elements of the psyche" that "possess a certain autonomy and specific energy which enables them to attract, out of the conscious mind, those contents which are best suited to themselves" Jung suggests that symbols created by the psyche "are always grounded in the unconscious archetype, but their manifest forms are moulded by the ideas acquired by the conscious mind". The symbol, he explains, "works by suggestion" and is able to carry "conviction" because of "the numen, the specific energy stored up in the archetype." (ibid., para.344) This idea of psychic energy being present in the archetype – in which it manifests as 'numinosity' – as well as being contained within the symbol, as shown above – is something that Jung refers to in later as well as early work. In 'On the Nature of the Psyche' he says that the archetype "as well as being an image in its own right" is also "a *dynamism* which makes itself felt in the numinosity and fascinating power of the archetypal image" (CW8, para. 414) and in 'Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams' describes how "one can perceive the specific energy of the archetypes when one experiences the peculiar feeling of numinosity that accompanies them – the fascination or spell that emanates from them" (CW18, para. 547).

Although Jung describes the numinous archetype as "living matter" and "a piece of life" (as when simply an image it is "like a corpuscle with no electric charge") (CW18, para. 589) he does not seem to equate this with any possibility of the numinous manifesting via other forms of existence. However, it is worth noting that Jung's use of the concept comes from Rudolf Otto, whose original descriptions were largely based in natural phenomena. Otto says:

> "… whatever among natural occurrences or events in the human, animal, or vegetable kingdoms has set him astare in wonder and astonishment such things have ever aroused in

> man, and become endued with, the daemonic dread and numinous feeling, so as to become portents, prodigies, and marvels."
>
> (Otto, 1936, p. 66)

For Jung the quality of numinosity attaches to the symbol more as a result of the symbol's relationship to the unconscious. In 'Aion' he writes: "…since the symbol derives as much from the conscious as from the unconscious, it is able to unite them both, reconciling their conceptual polarity though its form and their emotional polarity through its numinosity" (CW9ii, para. 280). In a footnote to 'Transformation Symbolism in the Mass' he states that: "The symbol always includes the unconscious, hence man too is contained in it. The *numinosity* of the symbol is an expression of this fact" (CW11, para. 337, n. 32). Processes in the unconscious, Jung suggests, due to their possession of a "numinous character", have "from time immemorial provided the strongest incentive for the formation of symbols" (CW12, para. 564). These "life-processes" are, however, "steeped in mystery" and, in Jung's opinion, the human mind will struggle to fully grasp them. Ultimately, he concludes, it is "doubtful whether human reason is a suitable instrument for this purpose" (ibid.).

This idea of a numinous or energy-imbued symbol that the ordinary rational mind is unable to comprehend appears to correlate, in Jung's thinking, with it being a 'living' embodiment of meaning that is reduced or stripped of dynamism if treated as a 'mere' word. In some way the 'charge' of the symbol in Jung's conception, relies on its semantic potential – it is impossible to create from "known associations" (CW6, para. 817) and alive only "so long as it is pregnant with meaning" (ibid., para. 816).

Animism and the daemon in nature

As shown above, Jung regards the perception of a "spirit, demon, or numen" in the natural environment to be an expression of a "primitive concept of energy" (CW8, para. 127) stemming from an early need "to represent the sensed dynamism of psychic events in a concrete way" (ibid., para. 130). This primordial understanding of energy was, according to Jung, a universal idea that lay dormant in the collective unconscious and provided the stimulus for a widely held early belief that all things revolve around a "magical power" (CW7, para. 108). It was this dormant image which was misunderstood, in Jung's opinion, as a belief in animism (ibid. and CW9ii, para. 394, n. 88). Instead, for Jung, the description of the early psyche given by Lévy-Bruhl termed '*participation mystique*' was one that in his opinion "aptly formulates the primordial relation of the primitive to the object" (CW6, para. 495). In Lévy-Bruhl's model, according to Jung, "objects have a dynamic animation", are "charged with soul-stuff and soul-force" and a "dynamic identification with the object" is produced (ibid.).

Jung does suggest, however, that "certain psychological phenomena observed among primitive peoples" have a "notable analogy with primitive animism" (CW13, para. 247). Trees may in some cases be inhabited by daemons, be "animated by souls", "have the character of personality" or "possess a voice that gives commands to human beings." (ibid.). In the twofold worldview of 'primitive' peoples, according to Jung, "the world of spirits has an equally real existence" to that of the manifest world (CW8, para. 572) and a there is a "universal belief in the existence of phantoms or ethereal beings who dwell in the neighbourhood of men and who exercise an invisible yet powerful influence upon them" (ibid., para. 570). Noting that in this belief system "physical reality is at the same time spiritual reality" (ibid., para. 572) and was understood to contain, in addition the spirits of the dead, "elemental demons who are supposed never to have been human souls or soul-parts" (ibid., para. 578) Jung concluded that this group of spirits must be seen as having "a different origin" (ibid.), i.e., the world of natural phenomena and the objects and places of material existence.

In ‘Two Kinds of Thinking’ Jung describes how the “naïve man of antiquity” experienced an environment in which everything was “conceived anthropomorphically or theriomorphically, in the likeness of man or beast.” This early individual saw “the sun as the great Father of heaven and earth, and the moon as the fruitful Mother” and lived in a world where “everything had its demon, was animated like a human being, or like his brothers the animals” (CW5, para.24). When comparing the ‘mana’ concept of the Melanesian people to psychoanalytic understandings of *libido*, Jung proposed that this was an idea to be found over a wider range of cultures as well as in the Latin concept of *numen* and to find its echo in the term *genius loci* (CW8, para. 441). However, this way of perceiving the physical world as dynamic and populated by spirit is, even in Jung’s later view, something that has been lost in the evolution of consciousness. For the ‘modern’ psyche, he says:

> “Thunder is no longer the voice of a god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree makes a man's life, no snake is the embodiment of wisdom, and no mountain still harbours a great demon. Neither do things speak to him nor can he speak to things, like stones, springs, plants and animals.”
>
> (CW18, para. 585)

As a result, our current consciousness is “no longer involved in nature” or aware of those natural events that “hitherto had a symbolic meaning” (ibid.). This, Jung tells us, is an “enormous loss”, compensated for by the symbols that arise in dream, which “express their contents in the language of nature” (ibid., para.586). Even our religions have become inadequate and are unable to guide us “because the helpful numina have fled from the woods, rivers, mountains, and animals” (ibid., para. 598), being only able to communicate with us through the products of the unconscious.

Jung observes that this ‘primitive’ worldview can show up in situations where, as a result of the “projection of a mythological content from the collective unconscious”, certain places and “moods of nature” come to possess a magical quality and the “whole atmosphere of [a] place seems

symbolic" (CW10, para. 43). 'Primitive man', according to Jung, lives in a natural environment that is simultaneously the "land of his unconscious"; a place in which "everywhere his unconscious jumps out at him, alive and real" (ibid., para. 44). Here:

> "In that stately tree dwells the thunder-god; this spring is haunted by the Old Woman; in that wood the legendary king is buried; near that rock no one may light a fire because it is the abode of a demon; in yonder pile of stones dwell the ancestral spirits…"
>
> (ibid.)

Although where external sites of mythic significance exist, "all kinds of objects and signs mark these places, and pious awe surrounds the marked spot" (ibid.) these external objects are not, in Jung's description, said to be symbols or archetypes in their own right. Throughout his work, when Jung refers to features in the landscape or natural objects that once possessed a symbolic significance for early inhabitants of an environment (as in the above quotes), rather than using the term 'symbol' or 'archetype' he interchangeably uses the words 'numen', 'numina',[6] 'daemon', 'demon' or 'spirit'. Nymphs and dryads are described as "nature- and tree-numina" in a mythological sense (CW14, para. 70), the spirit in the oak tree is a 'tree daemon' (CW13, para. 247 and CW14, para. 85) and the earth contains earth-spirits and daemons reviled by the church (CW14, para. 251).

In 'The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales', speaking about the archetype of the Wise Old Man appearing in various guises, Jung refers to the chthonic figure of the dwarf as a "vegetation-numen sprung from the underworld" and the figure of Russian fairytale 'Och, King of the Forest' as "a vegetation or tree numen who reigns in the woods" (CW9i, para. 406). In 'Transformation

[6] Jung does not clarify where he is using the term 'numen' to refer to "the specific energy stored up in the archetype" or where it is being used in the (classical) sense of a spirit or divine power presiding over a particular location.

Symbolism of the Mass' the terms can be seen being used fairly interchangeably, along with an acknowledgment of their symbolic capacity, with the "autonomous daemonic life principle of cultivated plants" being represented in the offering of bread that *symbolises* "the visible manifestation of the divine numen which dies and rises again" (CW11, para.387), and the perceived 'soul' of the grain and wine being, in the eyes of primitive man, a "vegetation numen" for which one of the *symbolic aspects* is as a manifestation of "mana or of the vegetation daemon" (ibid., para.385).

In discussing the manifestations of spirit in the personifications of the fairytale Jung describes the primitive mentality finding it "quite natural to personify the invisible presence as a ghost or demon" (CW9i, para. 388) and he suggests here that spirit was originally a "*daimonion* that came upon man from without" in human or animal form (ibid., para. 454). Jung is clearly relating these personifications to the physical world of nature when he describes how the "expansion of consciousness" that has now come to occupy the "originally unconscious" realm of the *daimonia* leads to the position where "man conquers not only nature, but spirit also, without realising what he is doing" (ibid.). Then, in a discussing the process of reducing the *daimonia* to "reasonable" proportions Jung refers to a "demonization" of the "superhuman spiritual agencies that were formerly tied up in nature." (ibid.).

The 'numen' in Jung's model, have "migrated in some mysterious way from the world of the spirit to the realm of matter" (CW16, para. 440). Perhaps "jinn and other devils are to be found in waterless deserts or in dangerous gorges; spirits of the dead haunt the eerie thickets of the bamboo forest; treacherous nixies and sea-serpents live in the depths of the ocean and its whirlpools" or dragons might "make their lairs by watercourses, preferably near a ford or some such dangerous crossing" (CW8, para. 335). Where such encounters happen, Jung suggests, there are "psychological conditions of the environment" that "naturally leave … mythical traces behind them". "Dangerous situations, be they dangers to the body or to the soul, arouse affect-laden fantasies", and "in so far as such situations typically repeat themselves," they "give rise to

archetypes" (CW8, para.334). King Och, as vegetation 'numen', is portrayed as residing in a "world under the earth" in which "everything is green" (CW9.i, para.406)[7] and the dwarf is likewise seen as a creature of the 'underworld' (ibid., para. 413). This "underworld" or "world under the earth" of the dwarf or forest king corresponds, for Jung, to the "partly chthonic" aspect of the archetype that "points downwards" and that exists alongside the "positive, favourable, bright side that points upwards" (CW9i, para. 413).

It seems that while the symbolic might here in some sense recapitulate the archetypal in its collective sense, for Jung it also draws our consciousness back to an earlier state of "archaic thought-forms" and "primitive instinct", where the symbols produced in dreams continually attempt "to bring back all the old primitive things from which the mind freed itself in the course of its evolution" (CW18, para.591) and back to the "archaic remnants" (a term Jung credits to Freud) or "primordial images" that Jung connects with unconscious archetypal content (CW18, paras. 521 & 523). According to Jung, these primordial images or remnants undergo changes over time, but retain a core of meaning that resonates to the present day and that is, in consequence, an essential element of their on-going significance.

In 'The Philosophical Tree' (CW13, para.350) Jung emphasises that the aspect of *meaning* is "essential to the phenomenology of the tree symbol" and he proposes that, like all archetypal symbols, "the tree has undergone a development of meaning in the course of the centuries" so that it is now "far removed from the original meaning of the shamanistic tree" – and thus presumably from its previous state a 'daemon', 'spirit' or 'numen'. Although its outward form may change being "empirically … capable of endless variations", certain basic features of the archetypal image "prove to be unalterable" and the variations serve only to increase the "richness and vitality" of the tree as symbol (ibid.). Although this version of the tree has become 'symbol' rather than 'daemon', the variety of meanings that grow out of, or constellate around, its central idea seem to connect it

[7] Green being the colour of the vegetation numen as stated by Jung in the Miss Miller fantasies (CW5, para. 665)

back to the perceptual style of *participation mystique.* As Jung has described, in this stage of consciousness 'primitive man' possesses no "abstract ideas", only "representations" based on "phenomenal" relationships (CW8, para. 127); things do not possess sharp boundaries, are "surrounded by a fringe of associations" and a "halo" of consciousness gives "a colourful and fantastic aspect to the primitive's world" (CW18, para. 465).

In 'Basic postulates of Analytical Psychology' Jung proposes that the reason "primitive man puts spirits and magical influences on the same plane as physical events" is that "he has not yet torn his original experience into antithetical parts" (CW8, para. 682). For him, "spirit and matter still interpenetrate each other" and gods "still wander through forest and field" and everything is experienced as an aspect of the psyche (ibid.). In Jung's opinion this archaic state is immature and undeveloped and he describes the 'primitive' like a child "still enclosed in his own psyche as in a dream", living in a world "not yet distorted by the difficulties of understanding that beset a dawning intelligence" (ibid.). He appears here to be equating the 'primitive' original experience of existence with both a dream state and an intersubjective style of perception that is different in some way from a modern "intelligence". This form of awareness also has some relationship to an imaginative-symbolic way of interpreting reality: In 'Definitions' Jung explains his use of the word 'archaism' to describe psychological traits and remnants that "exhibit the qualities of the primitive mentality"; it is clear, he says, that "archaism attaches primarily to the *fantasies* of the unconscious", the "associations-by-analogy of unconscious fantasy" and their symbolism (CW6, para. 684).

In later writings (for example CW11, para. 817, n. 25, CW14, para. 336, n. 662, CW18, para. 1297) Jung addresses the issue of Lévy-Bruhl's retraction of the concept of *participation mystique* as well as his use of the closely related idea of the '*état prélogique*' (or pre-logical state of consciousness). Acknowledging that the 'primitive' psyche is in fact able to differentiate between things and is able to process information "just as logically as we do" (CW14, para. 336, n. 662) Jung still feels there to be a distinction between 'primitive' and 'modern' thinking. He suggests that by his use of the

term *état prélogique* Lévy-Bruhl was, in fact, referring to "primitive presuppositions that contradict only our rationalistic logic" (ibid.). These presuppositions, in Jung's opinion, although perhaps not accurately described as pre-logical, might still be thought of as "irrational" (ibid.). In his Foreword to Aldrich's work on the primitive mind Jung reiterates his belief that the 'primitive' is "far from being illogical" as well as his being "just as far from being "animistic"" (CW18, para. 1297). Here he suggests that the fundamental difference is "not a difference in mental functioning, but rather in the premises upon which the functioning is based" (ibid.).

Fantasy thinking and the symbolic attitude

What happens, Jung asks, when we lose our former "antique" worldview and "see that there is no mercurial serpent in the caverns of the earth, that there are no dryads in the forest and no undines in the water"? (CW18, para. 1362). As discussed above, Jung believed that an archaic style of perception lived on in the unconscious and might emerge from an archetype or dream in the form of a symbol, but he also suggests that "anyone whose childhood was filled with fantasy can feel his way back to it to a certain extent" (ibid.). In his work 'Two Kinds of thinking' Jung similarly equates an archaic style of perception with a more imaginative and figurative way of interpreting the world and he proposes that "all through our lives we possess, side by side with our newly acquired directed and adapted thinking, a fantasy-thinking which corresponds to the antique state of mind" (CW5, para. 36). In 'Definitions', as noted above (p. 97) Jung interprets the worldview of 'archaism', or *participation mystique*, as being one that "attaches primarily to the *fantasies* of the unconscious", and he includes in the category of 'archaic' material "the associations-by-analogy of unconscious fantasy" and "their symbolism" (CW6, para. 684).

In his paper 'Two Kinds of Thinking' Jung presents his idea of 'fantasy thinking' as a type of awareness that contrasts with that of a more conscious, or consciously willed style of 'directed thinking'. Fantasy thinking, much of which "goes on in the half-shadow, or entirely in the unconscious" is able to contact "the oldest layers of the human mind long-buried beneath the threshold of consciousness" (CW5, Para.39) and this older style of thinking is the reason, for Jung, that the mind has an "aptitude for symbolical expression" (ibid. paras. 36-37). In Jung's view it is because we can access this early ability via a connection with the unconscious, such as when dreaming, that symbolic products of the psyche can arise. Just as when the "god or demon spoke to the sleeper in symbolic language, and the dream-interpreter had to solve the riddle" (ibid., para. 6), these products of the psyche may need interpretation as they "follow purposes very different from those of the conscious mind" and are "influenced by products which seem to obey quite other laws" (ibid., para. 10).

In ‘Two Kinds of Thinking’ Jung takes an approach to the archaic mode of thought in which it is seen as both vestigial to previous evolutionary stages (ibid, para. 36) and as linked to pathological states of mind (ibid, para. 37). Here, Jung refers to Bleuler’s description of such an ‘autistic’ symptomology as one that infers an “inferior” way of thinking (ibid.). Elsewhere in this work Jung draws on Freud’s idea of ‘dream-thinking’ as a “regressive” type of perception that in returning us to infantile fantasy states also returns us to those of our archaic existence (ibid, paras. 24-26). It was not long after describing these contrasting modes of thinking that Jung noted (in ‘Definitions’) that he would now, in preference, have used the term ‘*intuitive* thinking’ as a more appropriate designation (CW6, para. 830). Directed thinking is described here as “a *rational* function” because “it arranges the contents of ideation under concepts in accordance with a rational norm” of which the individual is conscious (ibid. para. 832). The contrasting style of intuitive (or fantasy) thinking is “undirected” and, Jung stresses, in his view “*irrational*” because it “arranges and judges the contents of ideation by norms of which I am not conscious and therefore cannot recognise as being in accord with reason” (CW6, para. 832).

Appearing to have later settled on the descriptors ‘directed’ and ‘undirected’ for his two kinds of thinking, in ‘The Structure of the Psyche’ Jung explains: “Apperceptive processes may be either *directed* or *undirected*. In the former case we speak of “attention,” in the latter case of “fantasy” or “dreaming”; “the directed processes are rational, the undirected irrational” (ibid.) Here, Jung also distinguishes dreams from the category of undirected thinking, or “conscious fantasies”, as although they too have an “undirected, irrational character” they differ in some essential, although not entirely clear, way (ibid.). According to Jung, when we are not thinking in a directed, deliberate, manner we allow our thoughts to “float, sink or rise, according to their specific gravity” (CW5, para. 18), thus allowing an associative kind of cognition to generate an “automatic play of ideas” (Kuelpe, 1895, as cited in Jung, CW5, para. 18). The ‘undirected’ style of thinking, in contrast to the rationality of directed thinking, allows a more creative and imaginative approach to phenomena. There is a difference, too, in energy expenditure between the two modes of thought.

The directed thinking style is “difficult and exhausting” and the undirected style “effortless, working as it were spontaneously” (CW5, para. 20).

Undirected thinking, in leading the mind into the ‘irrational’ realm of fantasy, also appears to lead it away from thinking in verbal form (CW5, para. 19 & n. 19). This type of thinking, Jung says, “turns away from reality” and “sets free subjective tendencies” (CW5, para. 20). In being directed away from the world of outer phenomena and towards the inner life of the psyche, it is “as regards adaption … unproductive.” (CW5, para. 20). In contrast, directed thinking is “reality-thinking” – a logical style of thinking that looks outwards rather than inwards and is “adapted to reality” (ibid., para. 11). It is also a “*thinking in words*” (ibid., para. 17) and, unlike “associative thinking”, by means of it we are able to “deal with *novel* data” (James, 1907, as cited in Jung, CW5, para. 11, note 3). Similarly, in his discussion of fantasy as *fantasm* (as opposed to *imaginative activity*) Jung describes it as a “complex of ideas that is distinguishable from other such complexes by the fact that it has no objective referent”, and its content, like fantasy-thinking “refers to no external reality” (CW6, para. 711).

In Jung’s model the psyche is portrayed as evolving over time, becoming more ‘sophisticated’, ‘rational’ and, thus, more ‘adapted’. As he explains in ‘Two Kinds of Thinking’: although we retain “side by side with our newly acquired directed and adapted thinking a fantasy-thinking which corresponds to the antique state of mind” (ibid., para. 36), “directed thinking, as we know it today, is a more or less modern acquisition which earlier ages lacked”, and is “manifestly an instrument of culture” (CW5, para. 17). This perspective of the development of consciousness to more a more ‘adapted’ state appears to persist through Jung’s work: In his 1952 Foreword to Werblowsky’s ‘Lucifer and Prometheus’ he states that “purposive and directed thinking is a relatively late human achievement”, in contrast with the psyche of ‘primitive man’ who “does not think his thoughts” as they “simply *appear* in his mind” (CW11, para. 469). Implying that the process of symbolisation itself undergoes a process of evolution, Jung goes on to say:

> "We have to imagine a millennial process of symbol-formation which presses towards consciousness, beginning in the darkness of prehistory with primordial or archetypal images, and gradually developing and differentiating these images into conscious creations."
>
> (ibid.)

In 'Symbols and the Interpretation of dreams' Jung describes how it as a result of a "daily adaption to the reality of things" which "demands accurate statements", that "we have learnt to discard the trimmings of fantasy, and have thus lost a quality that is still characteristic of the primitive mind" (CW18, para. 465). Explaining that there are potential dangers associated with this 'unadapted' state of mind, "actuated by inner motives", Jung suggests that if "not constantly corrected by adapted thinking" this form of thinking is liable to "produce and overwhelmingly subjective and distorted picture of the world" (CW5, para. 37). The "naïve man of antiquity" (as described above, p. 93) for whom everything "was animated and had its 'demon'" saw, according to Jung, "a picture of the universe which was completely removed from reality", but instead "corresponded exactly to man's subjective fantasies" (CW5, para. 24). In this approach to fantasy-thinking there is no objective or accurate comprehension of 'reality' or any encoding of authentic knowledge, inevitably meaning that an imaginative or archetypal interpretation of the environment cannot be regarded as the act of a highly developed consciousness.

Despite its irrationality and lack of adaption to reality Jung does not, however, entirely dismiss the value of this 'fantasy' type of thinking and notes that it is incorrect to assume that it to be "nothing more than a distortion of the objective world-picture" (ibid.). In 'The Type Problem in Classical & Medieval Thought' Jung argues that analytical theorists like Freud and Adler mistakenly "reduce fantasies to something else and treat them merely as a semiotic expression" CW6, paras. 93). In choosing an approach which privileges an "adaption to external reality" imagination is, he says, undervalued as "something reprehensible and useless" (ibid.). It is "short-sighted", Jung's suggests, "to treat fantasy, on account of its risky or unacceptable nature, as a thing of little worth" as it is

responsible for “every good idea and all creative work” (ibid.). In a footnote to his discussion of ‘Two Kinds of Thinking’ Jung questions the idea that only “reasoning is productive”, saying:

> “It is no doubt true that fantasy-thinking is not immediately productive, i.e., is unadapted and therefore useless for all practical purposes. But in the long run the play of fantasy uncovers creative forces and contents, just as dreams do. Such contents cannot as a rule be realized except through passive, associative, and fantasy-thinking.”
>
> (CW5, para. 20, n. 20)

In view of Jung reaching his distinction between the two kinds of thinking by questioning the origins of symbolic representation, there is a clear early correlation in his thinking between the undirected, fantasy style of thinking and the “mind’s aptitude for symbolical expression” (CW5, para. 37). There are also parallels between Jung’s definition of ‘fantasy’ and the symbol when he suggests that it is like any psychic content “evolving” and “preparing for the future” (ibid., para, 718) and, when “purposively interpreted” appears “like a *symbol*, seeking to characterize a definite goal with the help of the material at hand, or trace out a line of future psychological development” (ibid., para.720). Recalling, additionally, the dynamic nature of the symbol, fantasy is held by Jung to be the “manifestation or product of a combination of energized psychic elements” (CW6, para. 711), an expression of “psychic energy” and a “sum of libido that cannot appear in consciousness in any other way than in the form of an image”. (ibid., para. 722).

In ‘Definitions’ Jung explains that “whether a thing is a symbol or not depends chiefly on the *attitude* of the observing consciousness”, and when that consciousness “regards a given fact not merely as such but also as an expression for something unknown” and “*assigns meanings* to events, whether great or small, and attaches to this meaning a greater value than to bare facts”, a ‘*symbolic attitude*’ may be said to exist (CW6, paras. 818-819). In the *symbolic attitude*, as Jung describes it here, there is also a contrast with another, more ‘rational’, way of perceiving the world – one in which the individual “lays the accent on sheer facts and subordinates meaning to them”

and is, as a result, unable to directly access the symbolic realm (ibid, para. 819). It is, Jung says, "quite possible for a man to establish a fact which does not appear in the least symbolic to himself, but is profoundly so to another consciousness" (ibid., para. 818). "Purely unconscious products" are "no more convincingly symbolic *per se* than purely conscious ones" according to Jung, and it is the "symbolic attitude of the observing consciousness that endows them both with the character of a symbol" (ibid., para. 821). But the symbol as described here is also "neither "*rational* nor *irrational*", having "a side that accords with reason" being "supplied by … outer perception" and another that does not, being supplied by "pure inner … perception" (ibid., para. 823).

It appears that the idea of 'adaption' to reality coming through reductive logic and 'reality-thinking' is particularly relevant to how fantasy (or non-directed) thinking is viewed by Jung in his foundational reasoning. There also seems to be a correspondence between 'fantasy thinking' and the 'symbolic attitude', as a common thread can be seen in the contrast between the 'symbolic attitude' and one which places an "accent on sheer facts" (ibid., para. 819) and the directed style of thinking which, in contrast to fantasy thinking, is in "accordance with a rational norm" (CW6, para. 832). There is also a corresponding difference in orientation – the 'symbolic attitude' takes the attention from the outer world to focus on the inner and the 'adapted' style of directed or 'rational' thinking focuses on the external world of 'objective' reality. For Jung, fantasy, and the symbol pertain to the inner world, rational, adapted and evolved thinking provide a realistic connection to the outer world. However, there is point in his later work where Jung appears to touch on a realisation that the rational mind might not have the adaptive advantage he had previously emphasised. "Despite its undeniable successes", he says, "the rational attitude of present-day consciousness is, in many respects, childishly unadapted and hostile to life" (CW12, para. 74).

Language and the multivalent signifier

"Symbols", Jung tells us, "…are never simple"; instead, the symbol "always covers a complicated situation which is so far beyond the grasp of language that it cannot be expressed at all in any unambiguous manner." (CW11 Para. 385). On those occasions when the "concepts of human reason" are unable to express the "inscrutable" or "higher" aspects of spirit we will be led, he suggests, by our "powers of expression" to "create a *symbol*" (CW8, para. 643). For Jung, this form of expression differs from the allegory or sign, as when spirit requires a symbol to portray its meaning it generates a representation that "contains the seeds of incalculable possibilities" (ibid., para. 644). For Jung, those psychic contents that can be recognised as symbolic "have obviously not only one meaning", but "point in different directions", with some part of this meaning remaining perpetually beyond the reach of consciousness (CW18, para. 569).

A quality of semantic ambiguity seems to lie at the heart of what is meant by the symbol in Jung's framework, alongside a sense of its inexpressibility and position within a complex web of interconnectedness. In this way the symbol can be seen to relate to an undirected, fantasy, type of thinking rather than to "voluntarily directed processes, [such] as directed thinking" which in Jung's opinion should be "viewed as relatively closed psychological systems" (CW8, para. 50). These closed systems are structures that attempt to protect themselves from "disturbing influences from outside" (ibid.) and that draw no additional energy into themselves (ibid., n. 43). In contrast, in the fantasy-thinking perspective "image piles on image, feeling on feeling", at its extreme becoming "supra-linguistic" and verbally "inexpressible" (CW5, para. 19, & n. 19). When the fantasy image arises as an unconsciously produced 'fantasm' it is, Jung says, (as noted above, p. 101) distinguishable "by the fact that it has no objective referent" (CW6, para. 711).

An element of "vagueness and indefiniteness" being characteristic of certain types of psychic product is something Jung refers to early on in his work, suggesting in 'The Psychogenesis of Mental Disease' that the "ambiguity" of the dream image (as termed 'overdetermination' by Freud)

might be seen a “fusion” in which an interplay of complexes gain expression in symbolic form. (CW3, para. 133 & n. 13). However, when they occur as dream content, symbols do not, in Jung’s view, disguise their meaning. The dream, being a “natural phenomenon” does not “mean something it is not” (CW18, para. 569). Instead, in order to be understood the dream condenses’ into “vivid metaphors” in a way that work on the “imagination, feeling, and understanding of the dreamer”. (CW7, para. 174). In ‘Definitions’ Jung distinguishes the symbol from both sign and allegory by saying:

> “Every view which interprets the symbolic expression as an analogue or an abbreviated designation for a *known* thing is *semiotic.* A view which interprets the symbolic expression as the best possible formulation of a relatively *unknown* thing, which for that reason cannot be more clearly or characteristically represented, is *symbolic*. A view which interprets the symbolic expression as an intentional paraphrase or transmogrification of a known thing is *allegoric*”
>
> (CW6, para. 815)

Jung draws a similar distinction between allegory and symbol in ‘The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious’ where he explains allegory as “a paraphrase of a conscious content” – as opposed to the symbol which is “the best possible expression for an unconscious content whose nature can only be guessed, because it is still unknown.” (CW9i, para. 7, n. 10). Just as the ‘closed system’ product of directed thinking will accept no energy from outside itself, the sign can represent only known associations (CW6, para. 817). It is an “expression that stands for a known thing” (ibid.), able stand in for its referent and capable of being fully explained by what it signifies. It has a “fixed meaning” because “it is a conventional abbreviation for, or a commonly accepted indication of, something known” (CW5, para.180). In contrast, the symbol, for Jung, is an “indefinite expression with many meanings”, having “a large number of analogous variants” (ibid.),

Jung gives an explanation of how the symbol differs from the sign in terms of multiplicity of meanings by the example of how the two different interpretations might be understood in the case of the cross. He explains in 'Definitions':

> "The interpretation of the cross as a symbol of divine love is *semiotic*, because "divine love" describes the fact to be expressed better and more aptly than a cross, which can have many other meanings. On the other hand, an interpretation of the cross is *symbolic* when it puts the cross beyond all conceivable explanations."
>
> (CW6, para. 815)

In his discussion of the Christian 'Sign of the fishes' Jung also differentiates 'allegory' from 'symbol' by suggesting that the representations and synonyms found in the symbol "always contain more than mere allegories" – they are, like the Ichthys, designations of "something far more complex". (CW9ii, para.127) In a similar way, when the Lapis is likened to Christ, it is "not really a question of identification at all, but of the hermeneutic *sicut* – "as" or "like" – which characterises the analogy." (CW12, para.451). Jung speaks of a similar dynamic occurring in the archetypal unconscious where it is not possible to say exactly what its contents refer to due to the fact that "every interpretation necessarily remains an "as if"" and "the ultimate core of meaning may be circumscribed, but not described" (CW9i, para. 265. If the same thinking is applied to the understanding of myth, Jung observes, there is "no longer any question whether a myth refers to sun or the moon, the father or the mother, sexuality or fire or water; all it does is to circumscribe and give an approximate description of an *unconscious core of meaning"* (ibid., para. 266).

An archetypal content, in Jung's view "expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors". If, he says, "such a content should speak of the sun and identify with it the lion, the king, the hoard of gold guarded by the dragon, or the power that makes for the life and health of man", it is not to be regarded as one thing or the other, but as "the unknown third thing that finds more or less adequate expression in all these similes, yet – to the perpetual vexation of the intellect – remains unknown

and not to be fitted into a formula". (ibid., para. 267). However, Jung also speaks of the 'concrete' way a concept might be viewed by 'primitive man', where it is "the antithesis of *abstraction*" and "has grown together or coalesced with other concepts". In this worldview ideas such as divinity are not seen as subjective, but are "bound to material phenomena" and it is possible that "the sacred tree is the abode of the god, or even the god himself". (CW6, paras. 696-697). "If we take our metaphors concretely", Jung says, "we return to the primitive point of view". (CW10, para. 132). Even for medieval man, in Jung's thinking, "analogy was not so much a logical figure as a secret identity, a remnant of primitive thinking", and one that was "still very much alive." (CW12, para. 451)

As illustrated in previous sections, Jung's description of the symbol having an ability to draw consciousness back to primitive and instinctual levels indicates that the 'primitive' mind's 'concretism' is also, in some sense, a way of comprehending environmental phenomena symbolically. In discussing the existence of 'remnants' of the archaic psyche in 'Symbols and the Interpretation of dreams' Jung suggests that such unconscious survivals, "analogous to primitive ideas, myths and rites", far from being the "refuse of the conscious mind" (as might be suggested in a Freudian approach) are to be regarded as "in no sense dead or meaningless" as they "still continue to function and are therefore of vital value just because of their "historical" nature" (CW18, paras. 468-469). "Just as the body bears the traces of its phylogenetic development", he notes, "so also does the human mind" and in view of this "there is nothing surprising about the possibility that the figurative language of dreams is a survival from an archaic mode of thought" (CW8, para.475).

In his paper 'On Psychic Energy' Jung suggests that 'primitive' language encodes meaning in a way that is based primarily on phenomenal relationships and the experiences these relationships evoke, rather than "the nature or essence of that relationship, or of the principle determining it". For Jung (as noted above) there are "no abstract ideas to be found among primitives" – only "representations" (CW8, para. 127). All primitive languages, he says, "offer abundant proof of

this" (ibid.); they possess no abstractions, only analogies and they demonstrate the 'primitive' or 'primeval' "kind of mentality" which corresponds to "the symbolic or metaphorical way of expression" (CW8, para.309). Symbolic primordial images are, however, like the symbolic material of fantasy or dream, "difficult to define" and somewhat "hazy" (CW16, para.15). Just as in the 'inner' realm of fantasy-thinking, ideas can be seen to connect in an interplay of significance and meaning; for the 'primitive' many varied processes and phenomena may be understood as different expressions of a single idea. (CW8, para.118). The diagram below shows the various possible meanings Jung gives for the term '*wong*' from the lexicon of the people of the Gold Coast (as discussed earlier in the context of 'psychic energy').

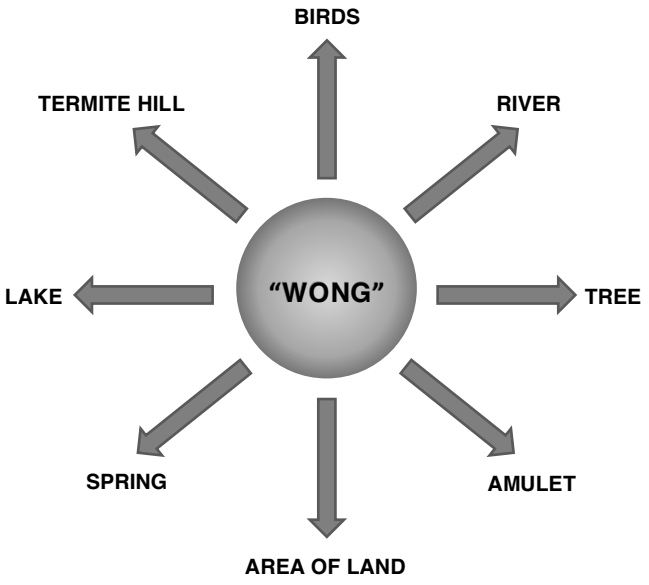

Figure 1 Symbolic referents (Based on Jung, CW8, para..118)

'Primitive thinking' in Jung's understanding "sees its object surrounded by a fringe of associations which have become more or less unconscious in civilized man" (CW18, para. 465). In this 'halo' of consciousness, embellished by fantasy, environmental objects, animals and plants, can "acquire properties that are most unexpected" to modern sensibilities (ibid.). These interconnected motifs are "symbolic primordial images" and are, according to Jung, the same as those termed "collective representations" by Lévy-Bruhl and "*a priori* categories of the imagination" by Hubert and Mauss (CW16, para.15). These "universal perceptions of the primitive mind" are not required, in Jung's

view, to be "clear and unequivocal" such as might be expected for scientific concepts, instead "cramping intellectual formulae rob them of their natural amplitude" (ibid.). It is in not denoting any specific content that these forms of expression become "significant for their wealth of associations" (ibid.). As discussed above, a relationship exists, for Jung, between the energetic charge of an object and its potential for meaning with this potency being something that will influence the "range of symbolic meanings" it elicits (CW5, para. 238). When this range is reduced and the 'symbol' becomes a 'sign' its dynamism might be said to be correspondingly reduced.

In Jung's discussion of the 'Philosophical Tree' the "richness and vitality" that he assigns to the symbol of the tree can be seen in the list of common associations he provides for it: Growth, life, unfolding of form (physical and spiritual), development, protection, shade, shelter, nourishing fruits, source of life, solidity, permanence, rootedness, age, death and rebirth. (CW13, para. 350). The range of meanings will come partly from cultural influences and partly from personal associations; due to the "collective nature" of a symbol such as the tree it is, in Jung's view, "impossible to establish its full range of meaning from the associative material of a single individual." (CW13, para. 353) The multiple associations for the term 'tree' (showing comparable multivalence to the word 'wong' illustrated earlier) are shown as a diagram below:

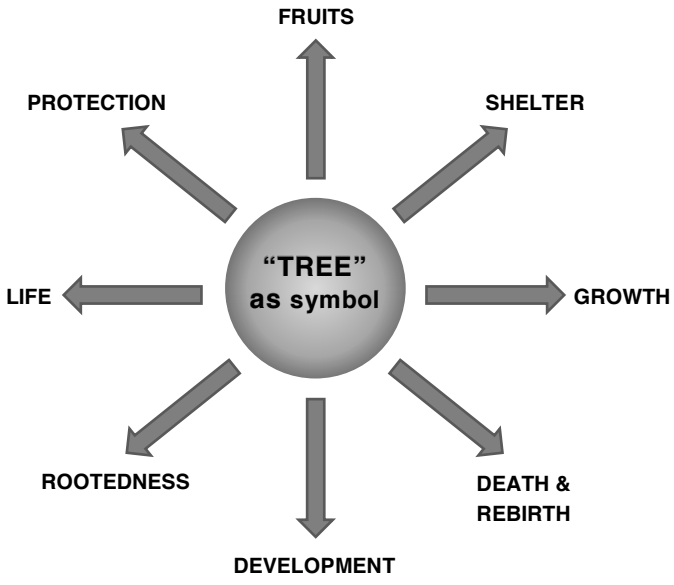

Figure 2 Symbolic referents (Based on Jung, CW13, para. 350)

With no obligation for it to have an unequivocal definition, the symbol somehow reveals its meaning more explicitly through its multivalence. It becomes, Jung suggests, more "complete and clear-cut" the more "analogous variants… it has at its disposal" (CW5, para.180). In his introduction to part 2 of 'Symbols of Transformation' Jung illustrates this by describing how "Tom Thumbs, dactyls and Cabiri" are simultaneously "the *creative dwarfs*" that "toil away in secret", representations of "the *phallus*, also working in darkness" that "begets a living being" and the *key* which "unlocks the mysterious forbidden door behind which some wonderful thing awaits discovery" (ibid.). They are, Jung explains, "personifications of creative forces" and representations of "libido, or psychic energy in its creative aspect" with this underling idea being, perhaps, their '*unconscious core of meaning*'.

For Jung, partly due to the "*multiple significance of symbolic contents*", there is a need for a system of "synthetic-hermeneutic interpretation" in working with the symbol (CW16, para.9). In contrast with an 'analytical-reductive' method, i.e., one that aims to reduce symbolic content down to individual, distinct, causes. Jung sees the synthetic approach as one that allows for a wide range of meaning and association to emerge through an "elaboration of the products of the unconscious" (CW6, para. 701). If fantasy is "understood *hermeneutical*y as an authentic symbol", Jung argues, rather than being understood "*semiotically*" it provides a signpost that leads to an enriched understanding of the analogies provided by the symbol (Jung CW7, paras. 491-493). Just as a semiotic interpretation "becomes meaningless when it is applied exclusively and schematically" as it "ignores the real nature of the symbol and debases it to a mere sign" (CW8, para. 88), if the symbol is 'reduced' by analysis its "true value" is destroyed and it is rendered "worthless" (CW7, paras. 491-493). "To be effective", Jung says, "a symbol must be by its very nature unassailable"; in functioning as both "best possible expression" and "unsurpassed container of meaning" it must also "be sufficiently remote from comprehension to resist all attempts of the critical intellect to break it down." (CW6, para. 401).

Imminence and the not-yet-conscious

Jung's definition of a sign is throughout his work (as in 'Definitions' CW6, para. 817, CW8, para. 88, para. 366, CW9ii, para. 127, CW18, para. 482, and elsewhere) reliant on defining the semiotic as the *known* as opposed to the symbolic as the *not known.* This quality of the symbol is emphasised in Jung's work more often than the quality of multivalence (as compared to the sign with its unambiguous encoding of meaning). In 'The Practical Use of Dream Analysis' Jung advises: "It is far wiser in practice not to regard dream-symbols semiotically, i.e., as signs or symptoms of a fixed character, but as true symbols, i.e., as expressions of a content not yet consciously recognised or conceptually formulated." (CW16, para. 339). The symbol, according to Jung, will "always express something we do *not* know," (CW8, para. 366); it "does not define or explain" but "points beyond itself to a meaning that is darkly divined yet still beyond our grasp, and cannot be adequately expressed in the familiar words of our language" (CW8, para. 644). To be effective, "a symbol must be by its very nature unassailable" and "sufficiently remote from comprehension to resist all attempts of the critical intellect to break it down" (CW6, Para.401).

Although Jung recognises that it "may seem strange" to attribute this uncertainty to the symbol, even when its meaning seems relatively clear, he explains that it is his preference to "regard the symbol as an unknown quantity, hard to recognise and, in the last resort, never quite determinable" (CW16, para. 340). He argues here, and elsewhere that the 'true symbol' differs from the Freudian idea of the symbol in this key respect. In 'On the nature of the psyche' he criticises the Freudians who, he says, insist on using the term 'symbolic' for what should, in his opinion, be regarded as semiotic – "regardless of the fact that in reality symbols always express something we do *not* know" (CW8, para. 366). For Jung, those signs for which "we know, or think we know, what they refer to or are based on" are distinguished as semiotic rather than symbolic in this way (ibid.).

Jung uses the term 'true symbol' in this way in a number of places. In 'On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry' he argues that Freud's use of term 'symbol' is incorrect when he

applies it to products that are, instead, signs or symptoms as in these cases, the representation is not a 'true symbol'. The "true symbol differs essentially" from these and "should be understood as an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any other or better way" (CW15, para.105). Here, Jung gives the examples of Plato's cave and Christ's kingdom of heaven as "genuine and true symbols" as they are able to express "something for which no verbal concept yet exists" (ibid.). In the case of works of art, Jung, suggests, "we would expect a strangeness of form or content, thoughts that can only be apprehended intuitively, a language pregnant with meanings, and images that are true symbols because they are the best possible expressions for something unknown" (ibid., para. 116).

Referring again to the relationship between the symbol and the archaic psyche Jung describes an "original norm" of consciousness in which charged unconscious elements "*are not yet conscious* and have not been subjectively realized, like the demons and gods of the primitives" (ibid.). The 'primitive' psyche is misunderstood by the Freudian school, in Jung's opinion, when it interprets "so-called phallic symbols" to have an "apparently definitive content, namely sexuality" rather than understanding the "freest use of phallic symbols" made by "primitive people" and the ancients (CW16, para. 340). For Jung, it is the "archetypal image" of potency that underlies the symbolic representation and gives rise to a profusion of analogies – "the bull, the ass, the pomegranate … the lightening, the horse's hoof, the dance…" and many others (ibid.). Despite the fact that "all these symbols are relatively fixed", Jung explains, "in no single case can we have the *a priori* certainty that in practice the symbol must be interpreted that way". (ibid., para. 341).

In being the closest approximation to a thing "beyond all conceivable explanations", for Jung the symbol is something both "incomprehensible" and "mystical or transcendent" (CW6, para. 815). In 'Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams' he explains this as follows:

> "A term or image is symbolic when it means more than it denotes or expresses. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect – an aspect that can never be precisely defined or fully

> explained. This peculiarity is due to the fact that, in exploring the symbol, the mind is finally led towards ideas of a transcendent nature, where our reason must capitulate."
>
> (CW18, para. 417)

In his criticism of Freud for his use of the term 'symbolic' for contents that appear in consciousness as '*symptomatic*', Jung is clear that the unconscious element of the symbol is not the same as repressed content, but that the symbol functions as a representative of "unconscious states or processes whose nature can be only imperfectly inferred and realized from the contents that appear in consciousness" (CW8, para. 366). The content of the symbol is that which is "*not yet* conscious" and that has "not been subjectively realized" (ibid.). In 'Definitions' Jung describes the symbol as any psychic product that is the best possible current expression of something "only divined and *not yet* clearly conscious" or that "eludes our present knowledge" (CW6, para. 817, my italics). In an appendix to 'The Structure of the Unconscious' Jung states that the symbol is "not a sign that disguises something generally known" (CW7, para. 492) and in his discussion of 'Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams' points out that "*a symbol does not disguise, it reveals in time*" (CW18, para. 483). Although Jung can be seen to emphasise that a symbol does not attempt to hide its content, in order to be a 'true' symbol it must still retain some indeterminate, "indefinite", content (CW16, para. 340) and some element of its future goal should be "as yet unknown" (CW14, paras. 667-668).

As seen above, where the symbol is said to point 'beyond itself' (p. 112) there is an implication that the psychic content hidden behind the symbol possesses a quality of imminence – a *waiting* to be consciously known. The idea of a potential future value of the symbol is something Jung emphasises early in his work when determining the divergence of his own ideas from those of the 'Viennese school'. In 'Prefaces to "Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology"' he describes the difference each approach gives to the 'value' of the symbol, with the Zurich school, in Jung's view, seeing the symbol as more than an indication of "repressed and concealed" material, and as something that "has a meaning for the actual present and for the future" (CW4, para. 674). Here the

symbol is described as having a “prospective meaning” and an indication for “the way to the further psychological development of the individual” (ibid.). A symbol can “represent something far in advance” of the individual’s current state of awareness and something “whose intellectual meanings cannot yet be grasped entirely” (ibid., para. 680). In indicating the way forward for the individual, symbols become, in Jung’s depiction, “bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore” (CW15, para. 116).

The symbol in this sense is forward-looking and has a teleological function that might serve in the process of individuation or analytic insight. “In psychotherapy it often happens” Jung explains, “that, long before they reach consciousness, certain unconscious tendencies betray their presence by symbols, occurring mostly in dreams but also in waking fantasies and symbolic actions” (CW14, para. 668). In his account of the ‘constructive method’ Jung describes how this method of “elaboration of the products of the unconscious” takes the products of the unconscious such as dream, fantasy, etc., as a symbolic expression which “anticipates a coming phase of psychological development” (CW6, para. 701). In ‘Definitions’ Jung suggests that fantasy when “purposively interpreted” has the quality of a symbol in the way it can be seen as “seeking to characterize a definite goal with the help of the material at hand, or trace out a line of future psychological development.” (CW6, para. 720).

Arguing that the “purposive character of unconscious tendencies cannot be contested” Jung proposes that the unconscious product should be seen, therefore, as “an expression oriented to a goal or purpose, but characterizing its objective in symbolic language” (CW6, para. 701). This is, as referred to above, a “language pregnant with meanings and images” that provides the “best possible expressions for something unknown” (CW15, para. 116). In ‘*Mysterium Coniunctionis*’ Jung suggests that this ‘symbolic language’ is one that uses comparison to illustrate its meaning. “If symbols mean anything at all”, he says, then they are “tendencies which pursue a definite but not yet recognisable goal and consequently can only express themselves in analogies” (CW14, para. 667). The idea of the symbol as an *analogy* of future development also occurs in Jung’s

earlier work. In an appendix to 'The Structure of the Unconscious' he says that the meaning of the symbol "resides in the fact that it is an attempt to elucidate, by a more or less apt analogy, something that is still entirely unknown or still in the process of formation." (CW7, para. 492)

As seen above, Jung frequently uses the phrases "best possible way" or "best possible expression" to describe the symbol's representative function. In 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious' he distinguishes the symbol from allegory by saying that, unlike the conscious paraphrasing carried out by an allegory the symbol is the "best possible expression for an unconscious content whose nature can only be guessed, because it is still unknown." (CW9i, para. 7, n.10). This 'best possible' state is also referred to in Jung's argument that the constructive (or synthetic) method is more than "simply "suggestion"" but rather a process of evaluating the symbol "in the true sense" of the word (CW8, para. 148). In this description of method, the symbol is again treated with a sense of imminence when it is taken as "the best possible expression for a complex fact not yet clearly apprehended by consciousness" (ibid.). The symbol as source of possible meaning and imminent realisation is not, according to Jung, inconsistent with its role as the 'best possible' available formulation. Regarding the symbol as a tendency "whose goal is as yet unknown" does not, he explains, "contradict the statement that symbols are the best possible formulation of an idea whose referent is not clearly known" as "such an idea is always based on a tendency to represent the referent in its own way." (CW14, para. 668 & n. 54).

Despite its status as the 'best' indication of emergent content, when fully consciously apprehended the symbol appears to lose something of its potency or dynamism. In explaining, in 'Definitions', that the symbol is "an expression for something that cannot be characterized in any other or better way" (CW6, para. 816) Jung also refers to it as a "living thing" that is "alive only so long as it is pregnant with meaning" that – once fully comprehended or formulated – becomes a dead thing that "possesses only an historical significance." (ibid.). The issue of the symbol that becomes known, or recognised, thus losing its symbolic potency, is also discussed by Jung's in an appendix to 'Two Essays in Analytical Psychology' where he indicates that if this meaning is brought out in analysis

to become “something that is generally known” its “true value” is consequently destroyed (CW7, para. 492). In this description there is a notable resonance with the difference between fantasy thinking and directed thinking, where directed thinking gives a rational and unambiguous interpretation of objects, but at the same time strips them of their creative dynamism and their ‘aliveness’.

Jung clarifies that it is when fantasy is taken literally, or *semiotically*, that it becomes “worthless”, whereas if “understood *hermeneutically* as an authentic symbol” it can provide a “signpost” for how to “carry on our lives in harmony with ourselves” (ibid., para. 491), “to attribute hermeneutic significance to it is consistent with its value and meaning” (ibid., para. 492). Nonetheless, something of the symbol seems to remain a mystery, perpetually imminent and mysteriously transcendent. At times, according to Jung, we “must be content to leave things as they are, and give up trying to know anything” beyond it (CW14, Para.667). It remains, in his words, “a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings”. (CW15, para.119).

Affect and the emotionally charged image

Jung appears to have connected the symbol with emotional content from early on in his thinking. When discussing the dream of child in which she sees herself become a tall church-spire and is able to 'tower above' her father, of whom she was afraid, he explains how it did not matter that the child herself was unaware of the symbolism as "the emotional effect of symbols does not depend on conscious understanding" (CW4, para. 490). In 'Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams' Jung directly links the symbol to both emotional content and a dynamic life-force: "It is life itself", he says, that "wells up in emotions and symbolic ideas" and "in many cases, emotion and symbol are actually one and the same thing" (CW18, para. 570).

In his 1962 essay 'Healing the Split', in discussing how symbols are selected by a dreamer's psyche, Jung suggests that the archetype presents simultaneously as image and emotion. Again, linking the symbolic, the dynamic and the emotional, he says of the way archetypes appear:

> "In the first case they appear in their original form—they are images and at the same time emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects coincide. When there is only an image, it is merely a word-picture, like a corpuscle with no electric charge. It is then of little consequence, just a word and nothing more. But if the image is charged with numinosity, that is, with psychic energy, then it becomes dynamic and will produce consequences. It is a great mistake in practice to treat an archetype as if it were a mere name, word, or concept. It is far more than that: it is a piece of life, an image connected with the living individual by the bridge of emotion. The word alone is a mere abstraction, an exchangeable coin in intellectual commerce. But the archetype is living matter."
>
> (CW18, para.589)

In a similar way to the 'symbol' needing to be distinguished from the 'sign' the archetype (from which the symbol arises, as CW5, para. 344, CW18, para. 1567 and elsewhere) should not be

treated, according to Jung, “as if it were a mere name, word or concept” (ibid., as above), once more making a connection between the symbolic and the semantic. In ‘Definitions’ Jung suggests that it is the “profundity and pregnant significance of the symbol” that appeals “just as strongly to *thinking* as to *feeling.*” (CW6, para. 823). Just as the symbol reduced by analysis or ‘debased’ to “a mere sign” loses its “true value” (as discussed above p. 111) a concept like “physical matter” when “stripped of its numinous connotation of the “Great Mother,” is unable to express the “vast emotional meaning of “Mother Earth”” becoming instead “a mere intellectual term, dry as dust and entirely inhuman” (CW18, para. 584).

Despite not explicitly defining the meaningful environmental object of ‘primitive’ experience a symbol in its own right, Jung does repeatedly describe the ‘primitive’ worldview with reference to the emotional properties of an ‘archaic’ symbolic language. In discussing what he understands as an earlier form of consciousness he refers to the “emotional participation” in natural events that once had symbolic meaning for individuals and cultures (Jung, CW18, para. 585). Many dreams, according to Jung, present “images and associations that are analogous to primitive ideas, myths, and rites” that, like Freud’s ‘archaic remnants’, are: “a sort of language that acts as a bridge between the way in which we consciously express our thoughts and a more primitive, more colourful and pictorial form of expression – a language that appeals directly to feeling and emotion.” (CW18 para.468-9).

In discussing the ‘primitive’ psyche of ‘Archaic Man’ Jung explains that for him the environment contains not only “his mythology,” and “his religion” but also “all his thinking and feeling in so far as he is unconscious of these functions” (CW10, para. 128). Feelings of fear might attach to certain places that are “not good”, such as caves in which devils are said to dwell or fords guarded by demons. “What we would call the powers of imagination and suggestion”, Jung says “seem to him invisible forces which act upon him from without” and the “psychic and objective coalesce in the external world” (ibid.). Such “numinous symbols” have, Jung tells us in ‘Healing the Split’, existed “since the beginning of the human mind” and “since energy never vanishes, the emotional energy

that manifests itself in all numinous phenomena does not cease to exists when it disappears from consciousness" – it appears instead in "symbolic happenings" (CW18, para. 583). In 'The Role of the Unconscious' Jung gives a description 'primitive man' in which he possesses an emotionally and symbolically embedded sense of self and simultaneously "dwell[s] in his land and at the same time in the land of his unconscious" (CW10, para. 44). Here, he says, "feelings totally strange to us accompany the primitive at every step", and in a relationship that the 'modern' psyche finds hard to understand "everywhere his unconscious jumps out at him, alive and real" (ibid.). By being now disconnected from our natural surroundings, Jung suggests, "a whole world of feeling is closed to us and is replaced by a pale aestheticism" (ibid.).

Elsewhere, when Jung describes the intersubjective participation of early man in his containing environment he makes a similar comparison between this worldview and that of our current psychological state. In 'Civilization in Transition' he suggests that in our loss of the archaic worldview an "unspeakable change" was "wrought in man's emotional life" which we might now find difficult to comprehend (CW18, para. 1362). In his foreword to Robert Crottet's 'Moon-Forest' Jung speaks of the "wholeness of pre-historic nature and preconscious humanity" as a lost state that our longing for is revealed by emotion and "cannot be expressed in words" (CW18, para. 1753). It is Jung's belief that this loss of a feeling-imbued interconnectedness we once had with the natural environment has caused such emotional responses to retreat from our conscious perception and "only the story-tellers emotion can bring it home to us" (ibid.). For the individual of today, Jung says, an "immediate communication with nature is gone forever, and the emotional energy it generated has sunk into the unconscious." (CW18, para. 585). With modern consciousness being able to "differentiate what is subjective and psychic from what is objective and "natural"" we no longer experience a containing environment that holds an affective reality or possesses its own 'mana' or "magical power" Jung explains (CW10, para. 128). Consequently, we are led to interpret "the obscure and inexplicable feelings and emotions which give some intangible, magical quality to certain places, certain moods of nature" (as well as inanimate objects) as the result of "the projection of a mythological content from the collective unconscious" (CW10, para. 43).

In these statements Jung can be seen to equate a modern day scientific-rational mindset to a psyche split off from its containing environment, and thus implicitly from the emotional experience of a living symbolic psychocultural terrain. The lost "emotional energy" (CW18, para. 585, as above) or "world of feeling" (CW10, para. 44, as above) lives on in the unconscious, but the more we "remove ourselves from it with our enlightenment and our rational superiority" the more it becomes inaccessible to us (ibid.). Jung appears to be making a clear connection between a state of symbolically-constellated awareness that once existed and the possibility of an emotional attachment to the objects of the natural world. There are indications, too, that this emotional connection is somehow intimately bound up with a symbolic style of perception and/or language and that in losing a symbolic containment of meaning we also suffer a loss of energy – the "emotional energy" that has "sunk into the unconscious (CW18, para. 585).

In 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections' Jung describes his encounter with a Pueblo elder that demonstrates an affective engagement with the landscape still to be found in Indigenous culture. He relates the following story from his travels, in which the emotional response he witnessed was also connected to a sense of awe and numinous impact:

> "Suddenly a deep voice, vibrant with suppressed emotion, spoke from behind me into my left ear: 'Do you not think that all life comes from the mountain?' An elderly Indian had come up to me, inaudible in his moccasins, and had asked me this heaven knows how far-reaching question. A glance at the river pouring down from the mountain showed me the outward image that had engendered this conclusion. Obviously all life came from the mountain, for where there is water, there is life. Nothing could be more obvious. In his question I felt a swelling emotion connected with the word 'mountain,' and thought of the tale of secret rites celebrated on the mountain. I replied, 'Everyone can see that you speak the truth.'"
>
> (Jung, MDR, p. 280)

Jung reports how the conversation was, “unfortunately”, interrupted, resulting in him being unable to gain any “deeper insight into the symbolism of water and mountain.” (ibid.).

In discussing his own experience of being in an earthquake Jung observed how the physical conditions of an environment can “arouse fantasies charged with affect.” (CW8, para. 332). He recollects experiencing the sensation that he was of no longer standing on “solid and familiar earth”, but “on the skin of a gigantic animal that was heaving under my feet”. It was this fantastical image, he says, that “impressed itself” on him rather than the fact of the physical event (ibid. para. 331). “It is not storms, nor thunder and lightning, not rain and cloud that remain as images in the psyche, but the fantasies caused by the affects they arouse” (ibid.). As noted above (p. 95) it is these “affect-laden fantasies”, Jung theorises, that give rise to the “myth-motif” of the archetype (ibid. para. 334).

Although he does not elaborate on the emotional character of the symbol in relation to its quality of imminence, Jung does compare the difficulty of formulating “the phenomenon of affect or emotion” in a satisfactory way due it its tendency to evade “all the attempts of the psychologist to pin it down in a hard-and-fast concept” (CW18, para. 570) with the fact that “such phenomena as symbolic ideas are most irritating, because they cannot be formulated in a way that satisfies our intellect and logic”. The trouble, in both cases, Jung explains, is “that the facts are undeniable and yet cannot be formulated in intellectual terms” (ibid.). There is, he says, “no intellectual formula capable of representing such a complex phenomenon in a satisfactory way” (ibid.).

Projection, Synchronicity and the field of original identity

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the archaic psyche's sense of interconnectedness with the natural environment in some way encapsulates for Jung a "symbolic or metaphorical way of expression" (CW8, para. 309). This worldview, in his opinion, also correlates to that of *participation mystique* of Lévy-Bruhl – a state hypothesised to be one in which 'primitive' man existed in a "unconscious identity" with all elements of his containing environment (ibid., para. 66). As Jung understands Lévy-Bruhl's use of the term, it indicates that psyche experiences an "indefinitely large remnant of non-differentiation between subject and object" (ibid.) resulting in the unconscious being projected into the object and the object being introjected into the subject and becoming "part of his psychology" (ibid.). It is as a result of this process that "plants and animals behave like human beings, human beings are at the same time animals, and everything is alive with ghosts and gods" (ibid.). Due to there being, in Jung's view, no understanding of the unconscious in earlier periods "all unconscious contents were projected into the object, or rather were found in nature as apparent objects or properties of matter and were not recognized as purely internal psychic events" (CW11, para. 375).

It is the result of psychic projection, according to Jung, that "a world in which man is completely contained physically as well as psychically" is created (CW10, para. 134). Through these identifications with the environment, he "coalesces with it" being "in no way … master of this world", but rather its component (ibid.). In this state, there is no clear separation between an individual and their containing environment: psyche is described as being "dovetailed into nature" (ibid.). In a dynamic that, for Jung, "accounts for the theory of animism" the "main body of psychic life" was projected into "human and nonhuman objects" (CW11, para. 140 and n. 33) In Jung's view, consciousness of differentiation is a "relatively late achievement of mankind" and one, he supposes, that forms a "relatively small sector of the indefinitely large field of original identity." (CW7, para. 329). In 'Definitions' Jung gives the following description of this earlier

type of consciousness (*participation mystique*) in which an identification with natural phenomena could be seen:

> "It denotes a peculiar kind of psychological connection with objects, and consists in the fact that the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to partial *identity*. This identity results from an *a priori* oneness of subject and object."
>
> (CW6, para. 781)

In 'Basic postulates of Analytical Psychology' Jung observes: "The fact that all immediate experience is psychic and that immediate reality can only be psychic explains why it is that primitive man puts spirits and magical influences on the same plane as physical events (CW8, para. 682). When 'he sees "relations… between men and animals or things, that to us are inconceivable" he is seeing the "projection of psychic happenings" (CW10, para. 129) and it is these that might "cause animals, trees and stones to speak" (CW10, para. 137) or psychic potency to be assigned to 'external' natural objects (ibid.). Throughout his work Jung returns to this idea of an undeveloped, unsophisticated, stage of consciousness in which psyche overlays itself on its surroundings and reads into them its own internal content. In our modern world, as we have become, according to Jung, "disinfected" of the "superstitious numina" and all the "bizarre beings that populate the primeval forest" and left behind our "mystical participation with things." (CW18, para.586). However, Jung does note that in parapsychology a "primitive equation" continues to exist in which "spirit land = dreamland (the unconscious)" (CW8, para 599).

A connection between *participation mystique*, projection, and the symbol is made by Jung in 'Transformation Symbolism in the Mass' where he suggests that those objects we consider to be "ours" are the recipients of projections from the unconscious causing them to become "*more* than what they are in themselves". As a result, they acquire "several layers of meaning and are therefore symbolical" (CW11, para. 389). In 'Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious' he says:

> "All the mythologised processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection – that is, mirrored in the events of nature"
>
> (CW9i, para. 7)

This projection is so fundamental, in Jung's view, "that it has taken several thousand years of civilization to detach it some measure from its outer object" (ibid.). Even in the time of the alchemists, Jung tells us, man was still in the process of freeing the psyche from projection into matter. It was "only in the following centuries, with the growth of natural science" that the projection was "withdrawn form matter and entirely abolished" (CW13, para.395). Although, in Jung's opinion, "this development of consciousness has still not reached it end", now that this form of projection has become obsolete "nobody … any longer endows matter with mythological properties" (ibid.). Magical or symbolically potent properties are likewise said to arise from the projected contents of psyche: Jung explains how the "obscure and inexplicable feelings and emotions which give some intangible, magical quality to certain places, certain moods of nature" and cause "the whole atmosphere of the place [to seem] symbolic" (CW10, para. 43, as mentioned above pp. 93-94) arise from the projection "of the collective unconscious" and a "coherent unconscious system" (ibid.).

Arguably, however, Jung does begin to think of *participation mystique* less as the mark of an unsophisticated consciousness, than as a feature of the symbolic. In 'Transformation Symbolism of the Mass' he speaks of a 'mystical unity' that features in the ritual of the mass, and here proposes that a perception of unity should not be understood as 'primitive' but rather as showing that "*participation mystique* is a characteristic of symbols in general." (CW11, para. 337 n. 32). In 'Archaic Man' Jung appears to consider the possibility of an alternative perspective, when he

questions whether there may be more to the matter of projection than he has so far considered: Observing that although the "primitive idea" of 'mana' as a "widely distributed power in the external world" and "a field of force" can be easily followed, Jung admits that this comes to present a difficulty "when we try to carry its implications further, for they reverse the process of psychic projection of which I have spoken" (CW10, paras. 139-140),

These difficult implications include perhaps having to accept that the medicine man *is* magical, that spirits *are* autonomous, that there might be more to consider than, as Jung calls it here, the "comfortable theory of psychic projection" (ibid, para. 140). The question is, he says, nothing less than this: "does the psychic in general – the soul or spirit of the unconscious – originate in *us*; or is the psyche, in the early stages of consciousness evolution, actually outside us in the form of arbitrary powers with intentions of their own, and does it gradually take its place within us in the course of psychic development?" Jung questions whether the "dissociated psychic contents" – to use psychanalytic terms – were "ever part of the psyches of individuals, or were they from the beginning psychic entities existing in themselves according to the primitive view…?" (ibid.) In 'The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits' Jung appears even more reluctant to define these entities as purely illusory, saying that although when "viewed from the psychological angle" they appear as projections, the "question of whether spirits exist *in themselves* is far from having been settled". (CW8, para. 585 & n. 5).

Noting that the distinction between "spirit and matter" could be challenged and that their relationship might be understood as spirit being a quality of matter, as in the philosophy of Hylozoism, Jung also considers the idea that they "could well be different forms of one and the same transcendental being." (CW9i, paras. 385 & 392). "To put it in modern language", Jung says, "spirit is the dynamic principle, forming for that very reason the classical antithesis of matter – the antithesis, that is, of its stasis and inertia", or life and death (CW9i, para.389). However, "the subsequent differentiation of this contrast leads to the actually very remarkable opposition of spirit and nature" as "one cannot really feel nature as unspiritual and dead" (CW9i, para.389).

In ‘The Spirit Mercurius’ Jung puts forward a series of stages through which the evolution of consciousness might be seen, beginning with a ‘primitive’ undeveloped state in which the individual is “governed by animistic assumptions” and “subjects and objects are identical” (CW13, para. 253). As an example of this Jung relates the story of the enlisted tribesman *Oji* who is compelled to leave his barracks when he hears a native tree calling to him in his sleep.[8] Here the ‘spirit’ that communicates with the dreamer resides in the tree and “the tree and the daemon [are] one and the same” (ibid., para. 247). Following this first stage, an “act of discrimination” separates man from nature and perception becomes more highly differentiated, corresponding to a “higher level of culture and consciousness” (ibid.) and the ‘primitive’ is freed from the “hallucinations” of his own projected unconscious (ibid., para. 248). A further level brings us to our current state of awareness where we attain the knowledge that there is no ‘objective’ existence to the spirit in nature, with the result that it “sinks into ridiculous insignificance” (ibid.). However, Jung posits yet another, fifth and presumably future, stage of consciousness in which it is understood that something neither purely psyche nor purely spirit “did happen after all” (ibid.) and where, if the spirit “cannot be proved to be a subjective psychic experience” then “even tress and other suitable objects would have, once again, to be seriously considered as its lodging places.” (ibid., para. 249)

Jung’s interactions with people from different cultures and other parts of the world seem to have caused him to further rethink some of his earlier ideas. In a revision to his paper ‘The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits’ he revisits his earlier claim that he sees “no proof whatever of the existence of real spirits” and notes that “after collecting psychological experiences from many people and many countries for fifty years, I no longer feel as certain as I did in 1919, when I wrote this sentence” (CW8, para. 600 & n.15). He goes on to query whether “an exclusively psychological approach can do justice to the phenomena in question” and to ask whether the concept of the space-time continuum in nuclear physics might open up “the whole question of the transpsychic reality immediately underlying the psyche” (ibid.).

[8] A story originally related by Amaury Talbot in his 1912 work ‘In the Shadow of the Bush’.

In Jung's view "it accords better with experience to suppose that living matter has a psychic aspect, and the psyche has a physical aspect" (CW10, para. 780). In a manner that he suggests is supported by theoretical physics, he proposes that is possible to see all reality as "grounded on an as yet unknown substrate possessing material and at the same time psychic qualities" (ibid.). The existence of this 'substrate' removes the need for an "awkward hypothesis of psychophysical parallelism" and provides an opportunity to move beyond a purely biochemical model to "construct a new world model closer to the idea of the *unus mundus*" (ibid.). Although for the Gnostic or alchemist the "non-differentiated unity of the world" of the *unus mundus* may be said to be "a metaphysical speculation" the unconscious, according to Jung, "can be indirectly experienced via its manifestations" (CW14, para. 660). The archetype appears to provide one type of interface to this substrate, being an "irrepresentable, psychoid factor of the collective unconscious" (CW8, para. 912) that, Jung explains, in its psychoid nature, "points to the sphere of the *unus mundus,* the unitary world" (CW10, p. 852). The psychoid archetype, despite in its ability to reach beyond the unconscious into matter is, however, not directly knowable (CW8, para. 380). It is, at it it's infra-red pole, "biological" and "physiological instinct", "immediately rooted in the stuff of the organism"; it "forms the bridge to matter in general" (ibid., para. 420) where it displays a "tendency to behave as though it were not localized in one person but were active in the whole environment." (CW10, para. 851).

In his descriptions of the alchemical *unus mundus*, despite defining it as a "primordial unconscious" and the "original non-differentiated unity of the world or of Being" (CW14, para. 660) Jung does not consider the ultimate alchemical state of 'conjunction' with this unitary world, as described Gerhard Dorn, to mean "a fusion of the individual with his environment" (CW14, para. 767). Instead, he speaks of the transcendental *unus mundus* as a "potential world outside time" (ibid., para. 718) suggesting that there is a distinction between this integrated state and that of *participation mystique.* Jung appears to locate archetypes partly in this potential space, as "autonomous psychic entities" that are capable of displaying "remarkable relativizations of time and space which simply cannot be explained causally" (CW10, para. 780). In this way, the

psychoid archetype “possesses qualities of a parapsychological nature” (ibid., para. 849) which may be expressed in inexplicable phenomena such as synchronicity (ibid.).

It is in synchronicity, Jung suggests, that the “parapsychological equivalent” of the *unus mundus* can be seen (CW14, para. 662). Synchronistic phenomena, in Jung’s opinion, become “more understandable” as a result of the *unus mundus* model as “every physical event would involve a psychic one and vice versa” (CW10, para. 780) and this “unitary aspect of being” could explain the “inter-connection or unity of causally unrelated events” (CW14, para. 662). Synchronistic events, in Jung’s opinion, tend to occur in relation to archetypal content (CW10, para. 849 & CW8, paras. 846 & 912), which he describes as “in itself… an irrepresentable psychoid factor of the collective unconscious” (CW8, para. 912). Giving the example of Swedenborg’s vision of a fire in Stockholm and the same moment a real fire was happening there Jung observes: “You can never say with certainty whether what appears to be going on in the collective unconscious of a single individual is not also happening in other individuals or organisms or things or situations” (ibid.)

It seems to be through synchronistic events that the idea of symbolic expression in the perceptually ‘external’ world becomes a possibility for Jung. In such cases, Jung regards it as “not too far-fetched to suppose that there may be some archetypal symbolism at work” (CW8, para. 845). In ‘Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams’ he describes how symbols occur not only in dreams, but “can appear in any number of psychic manifestations” including “symbolic thoughts and feelings, symbolic acts and situations” so, for example, when clocks stop at the moment of their owner’s death or mirrors break at moments of crisis, it “looks as if not only the unconscious but even inanimate objects were concurring in the arrangement of symbolic patterns” (CW18, para. 480). Jung also describes how working with a symbol might prompt synchronous events, relating how his work on the fish symbol preceded a series of events in which fish either appeared or were spoken of in the space of a single day (CW8, para. 826).

Conclusion: Locating operational criteria

In looking for an understanding of the specific features by which, according to Jung's thinking, the symbol can be recognised it becomes clear that each aspect that is closely viewed reveals how fundamentally interlinked each is with the others. As Jung says, the symbol is a "product of an extremely complex nature" as "data from every psychic function have gone into its making" (CW6, para. 823); it "covers a complicated situation", ambiguous and "beyond the grasp of language" (CW11, para. 385) in which fantasy, emotion, dynamism and meaning converge, yet something of it remains perpetually out of reach of the conscious mind. Despite Jung's extensive writings on the topic of the symbol, and the use of the concept both within his work and in that of those influenced by him, a sense remains that there is no precise set of definitions or single unequivocal description of the term to draw on. The symbol "always covers a complicated situation" (CW11, para. 385) and "remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings" (CW15, para. 119).

Some of the characteristics that have been identified in this chapter seem at first sight more readily transferrable to a symbolic style of perception of 'external' natural phenomena than others. The dynamic quality of the symbol, as noted above, is one aspect of the Jungian concept that seems most applicable to the context of a containing ecosystem. Additionally, the quality of numinosity, especially if traced back to its original formulation by Otto, might be expected to occur in certain nature-based encounters with meaningful phenomena. The existence of multiple significances has been shown to feature in Jung's view of the 'symbolic' interpretation of natural phenomena by archaic or Indigenous peoples, as has the appearance of fantasy-thinking and affective connection, both of which form part of the constellation of ideas and meanings attaching to symbolic forms. However, as shown above, Jung does not refer directly to these forms *as symbols* in the context of the 'archaic' mind and, in this regard, considers a symbolic style of perceiving the physical world as regressive and unadapted to reality.

From this the question arises of whether imaginative or fantasy-thinking does, as Jung believes, lead consciousness *away* from the outside world, rather than into a deeper (and perhaps intersubjective) relationship with it, and whether it will, as a result of being "actuated by inner motives" (CW5, para. 37) rather than adaption to material reality, distort engagement with the natural environment. In the majority of places where Jung discusses an early form of consciousness he explains the meaningful significance of other-than-human phenomena to be the result of inner content being projected onto them. This assertion that a symbolic-type content perceived *outside* the experiencing individual is to be regarded as a projection of inner concerns does appear to preclude an understanding of the natural object as meaningful in its own right, or as existing in a dynamic interrelationship with the psyche (as posited by ecopsychological theory).

As a result of these considerations, it might be argued that any application of Jung's concept of the symbol to a perception of external symbolic forms in the natural world should also take into account his thoughts on the distinction and interplay between psyche and matter. One of the consistent features of the symbol in Jung's formulation is its existence *within* the unconscious psyche rather than in the manifest world and his requirement that it must always contain an element of the 'unknown'; some 'not yet conscious' or 'indefinite' psychic material. As Jung did not fully develop the idea of meaning being potentially encountered in the natural world via the medium of the symbol, other than in the context of primitive thought (or incidentally through the synchronous occurrence), it is unclear how he might have considered a dynamic containing environment in relation to the symbol's emergent quality. Although Jung does come to question the mechanism of projection and begins to present other possible perspectives such as a 'transpsychic reality" underlying the psyche or the notion of the *Unus Mundus* he does not directly address or reformulate his concept of the symbol in light of these ideas. A symbolically mediated interrelation between psyche and matter that is not solely the result of projection – i.e., the simple overlay of inner content onto an otherwise neutral or inert background – remains, in Jung's work, an unexplored and intriguing possibility.

I have, in this conceptual study of the symbol, endeavoured to clarify Jung's use of the term within the corpus of his work and over the evolution of his ideas. I have examined where his thinking has been consistent and where it has been developed, expanded or left unresolved, particularly in the context of the relationship between psyche and environment. In order to take this understanding further and to enquire whether Jung's thinking can be usefully applied to experiences of nature-based therapeutic encounters with 'symbolic' forms, I will be to applying my findings to an experimental nature immersion activity, in which the characteristic qualities of the symbol are measured and analysed through empirical study. From the findings of this investigation, in combination with the insights of Jungian and ecopsychological thinkers, I will aim to determine how meaningful encounters with other-than-human phenomena might be more fully understood and effectively integrated into therapeutic practice.

In investigating the qualities that Jung assigns to the symbol I have sought to determine a set of criteria by which a 'symbolic' event might be reliably recognised. As a result, I have identified the following operational categories from which a set of thematic test criteria will be generated:

1. Dynamism
2. Numinosity
3. Fantasy/imaginative thinking
4. Multiple significance
5. Unconscious/emergent content
6. Affective impact
7. Projection of inner content
8. Synchronicity
9. Metaphorical significance

Items 1 through 8 have been mentioned above, with 'Metaphorical Significance' being included to represent both the 'analogical' structure and metaphorical dream condensation of the symbol postulated by Jung, as well as the metaphorical patterning of the archetype (see above p. 107).

Chapter 5: Encountering the environmental other: An empirical enquiry

Introduction

In previous chapters I have demonstrated that, despite the centrality of the concept 'symbol' in both ecopsychological and Jungian literature, these sources did not provide a comprehensive set of features by which any interaction or dynamic within the context of a natural environment might be definitively interpreted as 'symbolic'. In examining Jung's thinking, I have considered how he addressed the perception of meaningful phenomena in the physical world and to what extent his ideas may have varied or developed over time. One of my key findings is that although Jung does discuss the symbolic significance of environmental objects for the 'primitive' psyche, he refrains from making a direct use of the term 'symbol' in his descriptions of encounters with environmental objects ('spirits', 'numen', and similar) in Indigenous or archaic settings. In researching Jung's definitions and descriptions of the symbol I have queried which of these might prove readily transferable to an understanding of meaningful encounters with other-than-human phenomena and which might be more problematic. Additionally, in examining Jung's work, I have sought to determine a set of criteria by which meaningful responses to environmentally-encountered objects might be assessed, according to his framework, for symbolic content.

One of the first questions that arose for me in researching Jung's conception of the symbol was how to apply his conception of *fantasy thinking* to environmental contexts when he claims firstly that this kind of thinking is inward focused and actuated primarily by "inner motives" (CW5, para. 37) and secondly that it is fundamentally 'unadapted' to the external world (ibid., paras. 20 & 37, CW18, para. 465, and elsewhere). A further aspect of Jung's formulation that seemed to present challenges was the requirement that the symbol should always contain an element of itself that remains inaccessible to current consciousness (CW8, para. 366, CW16, para. 340, CW18, para. 417 and elsewhere). Another difficulty was identified in Jung's assertion that an experience of finding symbolic significance in objects outside the personal self – such as when 'archaic' man experienced himself meaningfully contained within his environment – should be seen as a

projection of inner psychic material (CW10 para. 135, CW9i, para. 7, CW11, para. 375, and elsewhere). Although Jung did revise this opinion and later envisaged a "transpsychic reality immediately underlying the psyche" (CW8, para. 600, note 15) he did not, at any point, revisit or modify his concept of the symbol with this possibility in mind.

Just as Jung describes the importance for 'primitive man' of being meaningfully contained in his environment and experiencing a dynamic relationship with the phenomena encountered there, a significant number of reports by outdoor practitioners and researchers suggest a profound relevance to coming into contact with the natural environment in a way that elicits personally meaningful connection. In nature-based work this dynamic or style of engagement might on some occasions be encouraged, with the facilitator guiding an individual into contemplation of other-than-human representations of inner concerns, and on other occasions it may be seen to emerge spontaneously, even in activities that have not been primarily therapeutic in intent. Representative objects have in this sense been described as 'symbols' and through such encounter an 'inner' experience or current difficulty has been shown be reflected in a way that generates positive therapeutic effect. In my literature review I have found this manner of perception interchangeably referred to as 'metaphorical' or 'mirroring', with those places in which it is described as 'symbolic' being unaccompanied by any further in-depth consideration of the term's usage.

Ecopsychological thought proposes the idea of an *ecological self* that is able to see itself as an integrated member of an ecological system in a dynamic intersubjective relationship with the other-than-human. In order to provide a structured way of correlating what happens for the individual in terms of ecosystemic awareness (i.e., meaningful containment) in relation to a 'symbolic' style of encounter, I have sought to generate a set of criteria by which this perspective might be measured. This set of criteria, in combination with those gleaned from the Jungian conceptual study, have informed the design of an empirical study that aims to observe, measure and interpret participant encounters a in nature-based setting, with a view to understanding how (and if) moments of symbolic significance might be identified.

Enquiry method and design

My empirical research study was designed to test whether evidence or indications could be found to show that meaningful symbolic representation could arise spontaneously in relation to other-than-human phenomena. Through observation of participant experience it queries whether instances that do demonstrate a perception of meaningfulness in natural environments display features that are compatible with Jung's conceptualisation of the symbol, and, additionally, determines whether they can be seen to intersect with, or occur concurrently with, experiences of ecological selfhood. As a result of my prior conceptual study, it was predicted that certain characteristics of the symbol, according to Jung's understanding, would be found in meaningful encounters in a physical environment and that others may be harder to identify in this type of experience.

The methodology for data collection was a mixed-method approach with the core study exercise being an adapted version of object interview technique. This exercise was followed by an optional, arts-based response and a brief concluding questionnaire. Primary data was provided in the form of transcripts of narrative commentary recorded by volunteer participants who had been asked to free associate with reference to a chosen focal point, phenomena or object in the 'natural' environment. Supplementary data was obtained via visual record of creative artefacts and questionnaire responses. Transcripts were then thematically coded according to operationalised criteria based on Jungian thought with the purpose of finding material demonstrating symbolic value or characteristics. A further set of thematic codes were applied to transcript data to indicate any moments of ecosystemic awareness, with the purpose of assessing whether these could be correlated with 'symbolic' styles of engagement. Additionally, I allowed for the observation and inductive discovery of any unanticipated themes that presented themselves during the study exercise, with the relevance of these being considered in relation to my overall enquiry.

In recognition of the premise that "all the associations implicate in the signs, symbols and signifiers available to any set of interacting thinkers" are aspects of what might be thought of as an 'associative unconscious' (Long, 2018, p. 44), one of the aims of this study has been to observe the relationship of this associative unconscious with the containing environment via the incidence of symbolic material produced during free-association nature engagement practices. One aspect of the 'Jungian' symbol that I was interested in investigating was how unknown, unconscious and/or emergent aspects of its content might be observed in a physical nature-based context. To this end, I have enquired whether environmentally-encountered symbolic material can perform the function of stimulating, or foreshadowing, new meaningful associations and/or further realisations. Other key considerations were whether any evidence could be found of the projection of unconscious content onto environmental phenomena and whether the occurrence of imaginative 'fantasy' thinking could be shown to draw consciousness away from the physical environment, or to display a distorted or unrealistic ('unadapted') view of it. Additionally, with regard to the multivalent significance and semantic indeterminacy of the symbol, I have considered whether a representative object tends to attract a network of meanings and to what extent these may be said to constellate current psychological processes or concerns.

Characteristics that I have determined as primary indicators of symbolic content according to Jung's conceptual framework (and that consequently suggest where an experience might be interpreted as symbolic) are as follows:

1. That the symbol possesses a sense of dynamism, life force, energetic potential, and/or containment within a dynamic system
2. That the symbol can carry an aura of numinosity; i.e., have an impact that might be experienced as profound, awe-inspiring and/or transcendental
3. That the symbol prompts, or is prompted by, an undirected, 'fantasy' style of thinking
4. That the symbol acts as a core of meaning around which a large number of analogous or associated referents might constellate

5. That the symbol contains an unknowable or potentially teleological element of itself that remains unconscious
6. That the symbol will have an emotional equivalence in the psyche and will often elicit affective responses or associations
7. That the symbol when encountered in the physical world will show evidence of projected 'inner' content
8. That the symbol may appear synchronistically; i.e., appear in a meaningfully and temporally coincidental or serendipitous fashion
9. That the symbol contains a metaphorical content that is experienced as analogous to individual states, concerns or purposes and manifests as an indication or representation of these

In considering how meaningful encounter with the natural environment might be appropriately evaluated I have taken the characteristics of the Jungian symbol described above as a starting point for developing an experimental format in which study participants can engage both imaginatively and associatively with nature-based phenomena. My research approach has also been informed, as discussed in Chapter 3, by Chalquist's description of Goethe's "exact sensorial imagination" method (2014, p. 253) and by ecopsychological thinking on phenomenological theory, as found in Vakoch and Castrillón's compiled work 'Ecopsychology, phenomenology, and the environment' (2014). A phenomenological background of thought was also employed to assist in positioning my study design with reference to the concept of the *ecological self* (as put forward in ecopsychological thinking) in which individual awareness recognises the interdependent and intersubjective position of the psyche within its containing environment.

As I have shown earlier (pp. 72-73), Chalquist, through his description of Goethe's method, demonstrates one manner in which the symbolic in nature might be suitably investigated. Just as the symbol in a Jungian sense can be seen to draw its meaning and import, at least partly, from the "multiple significance" of its content and from the "wealth of associations" in which it is embedded (Jung, CW16, paras. 9 & 15 and elsewhere) the leaf is "revealed" as existing within a network of connections that lend it holistic and phenomenological significance (Chalquist, 2014, p.

253). As well as resonating with Jung's conception of the symbolic, Goethe here could be seen as prefiguring an *ecosystemic* way of perception, where an object's containing environment is an indispensable aspect of understanding the object itself. Here too, phenomenological consideration of the significance of the 'imagination' – as sensory, participatory perception – and its contrast with an 'objective' outlook, might be recognised in the 'fantasy thinking' that Jung links to a symbolic perspective and contrasts with the more rational-cognitive perspective of 'directed thinking'.

Noticeable correspondences can be seen to exist between Goethe's 'exact sensorial imagination', Jung's 'fantasy thinking' and the widely recognised method, in ecotherapeutic practice, of 'soft attention' or 'soft fascination' where the mind, rather than having a focus of directed attention, is absorbed or engaged in a reflective manner (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, pp. 192-193). Just as Jung's 'directed' style of thinking requires "attention" (CW8, para. 294) and is "difficult and exhausting" in contrast with the "effortless" act of fantasy' thinking (CW5, para. 20), the directed form of attention is characterized by Kaplan as more stress-inducing and less restorative than the 'soft' form (1995, p. 170-173), with natural phenomena such as clouds, sunsets and similar being optimal stimuli for achieving a release from the stressors of cognitive processing (1989, p. 192).

These types of perception, and the idea of a voluntary moving between them, also echo Puhakka's call for an "understanding based on experiential enquiry" of how "one type of consciousness transforms itself into the other" and the allowing of pathways to a "wider and more fluid awareness" to be recovered (2014, p. 14). For Puhakka, the fluid "subject-object polarity" is a feature of what she calls "nomadic consciousness" which may potentially collapse "into a unity of self and nature" or separate into "a self with a more narrowly focused awareness of the other" (ibid.). For the purposes of this study, a series of general suggestions designed to encourage a level of immersion and engagement with the natural environment commensurate with 'soft attention' was given before participants were asked to choose a specific phenomenon or object on which to focus for the duration of the main study exercise (this locus of attention will be referred to below as the 'focus object').

In using an Object Interview method as a framework for this study it was intended that a free association method of dialogue with natural phenomena could encourage a spontaneously undirected and fluid series of responses to an environmental trigger. This method, additionally, allowed for the adaption to be made in which the researcher/interviewer was absent and direct engagement with a self-selected focus object could be elicited. In this way participant responses were prompted by direct interaction with a chosen natural object/phenomenon, which was then invited to play its own contributory role in generating the narrative (as Mayseless & Naor, pp. 189-190). By adapting the methodology of the object interview in this way it was hoped that using a format in which the interviewer was not present would allow uninfluenced responses to the natural environment to emerge and would enable free, imaginative exploration of the chosen focus object. This imaginative exploration is thus conceptually based on the description of Goethe's method as phenomenological enquiry, and is informed by free association technique, Jung's fantasy-thinking approach, and Kaplan's soft, or non-directed, attention.

A process of operationalisation was undertaken following Hinshelwood & Walker's 'Methods of Research into the Unconscious' in which they describe the method as one that "forms a schema, a set of characteristics or features that can be 'inferred' or, if directly observable themselves, can infer the presence of other indirectly observable features, characteristics, functions, or processes" (2018, p. 173). In order to identify a set of features to be used for testing whether the theorised condition of an 'eco-symbolic' encounter was present my conceptual study of Jung's work was utilized, as Hinshelwood & Walker advise, to identify "the significant features of the conceptual entity that is the subject of research" and to "[extract] from the literature the significant features that will be visible to observation" (ibid.). These core characteristics were then used to generate a set of criteria by which the existence of symbolic material could be inferred in a research setting. Criteria were allocated unique thematic codes by which a thematic analysis could applied to data generated from empirical research activity. This data was obtained, as noted above, primarily in the form of transcribed recordings of participant narratives (via the study object interviews), with

supplementary data being provided by questionnaire responses and, where available, created artefacts.

A code manual, divided into two main categories, was constructed to contain, firstly, the themes generated by operationalisation of the term 'symbol' as seen in the Jungian canon and, secondly, a set of themes to indicate varying level of ecosystemic engagement or awareness (as informed by the concept of the *ecological self*). Themes were coded as follows:

Feature of the symbol (as per Jung)	**Thematic Code**
Dynamism	*J-Dynamism*
Numinosity	*J-Numinosity*
Fantasy thinking	***J-Fantasy***
Multivalence (multiple/multi-layered referents)	***J-Multiplicity***
Evidence of unconscious/emergent content	***J-Emergent***
Presence of affect	*J-Affect*
Projection of psychic content	*J-Projection*
Synchronicity	*J-Synchronicity*
Metaphorical significance/interpretation	***J-Metaphor***

N.B. Categories/codes in bold were considered to be key characteristics, with the occurrence of one or more being required for any identification of symbolic material to be made

Ecological awareness of self (as per Ecopsychological theory)	**Thematic Code**
Ecosystemic awareness - not including self	*E-Recognition*
Ecosystemic awareness - including self	*E-Integration*
Ecosystemic awareness - loss of separate self	*E-Absorption*
Expression of concern for other-than-human object/environment	*E-Solicitude*
Recognition of/ attribution of agency for other-than-human object	*E-Agency*
Reciprocal engagement with other-than-human object	*E-Reciprocity*

A further standalone thematic category was termed ‘Therapeutic/Transformative relevance’ (theme: *T-relevance*) which was included to monitor any self-identified therapeutic outcome to participant experience. Although therapeutic impact or insight were not intended as a result from taking part in the study, it was felt worthwhile to record any instances in which they occurred, as this may prove relevant to, or shed light on, other responses recorded during the study activity. A final thematic group was made available for additional themes inductively retrieved from the data (i.e., not pre-coded) to be listed. These were marked with the prefix ‘I’.

Themes highlighted above in bold that were, by conceptual evaluation of Jung’s work, identified as key indicators of symbolic perception in an environmental context were:

- fantasy, or imaginative, thinking
- multivalent significance, or multiple referents
- evidence of unconscious/emergent content
- metaphorical interpretation and significance

It was proposed that the presence of any one of these, preferably in combination with other criteria, could be regarded as demonstrating a possible symbolic aspect to the participant’s experience. Additionally, for symbolic content to be positively identified at least one of these criteria were required to be present alongside other confirmatory findings. Although the theme of dynamism was also highlighted as particularly significant, it was a working assumption that the perception of a dynamic aspect to nature did not, in isolation, suggest a symbolic encounter. Particular attention was paid to incidences where multiple thematic codings occurred, with supplementary sources of data collection being utilised to further identify, confirm or enhance the interpretation of such instances. Supplementary sources were also used to provide clarification in incidences where categorisation was unclear and therefore less easily codable.

In keeping with the recommendation in 'The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology' that a phased examination of retrieved data should be employed in the management of data coding (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017 pp. 23-32) each interview transcript was approached in several stages:

Phase 1 Familiarisation: The transcripts were read without interpretation or analysis and considered on their own merits to allow immersion in and deep engagement with the data. Notes were made about overall impressions and any of my own responses and/or expectations. Notes from these readings were made in a reflexive journal (see below).

Phase 2 Coding: The transcripts were checked against recordings for accuracy and then coded with reference to the criteria listed in the code manual. A keyword list was included in the code manual with a range of possible terms considered to fall under the scope of each theme. New keywords were added to the code manual if they arose during this reading stage.

Phase 3 Keyword mining: The transcripts were mined for any additional keyword terms or expressions not originally included in the code manual. These were again added to the code manual where they were highlighted to indicate that they were a later addition.

Phase 4 Iterative reading: The code manual was reviewed and refined in light of findings from Phases 1-3. Transcripts were again read through to find any incidences of code words which had been added to the code manual and highlighted at Stages 2 and 3.

Phase 5 Reporting and Analysis: Findings from transcripts were evaluated with reference to code manual themes. Extracts from both main (transcript) and supplementary (questionnaire, creative response) data sets was used both illustratively and analytically and an overall set of findings were detailed.

As part of my Phase 3 theme development and reading of transcripts I paid close attention to interpretations and observations of latent content, using supplementary data sources to enhance my understanding. Whilst the majority of thematic codes could be applied to the data in a clear and transparent manner, it became apparent that the criteria *J-Emergent* and *J-Multiplicity* (discussed below) would rely to a greater extent on my own interpretation of participant narrative and that *J-Emergent*, in particular, relied on the observation of latent material. As Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun suggest, two layers of understanding needed to be applied to the coding of data: 'semantic coding', where the code captures the *explicit* meaning, or that which is identified at surface level of data, and 'latent coding' where the code captures the *implicit* meaning, that identified at deeper level of analysis (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 22). They describe latent coding as follows:

> "Latent (or interpretative) codes go beyond participant-expressed meanings, to the underlying patterns/stories in the data. They tend to bring the analyst's theoretical frameworks to bear on the data, and are built around concepts that help explain the data, and thus require more interpretation or insight."
>
> (ibid., p. 23)

Empirical research considerations

Objectivity

One consequence of the use of the adapted object interview technique was that it could, by removal of the presence of an interviewer, eliminate some elements of transference and countertransference that might otherwise arise in a research setting. Reghintovschi, recognising that a psychoanalytically-informed research methodology will inevitably require a recognition and consideration of transference material, suggests that within a research setting "interviewer's interventions [should] be reduced to a minimum in order to allow the flow of free associations" (2018, pp. 91 & 96). Considering that incidences of transference and countertransference are said to generally occur in interactions between researcher and respondent, the elimination of the researcher from the fieldwork environment, other than at the stage of activity introduction and sensory attunement, were anticipated to help guard against the participant's immersion in, or responsiveness to, such interpersonal dynamics. As a result, this aspect of methodology should, in itself, lend a degree of objectivity to the research process.

Other considerations for maintaining objectivity in the research setting informed both the implementation and structure of this study. In order to prevent any influence on research outcomes, participants were intentionally not told the ultimate aim of the research or of the intended thematic criteria for evaluation of study data, with the idea of symbolic representation not being introduced at any point during recruitment or study activities. Introductory instructions were limited to sensory suggestions to encourage a state of 'soft attention' and other than being asked to find a specific focus for the main study exercise participants were able to find their own style of engagement with natural phenomena. Thematic analysis of data generated by the study was applied to transcripts of participant voice recordings, a process which, in the view of Midgely & Holmes, can, in itself, add "an element of 'objectivity' to the research process" (2018, p. 59). The listing of pre-defined themes in the code manual with keyword suggestions for each was another process implemented to promote objectivity in the analysis of data. Additional keywords were entered in the manual only when clearly pertinent to the theme, or where they could be evidenced in related literature.

Triangulation of data

In the interest of generating more credible conclusions from this study a triangulation of data was achieved by the use of supplementary data sources, which consisted of a written questionnaire and (optionally) a creative representation of participant experience. These additional data sources provided a way to corroborate and/or enhance the interpretation of transcript data from the main study exercise and, as Denzin & Lincoln suggest, could further 'crystallize' and "secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (2011, p. 5). This approach, using multiple types of data, as well as multiple "theoretical frames and methods of analysis" can, according to Tracy (in the Sage journal 'Qualitative Inquiry') "allow different facets of problems to be explored" through a framework that "increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent (re)interpretation" (2010, p. 843) Although this study was not principally constructed on a triangulation model it was intended that the material from other data sources would, at a minimum, provide further nuance and richness to the analysis and discussion of findings, and, where appropriate, could enable clarification of participant responses or associations. Additionally, (as noted previously) supplementary materials were intended to provide illustrative examples and context for the interpretation of transcript data.

Although arguments that triangulation does not "necessarily result in improved accuracy" and suggestions that different methods of retrieving data may "yield different results" have been considered (Tracy, 2010, p. 843), the possibility of reaching a more objective and in-depth understanding of the data was felt to be of sufficient benefit to the study process for it to be introduced in some measure. In particular, given the connection between the symbol, as the concept under investigation, and the unconscious content of the psyche, methods of data generation in which more than one type of conscious engagement was present was thought to potentially offer important insight into the dynamics of participant experience. Supplementary data collection methods were introduced as activities subsequent to the main nature immersion (object interview) exercise, with an indefinite amount of time being made available for their execution, and they were completed by participants in the absence of researcher involvement.

With regard to the evaluation of data, Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun note in 'The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology' that, alongside a flexibility of approach, one of the strengths of Thematic Analysis is its suitability for the analysis of a number of different data types (2017, p. 22). They observe that the "most important aspect of data type or mode of collection is the quality of the data", with "rich and complex data on a given topic" having the potential to allow "deep and nuanced insights." (ibid.). The approach in this study where a combination of inductive and deductive analysis was applied to data and latent (possibly unconscious) material was taken into consideration meant that interpretations could, where relevant, be supported by supplementary data sources. The aim of using this approach was to allow a contextual, triangulated, understanding of themes to both emerge and deepen during the evaluation process. Although triangulation was predominantly sought through multiple data sources within the study itself, further theoretical discussion and evaluation of findings also sought to incorporate any comparable observations by other practitioners and researchers.

Validity, transparency and reliability of data

For the purposes of demonstrating the validity and reliability of data in empirical research Hinshelwood & Walker advise that certain issues in the operationalisation of terms need addressing (2018, p. 181). They note that conceptual definition and criteria should be "sufficiently appropriate and visible" to be clearly applicable to other data samples if a degree of reliability is to be claimed for the research findings (ibid.). The coding process used for thematic analysis of study data was designed to ensure that a standard of transparency could be claimed in how conceptual characteristics derived from the literature were applied. In addition, the establishment of key criteria and minimum essential requirements for concept identification made the process of data analysis visible and open to further third-party examination. To provide clear access to data evaluation, thematic classification of transcript data has been presented in accessible tabulated form, illustrating where transcript text has been considered to illustrate particular thematic categories.

To ensure that data collection methods would provide an appropriate and useful way to evaluate conceptual criteria, as well as to test the study format in advance of the main study, a pilot study was held and a test thematic analysis carried out on the resulting data. Some minor adjustments were made to the final structure of the study as a result of this initial trial, as detailed below. Participants came from a range of ages and backgrounds and were equally mixed between those for whom the site was familiar and those for whom it was not with the two main study days being held at different times of the year, allowing for some variation in seasonal experience. Although the use of multiple sites for research activity was beyond the scope of this study[9] the observation that comparable data generation from both the pilot study and the two main group studies could be repeatably obtained gave some support to the reliability and validity of data generated. If at a further stage this study was to be repeated in other research settings and with different participant samples, additional confirmation of its reliability might be demonstrated and evidence of the generalisability of findings obtained.

Reflexivity

Throughout the study activities I kept a reflexive journal, with the aim of understanding my interpretations of, and reactions to, the data and to encourage my awareness of any preconceptions I might have regarding participant responses, or any expectations regarding study findings. This is a practice suggested by Clarke & Hoggett to aid in consideration of the "unconscious communications, dynamics and defences that exist in the research environment" (2009, pp. 2-3). They say that "if we look at the aims of psycho-social research, then at the heart of the project is the reflexive practitioner" requiring "sustained and critical self-reflection on our methods and practice, to recognize our emotional involvement in the project, whether conscious or unconscious" (ibid., p. 7).

[9] Given that multiple locations were already being employed at a single site and that some containment of variables within a particular setting was felt to be appropriate for this stage of research.

Implementation of study

Location, safeguarding and recruitment

In order to provide a site with user facilities and an existing infrastructure the study was held, with kind permission, at the outdoor educational and therapeutic organisation Wilderness Foundation UK. Having the dedicated use of this space, where a variety of areas, habitats and landscapes were available, facilitated participant-led exploration of the environment and provided a wide variety of potential focus objects for the main study activity. Volunteer and site risk assessments were carried out and approval obtained for these from both the host organisation and the risk assessment lead at Essex University's Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies. Site familiarisation was carried out and safety advice given to participants before their participation in study activities at the Wilderness Foundation premises.

Ethical Approval was obtained via the University of Essex Ethics Review and Management System[10] after which volunteer participants were sought. Participants were contacted by email, in the first instance, through academic and professional networks, and participant information sheets were then sent to respondents who expressed an interest in taking part. It was stipulated that participants should not currently be taking part in any nature-based therapeutic intervention and, due to the layout of the site and the requirements of the study, should be able to walk short distances comfortably. Participants were asked to complete consent forms prior to their attendance and were advised on the confidentiality of the study.

Pilot study and preliminary findings

A pilot study was initially carried out at a separate private woodland site and was used to obtain preliminary findings, test the format of the study days and monitor participant responses to, and experience of, the planned activities. This initial trial of the planned study provided an opportunity for participant instructions to be reviewed and test transcript data to be thematically evaluated prior

[10] ERAMS Reference ETH2122-0311

to the main study. For this pilot study a single volunteer participant was asked to carry out the initial introductory exercise in sensory attunement, record their thoughts and perceptions during the study exercise and complete a final questionnaire, with the option of also making a creative representation of their experience. Pilot study responses to the participant instructions were mostly positive, apart from one assumption being made due to a misunderstanding over requirements. In this instance, the participant believed they were expected to provide continuous verbal commentary for the entire duration of the exercise, resulting in parts of their recorded response being their apologies for falling silent. As a result of this response highlighting the need for clearer guidance on the recording of thoughts and impressions, amendments were made to instructions to be used in the main study to ensure that participants felt able to spend time in silent thought if desired.

In terms of assessing the adapted version of an object interview technique, the pilot study participant found using a recording device and vocalising their thoughts for a time period of around an hour to be manageable, although they noted the use of technology as "slightly jarring". The participant also noted that the process of vocalising their thought processes – although a "challenging and interesting thing to do" (Question 3 questionnaire response) – was, to them, an unfamiliar way of reacting to natural surroundings and had thus felt like a 'product' in itself, with the result that they did not feel any inclination to produce a creative response. Despite their choosing not to focus on one distinct object, but to spend time connecting with a location that drew them, they found that their attention did frequently return to one particular feature of the landscape. In their questionnaire response to the question of how they selected their focus, they responded: "Although I did not focus on any one specific object, there was one theme and one feeling that I kept returning to. I did find my attention landed on one particular tree stump repeatedly". The tree stump that repeatedly drew the participant's attention could be seen to elicit different, although often linked, associations on each occasion, suggesting that a free-association pattern of thought was effectively evoked by the study exercise.

Relevant observations from this pilot study in relation to the theorised characteristics of a symbolic encounter were the perceived dynamism of the surrounding environment (everything seeming to be "in motion"), an imaginative engagement with clouds ("it was definitely a bear for a while") and the ascribing of a numinous significance ("a feeling for the spirit of the place"). In terms of indicators for ecosystemic awareness, the participant ascribed an agency to the woods (their giving "permission" for the participant to be there and seeming "quite happy" to be in an unmanaged state) and demonstrated recognition of an ecosystem (a moss-covered branch where "little animals have burrowed in, lived their lives, set the next generations off…"). The participant also made the interesting observation that having the opportunity to spend reflective time in nature was "a way of making small connections back to an older part of ourselves". Data from the Pilot Study was not included in the final thematic analysis of transcripts, but was used principally to trial the coding process and to elicit any additional themes that seemed significant.

Structure of the study

After implementation of the pilot study and the resulting confirmation that the methodology and structure of the study would be suitable for the intended research, two separate study days were arranged at the Wilderness Foundation site. The overall format of the day started with site familiarisation and safety advice, a brief introductory exercise for the whole group, a period of around 30 minutes for selection of an exercise location and around an hour for each participant to carry out a solo immersive exercise. This was followed by a refreshment break, after which participants were asked to complete a questionnaire and were given the opportunity to produce a creative representation of their experience, should they choose to do so.

Participants were given an introductory exercise in mindful relaxation, following the idea of non-directed attention (Kaplan & Kaplan,1989), with the aim of encouraging them to enter a relaxed and open frame of mind. They were then asked to spend some time (20-30 minutes) using this technique in familiarising themselves with the site and moving through the space until some natural feature or object attracted them, 'drew' them, or imaginatively interested them. The

selection of the focal point was regarded as part of a process of encountering and connecting with the natural object/phenomenon. Having settled on a specific focus participants were instructed to record[11] the thoughts that emerge, without in any way censoring or editing the material, spending around 60-75 minutes speaking aloud any thoughts, feelings, images, fantasies, associations, stories or memories that emerged from this exercise. Participants were asked to allow themselves to move fluidly in and out of a focus on the natural feature if they found that their thoughts 'wandered' and were encouraged to freely follow any associative ideas, images, feelings and trains of thought that the chosen focus of attention gave rise to. Following the solo exercise, writing and drawing materials were provided for participants to make a creative representation of the experience if they chose to do so. Alternatively, participants were able to create temporary natural installations of their choice or take photographs of anything they had found particularly interesting or significant to their experience.

The broad aim of the study was presented to participants as that of 'reflective practice' and a small prompt card of suggestions was prepared to help initiate and deepen participant engagement with their chosen object or space, if needed. These prompts were presented as open questions that were designed to stimulate an "elicitation of response" rather than an "extraction of response" (as Woodward, 2019), such as paying attention to sensory input or considering what was interesting or engaging about their chosen focus, thus following the aim, as described above, of allowing the spontaneous emergence of content rather its mediation. In this way a flow of free associations was looked for, which would leave open the possibility for interconnections and meanings to be freely produced.

[11] Via hand-held/portable recording devices provided by the researcher

Data collection

Data was collected via transcripts of voice recordings, image capture of created artefacts and questionnaire responses. A code manual was prepared in spreadsheet format to list keyword cues for different thematic categories and to collate data from transcript texts. Transcript texts were read in phased iterations (as described above, p. 142) and thematic codes were applied to relevant words or phrases. After the main study exercise participants were asked to complete questionnaires (on their own and in their own time) which contained the following questions:

1. Have you recently had any specific concerns or issues on your mind? If so, please briefly list them and how you feel they affect you.
2. Can you describe how you selected the focus for your solo immersive exercise?
3. What did you notice about your initial reactions to your chosen surroundings?
4. Do you have any observations about the solo immersive exercise itself or how you felt afterwards?

A further (yes/no) response was obtained to indicate whether the participant has produced a creative response to the study exercise and a three-stage Likert scale question was included to gauge the participants' level of immersion in the experience (i.e., "Very immersed", "Partially immersed" or "Not at all immersed").

Questions 1 and 2 were designed to indicate any correlations between a participant's current concerns and their selection of their chosen focus, particularly in terms of any 'mirroring' or metaphorical representation, and how conscious or unconscious this may initially have been. Question 2 was also aimed at collecting any participant observations or responses prior to their recorded narrative and to gauge whether their process of selection was in any way significant to their later reflections. Questions 3 and 4 were intended to capture any further details about the setting or experience that could enhance understanding of the transcript data. Level of participant immersion was recorded for the purpose of understanding if (any) symbolic material or intersubjective experience were more likely to arise in conjunction with a deeper state of

absorption in the natural world. Questionnaire feedback was also intended to contribute to an assessment of the effectiveness of the study format for its purpose of eliciting and measuring meaningful engagement with other-than-human phenomena.

Copies and photographs of any creative representations produced in response to the study exercise were obtained with the participants permission. Collection of these visual records was intended to provide further insight into participant narratives, particularly in terms of metaphorical or symbolic imagery, should this appear. None of the participants chose to make a creative installation so no record of constructed artefacts needed to be made.

The following documents are available in the Appendices section of this thesis:

1. Reflective nature practice instructions and exercise prompts
2. Study follow-up questionnaire

Coding of transcripts

As outlined above (p. 142), each transcript was approached in four stages – the first to get a general view and understanding of the material, the second to apply initial coding and highlight key words and phrases, and the third to check for omissions or errors in the stage 2 coding and to look for instances of additional themes for which new codes were inductively generated at stages 1 or 2. Additional key words and phrases that indicated a close relationship to the thematic criteria were noted in the code manual under the relevant thematic category and distinct themes that were generated inductively from the data were entered as additional themes in the data-driven 'I' group. In the fourth, stage transcripts were searched for incidences of keywords that might indicate a thematic relevance that had been previously overlooked and were simultaneously read in conjunction with the questionnaire responses and creative products produced after the main study activity. The re-reading of previous stages concurrently with the inductive development of further

themes was carried out in order to "ensure the developing themes were grounded in the original data" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 83).

Transcript data was coded prior to the analysis or use of supplementary study materials (questionnaire responses, creative representations) as these were to be employed as confirmatory, or illustrative, of primary thematic evaluations. A decision to leave the inclusion of questionnaire responses until after third stage coding of transcripts was made in order to avoid "reading into" and interpretating the meaning of the data through the lens of later participant reflection.

To clearly distinguish between explicit examples of theme emergence and those that might be interpreted as implicit within the material, a distinction was made in the code manual between these two interpretative stances. A theme was only regarded as explicit when either:

a. an allocated key word occurred in the transcript text, *or*

b. the participant unmistakably referred to the thematic criteria themselves

Thematic Analysis of Study Data

Initial observations

All participants demonstrated some degree of metaphor use (*J-Metaphor*) during the study exercise indicating a representative function for focus objects, with half making associative connections between these perceptions and their own lives. The remaining half made imaginative connections between perceived phenomena and other objects or actions, with all participants showing some evidence of imaginative or fantasy thinking (*J-Fantasy*). A table illustrating the various metaphorical meanings assigned by participants is shown below:

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Metaphorical interpretation(s) *J-Metaphor*
1	Groups of clouds	Island chains
2	Winter as dormant season	The benefits of taking time to rest and go inward
2	New growth in spring	Being hopeful about the future
2	Dead leaves falling and new buds	Potential for new growth in letting old things fall away
2	Resilience and survival of tree	Developing own ability to endure and weather storms of life
2	Age and experience of tree	Age leading to more acceptance of world events
3	Symbiotic plant species	Relationship and levels of intimacy, possible damage to another
3	Twisting tree branches	Having to grow around things in life
4	Pond algae	Cells of the body
5	Falling leaves	Gifts, reminders
5	Grass bending inward	Being embraced, wanting support
6	Age and experience of tree	Perceptions and relative experience of older people
6	Leaf variations	Being aware of people as distinct individuals
6	Falling leaves	Release of stress, "decompression"
6	Movement of wind	Cleansing and releasing through breath

Table 1: J-Metaphor

Two participants independently recognised and commented on the fact that a metaphorical significance was present in their perceptions, with both relating this to circumstances in their own lives. Participant 2 described her association to trees starting to shed their leaves, by saying:

> "But something that I've also noticed on these trees, is that even though their leaves are falling off they've got so much new growth on them, so many buds, so much potential for

> new life, for more growth. Which is a beautiful metaphor … I think it's a beautiful metaphor for life. Something about letting old things fall away because there's new growth to come. And even during a time like winter which seems bleak and empty, the trees aren't shutting down, they're still growing, they're still waiting for their time to come back in spring."
>
> (WF_2)

For participant 3, a sustained fascination with ivy wrapping itself around tree branches gave rise to a metaphorical question about relationship and symbiosis. She expressed this in the following words:

> "I'm so frightened that I'm you, somehow, and that I'm killing things, suffocating things, squeezing them. I can't see you as a good thing. So twisted, so got a grip on, dying together. Kind of beautiful, utterly beautiful as well. I'm kind of curious about it both ways, me and P, ivy, trunk, who's who. Do we shift in between? And then you *are.* You are something that is."
>
> (WF_3)

Imaginative or fantasy elements in the transcripts appeared to correspond less to personal insight, although for participant 2 the fantasy of being able to grow roots was closely connected to a metaphorical interpretation of a tree as illustrating the possibility of personal resilience. For participant 3 an imaginative engagement with mushrooms in the crack of a branch correlated closely with a sense of awe and wonder (see *J-Numinosity* below). After wishing that she could experience a "fairy tale ending" she goes on to observe:

> "And the fairy tale ending is here because I'm staring right at that crack of mushrooms again and that is the fairy tale… That is the magic, that nothing dies. There's this thistle

again, the ivy, coming, creeping. This dead trunk is not dead, it's alive. It *is* the fairy tale. It *is* the beauty."

(WF_3)

Responses coded as *J-Fantasy* are shown in the table below:

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Fantasy *J-Fantasy*
1	Wispy clouds	Imagining the clouds as an island chain
2	Tree	Seeing the tree as it will be in the future
2	Tree	Having roots growing from feet into the earth
3	Other-than-human creatures	A 'fairy tale' encounter and communication
4	Algae	Imagined as a blanket you could walk on
5	Textured branches	Imagined (humorously) as churros
5	Low branches	Memory of imaginative play when branch was horse
6	Patterns of bent grass	Mountain ranges

Table 2: J-Fantasy

For participant 5 the sight of low branches on a silver birch tree triggered a memory of imaginative play as a child, linking her to memory of a natural environment frequented in her youth (see *I-Reminiscence* below). Participant 6 found her imaginative perception of patterns of bent grass as a mountain range led to her feeling artistically inspired, and, through this style of perception, to be able to achieve a state of relaxation (see *I-Inspiration* below).

Participant 1, whose transcript was otherwise mostly restricted to memories (see *I-Reminiscence* below), descriptions of current concerns and objective observations at one point began to develop an imaginative engagement with clouds.-This participant chose, as his creative response, to return to his exercise location and take pictures of a cloud group. This image is reproduced below on p. 204, where the possibility of the participant's imaginative focus having an unconscious personal significance for him is additionally discussed.

Emotional responses to natural phenomena were experienced by the majority of participants, with a varied set of associative triggers and affective reactions. On two occasions emotional responses related directly to the metaphorical interpretations made of natural phenomena. For participant 6 positive emotional responses were, on more than one occasion, the result of memories being triggered by her associations to natural phenomena. Participant responses are shown in the table below:

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Affect** ***J-Affect***
2	Rustling leaves	Being soothed
2	Autumnal colours	Sadness, feeling of absence
2	Walking through leaves	Joy, wonder, excitement
2	Crunching acorns, cracking twigs	Fun, enjoyment
2	Warm sunshine	Feeling 'good'
2	Woodland (familiar setting)	Feeling cared for, peace, calmness
2	Arch of trees	Safety, protection, being held
3	Clinging ivy	Tearfulness, love
3	Log pile habitat and ivy	Sadness, poignancy, love
3	Cut and dying branch	Fury, frustration
4	Beetle	Companionship
4	Sun breaking through cloud	Positivity
5	Sun above the trees	Feeling of hope, positivity
6	Pile of logs	Welcoming *(noted in questionnaire response)*
6	Sound of birdsong	Enjoyment (associated with memory)
6	Natural setting	Happiness (associated with memory)
6	Wind blowing across face	Being energised, relaxation

Table 3: J-Affect

Other affective responses arose from the experience of spending time in a natural setting and noticing phenomena in the surrounding environment. As one participant who was already familiar with the site described, a sense of belonging (see *E-Integration* below) and a perception of meaningfulness within the environment was closely correlated with a positive emotional response of feeling "cared for". Another reported a feeling of positivity that resulted from being able to see the sun above the trees and relating this to a sense of hope:

> "I can see the sun … and the idea of being able to see the sun in the sky above, above the tree scape – I don't know, it just gives me a feeling of hope. Really positive feeling."
>
> (WF_4)

In some cases, emotional responses to nature appeared to be closely connected to a sense of awe (see *J-Numinosity* below) with the impact of the object being related to how it was experienced or perceived. As seen above, Participant 3 spoke of the "fairy tale" beauty and eternality of nature in a way that also suggested a recognition of its complexity and interconnectedness. All participants (the majority explicitly) made some reference to or acknowledgement of the ecosystem in which they were carrying out the study activity (see *E-Recognition* below), with half describing a level of engagement with their environment that elicited a sense of wonder or amazement regarding natural phenomena (*J-Numinosity)*. There appeared to be some correlation between this thematic characteristic and the level of immersion reported during the exercise, with two of those reporting less or intermittent levels of immersion (participants 4 and 6) not seen to use the keywords "wonderful", "amazing", "magic", etc. in their narratives. Despite this, both did express an implicit fascination in their engagement with natural phenomena, with participant 6 describing the woodland as "exciting" and "inspiring" and using the word 'interest' and its derivatives 16 times. Participant 4 employed the word 'wonder' twice to express a sense of curiosity, and the word 'interesting' twice to describe aspects of natural phenomena that were encountered.

Responses that were coded according to the category *J-Numinosity* are reproduced below:

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Expression of wonder/awe**	***J-Numinosity***
1	Blue sky	Wonderful	
2	Tree that has grown from acorn	Magical	
2	Rustling leaves	Wonderful	
2	Thistles	Fascinating, sense of wonder	
2	Grass seedheads	Sense of wonder	
2	Thorns on dog rose	Marvelling	
2	Natural setting	Amazing	

3	Mushroom	Amazing, incredible
3	Part of tree trunk	Extraordinary, weird, amazing, perplexing
3	Sunlight	Stunning, "Wow"
3	Beech trees	Amazing
3	Ivy	Extraordinary, fascinating, utterly beautiful
3	Mushrooms in crack of branch	Fairy-tale, magic, beauty
6	Woodland	Exciting, inspiring

Table 4: J-Numinosity

As well as all participants recording at least one incidence of ecological awareness, all transcripts contained some reference to the independent agency of an other-than-human entity (*E-Agency*). On occasion, these responses demonstrated some involvement of the participant's imagination, with aspects of metaphorical thinking being evident in the imaginative interpretations of phenomena that were encountered and in the imaginative interpretations being given of other-than-human experience or motivation. The imaginative and fantasy responses to the natural environment which included speculation on the inner life of plants and creatures led in some instances to a concern for their wellbeing and, in others, to a participant's realisation of their own interconnectedness with the surrounding ecosystem.

Two participants directly engaged with other-than-human inhabitants within the environment (*E-Reciprocity)*, one by vocalising a greeting and the other by modifying their activity out of consideration for the creature in question. The majority of participants expressed a sense of consideration (*E-Solicitude*) for other-than-human inhabitants of the environment, or for the environment in general. Participant 2 expressed concern for nature on several occasions and expressed a reluctance to pick a living leaf from a tree without gaining its permission, also commenting on how as she felt "cared for" when in the woodland there was a need to "[care] for nature in the same way nature cares for us".

Responses coded according to the themes *E-Solicitude, E-Agency and E-Reciprocity* are shown in the following tables:

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Expression of concern for entity/environment *E-Solicitude*
1	Natural setting of site	Health of environment, littering
2	Resilience/adaptability of tree	Human damage of natural world, greed
2	Squirrel eating acorn	Not wanting to disturb the squirrel
2	Hornet	Self as more of a threat to nature than nature to self
2	Natural environment	Distress at people hurting nature, destroying natural objects
3	Mycelia on bark	Possible trauma for mycelium by exposure to light
5	Leaning pieces of grass	Imagining grasses being in need of support
5	Sounds in grass, mouse?	Humane catching of mice (as in childhood)

Table 5: E-Solicitude

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Attribution of agency to entity/environment *E-Agency*
1	Bird of prey flying overhead	Imagining the bird deciding what to focus on
2	Old oak tree	Ascribing wisdom and sensory experience to the tree
2	Ladybird on a blade of grass	Imagining the ladybird feeling enjoyment
2	Squirrel	Imagining squirrel assessing threat posed by participant
2	Bees at beehive	Seeing bees as "full of purpose"
3	Wind blowing	Imagining wind is talking, not knowing what it is saying
3	Mycelia on bark	Wondering if mycelia experience trauma when exposed to light
3	Spider walking on twisting ivy	Ascribing holistic understanding to the spider
3	Ivy climbing round branches	Querying if friendship exists between ivy and tree
3	Nosie of trees and wind	Wondering what is being said by trees and wind
4	Beetle	Beetle appearing to work hard towards unknown goal
4	Caterpillar	Speculating on knowledge and awareness of caterpillar
5	Leaning pieces of grass	Imagining leaning grasses needing comfort and support
5	Rooks growing quieter	Speculating that the rooks are contented and at peace
6	Trees	Considering life experience of trees and what they have witnessed

Table 6: E-Agency

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Reciprocal engagement with entity/environment *E-Reciprocity*
2	Natural environment	Wanting to only take from nature with permission
2	Squirrel	Considering whether squirrel feels threatened
2	Bees at beehive	Reciprocal care for/by nature
4	Caterpillar	Greeting caterpillar as "friend"

Table 7: E-Reciprocity

One theme that had been gleaned from the ecopsychological literature (the 'E' group), but that did not feature explicitly in the transcripts was that of *E-Absorption.* Two occurrences were ultimately coded under this category in order to show the presence of an I-Thou fluidity between participant and perceived object, despite them not featuring a total loss of separate identity. One of these is reproduced in the above excerpt describing participant 3's identification of herself with the ivy (p. 156), with another coming to light from the reading of questionnaire responses, where participant 2 describes wanting to be "in the middle of the tree surrounded by its leaves and branches, almost to be a part of it". Perhaps significantly, participant 2 noted in a further questionnaire response feeling "at peace" and "more at one with nature" after the study exercise. Participant 5 makes a comparable observation, although this was not coded *E-Absorption* as no loss of self was evident, when saying: "I just had leaf blow off one of the trees and fall on me – fall on my chair. I wonder if I sat under a tree with lots of leaves whether, if I sat there long enough, whether I'd get covered in leaves. Hidden. Camouflaged."

Transcript data coded as *E-Absorption* is shown below:

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Awareness of ecosystem with loss of separate self** ***E-Absorption***
2	Tree (in introductory exercise)	Desire to be in centre of tree and to be a part of it
3	Ivy growing round branch	Querying of self as being the ivy

Table 8: E-Absorption

Pre-defined themes from the Jungian group that were not identified in the transcripts were those of *J-Multiplicity* and *J-Synchronicity.* Although none of the transcript text was found to explicitly, or directly, evidence the presence of multivalence it became apparent that this characteristic may be more effectively identified at a later stage of transcript analysis, as will be considered below. The criterion of *J-Projection* was identified in one transcript, with fuller details of this being discussed in the next chapter. Indications of unconscious content emerging from the encounter (*J-Emergent)* were considered unlikely to be explicitly present, with evidence of this finding again being discussed later in this chapter.

One other thematic category that was less in evidence was that of *J-Dynamism*, which was arguably seen implicitly in, and overlapping with, other criteria from the ecosystemic awareness group – *E-Recognition* and *E-Integration* in particular – and the criterion *J-Numinosity* from the Jungian group. One participant referred to the dynamic qualities of the environment in describing a ladybird and a bee enjoying being "energised by the sun" and two mentioned new life or referred to phenomena as "alive". Transcript data coded as *J-Dynamism* is shown below:

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Dynamism** ***J-Dynamism***
2	Ladybird	Energised by sun
2	Bee	Energised by sun
2	Buds on trees	New life, growth
3	Bug, nettles,	"alive yet dead"
3	Tree trunk	Not dead – alive = "fairy tale". New life out of old.
3	'Dead' Branch	"alive yet dead"
3	'Dead' Ivy	New life from old
4	Algae on pond	Underlying life, activity

Table 9: J-Dynamism

Transcript data coded as *E-Recognition* or *E-Integration* is shown below:

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Awareness of ecosystem(s)** ***E-Recognition***
1	Saplings	Health and growth of plants, variety of forms and species
2	Growth of tree from acorn	Conditions necessary for acorn to become tree
2	Strength of tree, growth rings	Nature adapting to given circumstances
2	Squirrel eating acorn	Awareness of being in squirrel's home/territory
2	Nettle and bramble flowers, bees	Seasonal provision, nature "always working together"
3	Ivy	Home for many species: bats, birds, insects
4	Pond algae	Interconnection, multiple lifeforms & activity underneath
6	Grasses growing together	Nature interacting with other parts of nature

Table 10: E-Recognition

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Awareness of ecosystem to include self** ***E-Integration***
2	Hornet	Recognition of being one of all living creatures, connection
2	Woodland	Being part of nature "not just a visitor", connection, reciprocal care

3	Twisted bark	Desire to enter inside, sense of merging
4	Beetle	Not feeling alone when other creatures present
6	Woodland setting with view	Experience of self as being "in the company of nature"
6	Nearby trees	Trees becoming "more welcoming" & comfortable with proximity

Table 11: E-Integration

Themes implicitly present in the data

It was evident that certain extracts from transcript narratives could be explicitly recognised as belonging to a thematic category due to the appearance of a key word or phrase listed in the code manual, and that certain other extracts might be implicitly recognised as expressing a theme, although the participant themselves had not clearly stated them. For example, participant 5 on hearing what she thought might be a mouse and speaking about trying to catch mice as a child went on to question why humans might feel the need to keep animals as pets. Although she does not directly express her concern for the animals in question, the narrative makes it clear that consideration for their wellbeing (*E-Solicitude*) might be implicitly read into her observations when she says:

> "… we'd put, set, little mouse traps to try and catch the mice and I remember we did find a mouse once. They were humane mouse traps, we wanted to keep them as pets".
>
> (WF_5)

Theme keywords are shown in Appendix 4 in this document and coding allocations that were inductively generated are indicated in the Code Manual, as shown at Appendix 3.

Themes generated from the data

Inductively generated thematic criteria were included as a result of being recorded as notable or recurrent responses in study data. Four additional themes (the 'I' group) were gleaned from a reading of transcript texts, and are listed below with their code allocations:

Retrieved Memory	*I-Reminiscence*
Creative inspiration	*I-Inspiration*
Heightened sensory awareness	*I-Sensory*
Time distortion	*I-Temporality*

Additional Category 1: Reminiscence (*I-Reminiscence*)

A majority (two thirds) of study participants found an environmental object or scene to be a trigger for personal reminiscence. This theme could maybe have been anticipated in the use of the object interview method, as the suggestion for participants to give freely associated responses did present an opportunity for personal reminiscences to emerge. Transcript passages that were coded as *I-Reminiscence* varied from simple equivalences such as "there's a pile of logs in front of me which really reminds me of Christmas" (participant 6) to spontaneous remembering of some quite detailed childhood memory that had been triggered from a sight or sound in the natural world. Instances of participant reminiscence are reproduced in the following table:

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Retrieved memory** ***I-Reminiscence***
1	Natural setting, clouds	Thoughts from childhood, grandfather
2	Aeroplanes overhead	As a child, finding trails in the sky to be exciting
2	Crunching acorns underfoot	Childhood memories, joy when doing this
2	Kicking up leaves	Childhood memories, love of doing this, state of wonder
3	Twisted tree trunk	Things that were "grown around"
3	Ivy	Father, who would have removed ivy from trees
5	Silver birch tree	Favourite childhood place
5	Finding peace in environment	Peaceful, "secret" spot in derelict garden frequented in youth
5	Sounds in grass	Catching mice in grandmother's chicken run
6	Pile of logs	Christmas
6	Deer jumping	Childhood dog jumping in water like a deer
6	Bird song	Walking to school as a child
6	Bird song	Watching birds at grandparents' house, feeding ducks
6	Being in nature	Holidays with family, going for walks in natural settings

Table 12: I-Reminiscence

Participant 2 recalled the following:

> "I'm now walking into the forest which is one of my favourite places here and immediately it's so cool, so fresh. Crunching acorns underfoot, which is another something I remember doing as a child – so much fun!"

Another (Participant 5) found both visual and aural prompts for recollection:

> "Well, I've, ah, just seen a silver birch tree, it's actually right in front of me, and it reminded me of, um, my childhood when I used to go with my sister and we could play in a part of the woods that, just off the footpath, main footpath, at a place called Grinsell Hill."

> "I keep hearing sounds in the grass, close by, wondering if it's a little mouse. Reminded me of a time when I was a little girl and, ah, my, um, I used to play in my granny's sort of old chicken run area which was all over, overgrown and, er, sometimes we'd ah, we'd put, set little mouse traps to try and catch the mice and I remember we did find a mouse once."

Participant 6 also described how a sound trigger led to happy feelings resurfacing for her as she was reminded of past experiences:

> "Hearing the sounds of birds, really, it reminds me of being young, being at my grandparents' house, as we would sit and we would watch the birds in the garden and we'd go down to the river and feed the ducks and I think that's why I really enjoy being out in nature when it's sort of damp, because it really reminds me of being down in the long grass throwing the bread over for the ducks."

Participants also described how certain scenes or natural phenomena 'reminded' them of some other thing, rather than triggering a memory from their own lives. For example, participant 4, viewing pond algae, commented that "from a distance it looks like a sheet, or a blanket, and when you look closely you can see the little individual, leaves. Tiny little round dots. Reminds me of cells in the body." In a similar way participant 5 was reminded of churros by looking at the texture of tree branches. These imaginative interpretations did not seem to have any affective correlation and are included here due to the keyword 'remind' appearing in transcript data. Both excerpts have been listed above as fantasy responses (*J-Fantasy*) and might be said to more accurately belong to this thematic category.

Additional Category 2: Creative inspiration (*I-Inspiration*)

On occasion, the study exercise gave rise to creative ideas and goals for participants. Although only one participant (Participant 3) chose to create an illustrative representation of their experience, two opted to make photographic records (Participants 1 and 5), with a majority – as shown either implicitly or explicitly within transcript texts – finding their environment to be creatively inspiring. The finding that this response occurred with some frequency, even for participants who had not chosen to make a creative product, prompted the addition of the inductive theme '*I-Inspiration*' as, whilst it was acknowledged that this theme may have some cross-over with the Jungian category of *J-Fantasy*, it was considered sufficiently dissimilar and significant to be listed in its own right.

Participant 5 considered composing a "story about a little mouse" and commented that they were "trying to picture things … to keep in my memory" with the idea that they might "draw or paint them afterwards". Participant 4 noted in their questionnaire responses that they would have liked art materials with them during the exercise. Another observed:

> "I find myself keeping thinking of art whilst I'm here. I'm – it's inspiring to take it in and look at all the different shapes and colours and you realise there's more to it than … and I

think that's a really exciting thing to capture. So, I find it a very inspiring place to be, for my own development."

(WF_6)

Responses for this category are shown in the table below:

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Creative inspiration *I-Inspiration*
4	Various observations	Disappointed art materials not to hand as hard to recall observations later
5	Sounds in grass, mouse?	Idea of writing a story "about a little mouse"
5	Various observations	Inclination to memorise things for drawing or painting later
6	Natural environment	Thoughts of artistic pursuit, nature as inspiring
6	Patterns of bent grass	Appearance similar to an artwork, "expressive" way to relax

Table 13: I-Inspiration

Additional Category 3: Heightened sensory awareness

Another theme that was generated deductively from transcript data was the experience of heightened sensory awareness that was reported during the immersive solo exercise (*I-Sensory*). The majority of participants reported that they had been "very immersed" during the study, with only one reporting partial immersion (although having experienced significant time distortion during the exercise) and another noting that they had alternated between deep immersion and no immersion in their experience. Participant 6 explained:

"It's almost a feeling of being disconnected, but very in touch with what's going on around me. Seeing the grass even just moving in the wind, it just makes you realise how much there is going on that you don't usually notice."

Although only this one participant explicitly referred to a state of increased awareness all participants could be seen to show some level of deepened sensory engagement with their surroundings.

Additional Category 4: Time distortion

One participant (participant 6) who had found the exercise particularly artistically motivating and who had commented on this repeatedly during their recorded narrative described the time they had spent doing the exercise as "like a blur of memory" afterwards. This participant had also experienced a distorted sense of time during the study activity, which although unique to this participant, was felt to be an experience of considerable enough interest to include in the theme list (*I-Temporality*).

Additional observations

It was interesting to note that although participation was not expected (or claimed) to have any therapeutic outcome, half the study participants made some reference to therapeutic benefits in their transcripts (*T-Relevance*). For example, participant 6 made the observation: "I think this is really good for me, because I don't usually take the time to step back and evaluate what's going on around me, and being in nature really helps". Some other responses are shown in the table below:

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Therapeutic impact/awareness *T-Relevance*
1	Breeze, warmth of sun	Calming and settling effect
1	Natural environment	Resolution to use techniques and remember parts of experience
2	Various perceptions	Process of vocalisation found to be particularly relaxing
2	Old oak tree	Possibility of remembering insights and learning from them
6	Texture of grasses	Relaxing to touch natural objects
6	Natural environment	Trigger for positive feelings and memories
6	Natural environment	Beneficial to spend time in nature, positive experience, calming
6	Natural environment	Enhancement of connection with, and processing of, emotions

Table 14: T-Relevance

At the end of the study activities all participants verbally expressed enjoyment and appreciation of the experience and considered that it had been positive for their wellbeing. Participant 1 expressed his intention to follow up by seeking further therapeutic assistance, and wrote in one of his questionnaire responses: "I hope to be able to use some of the techniques immediately to help sleep" (WF_1Q). He also observed that during the study exercise he had found himself free from

intrusive thoughts about his health. Participant 2 noted an intention to remember and continue working with her experience, saying:

> "Maybe there's a sense that for me, I can't grow roots and stay here all the time, but this place can stay with *me* and I can learn from it to be me."

Lastly, one theme which had been generated inductively from the pilot study (*I-Gratitude*) was removed from the final code manual as it did not feature in any of the main study narratives. The pilot study participant had expressed feeling grateful to have spent time in nature and described having "time to just sit and be" as "a luxury and such a necessity".

A summary of findings

Although all participant transcripts showed some evidence of thematic response as predicted by the previous conceptual study, the existence of symbolic material was only determined to be present where multiple responses relating to the same focus object (including key discriminating criteria) could be said to exist. Following this requirement two specific 'object interviews' were evaluated as demonstrating a symbolic style of engagement with a focus object. These two occurrences were the only ones in the study data where varied thematic responses were unmistakably linked to one focus object, whereas other transcripts may have been coded with a range of criteria but these could not be so clearly said to 'cluster' around a single focus object.

The first of these was participant 3's engagement with an ivy plant twisting as it grew around a tree branch. It could be clearly seen that this focus object drew the fascination of the participant and generated multiple associated ideas for her. Her perception of the phenomenon as meaningful and relevant to her personally was shown by her comment "I don't know what is being told to me by all this ivy" with metaphorical significance (*J-Metaphor*) emerging during her narrative in which she questions whether the ivy and the branch represent her and her husband.

Affective responses (*J-Affect*) were also present, with the participant being brought to tears as she reflected on both the metaphorical significance and the beauty of the ivy. She observed how there is "something so beautiful and so sad about it at the same time. I love it, I really love it". At the same time that she expresses her love for the ivy and wonders "if I'm the thing that clings and chokes people" and asks if she "want[s] it to be something different to that", she appears to access a memory about her father (*I-Reminiscence*) who she supposes would have ripped the ivy down. Simultaneously, part of her emotional reaction is to the way the ivy and the branch nurture other creatures and "give homes to so many … like bats and birds and insects", showing an ecosystemic awareness (*E-Recognition*) to also be bound up in the participant's encounter. At one point she considers the perspective of the ivy, asking "are you friends ivy, are you friends with the oak?"

suggesting a recognition of agency (*E- Agency*) belonging to the lifeform she is contemplating. An indication of the presence of the theme *J-Numinosity* was also noted in participant 3's use of the words "amazing", "utterly beautiful", "extraordinary" and "incredible" to describe the twisting ivy and branch, as well as in her reference to the 'fairy tale' nature of the scene. In her questionnaire response on her initial reactions to the setting she described being "drawn into the intensity of it all" and finding her curiosity about the phenomenon of ivy and tree as "like trying to find the answer to a riddle" (WF_3 Q).

The second focus object that generated a number of thematic responses for a participant was a large old oak tree which participant 2 paid recurring attention to. As well as identifying the tree as a metaphor for resilience, acceptance and renewal (*J-Metaphor*), she engaged in a fantasy (*J-Fantasy*) in which she imagined herself as a tree, and whilst thinking about the ideal conditions for its growth (*E-Recognition*) remarked how "magical" (*J-Numinosity*) the circumstances for this were. Although this participant did not report an affective response to the tree itself, she did comment on her feelings of joy from walking through leaves and being cared for, at peace and calm in the woodland setting. She also noted her sadness about ecological destruction and compared her anxiety to the tree's calm tolerance of world events, demonstrating both concern for nature (*E-Solicitude*) and a view of the tree's own sentience (*E-Agency*). Her fantasy of being a tree and becoming a part of the landscape was prefigured by a recognition of the interconnectedness of the natural environment (*E-Recognition*), and "how each part of nature has its place, and how they're all connected and we're connected too, as humans".

Emergent material

In the case of imminent awareness or material in the process of emerging from a participant's unconscious the background 'story' was sought in supplementary data sources as well as in transcript text. For determining the constellation of multiple meanings around a specific phenomenon all data sources were used in conjunction with themes previously identified in relation to the focus object. In addition to this analysis, I used my reflexive journal to follow

through and explore my own thinking on the interpretations I was making and to attempt to recognise my own suppositions and associations. In some instances, I allowed phenomena I regarded as significant to 'speak' to me in the same way I might consider the symbolic content of a dream. In this reflexive practice I also paid close attention to where I felt material could be recognised as symbolic and where I would be inclined to draw out personal significances from encounters were I working in a one-to-one therapeutic context.

One of the ways I sought to determine the latent presence of emergent material (*J-Emergent*) in participant narrative was by examining participant questionnaire responses to the question "Have you recently had any specific concerns or issues on your mind? If so, please briefly list them and how you feel they affect you". Both participants 2 and 3, as discussed in the examples above, made associative connections to their own lives and to their prevalent concerns. For participant 2 anxieties about both their own life situation and ongoing world events were reported as concerning issues (WF_2 Questionnaire) and for participant 3 their current relationship was recorded as being in their thoughts (WF_3 Questionnaire).

In terms of previously unconscious or unacknowledged material coming into awareness, participant 2 reported finding relief from her anxiety and a sense of "peace" during the exercise, as well as reaching the realisation that it would be possible, in the future, to learn to be more forbearing and resilient in the same way she had perceived the character of the tree to be (WF_2 Questionnaire). Participant 3 came to an awareness of her own tendency to question things rather than accept them as they were, responding to the question on observations after the study exercise by saying she was able to see her own process and how she "fluctuated between intrigue, fascination and just being" (WF_3 Questionnaire). This participant finished her questionnaire response with the words "it felt complex and I will think on it some more" and in her illustration of the ivy included the caption "the ivy's time?" (WF_3 Creative Response, shown below).

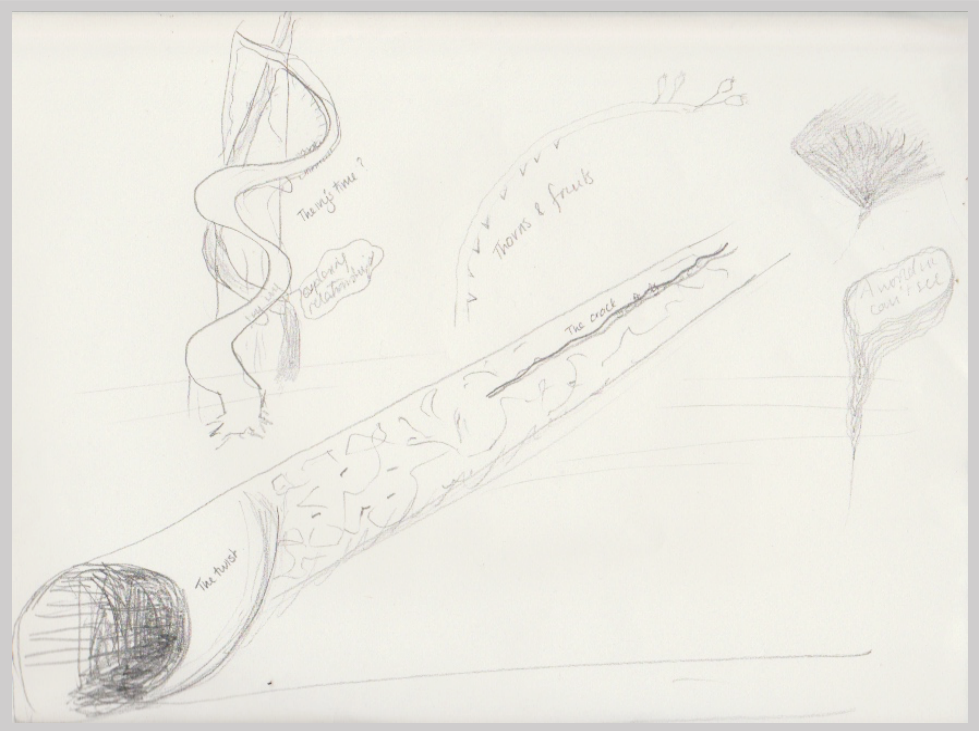

Figure 3: Creative response by participant 3

In another example of imminent content arising during the study exercise Participant 6 came to a realisation about their approach to decision-making and their upcoming need to make decisions on where to live and work while reflecting on their choice of location for the study exercise. In a questionnaire response on their initial reactions to their chosen surroundings they noted that an initial impulse to choose "somewhere 'protected/sheltered' in a very vast overall environment" triggered a recognition of their tendency for "gravitating towards what is 'safe'". Although it is not possible to follow up whether participant experience affected any future decision-making, it may be a valid observation that something meaningful was in a state of emergence for these three participants. Study data that was allocated the code *J-Emergent* is shown in the table below.

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Unconscious/Emergent content** ***J-Emergent***
2	Age of tree, tree through seasons	Possibility of being more like a tree: sanguine, tolerant, less anxious
3	Ivy growing around branch	"The ivy's time?" (in creative response), being more accepting
6	Protected/sheltered location	Upcoming decisions, recognition of tendency to choose safe options

Table 15: J-Emergent

One further response worth mentioning in relation to unconscious or latent material is the case of Participant 1, whose described his fantasy of a cloud cluster being an island chain. Although this participant's response was coded *J-Metaphor* (as it represented something other than itself) he did not, in his narrative, describe the fantasy image as having any personal meaning or relevance. His inclusion in his questionnaire responses of concerns regarding a son living in New Zealand and his feeling of "helplessness" regarding his son's difficulties did raise the interesting question of whether a connection existed between the imaginary and actual island groups. Although this may seem an excessively interpretative or subjective 'leap', it has been taken into consideration due to the fact that this was the participant's sole imaginative reflection and the wellbeing of their son the main reported concern on their mind apart from ongoing health issues.

Multivalent material

It became apparent that a constellation of associations, where multiple meanings emerge from a specific focus object, as represented by the theme *J-Multiplicity*, would be implicit in the data rather than be explicitly present in participant reflections. Coding for this theme thus became largely dependent on subsequent analysis and interpretation by the researcher. Participant 4 did note that she experienced a more disjointed style of thinking during the study exercise and described her experience in the following way:

> "I feel like I'm having lots of half thoughts about things but no fuller solid thoughts that can be vocalised. It's like I start thinking something then it never actually becomes a developed thought and then I move on, and so on, and so on. It just keeps going."
>
> (WF_4)

All participants could be seen to follow associative chains of thought during the study exercise and to engage in a free play of ideas, but it is noteworthy that multiple referents emerging from a single object were seen most clearly in the two cases where a symbolic interaction had been hypothesised to be present.

To illustrate this, participant 2 and participant 3's various responses to their focus object are shown in chart form below.

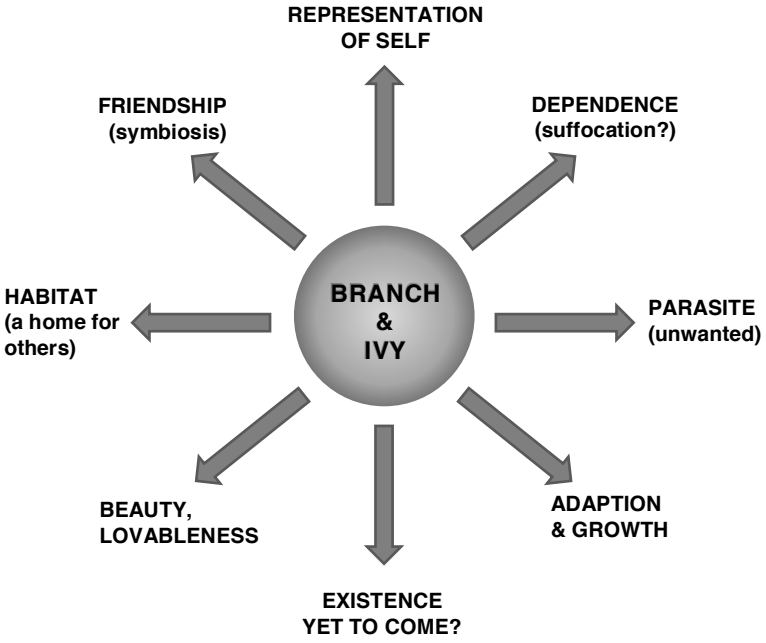

Figure 4: WF_3 object associations

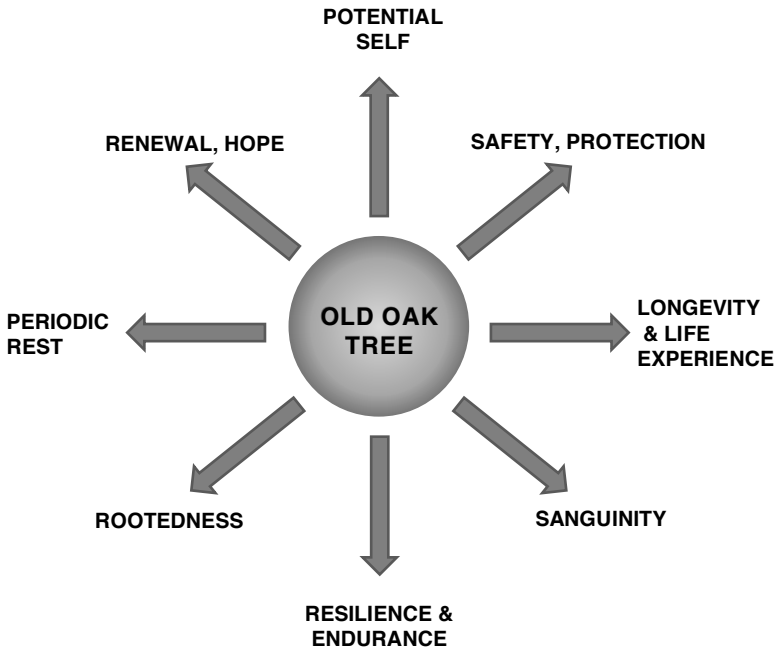

Figure 5: WF_2 object associations

Researcher reflections

Throughout the duration of the study activities and analysis of materials I engaged in reflexive practice (as described above on p. 147) to monitor my own responses and assumptions regarding study processes. I was highly appreciative of the openness and commitment of the study participants and the trust they put in me as the researcher, with this giving me a strong sense of responsibility to represent their experience as accurately and thoughtfully as I could. I am hopeful that participants' sincere and willing engagement in some way reflected that the study format enabled them to feel respected and safely held. I was initially worried by the number of participants being lower than initially planned due to Covid restrictions, several late cancellations and time constraints on rescheduling. I found, however, that a smaller sample size gave me an opportunity to familiarise myself with each participant's experience reflexively, carefully, and in depth. I was also disappointed that none of the participants chose to make a creative installation from natural materials to represent their experience as this is something often encouraged and found valuable when working therapeutically in natural settings.

As noted above, I monitored my own interpretations or subjective assumptions from participant observations, especially at the Phase 1 familiarisation stage. As I was aware that I would inevitably be entering this study with preconceived notions of possible outcomes I felt the need to be rigorous in applying my thematic criteria and to guard against making interpretations to 'fit' the theory. One of the ways I had attempted to ensure this was by allocating a minimum level of key criteria that would be required in order to designate an occurrence as symbolic.

With regard to triangulation of data, I noted that, although it had not been consciously designed that way, the contrast in supplementary data between created and written materials mirrored the distinction of the two ways of thinking described by Jung, with the reductive-cognitive material of the questionnaire and the synthetic-imaginative material of creative expression. In terms of being responsive and flexible as a researcher I found it became necessary to code themes that only came up in a participant's questionnaire responses, with these being colour-coded in their code book

entries to indicate their presence in supplementary materials rather than transcript text. Although my original intention had been to work systematically through the coding of the transcripts one theme group at a time in reality the process needed to be more multi-layered, fluid and iterative, putting me in mind of approaching the data with something resembling my own 'symbolic' perspective.

One of the questions that arose for me as a result of reviewing the data was whether a topically representative symbolic encounter would be more likely to emerge for an individual if they were to approach a nature-based exercise of this type with a specific question or issue in mind. Although it was not possible to test this question experimentally as participants in the study were intentionally not informed of the study aims or the dynamics under investigation, it was possible to compare the presenting issues of question 1 in the questionnaire to the transcript data to see if these 'specific concerns or issues' had been represented in participants' recorded narratives, as was speculatively done above with participant 1's island reverie.

Although not specific a focus of this study, the widely differing reactions participants had to the solo 'object interview' method were interesting to note. One participant found speaking out loud to be particularly challenging and intensifying of their sense of vulnerability, whilst another found the method to be an unexpected aid in being able to reach a previously unobtainable meditative state. Participant 6 reported gaining an awareness about their own habits of thought and how much they would usually evaluate things critically. Participant 3 briefly paused from their flow of associative thoughts to question whether their recorded material would be "good enough" or "the best" from the point of view of the researcher.

N.B. Subsequent to their taking part in the study all participants were offered the opportunity to give feedback to the researcher on how they thought the study was structured and organised, and to provide any suggestions for enhancing participant experience.

Conclusion: Study Outcomes

The 'material' of the natural world and the other-than-human community could be seen in this study to provide a rich resource for imaginative and associative connection and to speak meaningfully to the individual, much as the unconscious might provide material for fantasy or dream content [12]. The majority of participants felt that they had achieved a more relaxed state of mind, with associative thinking, metaphorical interpretations and imaginative connections appearing to correlate with a highly immersed state of consciousness. Intriguingly, participant 6 reported an experience reminiscent of a 'dream-like' state where her thoughts and imaginings faded quickly after completing the study exercise, leaving a "blur of memory". Additionally, as may occur in the dream state, she experienced a sense of time distortion, both during and after the exercise. Although participant 4 did not report any enhanced relaxation or heightened sensory awareness during the exercise she did note that her thoughts were only partially forming, with verbal expression being replaced by a series of impressions and indistinct associative links. This participant stated afterwards that she had far fewer thoughts than usual going through her mind and in response to the questionnaire question on immersion level, indicated that she had fluctuated between being "very immersed" and "not at all immersed".

Many of the categorised thematic criteria were found to be present in participant narratives and to be triggered variously by sights, sounds or sensations, and their associations. In particular, all participants demonstrated metaphorical and fantasy responses to natural phenomena, and affective responses were found either implicitly or explicitly in the majority of transcripts. These were occasionally linked to metaphorical interpretations, but also found in connection with the spontaneous emergence of memory. Incidences of associative reminiscence were noted to a significant degree, leading to the data-driven thematic category *I-Reminiscence* to be generated. A number of participants voiced an expression of awe or wonder in response to natural phenomena

[12] As previously observed, it has been suggested (e.g., by Greenway (2009), Kerr & Key (2018) and others) that the unconscious may be said to be integrated within the physical environment.

and, in almost all cases, showed some recognition of nature as a system of interacting lifeforms, with some degree of correlation being found between these two responses. All participants noted the agency of some other lifeform, with some entering into imaginative speculation regarding the inner experience of other-than-human entities and others engaging in some form of vocal interaction with them. In general, it was possible to say that multiple thematic responses to encountered phenomena could be seen although these did not always constellate around a clearly defined focus object.

Recorded observations were wide ranging in style and narrative topic, making it less than straightforward to determine whether any specific encountered object could be interpreted as a single meaningful phenomenon. In terms of study design, it was found that despite instructions to find a single focus for their immersive exercise, and to continue to deepen an engagement with this, participants often allowed their thoughts and observations to wander freely away from their initial focus, rather than to further explore their interest in it. Where concentrated attention on a single focus did occur (or reoccur), it could be said that multiple thematic criteria were cumulatively evident in in relation to one meaningful focus. In this respect, at least two focus objects did seem to reach the required level of confirmation for them to be regarded as symbolic occurrences. In these two instances it was also possible to see a reference to emergent awareness and possible future directions of psychic development, as would be predicted to occur in Jung's model of the symbol.

As I have touched on above, it is difficult to say without the collection of follow-up data where unconscious content might have influenced other participant responses and reflections. Where evidence of unconscious material could be conjectured by comparing transcript data to questionnaire responses (in particular to the question "Have you recently had any specific concerns or issues on your mind?") it was necessary to maintain an awareness that any interpretation of this kind would be highly subjective and not open to mutual exploration, as might be the case in an established therapeutic setting. Triangulation of data sources by use of questionnaire and creative

artefact proved to be an essential part of understanding participant transcripts in a rich and contextual way, as well as providing the possibility for more implicit material to be considered.

It may be that time constraints did not allow participants to enter into a deeper or more multifaceted relationship with a single aspect of their surroundings (as might be possible 'on trail' for instance), but it may also be that due to the intentionally open instructions – as opposed to nature-based practices that actively encourage or mediate an amplified focus – no particular expectations were raised for the experience, and participants responded with a more widely associative and anecdotal style of engagement. The absence of an interviewer to guide the participant back to a single focus object, as could have been present in semi-structured or object interview formats, meant that undirected, freely associative, thinking was not in any way limited, perhaps also making digressions more likely to occur. It was also noticed, as mentioned above, that participants did have inclinations to creatively represent some aspect of their experience, but on returning to the main facility (and despite art materials being freely available there) found they had lost the impetus of the moment. Any further development of this methodology might take into account a need to provide materials for creative representation during the main study activity.

In making my methods and analyses as transparent as was practicable within the parameters of this study, I have aimed to ensure that discussion on the reliability of my findings will be subsequently possible. Given the relatively small sample size available for this study (tailored to Covid-related delays and restrictions), and in order for consistent and credible conclusions to be drawn, further reproductions and developments of this initial enquiry might be usefully attempted. Nonetheless, it is to be hoped that a robust foundation and experimental application of method has been demonstrated that that could in future be applied to a fuller investigation into whether (and how) a symbolic dynamic can be predicted to arise spontaneously in natural settings. It is also possible, I suggest, that transcript analyses and the refinement of themes resulting from study observations may in themselves prove useful for understanding how best to study and work with meaningfully representative perceptions as they occur in various nature-based practices. Ultimately, perhaps, a

significant contribution made by this empirical study is in its having ascertained which questions to ask and how to most effectively ask them.

In the following chapter I will be looking at how findings from this study might be viewed from a Jungian perspective and how they might contribute to our understanding of the symbol in the context of environmental encounter. I will be investigating each conceptual theme in more detail in relation to ecopsychological and depth psychological thought as well as enquiring into the methodological and theoretical implications of this study and considering whether they may usefully inform either traditional or emerging therapeutic practice.

Chapter 6. Considerations for Theory and Application

Introduction

In order to reach an understanding of meaningful encounters with other-than-human phenomena in external environmental settings I have, in this thesis, considered whether such experiences can be regarded as 'symbolic' in a Jungian, depth psychological, sense. Having applied a structured method of enquiry by using thematic categories gleaned from a conceptual examination of Jung's work to the analysis of study data I will, in this chapter, be discussing the results of this study in relation to the Jungian conceptual framework by which it was informed, as well as in relation to ecopsychological thinking and nature-based practice. As part of this discussion, I will be considering the significance of those themes that were identified as emerging inductively from the data and I will be querying why particular thematic characteristics did not appear in any data and why, in the case of some data, it was found necessary to identify criteria as implicitly rather than explicitly present.

I will discuss how my understanding of certain aspects of Jung's thinking has developed over the course of this research in response to the findings of my empirical study. In particular I will be considering Jung's assertion that the symbol will always contain an 'unconscious' or perpetually 'unknown' element (CW6, paras. 815-817, CW8, paras. 148, 366 & 644, CW9ii, para. 127, CW16, para. 339 and elsewhere), his identification of 'fantasy' thinking with a 'symbolic' style of perception (CW5, para. 37), and his early opinions on the symbolic significance of 'external' objects being the result of the projection of unconscious material (CW11, para.140, CW10, paras. 133-134, CW13 para.122, and elsewhere). Having noted previously (e.g., p. 131) that Jung's description of the two types of thinking (directed and fantasy) both contributes to, and problematises, the question of the environmentally-encountered symbol, I will expand further on the distinction between these two modes of perception in relation to the use of imaginative and creative practices to engage with the other-than-human realm.

I will be looking at each individual thematic category operationalised from my conceptual study in order to gauge its relevance to engagement with environmental phenomena and to understand what implication my findings may have for understanding such encounters and their representative interpretation of the other-than-human. Drawing on these evaluations, I will ask what can be learned from this investigation in terms of the development of existing conceptual understandings of the symbol – in particular how symbolic experience may relate to the meaningfulness of other-than-human phenomena and an intersubjective experience of psyche within the containing environment, what therapeutic potential and significance might a symbol-led style of ecosystemic perception offer and, ultimately, to what extent a Jungian conceptual background might contribute to effective eco-therapeutic practice.

Study findings: Conceptual and thematic evaluation

A central aim of this research project was to reach, in Dreher's terms, an "optimal clarification" of the concept of the symbol (Dreher, 2000, p. 16) and to consider if any further development of the concept is required in order to optimise its use in nature-based practice and/or research. One key disadvantage of working from a conceptual hypothesis in this way is that empirical investigation into the concept then begins with some prior notion of what is being sought. As Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 90) and Swain (2018) caution, a preconceived thematic framework comes with the attendant danger of fitting the data to the expectation, rather than allowing the data to drive the theory. I have endeavoured to guard against this occurrence by, firstly, focusing my study design on the *observation* of spontaneous instances of symbolic significance rather than the *elicitation* of symbolic perception (following the distinction made by Naor & Mayseless, 2021, and others as discussed on pp. 55-56 of my literature review and in 'object interview' technique, as p. 75) and secondly, by coding transcript and supplementary data according to thematic criteria indicative of symbolic material, rather than by making an overall, potentially subjective, judgement of a symbolic occurrence. The identification of symbolic content is, consequently, dependent on a set of criteria being observable, with some of these criteria being allocated as essential 'key' indicators and some as providers of additional 'secondary' verification. A minimum of one of the essential criteria being met, in addition to at least two others, in relation to the same focus object were required for a symbolic moment to be identified. In this way, my study aim was to locate specific, transparent, indicators of symbolic content in the study data and only later to 'build up' a conceptual identification based on these.

From a review of the literature in which meaningful encounter with nature was described I extracted an additional set of themes designed to measure a participant's level of ecological awareness and the degree of intersubjectivity that this awareness demonstrated. A further measure to ensure a rigorous, less subjective, approach to the data was that of making allowance for data-driven findings to be recorded. In addition to the two classes of criteria mentioned (Jungian and

Ecosystemic), transcript and other data sources were mined for additional themes in line with recommendations for taking a hybrid approach to thematic analysis given by Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Swain (2018). This stage of data analysis sought any additional themes pertinent to the investigation, and further iterative readings of transcript and questionnaire data were made to code their occurrence.

Themes generated from the data

Three inductively generated themes that emerged from an inductive coding of the transcript and questionnaire data were as follows:

I-Reminiscence	Reminiscence prompted by other-than-human object/environment
I-Inspiration	Inspiration (including creative product)
I-Sensory	Heightened sensory awareness

Although heightened sensory awareness could perhaps be said to be one aspect of an ecosystemic state of perception, or already contained within the category *J-Numinosity* (intended to measure a sense of awe or wonder in relation to the focus object/environment), it was felt to be sufficiently distinct from these to require separate categorisation. *I-Inspiration* was another data-generated category that could arguably be encompassed within existing thematic criteria – in particular by the Jungian category of *J-Fantasy* which was employed to identify instances of imaginative or fantasy thinking in relation to the focus object. However, through iterative readings of transcript data it became clear that, although there were possible overlaps, an encountered phenomenon that was described as inspiration for a creative act (a story for Participant 5 and artwork for Participant 6) did not necessarily correlate with the production of fantasy material, or demonstrate the presence of imaginative thinking in the participants' recorded narrative.

Participant 2, Participant 5 and Participant 6 found memories of childhood coming to mind, although these were not attached directly to their focus objects (crunching acorns underfoot and kicking leaves for participant 2, a favourite playtime tree and trying to catch mice for participant 5,

Christmas, playing with a dog, feeding ducks and walking to school for Participant 6). Participant 1 found "random" memories would come to mind (going to football matches with his grandfather, making a new year's resolution not to drop litter) which he ascribed to feeling relaxed in the environment rather than any particular phenomenon acting as a prompt for reminiscence. Participant 3 related a more general sense of reminiscence, rather than retrieving a specific memory, but in the case of her recollection (prompted by twisting ivy) – "I'm wondering about my twist as well … my things I had to grow round…" – there was a close connection to, and metaphorical interpretation of, her focus object. This metaphor was later developed into thoughts about more current concerns regarding relationship and cohabitation, and was the stimulus for her expression of a series of associations. This last example shows a potential connection to the Jungian concept of the symbol (as will be discussed later), with reminiscence being one component of a cluster of associations that, for Participant 3, gathered around the focus object.

Whilst it might be expected that symbolic encounter would provide a stimulus for creative endeavour (as an established method of amplifying or further exploring symbolic imagery) it was only in the data generated by Participant 3 that a creative response was clearly and directly linked to the focus object. Participant 1 chose to return to a location where he imaginatively engaged with passing clouds to photograph the view, reporting later in his questionnaire response (re. initial reactions to setting) that his thoughts were able to flow more freely as he expanded his awareness "outwards" towards the sky. One participant commented that they would have liked art materials with them during the study exercise (WF_4Q), another described attempting to keep impressions in their mind to draw or pain afterwards (WF_5) and one related the following:

> "I find nature very inspiring… I enjoy doing art and I find myself keeping thinking of art whilst I'm here. It's inspiring to take it in and look at all the different shapes and colours and you realise there's more to it than – when you look at woodlands as a mass it all looks very the same, but when you actually draw into it and look closer the colours almost warp and you see more."

(WF_6)

In the transcript data reproduced above, a connection can be seen between a creative impulse (*I-Inspiration*) and a heightened awareness of environmental features. Participant 2 also reported an enhanced sensory awareness, and related the following:

> "I'm really noticing, and I've never seen it before, because I've never really looked in huge detail that the trees around me where they're changing colour for autumn, they're changing from the top. So, the tree in front of me, with the yellow and golden leaves, at the top most leaves are almost brown now, and then working down to a golden yellow and then the lower branches, a lot of them are green with some yellow mixed in. And then as I look round all of the trees are like it, so the oak, the big oak, its higher leaves are brown and lower down they're green."

(WF_2)

It is from this state of heightened observation that the participant begins to see metaphorical significance in the trees that she is describing. Participant 6 has a similar transition from heightened awareness to metaphorical interpretation: She begins with a "feeling of being disconnected, but very in touch with what's going on around me" and realising "how much there is going on that you don't usually notice". After a pause, she observes:

> "It's interesting to look at the leaves on each tree, the very different colours, and it makes me think as a whole you tend to look at people with the same opinion, um, but then when you actually look closer all these leaves are completely individual."

(WF_6)

Although there appears to be a close correlation between imaginative, metaphorical and creative responses and a heightened awareness of surrounding phenomena in the study data, the theme of heightened sensory awareness (*I-Sensory*) cannot be said to connect with a Jungian interpretation

of symbolic awareness (the 'symbolic attitude') in a straightforward way. As discussed in Chapter 4, for Jung the symbol is positioned as a product of the 'inner' psyche and the fantasy material that it generates is likewise, an 'inner' response. Despite one indicator of numinous experience being a sense of heightened intensity, there is no suggestion in Jung's work of an accompanying sensory acuity, especially in relation to the 'external' world. However, it may be worth remembering in this regard that in Rudolf Otto's original account of the numinous it is in a sensory appreciation of the natural world that a sense of wonder and awe first emerges (Otto, 1936).

Metaphorical representation

One of the characteristics of the symbol that was assigned as a key thematic criterion for my empirical study was that of 'metaphorical significance'. As noted in previous chapters, the terms 'symbol' and 'metaphor' have often been used interchangeably in discussions of meaningful interaction with other-than-human phenomena, with a resulting uncertainty over how to interpret the symbolic value of such an encounter in a Jungian, depth psychological, sense. This characteristic was given the thematic code *J-Metaphor* and was identified based on the observation (as stated in Chapter 5) that the object "contains a metaphorical content that is experienced as analogous to individual states, concerns or purposes and manifests as an inner representation of these".

Although Jung is, in places, insistent that the symbol is *not* the same as a metaphor or allegory he does refer to psychic or metaphysical images as *allegories* of some other thing in much the same way that he refers to them as *symbols* of some other thing (e.g., CW9i, para. 428, note 44, CW11, para. 161, or CW5, para. 372). As discussed above (pp. 107-108 & p.123) Jung believed the language of the 'primitive' corresponded to a "symbolical or metaphorical way of expression" (CW8, para. 309) and with regard to the archetype, observed that "an archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors" (CW9i, para. 267). "Archetypal images", having crystallized out of physical reality over time, can be, according to Jung, "taken metaphorically, as intuitive concepts for physical phenomena" (CW7, para. 151), implying than in the symbol, as an expression of the underlying archetypal pattern, we might correspondingly find a metaphorical

representation that relates to the physical realm. David Tacey speculates that Jung struggled with the idea of an "as if" approach to metaphorical statements about reality, with his "real concern" being to "affirm the reality of hidden universal forces in nature" (Tacey, 2009, p. 17). Using the term, he believes, presented Jung with a difficulty when something became "only" or "merely" metaphor, rather than pointing (like the "true" symbol) beyond itself to something "real" as well as to "metaphysical postulates" (ibid., pp. 17-18).

In his work on Jung and phenomenology, Roger Brooke refers to Jung's portrayal of the archetype being expressed metaphorically when stating that, for Jung, the symbol has "an essentially metaphorical structure" (2015, p. 133). For Brooke, 'symbolic reality' is a "metaphorical ambiguity, in which psychological life is both concretely real and at the same time imaginal and personally significant" (ibid., p. 114). He suggests that for Jung the symbol possesses an 'as if' structure[13] in which there is "an intrinsic relation between the signifier and signified" (ibid., p. 115). Thus, for Participant 2, her experience prompts the thought that she can live 'as if' she were a tree, and for Participant 3 her relationship with her husband is 'as if' they were mutually entwined and interdependent, like the ivy twisting around and coexisting with the tree branch.

In my empirical study all participants were found to refer metaphorically to something they had observed or experienced during the research activity. For one (WF_5), this metaphorical interpretation was linked closely to imaginative or fantasy thinking and for others it prompted a feeling response (WF_3) or an association with something they were reminded of (WF_4, WF_6). In one case the participant themselves referred to the metaphorical significance of what they were observing, speaking of the new growth of buds on trees as a "beautiful metaphor for life", as the tree would be returning to life with new growth in the spring. Later, when reflecting back on the experience of spending time in nature and asking herself "what nature means to me and what trees

[13] As proposed by Stein, 1957 and Fordham, 1944

and outdoor space mean to me" Participant 2 echoed her earlier metaphor and went further into the significance it had for her:

> "I can, go into the winter with some hope really that, winter isn't all bleak and dull and grey that it's just a time maybe of turning more inward, of curling in and becoming more reflective and preparing, almost preparing and thinking ahead to the joy of spring and the new life that comes with that."
>
> (WF_2)

Participant 2 and Participant 6 made surprisingly similar metaphorical associations between the age and experience of trees and how much older humans may have seen or experienced. Participant 2 again returned to the metaphor and applied it to her own life, imagining that she could herself be like a tree, letting things pass and weathering the storms "whatever life throws at me" (WF_2). Participant 6 also seemed to refer to her own lifespan when she said:

> "I always think with trees it's, it's really interesting to think what, what has the tree seen. Um, because you could be a tree that's been, ah, 10, 20 years, 100 years, and they've seen lots of different things in their lifetime. And I think that really strikes a feeling for me of how does this make people feel? There's people, older people, that have seen lots of things in their lifetime, but maybe a younger person has seen more."
>
> (WF_6)

As shown in my literature review, a number of practitioners and researchers referred to the use of metaphor as beneficial in nature-based work and frequently observed how meaning might arise from interactions with the other-than-human in the form of 'metaphor' or 'symbol'. Some nature-based programmes are intentionally built around the use of metaphor, such as the 'Nature Therapy' framework devised by Berger that uses metaphors from the "story of the hero's journey" (2006, pp. 183-185) or the outdoor adventure education programmes that use metaphor to introduce and develop

activities (e.g., Hovelynck, 1998, pp. 6-13 or Hartford, 2011, pp. 145–160). Corazon, Schilhab & Stigsdotter in their study into the therapeutic potential of 'embodied cognition and metaphors' in nature-based therapy suggest that metaphors provide a way of expressing complex information in a succinct yet "rich and vivid" manner, and for outdoor practitioners, offer a way of embodying abstract ideas (2011, pp. 165-66). They describe the metaphor as "a figure of speech whereby a physical phenomenon or object is used to describe something less concrete, thus transferring the qualities and characteristics of the former to the latter." (ibid., pp. 165-166).

For Laura Mitchell the metaphor, as a means of "taking in the actual sensorially apparent world", itself points to the "way of seeing in depth" that Goethe referred to as the "intuitive imaginal mode" (2014, p. 123). In the use of imagination – an ""organ" of perceptual experience" that ""sees" the connections between thing" – a "twofold unity" links "the sensory surface of a thing with its non-sensory (metaphoric/archetypal) meaning" (ibid.). "Image formation and metaphor" are not, she says, "an abstracted mental process", but "a fundamental embodied way by which we encode the world directly from out of our experience and into our thinking and language structures" (ibid., p. 122). Mitchell suggests that metaphor contains within it the "embodied imagination and dimension of depth" as it is through physical interaction with the environment that metaphor comes "allows common mental imagery from the sensorimotor domains to be used for domains of subjective experience" (ibid., p. 122) A sensory immersion in phenomena will 'deepen and shift' via the intuitive imagination, according to Mitchell, and provide "emotional and psychical space to stretch out into this expansive terrain of the imaginal and of *anima mundi*" (ibid., p. 123). I will go on explore the idea of the metaphor and symbol as expressions of a continuum with the natural world in my further discussion of the ecosystemic psyche.

Emergent unconscious content

As I have shown in my conceptual study, one aspect of the symbol that is consistently emphasised in Jung's work is that it will always point to, presage, or contain, something "unknown", "unconscious" or "not fully known" (see Ch 4, pp. 112-117) and, for Jung, this seems to be the

most essential way of differentiating the symbol from other psychic products. As Susan Rowland points out (in reference to Jung's 'Definitions') "What makes them peculiarly symbols is their ability to evoke what cannot yet or even ever, be fully or rationally know" (Rowland, 2018, p. 168). When designing my empirical study, this unconscious or yet-to-be known aspect of the symbol was one that I anticipated would be less easy to identify as symbolic content encountered in the form of 'outer' material phenomena was arguably not in any sense 'hidden'. I had also recognised that it would not be possible to directly evidence unconscious or emergent material in participant narratives, and that this theme would need to be *implicitly* identified as present. Additionally, in the absence of any plans for follow-up study, it would not be possible to verify any later emergence of previously unconscious psychic content. This property was, however, included in the list of thematic criteria due to its central place in Jung's conceptual formulation. The indicator 'evidence of emergent (unconscious) content' was allocated the thematic code *J-Emergent* with the intention of applying this to data for which any evidence of this dynamic could be reasonably inferred.

In his discussion of phenomenology and 'intimate responsivity' Adams introduces the term 'presencing' as a way of "intimating the dynamic, ever-changing, impermanent, revealing/concealing being of phenomenal presences, in contrast to something simply, statically, superficially, objectively present" (2014, p. 69, *n.* 5). "All presencing", he proposes, "involves an infinitely deep inclusion of hidden, implicit, un- or not-fully manifested yet still intimated dimensions" (ibid.) For Adams this is an important aspect of interrelationship with the natural environment – we are "*ever presencing*" even if we do not know this reflectively (ibid., p. 71). Adams suggests the following:

> "As a path of inquiry, therefore, we might simply walk outside, open our embodied heart-mind, become receptively attuned to whatever is transpiring there – whatever comes to meet us, to call us, ordinary or uncanny – and respond accordingly."
>
> (ibid.)

This idea has noticeable parallels with the instructions for participants in my empirical study, particularly the guidance they were given that when they had achieved a "relaxed engagement" with their surroundings participants were to "begin to move through the space, continuing to connect with (their) surroundings in an open and curious way". Then, as they began to explore the space they were asked to "be attentive to which particular natural feature, process or object" attracted them, drew them, interested them, or "called to" them. Participants were asked to be open to whatever possibilities presented themselves and in this way might be said to have been in a 'receptively attuned' state in which whatever might arise for them began as an unknown.

Although this was not the same type of 'unknown' as the emergent content foreshadowed by the symbol in Jung's thinking, it may be that this state of immersive attentiveness was able to contribute to the achievement of a 'symbolic attitude', and this is a possibility that will be addressed further below. As discussed in my previous 'Findings' chapter (Chapter 5), there were some indications that processes leading to the emergence of new conscious awareness could be observed. Participant 2, whose awareness of the metaphorical quality of her focus object was mentioned earlier, spoke of "letting old things fall away because there's new growth to come" just as the tree was waiting for its "time to come back in spring" after a winter of going "inward". Through this train of thought the participant reached the realisation that she too could "go into the winter with some hope", and rather than feel that winter was a time of "bleakness" and absence that she could see the time as one of "turning more inward, of curling in and becoming more reflective and preparing." (WF_2).

Participant 3 could also be seen to refer to a sense of something to come, when in her illustration of ivy growing around a branch (a creative response to her main focus object, as discussed and shown on pp. 173-174) she added the captioned question "the ivy's time?". in her questionnaire response when she noted how she initially reacted to the setting that the experience had been "like trying to find the answer to a riddle" she also noted that as she had allowed herself to be "drawn into the intensity of it all" she was able to see something of her own psychological process. As noted on p. 173,

participant 3 concluded that the experience “felt complex” and that she would need to “think on it some more” (WF_3). Both participants reported their level of immersion as high (“Very immersed”) and had interpreted the phenomena which seemed to contain imminent understanding in a metaphorical manner, as well as both demonstrating an affective response to it.

In these two examples the participants appeared to recognise that something had ‘emerged’, or was ‘emerging’ for them. An unknown quality was recognised as either something they had been previously unaware of (as in Participant 2’s new realisation about winter) or as something still coming to consciousness (as in Participant 3’s question, riddle and intention to think further). Jung suggests that “a symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings” (CW15, para. 119) and, like a riddle, has a “hidden” and “ungraspable” meaning that may at some point “shine through” (ibid., para. 185) or that might at least be recognised as present (ibid., para. 119). It was interesting to note that the focus object for Participants 2 and 3 appeared to have a teleological function, just as the symbol does, according to Jung – a looking “forward to a goal not yet reached” (CW9i, para. 293). Just as spring or the ivy’s time may come, the awaiting of further relevance is reminiscent of Jung’s description of symbols as “bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore” (CW15, para. 116).

In her study Eve Sahlin describes a therapeutic dynamic in which, when participants found symbolic representations in nature, these were able to offer “comfort and hopes for the future” and would help people to “see their situation in new and constructive ways” (2016, p. 105), suggesting that something emergent would point a way forward as a result of the encounter. For Omar Hajo, whose experience of therapeutic horticulture was mentioned in Chapter 1, the realisation of how the first plant he grew had represented his potential future came only when he subsequently learnt that “sunflowers” could “signify optimism, positivity and peace” (Mustafa, 2022). He then recognised how significant the plant had been in prefiguring his own attainment of those feelings.

Rowland suggests that the symbol, being the place where "matter and energy meet", "comes to us in … somatic immanence and joins us to the unconscious in its fullest possibilities", with these possibilities including the collective, transcendent and spiritual (Rowland, 2015, p. 82). For Rowland, there is a connection between the image as a 'sign' and a "known and coherent content", and between the symbol and the "unknown, not yet known or unknowable" which can be seen to fit Jung's "typical" pairing of concepts, although she notes that Jung's definition of the symbol is in this sense "deceptively straightforward" (ibid.). Brooke considers the unknown symbol to not be "somewhere else" but "an interiority within the symbol itself" (2015, p. 115), although this does not imply that 'inner meaning' is its sole significance, as "concrete existence" is "one essential pole of the symbol's constitution" (Gordon, 1968, as cited in Brooke, 2015, p. 115). The possibility contained in the symbol of some aspect of meaning being perpetually hidden also resonates with a quality of Indigenous language (i.e., Te Reo Māori) described by Mika, with the idea that "that which is being manifested through language is ''fundamentally unknowable and never the less influential and constructive'' (Mika, 2016, as cited in Williams, 2019, p. 176). In some way this 'unknowable' relates to the "interconnected totality" and the "bringing the world "into presence"" (Williams, 2019, p. 176).

This idea of an 'interiority' in which potential meaning is contained, in fact *must be* contained according to Jung, perhaps in some way relates to another characteristic of the symbol – that of its multivalence. The symbol has no clearly defined one-to-one signification; its "referent is not clearly known" (CW14, para. 668, *n*.54) and the presence, or possibility, of emergent meaning is what distinguishes it from both a sign (CW5, para. 180, CW6, para. 815, CW9i, para. 293 and elsewhere) and a metaphor (CW9ii, para. 293, CW15, para. 105). I suggest that the yet-to-be-revealed aspect of the symbol might therefore be thought of as an 'unknown referent', simultaneously hidden and undefined, yet always present in the unconscious as an *in potentia* aspect of awareness or meaning. I will be discussing this idea further in relation to the fantasy and imaginative responses of my study participants to their focus objects, below.

Projection

In a footnote to a discussion of mythological projection Jung states that "nature, the object par excellence, reflects all those contents of the unconscious which as such are not conscious to us" with many our own sensations being "unthinkingly attributed to the object" (CW5, para. 170, note 84). "In every case of projection", he says, there is a "mystical or *unconscious* identity with the object" as the projected content "creates an apparent relationship between it and its subject" (CW11, para. 375, note 77). In Jung's early view, this 'mystical identity' with nature was gradually curtailed as we learned to withdraw our "anthropomorphic projections" (ibid., para. 375). Thus, as consciousness became more sophisticated we learnt to differentiate and, it seems, to simultaneously lose an intersubjective existence within the natural world.

Although Jung's thinking on the mechanism of projection changed significantly over the course of his life, in particular when he began to consider the idea of a "transpsychic reality underlying the psyche" in relation to nuclear physics (CW8, para 600., *n.* 15), a tendency has been said to persist in analytic therapy of overlooking (Spitzform, 2000, pp. 275 & 282), not acknowledging (Prentice & Rust, 2006, p. 48) the presence of other-than-human existence, rather than seeing it as meaningful in its own right. In my empirical study I have looked for evidence of psychic content being 'projected' onto the other-than-human world by participants during the study activity *(J-Projection)*, identifying this by a demonstrable 'overlay' of unconscious or individually relevant material. I found only one instance of a description by a participant that might be interpreted as the projection of an inner state onto an encountered other-than-human phenomenon: In Participant 5's transcript the following narrative is found:

> "..Looking at a couple of pieces of grass, that are sort of bowing over on to me almost like they're giving a cuddle. I'm just dropping a few of their seeds onto my lap and my… blanket *(laughter)*. It feels like they're looking for comfort, for support."
>
> (WF_5)

In her questionnaire response Participant 5 reported that there were a number of concerns currently on her mind that were causing her to feel "vulnerable and overwhelmed" and that as a result of multiple caring duties she was not spending enough time considering her own wellbeing. Although her commentary could arguably be read as a feeling of concern for the encountered object and an imagining of it expressing its own state (see the discussion of the themes *E-Solicitude* and *E-Agency* below) the participant's own need, in combination with the higher unlikeliness of a plant being in "need" of "comfort", does seem to suggest this is an expression of her own need, rather than that of the object itself. Apart from this one incidence, I was unable to find any other compelling examples of data to code as *J-Projection*, despite the majority of participants finding some level of meaningfully representative connection with other-than-human phenomena. Comparing participants' transcript data with their questionnaire responses did not produce any suggestion that matters of current concern for them were assumed by them to be present in natural phenomena. Instead, presenting states could be seen to alter and shift though engagement with the natural world as new realisations were reported to emerge. Most often, the significance of encountered phenomena was described as eliciting associations and reminiscences through metaphorical connections, for example participant 6 describing falling leaves as follows:

> "Seeing the leaves just gently fall from the trees, it reminds me of when you just decompress after work and everything just feels like it's falling down in a way, but in a good way."
>
> (WF_6)

This observation illustrates a mirroring, or recognition of an 'as if' similarity in the focus object, rather than an ascribing of its own need to "decompress". Later the participant describes being in nature as prompting her to recognise and process her emotions – to engage in a "sitting and sifting through". She comments that: "When I find myself feeling trapped inside, coming out and connecting with nature is so helpful". This participant appeared to be experiencing the natural

environment as something that *drew out* her inner thoughts and feelings, rather than as something providing a proxy container for their articulation.

Sahlin recounts a similar dynamic to Participant 5's (above) when she describes the care one of her study participants gave to some small seedlings. For Sahlin the demonstration of concern could be interpreted as a "conscious or unconscious wish to be met with the same care as she herself had given the seedlings" and to be "nourished by understanding from her environment" (2016, p. 105). In 'Nature-based practice: a Buddhist psychotherapy perspective' Caroline Brazier suggests that for cases where projections and distortions do occur in nature-base settings the "attitude of enquiry becomes investigative and curious" (2016, p. 38). Out of the therapy room, she says, "trees, walls and meadows are more evidently real" than recounted "stories and memories", and as they "do not have their own agendas" can become "neutral objects" against which projections can be explored (ibid., pp. 38-39). "Although natural features may carry associations" these, she explains, "can be recognised and deconstructed or used as creative inspiration" as "nature is capable of surprising us out of assumptions" (ibid., p.39).

Tacey argues that "the very word *projections* (sic.) may be wholly inadequate because it assumes a dualistic Cartesian universe at the outset", a view in which the 'external' world possesses meaning or validity only as a result of whatever the conscious mind overlays on it (2009, p. 21). Brooke, in discussing Jung's understanding of phenomenology and Whitmont's 'reformulation' of Jung's position, notes that there is an argument for the 'reality of the psyche' to be understood as "referring to our perspectivity and metaphoric, or symbolic, sense when relating to the world" and thus the "human being's anthropomorphising tendency when relating to the transpersonal should not be called 'projection' but rather 'symbolic perceptions'" (2015, p. 79). In this way Brooke too thinks the "Cartesian mind-object split" can be overcome (ibid.).

Marie-Louise von Franz in her definition of projection (1980, p. 19) refers to Jung's understanding that the "basis of the phenomenon of projection" is to be understood as the subliminal persistence

of *participation mystique,* the "archaic identity of subject and object". She explains that: "Only that which has become a content of consciousness is described as an inner or outer phenomenon, that is, either as an introspectively perceived condition, like the welling up of an emotion, or as an "outer" event or object" (ibid.). According to von Franz "everything else, of which we are not conscious, remains, as before, an undifferentiated part of the occurrences of life" (ibid., pp. 19-20) and, according to this description, must therefore be by definition *unconscious.* Her further qualification of the phenomenon is, I believe, important – where she says that "one cannot speak of projection in the strict sense until a disturbance arises that necessitates the revision of a merely assumed perception or a judgement that has been accepted without reflection" (ibid, p. 20).

Tacey sees Jung as abandoning the idea of projection when he arrived at the concept of synchronicity (2009, p. 21) and suggests that "Jung recognizes that there is meaning in the world beyond that which might be projected into it, but he lacks the science to be able to tackle this problem" (ibid, p. 23). For Tacey, Jung struggled in his writings on synchronicity with "the notion of meaning in the world beyond that which humans may project" and he points to a 1943 letter from Jung to Emil Egli, where Jung says: "I am deeply convinced of the – unfortunately – still very mysterious relation between man and landscape, but hesitate to say anything about it because I could not substantiate it rationally" (Jung, 1943, as cited in Tacey, 2009, p. 22) In Tacey's opinion "A true mythic or symbolic content reveals the real and does not conceal it" (ibid, pp. 23- 24), taking us back, to my mind, to the question of whether or not the symbol can be 'adaptive'.

Like Rowland, in her call for a revisioning of the Jungian symbol (2015, p. 90), Tacey proposes that we "urgently need new cosmologies and symbolic systems appropriate to our advanced, post-scientific view of the world" (ibid., p.20). There is work to do, he advises, in separating out our "neurotic, escapist, and superimposed" projections and re-evaluating our idea of "fantasy imagination and projection" (ibid, p. 23). For Aizenstat, writing in 'Jungian Psychology and the World Unconscious', a reconsideration of projection might see it operating "in an intersubjective field that includes the phenomena in the world" and might even be seen, form an ecopsychological

point of view as "working the other way around – with "human life carrying the projections and personifications of the soul that reside in the creatures and things of the world" and "an object, plant, or animal could project its particular subjectivity onto us" (1995, p. 98).

Fantasy Thinking

Engagement with the symbolic realm seems to correlate, for Jung, with a leading of consciousness *away* from the phenomena of the outside world rather than into a deeper relationship with it, except through the 'inner' archaic, mythological – and hence archetypal – realm of psyche. This thematic criterion appeared to me to therefore present something of a challenge in applying a Jungian interpretation to fantasy thinking in the context of nature-based symbolic encounter. In his description of the introverted intuitive in 'Psychological Types' Jung points out that in relying on his "vision" this type of person might make "himself and his life symbolic", but as a result is adapted only to the "inner and eternal meaning of events", "unadapted to present-day reality" and devoid of practical influence (CW6, para. 662). This renders the individual "uncomprehended", and, in Jung's words, having "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (ibid.). Although "creative fantasy", for Jung, has the ability to draw on "the forgotten and long buried primitive mind with its host of images" (CW5, p. xxix), like the archaic mind, the creative mind is equally dissociated from reality. In 'Two Kinds of Thinking', Jung reasons that the "early classical mind", although highly artistic was unconcerned with objectivity and accuracy and, as a result, generated "a picture of the universe which was completely removed from reality" (ibid., para. 24).

Samuels, Shorter and Plaut, who describe fantasy-thinking as metaphorical, symbolic and imaginative (1987, p. 46), suggest that Jung's definitions of 'fantasy' are problematic in that they present two disparate uses of the term. In one the contents of fantasy are "different and separate from external reality" and in the other they perform the function of "linking inner and outer worlds" (ibid., p. 59). They suggest that the difficulty can be resolved if we understand the inner world as something "present only in structural form" with fantasy acting both as oppositional to and a "bridging factor" between archetype and external reality (ibid.). However, in discussing

fantasy in his work 'Definitions' Jung does acknowledge that it is, like every "psychological fact" a "living phenomena" that is "indissolubly bound up with continuity of the vital process" and "conditioned by historical and environmental circumstances" (CW6, para. 717). He suggests that there is broader "latent meaning" to fantasy, one that perhaps ties it to the physical world. He also notes that fantasy, when "purposively interpreted" seems "like a *symbol*, seeking to characterize a definite goal with the help of the material at hand, or trace out a line of future psychological development" (ibid., para. 720) and that it is "not only something evolved, but also continually evolving and creative" (ibid. para. 717).

In an interesting echo of Jung's requirement for the symbol to have an unknown or emergent quality, Mickey sees the imagination as "hovering between possibilities and uncertainties of things" (2014, p. 165). Writing on 'elemental imagination' he argues that phenomenology, as a method, is "indispensable" to an understanding of imagination, in particular to "determinations of imagination" that demonstrate innovative ways of reorientating the human psyche to the natural world (ibid., p. 162). There is, he says, a problem when an "object with all its variations" centres on human intentionality, so that the "qualities, profiles or adumbrations" of the object are not recognised as part of something that exists outside the "horizons of intentional consciousness" (ibid.). It is intriguing to consider, in reference to the discussion of emergent content above, that one meaning of 'adumbration' (in addition to 'representation in outline') is that of *foreshadowing* – suggesting that amongst the phenomenological "variations" and "qualities" of the object may also lie the yet-to-be-known.

My adaptation, for the purposes of empirical study, of the 'free association' object interview method drew on phenomenological theory and on Chalquist's account of Goethe's intuitive and attentive mode of "exact sensorial imagination" (2014, p. 253). For Jung, an 'undirected' or 'fantasy thinking' style is one that is linked to the "symbolic attitude" (as discussed above pp. 99-104) and although participants were not given any specific instruction to engage imaginatively with their surroundings, this was a type of thinking that appeared to occur during the free flow of

associated thoughts that arose for them during study exercise. As explained in the previous chapter, although a crossover was anticipated for participants between fantasy responses and creative inspiration, it was decided that two separate categories should be maintained, with the intention of identifying data that could be specifically assigned the 'Jungian' criteria of *J-Fantasy.* Using thematic indicators generated by my conceptual study of Jung's work, data was categorised as showing evidence of 'fantasy thinking' when an imaginative, figurative or creative approach to the interpretation of phenomena was found. Responses coded under the *J-Fantasy* category demonstrated that a more imaginative observational state was reached to some extent by all participants, including one whose narrative was otherwise predominantly a series of objective observations and personal reminiscence.

This participant (participant 1) imagined that the clouds he was observing were an island chain and he later chose to return to his chosen location to attempt to photographically capture a similar image. This is shown below, alongside the relevant section of his transcript.

Figure 6: WF_1 creative response

"Now I have couple of little wispy clouds going above me and I'm just going to focus on them. So, this particular cloud seems to have five little islands to it, a main island, if you like, at the top, which we'll call north, a mainland which seems to have two straggly bits and a little tail sticking off the bottom where the cloud is much less pronounced and a couple of little islands dotted around it."

(WF 1)

Participant 1 later made an observation on how their ‘fantasy’ portrayal came about in response to the questionnaire question “What did you notice about your initial reactions to your chosen surroundings?” He described his attention moving outward from an initial focus to the surrounding environment, ending at the “blue sky” enabling him to move from “random thoughts” to a state where he was more “prepared to explore” any ideas that arose. (The possibility of this ‘island group’ having unconscious significance for the participant is discussed in the previous chapter.)

Participant 6, who had found the exercise particularly artistically motivating, but who did not follow this up with a creative response, at one point imaginatively contemplated a pattern of grass plants, giving the following description:

> “It’s interesting to look at the shapes and colours of nature that you don’t usually stop to think about, like there’s some long rigid grass that has sort of snapped over and it’s made triangles, and these triangles look almost like a mountain scene and you wouldn’t usually sit there and think “Oh, that looks like something” but when you look around it’s more like an artwork and I find art really an expressive way of relaxing and decompressing, so actually I think it’s really important to be out in nature and relax and decompress in that way too”.
>
> (WF_6)

Although the ‘fantasy’ scene did not directly link associatively to any personal concerns or memories, it was reported by this participant to coincide with a more expansive, contemplative frame of mind and a more relaxed state. This position of being “prepared to explore” ideas that arose (Participant 1) or look at surroundings in a way that “you don’t usually stop to think about” (Participant 6) calls to mind Jung’s description of allowing thoughts to “float, sink or rise, according to their specific gravity” (CW5, para. 18) and for the absence of directed or ‘willed’ thinking to allow an “automatic play of ideas” (Kuelpe, 1895, as cited in Jung, CW5, para. 18).

This type of 'associative' thinking, where "thinking in verbal form ceases, image piles on image, feeling on feeling", Jung suggests, "does not tire us" (CW5, para. 19), it is "effortless, working as it were spontaneously, with the contents ready to hand." (CW5, para. 20). Participant 6 seems to attest to this quality when, in describing her experience, she uses the phrase "an expressive way of relaxing and decompressing". The idea of one style of perception being less tiring than another can be seen in Kaplan's method of "soft fascination" (Kaplan, 1995, p. 170-173 as noted above (p. 138) and in Puhakka's idea of "fluid awareness", that might also be consciously adopted in order to reach a restorative or immersive state. However, for Kaplan and Puhakka the contrast between the two forms of awareness does not have the same inward-versus-outward emphasis that is portrayed in Jung's work. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the finding that for some participants fantasy responses were inseparably connected to their perceptions of immersion and communication with other encountered lifeforms or phenomena.

Multivalence

Although multiple significances could be said to arise for all individuals during the study exercise it was only in two instances that a number of meanings or associations could be unequivocally said to be generated from a single focus object. In retrospect, it became clear that coding of the theme *J-Multiplicity* would need to be determined by the researcher by analysis of the complete transcript of each individual, rather than to be found explicitly conveyed within it. There was, however, one instance that seemed to indicate a clustering of 'undirected' ideas or partial thoughts, where Participant 4 gives following description:

> "I feel like I'm having lots of half thoughts about things but no fuller solid thoughts that can be vocalised. It's like I start thinking something then it never actually becomes a developed thought and then I move on, and so on, and so on. It just keeps going."
>
> (WF_4)

This account recalls Jung's description of the "supra-linguistic" and "inexpressible" content of fantasy-thinking (CW5, para. 19, note 19) as well as his portrayal of the symbol as beyond the grasp of language (CW8, para. 644, CW11, para. 385, CW15, paras. 119 & 185 and elsewhere), "never quite determinable" (CW16, para. 340) and, to the "perpetual vexation of the intellect" cannot be "fitted into a formula" (CW9i, para. 267). Puhakka, observing the flow of experience that can emerge from a process of introspection within the natural environment, describes, in remarkably similar terms, how: "The richness of the flow in such an intimate experience… always exceeds the vocabulary a language provides for its description" and a resulting need arises "to allow one's purely observational and nonlinguistic experiential capacity to move in terrains uncharted by language" (2014, p. 13). Grut, likewise, speaks of the way that "much of the work is beyond words, without words", an "unheard language" (Linden & Grut, 2002, p. 6) or "trans-language" manner of communication (ibid., p. 43). This space beyond verbal articulation is "something that challenges the inquirer to tolerate vagueness and indeterminacy where the mind would clamour for clear articulation and conceptual comprehension" (Puhakka, 2014, as noted above, p. 73). It is, perhaps, in this flowing state that those thoughts and associations that lie below consciousness and linguistic expression can be drawn into cognitive awareness.

Whilst other criteria were thought to give a strong indication of symbolic content, it was, in my opinion, the appearance of multiple significances, especially in combination with a metaphorical or imaginative interpretation, that was most likely to indicate that phenomena had taken on a symbolic quality for an individual. In this way the signifier could most unequivocally be said to be functioning as a symbol rather than a sign with, in Jung's interpretation, a single referent. As Jung says, the symbol is an "indefinite expression with many meanings", having "a large number of analogous variants" (CW5, para. 180).

For participant 3, responses to her focus object showed a constellation of several meaningful associations. These included friendship, life & death, parasitic or symbiotic lifeforms, co-dependency, habitat, beauty and puzzle or riddle. Participant 2, whose recognition of the

metaphorical significance of a tree is discussed above, also demonstrated multiple responses to her focus object. As well as the core metaphor of death and regrowth (in winter and spring), she speaks of the age and wisdom of the tree, comparing its perceived sanguineness to that of older people who she supposes have seen and survived many circumstances and changes in their lives. This also leads her to think about the transience of problems and the adaptability of nature. She also an emotional response to her associations and expresses her sense of wonder at the tree's development from an acorn. A fantasy response has her imagining what it would be like to grow roots and feel the same sense of resilience that she ascribes to the tree.

The multiple associations, alongside the sense of ecosystemic immersion, in participant 2's narrative, call to mind the language systems that are described by Indigenous speakers as eliciting a sense of oneness with place, as well as a "gathering of entities intimately related to place, space and time" in a "more metaphorical, nuanced, approach to meaning" (Williams, 2019, p. 174), as described previously. In a distinction that seems to recall Jung's separation of the symbolic from the semiotic, Williams explains the constellations of meaning in Te Reo Māori as "probably the primary defining attribute that sets it apart from Western languages like modern English, which are grounded in Cartesian or separatist views of reality" (ibid.). In this form of language things do not represent "discrete objects or entities" that exist separately from the rest of the world, but a single utterance can express "the interconnected totality of things" (ibid., p. 176) and language "arises from the communion of entities in place with each other" (ibid.). As the anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff observes in the case of the Huichol people, a challenge to understanding their language structure is that there is a unity in the "identification of the referents of the symbols and relationship between them" and the "function of the identification of the symbols with each other so that they form a single complex". (Myerhoff, 1974, as cited in Lawlor, 2013, p. 21). Jung also speaks about the Huichol interconnection of deer-corn-peyote (the 'complex' of meaning addressed by Myerhoff), and believes this demonstrates a "fundamental conception of a power that circulates through men, ritual animals and plants" (CW8, para. 121).

In terms of considering collective meanings and an archetypal foundation to the symbol in nature, there was a marked similarity between two of the study participant's responses to observing trees. Participant 2, as described above, spoke about their similarity to older people and their life experiences, saying "it's kind of like this tree has seen them all before … I think that's also similar to the wisdom of older age in humans". Participant 6 expressed a comparable thought, saying:

> "it's really interesting to think what has the tree seen…they've seen lots of things in their lifetime…and that really strikes a feeling in me of how does this make people feel? There's people, older people, that have seen lots of things in their lifetime."

Several of the themes from the study transcripts, such as rootedness, death and rebirth, life development and growth appear in Jung's description of the philosophical tree (as shown in Chapter 4 above, p. 110). Although Jung believes that the tree, as a symbol, has "undergone a development of meaning in the course of the centuries" and is now "far removed from the original meaning of the shamanistic tree" (CW13, para.350), he does suggest that certain features remain consistent. "The psychoid form underlying any archetypal image" he explains "retains its character at all stages of development, though empirically it is capable of endless variations" (ibid.). There is a sense in Jung's approach to the multiple meanings of the symbol that the one-to-one referent (or 'sign') might correspond with the physical manifestation of an object, and the one-to-many correspondences might take it into the realm of imagination, association and 'undirected' thought. If this were the case, then, in my opinion, the external manifestation of symbolic phenomena becomes easier to assimilate into a Jungian theoretical frame of understanding.

Herbert Silberer, who was in agreement with (and may have influenced) Jung regarding the "multiple significance of symbolic contents" (e.g., CW16, para. 9), proposes in 'Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism' that "the problem of multiple interpretation" is "universal" and "one encounters it everywhere where the imagination is creatively active" (1970, p. 168). In Silberer's opinion the principle of multiple determination explains the fusion of function and material aspects

of a symbol as elements of both take an active part in its formation (1970, p. 184). Rowland correlates the way the symbol "incarnates many voices in its multiple potential for meaning" with its being "indigenous to art as a *portal to nature"* (2015, p. 91) and suggests that Jung, rather than showing us how we can use symbols, models how "symbols are dynamic instances of the ensouled world" (ibid., p. 92).

Dynamism and Numinosity

One of the criteria for identifying moments that could be defined as symbolic encounters was that of dynamism. As noted previously, one of Jung's consistent descriptions of the symbol was its energetic quality or potency, and Jung's dynamic view of the psyche was one of the perceived advantages of a Jungian approach to a study of meaningful environmental encounter. In 'On Psychic Energy' Jung states that "there are indications that psychic processes stand in some sort of energy relation to the physiological substrate", suggesting that a dynamic view of the psyche may, in some way, be related to the underlying dynamism of the material world. In contrast with Jung's view that, in the context of the 'primitive' psyche, dynamic relations between man and objects should be regarded as 'energetic rather than 'animistic' (CW8, paras. 118 & 127), for Rowland, the symbol *is* "animistic not in a metaphorical sense, but in actuality". She proposes that on the symbol there is a possibility of "healing… the great split from nature" and "[uniting] the human psyche to the animism of the non-human world" (Rowland, 2015, p. 91).

In formulating a second set of thematic criteria to measure participant ecosystemic awareness or intersubjectivity, I was hoping to observe whether the perception of the object as having a dynamic quality was related in any way to the recognition of an energetic, or animistic, quality in the non-human environment. In my empirical study the thematic category of *J-Dynamism* was allocated to the identification of data in which a dynamic quality was assigned to a focus object. It was intended that observations of dynamism (and potentially numinosity) could additionally be compared to experiences of ecosystemic awareness and attributions of agency to other-than-human phenomena. In order to clarify how this this recognition of animate qualities in environmental

phenomena came about experiences were specified according to type, with the categories *E-Solicitude, E-Agency* and *E-Reciprocity* being used as detailed in Chapter 5. Transcripts were mined for descriptions of energy, life force or dynamism with three participants having their narratives coded for incidences within this category.

Participant 4 expressed recognition of the life forms underlying the visible surface of a pond. She said: "And everything looks so still. It's like I know that there is life and lots of things happening underneath the algae but from above it just looks like a very still blanket that you could safely walk on". Participant 2, as noted in the previous chapter, observed two different creatures (a ladybird and a bee) that she described at different moments as being 'energised' by the sun. The ladybird was described as "just enjoying the sun, being energised by the sun" with a recognition of its agency and an imagined interpretation of its experience. In describing the bee "re-energising" the participant focused more on her own enjoyment of the scene and of hearing the "glorious sound" of the bee's buzzing. She also spoke of noticing the life force and potency of trees, that despite their state of preparation for winter showed signs of new life. This dynamic was something that, as discussed above, she described as a "beautiful metaphor for life" and one which she found relevant to her own life experience.

Participant 3 also noticed the dynamism of her chosen focus scene. Speaking of the ivy-covered trunk she said "This dead trunk is not dead, it's alive" with "dead ivy around. Like an ever-changing creation. New life, out of old life". Commenting on her own desire for some kind of "fairy tale ending" to her experience to reassure her that everything was "OK", she moved from a recognition of the cyclic nature of life forces to a realisation that "the fairy tale ending is here because I'm staring right at that crack of mushrooms again and that is the fairy tale… That is the magic, that nothing dies… It *is* the fairy tale. It *is* the beauty". This part of Participant 3's transcript was coded as showing both a dynamic and numinous appreciation of the phenomena being observed, as well as demonstrating an accompanying ecosystemic awareness.

The category of *J-Numinosity* might be thought of as intersecting with that of *J-Dynamism*, with the idea of 'potency' relating potentially to both criteria. In this regard, an energetic quality is one of the four elements Rudolf Otto lists for the numinous experience (1936, pp. 13-30). In another occurrence that reflected Otto's idea of the numinous, participant 6 demonstrated a shift in perception from panic to aesthetic appreciation when a deer came close to where she was sitting. She described how: "The initial moment of hearing the deer, it made me panic, *(laughing slightly)* because I was like, "I don't know what that is…" and then spoke of her realisation: "but once you look and realise how beautiful it is, it's a nice feeling". In this instance, the initial feeling of unease calls to mind Otto's description of another element of the '*mysterium tremendum*' – the feeling of 'awfulness' or dread that may herald the numinous encounter. (1936, p. 16).

Otto's other elements of 'overpoweringness' and sense of the 'wholly other' were not in evidence in any of the data from the study. However, a sense of awe (as anticipated by both him and Jung) could be seen in several descriptions participants gave of their responses to focus objects. Perhaps significantly, it was the two participants whose experience could be said to most closely resemble a symbolic encounter whose transcripts were most frequently coded with the theme *J-Numinosity.* Participant 2 twice used the phrase "sense of wonder", once in response to nature's variety and its "mechanisms for survival" and once at the tactile sensation of grass seed and the surprising quantity of seeds on one plant. They also used the term "magical" to describe the materialisation of a tree from an acorn and the combination of circumstances in which that could about. This participant ended their immersive exercise with the comment "This nature is … amazing".

Participant 2 spoke more of the dynamism of nature in relation to her focus object, with her moments of 'wonder' being prompted by other phenomena. Participant 3, in contrast, was absorbed in a state of wonder in response to her focus object. She describes it as "incredible", "extraordinary", "weird" and "amazing". She also comments on it being "bizarre", how it "puzzles" and "confuses" her, and how she doesn't understand how it came to be, in way that calls

to mind Jung's description of the symbol's imminence being a "riddle" and a "challenge to our thoughts and feelings" (CW15, para. 119), as discussed above (p. 99 & p. 117). Again, this evokes Otto's version of the numinous, when he speaks of those natural phenomena that have "loomed upon the world of [man's] ordinary concerns as something terrifying and baffling to the intellect" or "set him astare in wonder and astonishment" (1936, p. 66), or when he refers to numinosity attaching to:

> "Objects which are already puzzling upon the 'natural' plane, or are of a surprising or astounding character; such as extraordinary phenomena or astonishing occurrences or things"
>
> (Otto, 1936, p. 27)

As discussed in Chapter 4, for Jung, unlike Otto, the experience of numinosity is applied principally to inner experiences to which a sense of mystery or divinity is attached. Jung states that the numinosity of the symbol is a reflection of the fact that "the symbol always includes the unconscious" as well as man himself (CW11, para. 337, note 32) and that it is the numinous content of the unconscious which gives rise to the formation of the symbol (CW12, para. 564). However, in Aion, when speaking of symbols of the "world-soul slumbering in matter" Jung observes that in this medieval belief, and in anticipation of the alchemical attitude, "matter is predicated as having considerable numinosity in itself" (CW9ii, para. 120). In addition, as shown above (Chapter 4, p. 88), when speaking of the multiple meanings of the word "*wakonda*" Jung includes among its connotations the idea of "mystery, power, holy, old, greatness, alive and immortal" (CW8, para. 115), correlating with the qualities of the numinous and resonating with some of the descriptions that constellated around participants' focus objects.

Affect

Findings from my empirical study might suggest that participant's emotional responses were somewhat closer to the surface and more readily accessible to participants than Jung seems to have

predicted. As discussed in Chapter 4 above, Jung speaks of the emotional substance of the symbol as an aspect that "does not depend on conscious understanding" (CW4, para. 490) and our emotional engagement with the environment as something lost in our archaic past. "Feelings totally strange to us accompany the primitive at every step", he says, and "everywhere his unconscious jumps out at him, alive and real", but now, in our modern lives, "a whole world of feeling is closed to us and is replaced by pale aestheticism" (CW10, para. 44).

As can be seen in the table on p. 158, all participants except one expressed a feeling reaction to some aspect of the natural surroundings. Although these responses were not necessarily connected in a direct way to their main focus object, there were occasions when a cluster of associative responses, including affective, could be said to constellate around a single phenomenon. Participant 3, whose ongoing interaction with ivy wrapped around a branch showed responses in several thematic categories, recorded the following:

> "It's just extraordinary suddenly the ivy appears to come from inside the tree…I love the ivy. I'm feeling teary as I speak of loving the ivy because I kind of wonder if I'm ivy – I kind of wonder if I'm the thing that clings and chokes people … but I don't know if that's true – if that's what it was doing [*slight sob*] I don't know, I don't know. That's the truth of it. Or if it – I want it to be something different to that. I want to say I love the ivy."
>
> WF_3

Later the participant queries what the ivy is telling her – what it is "trying to say". She mentions fear, curiosity and recognition and then describes how she is crying in response to the tree and the ivy, saying "there's something so beautiful and so sad about it at the same time. I love it. I really, really love it." It is difficult in this material to separate out which part of the feeling response belongs to the natural object and which to a recognition by the participant of her own situation. She also uses the word "extraordinary" of the ivy's emergence from the branch suggesting that some

moment of ecosystemic awareness, perhaps bound up with a sense of numinosity, is interconnected with her affective state.

For participant 2 a connection between emotional response and ecological concern is more explicitly expressed when she says “I feel a sadness that more people don’t connect to nature and see how fragile and precious it is”. This sadness is also related to her earlier thoughts of how she might learn from the adaptability of nature and her focus object of a tree, as well as a recognition of the “magical” circumstances of the tree having grown from one specific acorn. Later she associates the same feeling of sadness to the onset of winter and from this arrives at her reassuring metaphor (discussed above on pp. 155-156) in which even bleak times can be seen to contain the hope of new growth.

Participant 5 related seeing the sun above the trees to a feeling of hope and positivity and for two participants a feeling of comfort was described as resulting from not feeling alone in the natural setting. Participant 4 found that her feeling of vulnerability from ‘talking to herself’ in the woods was eased by a recognition of other neighbouring life forms. Participant 2, for whom the setting was a familiar one, reported an immersive sense of wellbeing:

> “I feel cared for by nature when I’m here in this woodland, when I’m here. I feel not just a visitor, but, part of it. This place has a deep meaning for me, brings me a deep sense of peace and … calm.”
>
> (WF_2)

For participant 6, other than her encounter with a deer (as mentioned above), feeling responses were mostly associated with happy memories. For example, hearing birds and being reminded of walking to school as a child, or feeding birds at her grandparent’s house, seeing the woodland scene and being reminded of walks on holiday with her family. She commented that this was “a really positive thing to do, to come out and enjoy something that reminds you of previous

experiences in a positive way, because it resurfaces these happy feelings". She observed that she was finding "a lot of the feelings … are very positive feelings" and that she had not had any negative emotional reactions to natural phenomena. She also describes how taking in the details of her surroundings has prompted her to be slower in her movements, feel more grounded, and become more relaxed and content. Some of participant 6's recollections were connected to happy childhood memories of her dog, with participant 5 also connecting her affective response to reminiscences triggered by her surroundings, which for her were memories of feeling happy and peaceful in the "secret area" of an old garden she used to frequent.

Searles, who argues for the importance of the non-human world to be acknowledged in developmental theory, has observed that when reminiscences about the importance of the non-human to an individual are recounted we tap into "a territory of personality which has lain long hidden from interpersonal view, full of thoughts and feelings which have remained private through the years". He reflects on how eagerly these are shared when there is an opportunity for the experience to be heard (Searles, 1960, pp. 21-22). Marianne Spitzform, acknowledging Searles' contribution to the developmental importance of the natural world, questions if a lack of this understanding in psychoanalytic theory may result in "affectively charged moments of self-in-relation to the more-than-human world" being under-reported by patients (2000, p. 282). In Spitzform's view, due the absence of evidence we are "forced to speculate" on how "*human* relatedness and attachment might apply to engagement between humans and the more-than-human world". (ibid., p. 268). In Searles' work he recalls how the "hills and forests, the lakes and rivers, the village streets and the familiar buildings and the myriad other nonhuman inhabitants" of his own childhood possessed, for him, a psychological significance which, although it may have been "interwoven" with interpersonal relationships, should still have been regarded as important in its own right (1960, p. 329).

Environmental philosopher Charles S. Brown suggests that a recognition of our "kinship with the broader ecological community" can provide a "framework for self-understanding that includes a

place for emotion, subjectivity, particularity, and animality in our socially constructed, narrative selves…" (Brown, 2014, p. 152). This 'self-in-relation' is one that is "from the beginning, intersubjective" (ibid. p. 148), with an ecological self-awareness developing from the internalising of a framework – a "network of differences in which the identities of things are constructed through their interrelationship with other things." (ibid., p. 152). There is a need, he suggests, for ecologically informed understanding of self that can take this network of relationship into account (ibid.). For Matthew Cochran there is a "stratigraphy of emotions" contained in the natural environment, with an interwoven system of "cultural complexes, geographic and geologic interactions" that go into the formation of an 'archetypal geology' (2014, pp. 235-6). Cochran quotes Giegerich in his opinion that Jung had emphasised something similar – that we are "enveloped by psyche on all sides, and it is the nature of psyche to be what surrounds us" (Giegerich, 2007, as cited in Cochran, 2014, pp. 223-224).

Here, there is a reminder of Jung's description of the 'primitive' state in which the topography of the environment and the contents of the psyche are meaningfully and symbolically interwoven. As previously noted, ecopsychology highlights the fact that a complex interweaving of psyche and ecosystem, rather than being an archaic and obsolete state of consciousness, is a lived reality for many Indigenous peoples. Martin Jordan describes the "profoundly metaphysical landscape" and "web of systemic connections" found in Indigenous lifeworlds as a state in which psychology and emotions are rooted in the land (Jordan, 2009, pp. 29-30) and where emotion can be understood as a socio-spatial experience rather than an exclusively interior phenomenon (Jordan, 2016, p. 63). Jordan describes how in Indigenous cultures the 'symbolic' significance of places can be recognised from their "emotional associations and the resultant feelings they inspire" – an "emotional geography" where affect "positions the perceiver and place in a reciprocal feedback loop" (Jordan, 2016, p. 63). David Lawlor speaks of a "resiliency, rootedness and meaning" (2013, p. 19) in experience of place for the Huichol people, in which both symbolic and emotional aspects are contained (ibid., p.21). As related in Chapter 4, Jung's encounter with a Pueblo elder fittingly

illustrates these ideas, when their mutual sense of reverence for a mountain filled both Jung and his Indigenous host with profound emotion.

It seems reasonable to question whether the modern psyche is, in fact, as emotionally distanced from its natural surroundings as Jung, on occasion, implies. As Searles has pointed out, and as my empirical study, I believe, demonstrates, when an opportunity is made available for nature connection (or for the prompting of reminiscences of them), we begin to hear about those "unknown" feelings accompanying the individual "at every step" and even witness how those underlying emotions become inherently present – "alive and real" – within the landscape.

Synchronicity

Although no examples of the theme *J-Synchronicity* were identified in participant accounts of study activity, synchronistic occurrences are often reported in nature-based therapeutic practice. This has been my own experience and that of other practitioners working in outdoor settings when, as Prentice & Rust observe, "a lot seems to take place at the levels of metaphor and synchronicity" (2006, p. 45). Eve Sahlin connects a sense of ecstasy or awe and "being deeply moved" by experiences in the natural world to a state in which a person becomes connected and "in harmony with the universe" (2016, p. 104). Verena Kast likewise credits the quality of awe with bringing us into relationship with nature (2022) and von Franz suggests that it is in those moments activated by a "state of high emotional tension" that "psyche and matter seem no longer to be separate entities but arrange themselves into an identical, meaningful symbolic situation". (2001, p. 99). In these respects, it is interesting to note that Participant 2 spoke of the 'magic' of an acorn growing into a tree when the exact set of circumstances converged for this to happen.

In a similar experience to Jung's 'fish synchronicity', described above, Lauren Schneider writes in 'Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind' of how working with a series of dreams about whales resulted in a cluster of related 'whale synchronicities'. She observes how these types of experiences have the ability to connect the psyche to a greater planetary whole, and she explains how the symbol of the whale came to represent for her "the animal instinct that lives in the ocean, or the greater unconscious, of all humankind" and that it could represent "the instinctual nature that lives in the oceanic collective" (2009, p. 118).

As noted above, (p. 200) Tacey believed that Jung's thinking moved beyond the mechanism of projection when he formulated his concept of synchronicity. He describes the "most profound projections" as "expressions of archetypal reality that speak of the nature of ultimate reality", or in other words as things that do not belong to us but "might belong inside the soul of the world, the *anima mundi*" (2009, p. 21). In his paper on 'Synchronicity and Holism' Main suggests it is possible to see Jung's psychological model as "itself a richly articulated form of holistic thought,

which would repay study in relation to its core holistic ideas" (2019, p. 3). Jung's interpretation of acausality, according to Main, "affirms that events can be connected not through cause and effect but through their relationship as psychic and physical components (or parts) of a greater psychophysical whole" meaning that "the psychophysical whole is a pattern of meaning, experienced not as subjective projection but as an objective feature of reality (ibid. pp. 12-13).

For Main, Jung's theory of synchronicity supports the objective, transpersonal character of the symbol (or archetypal motif) by showing "they can be as much physical as psychic, involving the outer world of nature as well as the human mind" (2006, pp. 18-19). In this way the symbol can be seen to hold a fundamental role in containing intersubjective or ecosystemic experience of the other-than-human world, suggesting that even in encounters that cannot be described as 'synchronistic' a synchronising effect of some kind may still be present in the experience. As Jung says of the *unus mundus* – synchronicity is its parapsychological equivalent and "the unconscious can be directly experienced via its manifestations" (CW14, paras. 662 & 660), as discussed on p. 128). The contents of the unconscious, Jung says, give the impression that "everything is connected with everything else" and that "despite their multifarious modes of manifestation", they are, ultimately, "a unity" (ibid., para. 660).

For Rowland synchronicity "implies that archetypal principles of creativity and ordering are not limited to the psyche, but inhered in other forms of reality". In cosmodernity, she explains, synchronicity is "a recognition of quantum spontaneity and the intercommunication of complex adaptive systems" (2018, p. 170). Jung, in Rowland's opinion, has provided in his concept of the symbol "an idea of radical re-visioning of the psyche as expressed in time and space" (ibid., p. 81) – a meeting of "matter and energy" that reconnects us to the world by "holding the "tensions between immanence and transcendence." (ibid., p. 82). In this sense 'immanence' is the embodied or grounded aspect, located "in a specific place, and time, with a particular history" (ibid.). The symbol joins the *somatic* to the fullest possibility of its expression in "collective, transcendent" and

"spiritual energy" (ibid.) and by holding this tension, has the ability to "knit us into the cosmos." (ibid., p. 86).

According to Gieser, writing in 'Jung, Pauli, and the Symbolic Nature of Reality', Pauli, who in his collaboration with Jung became interested in the concept of the symbol, believed that its form was "linked to its deeper organizational (i.e., archetypal) levels that refer to some kind of psychophysical processes that are operative in nature." (Gieser, 2014, p. 157). Pauli went so far as to say that "reality in itself is symbolic" (Gieser, 1995, p. 151), and, in what seems to be direct contrast with the idea of the 'unadapted' nature of symbolic existence, proposed the symbol as the "first and fundamental unit of reality" – a "basic structuring principle beyond the dichotomy of psyche and matter" that "can explain how symbols both express psychological and material 'truths'" (ibid., p. 151). In contrast with Jung's statement that the symbol does not disguise its meaning (CW18, para. 569 & CW7, para. 492) Gieser views it as being both "veiling and revealing" of reality (ibid., pp. 161-163), explaining Pauli's approach as a "double-aspect" one in which "the symbol is visible in its limited, phenomenological and/or rational expression", but also "opens up to a deeper archetypal level of inclusiveness and complexity" (ibid,. p. 161). Gieser believes this approach lead Pauli into some areas of confusion, as when he "uses the concept 'symbol' to denote the one-sidedness of a certain symbolic image and therefore to emphasize that knowledge is always connected to making a choice of seeing one aspect of reality and sacrificing another" (ibid, p161).

As well as these ideas of interconnection and unity suggesting that is important to keep idea of synchronicity in mind when working with the symbol, Jung, as noted above (p. 129), points out that synchronistic events will tend to constellate around symbols and archetypal material, quite often material activated by strong affect (CW8, paras. 826 & 912, CW9ii, para. 287, note 1) or numinosity (CW9ii, para. 287, note 1). It is possible that journeying into the natural environment with intention may provide a "connection with emotionality" or a feeling of "interest, curiosity, expectation, hope, [or] fear, of the kind Jung suggests is more likely to evoke dynamics that are

"not causally explicable" (CW8, para. 912). Participant 5 in my empirical study queried whether she would have "got more out of the exercise" had she written her concerns down first and although this opportunity was not provided within the parameters of the study, it may be worth noting as something that may enhance emotional engagement and therefore invite more 'synchronistic' relationship with the other-than-human world.

Further creative expression may also have opened up possibilities for deeper participation in the patterns of the natural environment. It is, according to Rowland, through artistic expression that the "synchronous Jungian symbol" might provide an "evolutionary portal into the psyche offering the return of an animistic sense of non-human nature" (ibid., p. 91) as the true symbol is "part of a creative act that involves more than the individual psyche" (ibid., p. 89). Aniela Jaffé, writing in 'Man and his Symbols' also regards artistic expression as a way of connecting to the materiality of the symbol. She describes how for "man, with his symbol-making propensity" the "whole cosmos", and elements such as "stones, plants, animals, men, mountains and valleys, sun and moon, wind, water and fire", become potential symbols and artistic inspirations (Jaffé, 1964, p. 257). For Jaffé, "the unconscious (which had conjured up the pictures in the chance configuration of things) … *is* nature" and, notes how 19th century romantics "spoke of nature's 'handwriting', which can be seen everywhere, on wings, eggshells, in clouds, snow, ice, crystals, and other 'strange conjunctions of chance' just as much as in dreams or visions". Like Rowland, Jaffé presents a view in which the symbol, rather than becoming confused with 'concrete reality' as Gieser queries (above, p. 220), in actuality allows us to pass through the 'veiling' to a deeper revealing' of the natural, animate, world and, ultimately, our place within it.

Ecosystemic awareness

In order to determine whether any connection could be theorised between an 'ecosystemic' outlook (as understood by ecopsychology in relation to the 'Ecological Self') and a 'symbolic attitude' (as understood by Jung in relation to manner of perception), my empirical study contained a category of thematic criteria aimed at identifying the presence of ecological awareness in participant responses. Three levels were included in this theme series to provide some indication of the extent to which awareness of a 'containing' ecosystem was felt by the participant to incorporate their own existence.

The first set of '*E*' codes represented the following corresponding states:

E-Recognition	Awareness of surrounding ecosystem
E-Integration	Awareness of surrounding ecosystem and inclusion of self
E-Absorption	Immersion in surrounding ecosystem and loss of separate self

Participants were also asked to record how immersed they felt they had been during the exercise in order to correlate this with the degree of awareness they had of their ecological interconnectedness. Further context for analysing participant experience in relation to their containing environment was provided by the following, second set of '*E*' criteria:

E-Solicitude	Expression of concern for an other-than-human object or environment
E-Agency	Recognition of/attribution of agency for the other-than human object/environment
E-Reciprocity	Reciprocal engagement with an other-than-human object or environment

All participants in the empirical study could be said to demonstrate some element of ecosystemic awareness and a recognition of the interplay of nature around them. Four participants expressed some form of concern for the other-than-human environment, with two referring to the harm done by inconsiderate destruction or manipulation of the environment and a general need for environmental awareness and care (Participant 1 and participant 2). Two participants described

awareness of their own integration with aspects of their surroundings. Participant 6 observed: “it’s interesting to look around and see how nature really interacts with other nature. It’s almost as if the piece that’s wrapped around is holding the other piece up, and then when I look closer there’s more, on a larger scale.”

Participant 3, one of the three who commented on how different parts of nature interacted and worked together (*E- recognition*), began her immersive practice with a sense of wanting to become part of the first thing that drew her attention, describing “a sense of merging, sense of wanting to be inside” (*E-Integration*). She went on to be fascinated by, and seek an understanding of, the symbiotic relationship between ivy and oak which (as discussed above) also came to represent the relationship between herself and her husband.

Also expressing a desire to ‘merge’ with aspects of the environment, participant 2 reported an “immediate sense of peace” in response to her surroundings and a profound connection with a nearby tree that led her to want “to be in the middle of the tree surrounded by its leaves and branches, almost to be a part of it” (Questionnaire response WF_2). As a result, she spent some time seeking a location in which she could re-create the sensation. Although she did not subsequently achieve that same level of initial absorption she did reach a moment of awareness of being part of a containing ecosystem (*E-Integration*), and observed: “There’s something about the way nature works, how each part of nature has its place, and how they’re all connected and we’re connected too, as humans”. She later interacted imaginatively with a nearby tree, saying:

> “So, I’m looking up at another beautiful oak tree and I could stand here all day watching this tree, the way each branch and leaf is moving in the wind. The acorns that are still on the tree are just shining in the sun. There are bees buzzing all over. The shape of each leaf outlined against the blueness of the sky. There’s almost part of me that feels it would be wonderful to sprout roots from my feet, for them to grow down and just for myself to become part of this landscape – to be here for ever. To

> weather all the storms and have that sense this too shall pass. The trees carry on being trees whatever happens in the human world. So maybe there's a sense that for me, I can't grow roots and stay here all the time, but this place can stay with me and I can learn from it to *be* me."
>
> (WF_2)

Transcripts for both participant 2 and participant 3 generated a significant number of *J-Numinosity* codings, (6 & 7 respectively), with words such as "incredible, "extraordinary", "amazing", "magical" "fascinating" and "wonder", strongly suggesting that an experience of numinosity might accompany a sense of ecosystemic integration. This sense of awe or numinosity did not necessarily correlate with a metaphorical interpretation of the focus object, although this did on occasion arise in separate associations to the same object.

All participants expressed some awareness of other-than-human phenomena possessing agency such as their own feelings or thoughts. These speculations included the idea that the wind was attempting to communicate (Participant 3) and ascribing some kind of wisdom through life experience to a tree (Participants 2 and 6). Two participants directly engaged with other-than-human inhabitants within the environment (*E-Reciprocity)*, one by vocalising a greeting (Participant 4) and the other by modifying their activity out of consideration for the creature in question (Participant 2). Participant 4 engaged with two creatures that were encountered, referring to both a beetle and a caterpillar as a 'friend' and vocalising "hello!" twice to the caterpillar. Participant 2 expressed concern for nature on several occasions and expressed a reluctance to pick a living leaf from a tree without gaining its permission, also, after commenting on how she felt "cared for" when in the woodland, observing that there was a need to "[care] for nature in the same way nature cares for us".

Participant 2 demonstrated concern for, and reciprocal engagement with, a nearby squirrel, as well as a recognition of both its agency and place in the environment. She said:

> "Now I've stopped because there's a squirrel ahead eating an acorn. It's so absorbed in it and I don't really want to move forward and disturb the squirrel. As this is the squirrel's home, not mine. I'm a visitor... I think the squirrel's seen me now, it's looking over, but like it's assessing the threat level, wondering whether I'm a problem or not. And it's gone, up a tree."
>
> (WF_2)

Although the thematic categories used as indicators for ecosystemic awareness were not originally intended to show the existence of symbolic material, it is clear that something is happening that takes the observing consciousness beyond the comprehension of the object (e.g., 'tree') as simple referent and into a wider more multi-dimensional state of comprehension. As Jung says in 'The Spirit Mercurius' there is a level of consciousness in which it is undeniable that "something did happen" between the perceiving individual and the natural phenomenon being perceived (CW13, para. 248). Although identification of symbolic material was only made when a minimum of number of the required criteria were met, resulting in only two instances where this was thought to be a adequately evidenced (Participant 2 and Participant 3), a number of other examples did suggest that some kind of meaningful engagement with other-than-human phenomena could be said to have taken place. With regard to the question of whether certain features of the symbol in Jung's formulation might show some congruity with the idea of the 'ecological self', it seemed likely that the experience of numinosity has some correlation with both the ecosystemic awareness and reported level of immersion experienced by participants. An experience of the dynamism of natural phenomena and flows of imaginative thought regarding other-than-human phenomena could also be seen to relate to some level of ecosystemic perception.

The experience of a loss of self in the environment was reported only by Participant 2 in her experience of 'becoming a part of' a tree (Questionnaire response). Recorded cases of loss of a separate self in nature-based activity (as discussed in Chapter 2) seem to have been more prevalent in extreme situations or extended periods of isolation, with this experience not necessarily having

been encouraged by the relatively restricted study situation. However, the dialogues between some participants and other-than-human lifeforms and descriptions by others of a recognition of their own place in their surrounding ecosystems do seem consistent with some level of intersubjective engagement with the natural environment.

An experience in which an individual perceives themselves not as separate from the rest of existence, but, in Susan Rowland's terms, as a "conjoined mutual being" though symbolic engagement with the phenomenal world (Rowland, 2015, p. 90) is one that might easily be at home in ecopsychological discourse. It is also one that can be seen to be closely echoed in James Hillman's foreword to Roszak, Gomes and Kanner's work on ecopsychology, where he describes an adaption of the deep self to the collective unconscious being "simply adaptation to the natural world, organic and inorganic" (1995, p. xix). Here, adaption is seen as the aligning of the self with the physical world of nature and as something that can be achieved via the collective, imaginal realms of psyche. Again, the suggestion is that, far from being a delusional or pathological way to interface with the natural world the 'choice' to perceive symbolically does not inevitably negate or our relationship with reality, or "sacrifice" it (as Gieser intimates, 1995, p. 177) but may even, in some senses, integrate us more fully with it.

Atmanspacher, in his 'Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena' describes Pauli and Jung's 'dual-aspect monism' as a "radically holistic" conceptual framework in which mind and matter can be seen as "*complementary* aspects" of existence with an "underlying domain" that "does… not consist of separate elements at all" (2014, p. 182). From this perspective phenomena based on psychophysical correlations are not seen as physical with some mental aspects, or mental with some physical aspects, but, in Atmanspacher's opinion, might more properly be regarded as "*relations* between the physical and the mental rather than *entities* in the physical or mental realm" (ibid., p. 197). This "challenging idea" may explain, he says, "why meaning is so essential for psychophysical phenomena – either as an explicitly relational concept or an implicitly holistic experience" (ibid.).

Jungian perspectives on the 'eco-symbolic' encounter

As I have illustrated in my literature review, despite concepts and terms originating in Analytical Psychology being frequently employed in ecopsychological discussion, there has been little detailed enquiry into how evidence from nature-based therapeutic practice might inform traditional analytic interpretations, or into how nature-based therapeutic practice might draw more effectively from existing psychodynamic theory. In particular, I found that although reference was made to the importance of 'symbolic' perception in nature-based work, questions of how, or why, this way of interpreting the natural environment was psychologically significant, or how a conceptual understanding of this dynamic might be reached, were not noticeably addressed. As a result of this, and in recognition of a Jungian approach being potentially sympathetic to holistic theories of mind, I have proposed that basing an investigation into this within the context of Jungian thought offers an appropriate framework from which to enhance an eco-therapeutic understanding of the symbol. I have also begun to ask how Jung himself may have developed his theory into those areas in which he indicated uncertainty or potential for future understanding. (e.g., CW8, Para. 600, note 15, CW9ii, para. 412)

Although Jung does not directly address the occurrence of symbolic material in natural settings as far as the analytic process is concerned he has, as I have shown in Chapter 4 above, spoken extensively of the connection between environmental phenomena and a symbolic style of perception in the context of 'primitive' thought. In his discussions of an 'archaic' psyche Jung can be seen to link an emotional affinity with the natural world, and an imaginative (undirected) manner of perceiving it, to a symbolic interconnection with the surrounding environment – a state where psyche is "dovetailed into nature" (CW10, para. 134, as described above). Although Jung more usually uses the terms 'numen', 'daemon' or 'spirit' when speaking of other-than-human objects being perceived as animate, there are occasions that Jung uses phrases such as "symbolic meaning" (CW18, para. 585) and "symbolic atmosphere" (CW10, para. 43), when discussing to the meaningful significance of environmental phenomena for archaic or Indigenous peoples. This loss

of a conscious interrelationship with natural phenomena – incorporating a symbolic containment of psyche – also means that we have, according to Jung, lost some kind of language that "appeals directly to feeling and emotion." (CW18, paras. 468-469).

Symbol as mediator

In places in Jung's writings there are implications that symbols arising in nature are something more than the projected contents of the unconscious. The "more archaic" and "deeper" or "more *physiological*" the symbol is, he proposes, the "more collective and universal, the more "material" it is" (CW9i, para. 291). In his discussion of the connection between spirit and tree (CW13, paras. 247-249) Jung takes the reader through five proposed stages of consciousness from an early intersubjective state comparable to *participation mystique*, through a gradual differentiation and withdrawal of psyche from nature to an envisioned future development in which it is understood that something has emerged from the other-than-human "even though the psychic content was not the tree, nor a spirit in the tree, nor indeed any spirit at all" (ibid., para. 248). Although, at this stage, the perceived entity cannot be proved to be a subjective experience it is "nevertheless a phenomenon thrusting up from the unconscious' (ibid.)", presenting the prospect of "trees and other suitable objects" being once again regarded as "lodging places" for spirit (ibid., p. 249).

In 'Symbols and the Interpretation of Dreams' Jung acknowledges that symbolic events may be generated from material outside the personal psyche, and he explains that "symbols, like dreams, are natural products, but they do not occur only in dreams. They can appear in any number of psychic manifestations: there are symbolic thoughts and feelings, symbolic acts and situations, and it often looks as if not only the unconscious but even inanimate objects were concurring in the arrangement of symbolic patterns" (CW18, para. 480). Here, Jung is referring to synchronous events, such as the stopping of a clock at the moment of death, or the spontaneous breaking of an object at a significant point in a crisis, and similar, and his examples are of manufactured, rather than 'natural' objects. However, Jung does appear to recognise an organic materiality to the symbol: In 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype' he speaks of the progressively material nature

of the symbol the further into the "autonomous functional systems" of the body it moves (CW9i, paras. 290-291). "The more archaic and "deeper," that is the more *physiological,* the symbol is, the more collective and universal, the more "material" it is" he observes (ibid. para. 291), stating his agreement with the author Kerényi that "in the symbol the *world itself* is speaking" (Kerényi, 1949, as cited in Jung, CW9i, para. 291). As Jung explains in his description of the alchemical process in 'The Psychic Nature of the Alchemical Work':

> "The place or the medium of realization is neither mind nor matter, but that intermediate realm of subtle reality which can be adequately expressed only by the symbol. The symbol is neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal. It is always both."
>
> (Jung CW12, para 400)

Rowland sees in Jung's work on Ulysses the "intimation of an expanded sense of the Jungian symbol as possessing properties beyond constructing the psyche as individually bound" (2015, p. 90). She suggests that "when matter is considered significant, it can, in the Jungian active psyche *signify*" (ibid., p. 88) and the symbol, in this wider sense, might act as is a "reciprocal portal to nature" (2015, p. 82). In discussing the symbol from the perspective of literary criticism Rowland suggests that "not only can ideas be symbols, they *need* to be symbols to retain that innate openness to the hidden, unknowable third that makes them part of cosmodernity" meaning the symbol does not function as a "hidden third" per se, but as a "logical understanding that allows its unknowable potency to be present." (2018, p. 169).

Atmanspacher, speaking of the framework of dual-aspect monism (such as can be seen in the Jung-Pauli conjecture), argues that the "deep structure of meaning is tightly related to the deep structure of ecology" (2022, p. 193) and he believes we can take from dual-aspect monism the idea that "the deep structure of ecology, understood in a dual-aspect fashion, offers a way to understand how the mental and the physical are interlinked, embed in numerous interlace fields of sense" (ibid.).

“Insofar as a symbol is infused with latent and ineffable meaning”, Atmanspacher observes, “it goes much deeper than a simple placeholder of something else”. Whilst “the meaning of signs is covered by the surface structure of meaning of reference, the meaning of symbols” in his opinion “refers to the deep structure of meaning as sense” (ibid., p. 74).

Gieser, in considering Pauli’s wish to have the symbol regarded as the “first and fundamental unit of reality” and his proposal that “reality in itself is symbolic” (2014, p. 151) suggests that “regarding the concept of the symbol as the essential starting point of knowledge means that it is not the independent “elementary parts” of the world that are fundamental reality, but the inseparable interconnectedness of observer and observed” (ibid. p. 164). I suggest that a dynamic of this kind can be found in Participant 2’s engagement with the tree which represented to her a state of sanguinity, renewal and resilience. As she came to imagine various ways of interacting with the tree, such as returning to visit it after a number of years had passed to see its development, or imagining she herself could grow roots and become part of the woodland, she was also immersing herself in a deeper understanding of the ecosystem – of how things might develop or interconnect within her surrounding environment.

Ecosystemic layers of understanding also feature in Participant 3’s associations to the interconnected ivy and tree, where she sees the symbiotic, or perhaps parasitic, relationship between them as both existing in nature and as representing her own marital situation. At the start of the study exercise Participant 3 begins by describing an experience of “a sense of merging, a sense of wanting to go inside”. In these two examples the ecosystemic awareness elicited by the exercise goes further than that of, say, Participant 4 who recognises a complex system of life underlying a pond surface, but does not additionally find a meaningful personal representation identified in the material existence of the other.

Emergence, Multivalence and the ecosystemic psyche

The unknown or imminent quality that the symbol must always, according to Jung, contain was one of the characteristics of the Jungian symbol that I had originally highlighted as problematic in an application of theory to the symbolic encounter in other-than-human settings. However, through an analysis of study data, it became apparent that an emergent aspect could be inferred to exist with participant perception of natural phenomena, and in one case, was directly expressed in a creative response to the study exercise (as discussed above).

Figure 7: WF_3 creative response

As can be seen in the illustration produced by this participant (Participant 3), the question "The ivy's time?" is captioned in the image as arising from the exploration of relationship (also captioned) between ivy and tree. This question is not verbalised at any point in the participant's recorded narrative and appears only after the main study exercise, in this creative response. It might reasonably be speculated that this is a psychic content still to be discovered, or still to be resolved, with answers yet to emerge from this encounter with the focus object.

These emergent properties suggest that, in Rowland's words, an "innate openness to the hidden, unknowable third" and "unknowable potency" (2018, p. 169) can manifest in the material world as much as it can be held in the internal world of the psyche. As Gieser notes, the symbol can be understood as "consisting of a visible expression that only reveals a certain limited aspect of something that cannot be fully conceptualized" as with our limited perceptions we are only able to grasp parts of a "complex reality" (2014, p. 153). For Jung, Gieser suggests, a "view of the symbol as an archetypal image, both revealing and alluding to a more complex underlying reality" is an

attempt to "encompass *both* the limited expression of the symbol (its phenomenological aspect) *and* its connection to the archetypal matrix (non-causal ordering principle of nature) that gives the symbol its numinous quality" (2014, p. 154).

Puhakka, describing the state of 'fluid awareness' that can emerge from an intimate process or introspection within the natural environment, says that: "The richness of the flow in such an intimate experience… always exceeds the vocabulary a language provides for its description." (2014, p. 13). There is, according to her, a need "to allow one's purely observational and nonlinguistic experiential capacity to move in terrains uncharted by language", this being "something that challenges the enquirer to tolerate vagueness and indeterminacy where the mind would clamor for clear articulation and conceptual comprehension" (ibid.). This linking of indeterminate content with something that moves beyond language calls to mind Jung's distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic, as well as his identification of the symbol as the "best possible formulation of an idea whose referent is not clearly known." (CW14, para. 668, n. 54).

In Jung's formulation the symbol can be seen to draw its meaning and import, at least partly, from the "wealth of associations" in which it is embedded (e.g., CW16, para. 15) just as in Goethe's method the leaf is "revealed" as existing within a network of connections that lend it holistic and phenomenological significance (Chalquist, 2014, p. 253). As well as resonating with Jung's conception of the symbolic, Goethe could be seen here to prefigure an *ecosystemic* type of perception, where an object's containing environment is a crucial aspect of understanding the object itself. Here too, a reference to the significance of the 'imagination' – as sensory, participatory perception – and its contrast with an 'objective' outlook, might be recognised in the 'fantasy thinking' that Jung links to the symbolic attitude. and its contrast with the more rational-cognitive perspective of 'directed thinking' (CW5, paras. 36-37). Chalquist's description of Goethe's approach as one that is "respectful" and "watchful" and that avoids "replacing a living thing with a deadening category" (2014, p. 253) also recalls Jung's assertion that a symbolic

interpretation, rather than that of semiotic or 'schematic' directed thinking, retains the true value of the symbol and prevents it being reduced or 'debased' to "a mere sign" (CW8, para. 88).

This sense of being emplaced through a 'symbolic' style of perception is, as shown in Chapter 2, indicated by some Indigenous speakers to be intrinsic to their language system and worldview. Just as in Jung's descriptions of the 'archaic' or 'primitive' psyche, these living languages describe matrices of significance that culturally, semantically and affectively interweave the speaker with the containing environment. Language is thus not "grounded in Cartesian or separatist views of reality" (Williams, 2019, p. 174) but "calls into presence a deeply animate world" (ibid., p. 180). Rather than words representing objects or phenomena that are somehow separate from the individual, each utterance contains the sense of an interconnected whole (ibid., p. 176). Just as Jung's symbol is "reduced" or "debased" to "a mere sign" when fully determined, a term taken out of the context of the whole in Māori speech becomes "thinned" and loses its cultural, ecological and co-relational emplacement; it is no longer grounded or held within a meaningful cosmology (ibid., p. 179). A representation of the multiple (and interconnected) responses of Participant 3 to her focus object is reproduced below:

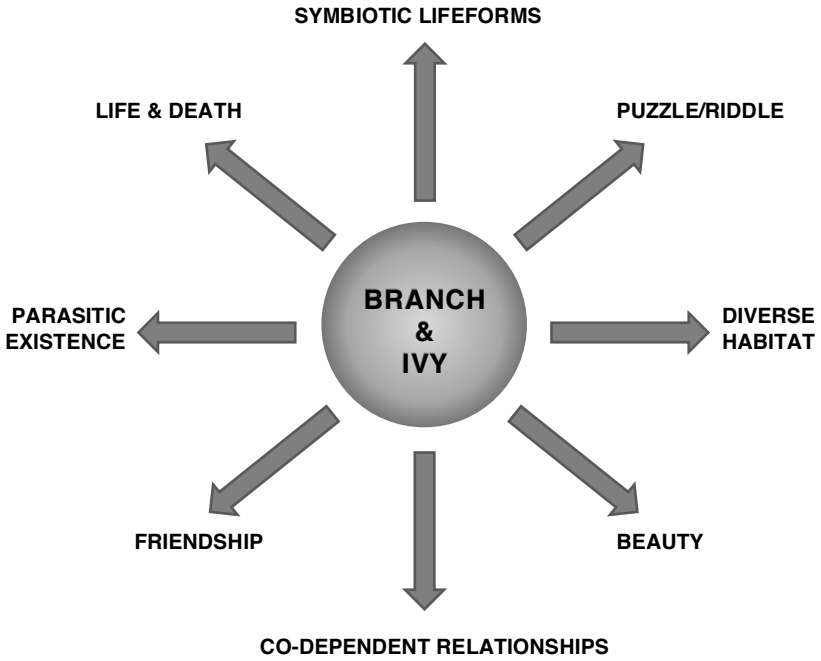

Figure 8: WF_3 object associations

If we contrast the sign and the symbol as Jung suggests, and consider to sign to provide a one-to-one referent and the symbol to provide a one-to-many, we might represent the two different types of signifier as shown below, using the associations for the philosophical tree previously listed (p. 110).

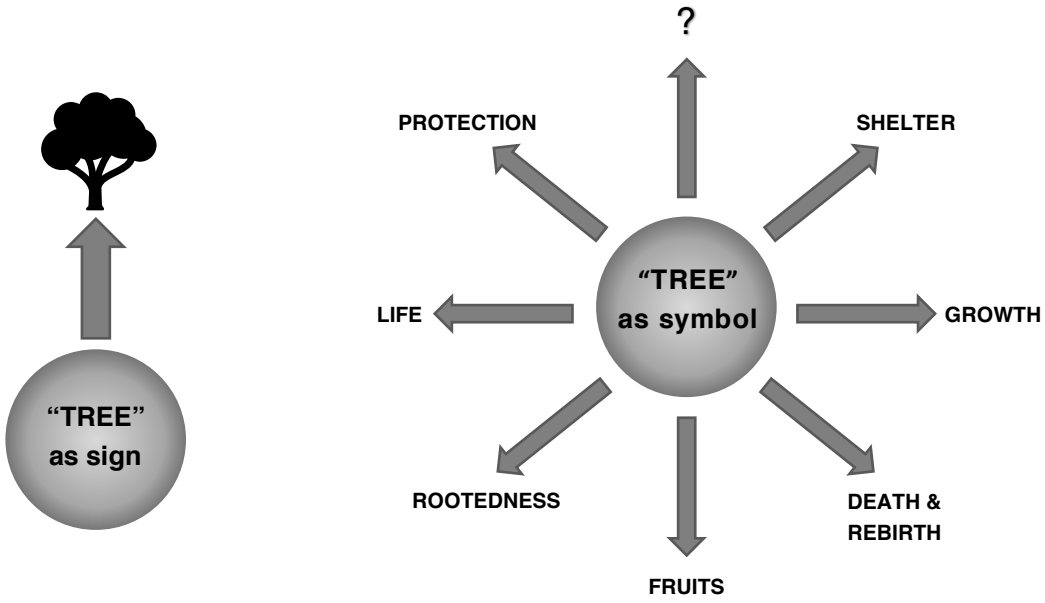

Figure 9: Comparison of sign and symbol

In this depiction of the symbol's one-to-many semantic range a space for the 'unknown referent' has been displayed as a question mark, to indicate the ongoing potential for more associations or meanings to be added to those already extant. In this way the symbol's multivalence and emergent qualities are represented in contrast to the 'known referent' of the sign. This representation of the symbol could be said to relate to the 'complex adaptive systems' described by Rowland in which, as "engines of creativity", symbols "make reality visible in a system always open to new knowing" (2018, pp. 169 & 170). This way of viewing the symbol might also be said to allow for the integration of creative or 'fantasy' thinking, in that something already in existence and, as Mickey phrases it, "hovering between possibilities and uncertainties of things" can be 'draw' into presence by the imagination (2014, p. 165). By this way of representing the multivalent signifier a sense of the semantically embedded eco-systemic symbol begins, I believe, to emerge.

Applications to practice and wider therapeutic discourse

As a result of my research, I believe that there are ways in which Jung's understanding of the symbol can provide valuable insight for nature-based work. In Jung's thinking there is a way to approach phenomena – a 'symbolic attitude' that results from a "definite view of the world which *assigns meaning* to events, whether great or small, and attaches to this meaning a greater value than to bare facts" (Jung, CW6, para 819). In this way a symbolic encounter can encourage a wider perception of meaningfulness that I suggest, can locate this meaning in a holistic matrix of being. Susan Rowland regards it as implicit in Jungian thought that "whether an image is a symbol or not depends on the attitude of the observing consciousness" and she suggests that this insight "offers the possibility of regarding symbols and signs as types of reading, rather than as intrinsic categories" (Rowland, 2015, p. 84). Although in Jung's approach this style of perception is most likely to be turned 'inward' rather than 'outward' into the world of environmental phenomena, there is potential in the symbol's role of mediating between conscious and unconscious mind for it to extend to the connection between *psyche and ecos* in a similar way.

It has been recorded by practitioners (such as Kerr & Key, 2012 & respondents in Mayseless & Naor, 2020), and demonstrated by my study, that a symbolic style of engagement can spontaneously arise in nature-based activity. However, there do appear to ways in which this style of engagement can be elicited or encouraged through reaching a particular state of mind and, as I have shown above (p. 138), there is a notable similarity between Jung's idea of an 'undirected' or 'fantasy' style of thinking and Kaplan's mode of 'soft attention'. This state of perception, as I have discussed earlier, has similarities to the immersive attentiveness of Goethe's method of 'exact sensorial imagination' described by Chalquist (2014) as well as to Puhakka's description of a wider and more fluid awareness (2014) and Adam's idea of 'presencing' (2014). A consensus appears to exist that there is a style of engagement that encourages psyche to be more receptive to meaningful material arising from the environment (and/or the unconscious), and that this type of perception will tend to be more 'symbolic' in character. Consequently, instructions given in nature-based

practices that seek to elicit symbolic material might be understood to have significant influence on the content of the experience.

Metaphor and emergent meaning

In terms of therapeutic method, I have shown that two approaches can be distinguished, one in which the spontaneous recognition of symbolic content is envisaged and another in which therapist-directed interaction with other-than-human phenomena guides the process. In the first, there is usually an understanding of nature as an 'active participant' and in the other (in Mayseless and Naor's terminology) an active 'mediating' of the symbolic input. (2021, p. 192). Jenny Grut talks of "drawing out the metaphorical" material (2002, p. 88) by, for example, "guiding [the client] through … challenges and giving them some understanding of what they represent at both a real and a symbolic level". This, she says can constitute a "very important part of the rehabilitation work" (ibid.). There is, I suggest, an additional possibility in which the symbolic interaction between client and object is observed by the therapist, but remains unspoken and allowed to gradually emerge. In this way the multivalence of the symbol and the implicit potential for new referents to constellate around it, or emerge from the unconscious, might become part of a therapeutic understanding of its significance.

It could perhaps be useful to ask what the implications are of these different approaches in stimulating a 'symbolic attitude" and finding meaningful representation in in natural phenomena. In my empirical study participant 'attitude' was reliant on initial instructions designed to encourage a more receptive and reflective state of mind, and the results do appear to show that spontaneous emergence of symbolic significance is possible without guided 'mediation'. However, in reading participant transcripts I was aware of points in the narrative where it would have been interesting (and perhaps therapeutically relevant) to 'draw out' aspects of the experience and its significance more fully. If the *eco-symbolic* can be accurately said to be in the Jungian sense 'symbolic' all the traditional ways of working with the symbol thus become admissable in a nature-based therapeutic context. Here, I am thinking of the possibility of 'amplifying' the symbolic content in a Jungian

sense, or of encouraging a practice of active imagination with other-than-human phenomena that presents themselves as meaningful .

Working in this way with symbolic associations to the natural environment can be a useful mechanism when psychic material is struggling to be acknowledged or resolved, as Jenny Grut has observed. From my own experience, when working with a younger person, it may prove easier for them to articulate emotional difficulties through physical interactions with the world around them, rather than through face-to-face dialogue. Allowing them to find expression in this way, and taking part in activity alongside them, will often generate a far easier and more natural flow of discourse in which surrounding physical realities can be discussed as representations of an inner ones, or can be implicitly rather than explicitly worked with. An awareness of yet-to-be-accessed unconscious content might, therefore, be approached first in a metaphorical guise, and subsequently 'worked through' or drawn out through imaginative reflection and/or activity in a natural arena.

One of the findings in Mayseless & Naor's study was the therapeutic potential in physically entering into a symbolic or metaphorical space. The difference, according to study participants, was that "usually the metaphor is created externally like in art, in nature you are actually and physically in the metaphor" and the situations are "more powerful and more potent because they're real and they involve our bodies and senses" (2021, pp. 191-192). It may be that developing an awareness of how to work with representative material in these ways could provide the outdoor practitioner with tools and techniques by which the symbolic experience could be significantly deepened and enhanced. It would also provide an approach in which the symbolic relevance of an encounter can be mutually discovered and explored rather than needing to be either found by the client alone, or explicitly revealed by the practitioner.

Another contribution that can be made by of a Jungian understanding of the symbol is the possibility of bringing an archetypal framework to bear on symbolic encounters with other-than-human phenomena. As shown in the example of the philosophical tree and the tree associations

taken from participant transcripts, similarities can be seen in the range of meanings constellating around the symbol of the tree. Again there is a sense of *in potentia* meaning in the underlying archetype that might emerge from the unconscious to become the new known for the unknown referent. As Jung says, the archetype "has the tendency to gather suitable forms of expression around itself" (CW18, para. 1208) and although here he is referring to a synchronistic effect it might also, I suggest, have relevance to how the psyche locates those representative forms in the natural environment that best contain or express the psychological work that needs attending to. Roesler (2022, p. 19) suggests that the archetype can be viewed as a fundamental pattern for healing which can "become made available in different ways" – e.g. dreams, daydreams, visions, spontaneous fantasies, thus potentially extending into nature-based encounters/experiences. He notes that according to Jung "especially during crises and mental disturbances, the unconscious makes archetypal images and structures available for consciousness in order to give indications for a new alignment or centring." Roesler (2022, p. 19)

The emplaced and enraptured psyche

Through investigating the role of the symbol in an environmental context it becomes clear that a key factor in our interactions with the natural environment is one of *meaning*. A cultural or personal ascription of significance to a natural object, one that goes beyond that of classification or utility into a *symbolic* significance, seems to enable what might be considered a healthier – or health-promoting – relationship with the natural environment. Amanda Dowd refers to this as a "background of meaningful containment", the absence of which can have profoundly negative impact the psyche. A sense of being "contained/protected/supported/boundaried" by our "nonhuman environment envelope" can, she says, result in a "feeling-of -being in place" – a "recognition and belonging" that hold both personal and cultural identity" (2019, pp. 252-253). As I have discussed earlier the ecopsychological principle of 'reindigenizing' (or, as more recently termed, 'uncolonizing') suggests that wellbeing is deeply connected to an integrated sense of being environmentally or ecosystemically emplaced. Indigenous theorists are in agreement with Jung here, that a symbolic "participation in natural events" (CW18, para. 585) is a significant aspect of

this containment, suggesting that developing an eco-symbolic way of perception has a powerful potential that reaches beyond the personally remedial.

Just as participants in my empirical study found a sense of peace, belonging and wonder alongside their meaningful interactions with natural phenomena, Hinds relates how participants in a study by Jacob & Brinkerhoff reported "feelings of union with nature, joy, a sense of wonder and peace of mind" (1999 as cited in Hinds 2016, p. 48). A sense of awe or wonder was observed in several participant transcripts with responses describing the "wonderful", "fascinating" or "magical" aspects of the other-than-human often coinciding with awareness of ecosystemic dynamics in the natural environment. As related by Chalquist, a phenomenological study by DeMares, demonstrated that "attentive, respectful" encounters with other beings could, for participants, become opportunities for experiences of "ecstasy and aliveness" (2000, as cited in Chalquist, 2009, pp. 67-68). Experiences of this kind, that contain "feelings of awe, harmony, balance, aliveness, at-homeness and openness" are described in the Salem Press Encyclopaedia of Health as contributing to mental health (2019) and, again, can be seen to arise unprompted as part of an experience of the mind "opening" in natural settings in a way, according to Davis, in which transpersonal perception and a "sense of oneness" may occur (1998, p3).

Although this current study was restricted to one type of setting there are many other ways in which meaningful engagement with the natural environment might take place. The study by DeMares examined "experiences triggered by spontaneous encounters with dolphins, orcas, and belugas" (2000, as cited in Chalquist, 2009, pp. 67-68) in an activity that might today come under the category of "blue health" (e.g., Adkins & Latham, 2022) and as shown in my literature review acts of caring for nature can represent important processes and dynamics for an individual, such as the care for seedlings described by Sahlin above (p. 55). Other practices include walking in natural settings, such as in John Scull's example of encouraging a client to take solo nature walks in between their individual therapy sessions, and to pay attention to anything that held her interest.

This simple instruction resulted in profound connections and interpretations of natural cycles that, as described above (p. 53) helped her to come to terms with her own terminal illness.

It appears that in inviting a symbolic style of perception we are also entering a more intimate and ecosystemic way of engaging with the phenomena of the environment. By maintaining an awareness of the 'unknown referent' or unconscious element within the symbol, we are perhaps more able to allow an opening up to our own unconscious potential as well as to enter into an intersubjective and meaningful relationship with the other-than-human. An important part of working therapeutically with symbolism in the natural environment is thus to ensure that we do not try to fix' a meaning, especially a single one, to a meaningful phenomenon, but allow the richness and multiplicity of associations to radiate out organically. In this way we move beyond the perspective in which phenomena are viewed in the 'reductive' or 'semiotic' way of 'directed thinking' and access another 'undirected' and 'synthetic' perspective by which they might become a gateway to the unconscious or the realm of imagination, and perhaps become the "reciprocal portal to nature" described by Rowland (2015, p. 82).

7. Conclusion

In this study of the applicability of Jung's concept of the symbol to meaningful encounters with the other-than-human I have aimed to evidence ways in which Jungian theory may be able to engage with ecopsychological thinking and nature-based practice. I have also considered where ecopsychological approaches may enhance depth psychological understanding, in particular in widening our understanding of symbolic perception beyond the 'inner' realm of psyche. As shown in my literature review, despite informing some of the earliest ideas about ecopsychology, research in depth psychology has to date played a surprisingly limited part in the development or corroboration of ecopsychological ideas. It is my belief that a Jungian approach, although perhaps in need of some conceptual clarification and development, has a great deal to offer in terms of understanding and working with symbolic material when encountered in the form of environmental phenomena. In researching Jung's thinking on the concept of the symbol I found that potential for future development of his theory could be discerned, especially in the area of possible connections between the symbol and a unified psychophysical state of being (such as the *unus mundus*) that Jung himself did not fully explore.

Through conducting an empirical study into the spontaneous emergence of symbolic perception in nature-based settings, I found that a number of the characteristics that Jung assigns to the symbol – i.e., numinosity, multivalence, metaphorical content, fantasy and affect, could be seen in reports of meaningful encounter with natural phenomena. The set of thematic qualities employed for this study drew on characteristics from a number of different views of the symbol (i.e., semantic, dynamic, imaginal and teleological) that could be found in Jung's work, with some being closely connected to other qualities, as discussed above, or dependent on other aspects of theory (such as an energetic approach to psyche). In the interests of bringing suitable rigour and objectivity to the process of identifying the presence of symbolic material, I allocated some of the thematic criteria extracted from Jung's work as essential 'key' identifiers, and others as those providing supporting data. In addition to this I compiled a set of thematic criteria by which participant narratives could

be evaluated for any expression of ecological awareness. Through this concurrent analysis it was intended that moments of convergence could be observed between symbolic perception and states of ecosystemic awareness (as thematically listed under the 'E' coding group) allowing these to be transparently identified and explored.

The results of my empirical investigation demonstrated that the dynamics and phenomena of the other-than-human environment could provide diverse stimuli for imaginative and associative reflection in a comparable way to that of the 'inner' material of the unconscious providing an impulse for the representative content of dreams and fantasies. A 'dream-like' similarity was particularly reflected in the experience of one participant who reported time distortion and the rapid dissipation of their thoughts and reveries after completion of the study exercise. Associative thinking could be seen to elicit both personal and ecosystemic responses to focus objects and to give multi-faceted views of a single phenomenon. A range of different responses to a single focus object, triggered variously by sights, sounds or sensations and their associative connections, was found to be present either implicitly or explicitly in the majority of transcripts.

As my research was carried out to investigate the relevance of a widely known Jungian concept to an, as yet, unfamiliar context, the use of thematic analysis was felt to be a more appropriate method of investigation than that of grounded theory. In order to ensure that, where relevant, themes could be inductively drawn from the data generated by participant activity, a mixed approach to thematic analysis was employed where both data-driven and theory-driven results were taken into account. In my opinion this methodology successfully revealed how natural phenomena provided inspiration, increased sensory and ecosystemic awareness, elicited responses of awe or wonder and affectively impacted study participants. Significantly, it showed how metaphorical content could spontaneously arise from reflective immersion in nature and how this mirroring function could be seen as one aspect of a more extensive dynamic that might be regarded as 'symbolic' in the depth psychological sense.

A further compelling finding was that the majority of participants found memories to be triggered by other-than-human objects or by their associations to them. Although these reminiscences could be seen to arise in conjunction with metaphorical interpretations or feeling responses, the emergence of memory was not a quality that had presented itself in my considerations of ecotherapeutic practice, or through my research into Jung's thinking regarding the symbol.

Study limitations and methodological implications

The main limitation of this study was that of restricted participant numbers due to time constraints. The opportunities for empirical research were affected to some extent by Covid regulations as the format and activity of the study days were reliant on participant engagement in a physical setting. Having a smaller number of participants ultimately, however, proved to be beneficial for the study as a far deeper and more reflexive response could be applied to each participant's experience. Although transcript data revealed a number of examples of natural phenomena being interpreted metaphorically or imaginatively with evidence of supporting themes also present, instances evaluated as symbolic were intentionally restricted to those where a single focus object could be shown to have elicited an appropriate range of thematic responses. Analysis of the data thus resulted in only two cases of material being clearly identified as symbolic.

Due to the use of an adapted object interview method, with its aim to 'elicit' responses rather than 'extract' them, the resulting free-association style of participant engagement with natural phenomena meant that associations were wide ranging and contemplations did not always return to an original focus object. This, in turn, meant that less data could be unequivocally identified as symbolic using the established criteria of the study. However, as the study relied exclusively on each participant's containing environment to elicit and integrate their responses, an opportunity arose to observe how responses in this situation might reflect the ecotherapeutic notion that the other-than-human becomes 'co-facilitator' in nature-based work. It also meant that interviewer 'intervention' was fully absent with the result that distortions to the flow of free associations could not be either accidentally, or unconsciously, introduced.

It is possible that guided interaction to encourage a deepening engagement with, or amplification of meaningful encounters, would have allowed more participants to enter into a 'symbolic' relationship with observed phenomena. It appeared that, as the intentionally open instructions did not raise any particular expectations for the experience, participants felt able to respond with a more widely associative and anecdotal style of engagement, particularly in the narratives of those not reporting as much 'immersion' in the study exercise. Instructions, therefore, might have made it clearer that a single focus object should be the constant prompt for participant contemplation using the suggestions for deepening engagement, and that this focus should be central to the free association process. Despite these concerns it was interesting to observe that participants did on occasion follow apparently unrelated associative trains of thought that later brought them back, unprompted, to their original focus object, particularly in those narratives where the object was later thematically evaluated to hold symbolic significance.

As was considered in my discussion of findings, it was difficult to say with absolute certainty where emergent contents of a participant's psyche might have influenced their responses and reflections and, without further follow-up, to ascertain if any previously unconscious material came to light as a result of the study exercise. Where evidence of unconscious material could be theorised by considering transcript data in combination with other data sources (in particular to the questionnaire question "Have you recently had any specific concerns or issues on your mind?") it was necessary to be aware that any such interpretation of data would be highly subjective and not open to mutual exploration, as might be the case in an established therapeutic setting. In light of this, I would suggest that any future studies using a similar format would benefit from follow-up interviews in place of, or in addition to, questionnaire use, and/or a further exploration with the researcher of what emerged during the experience.

It is clear that further research needs to be conducted to extend the scope of this enquiry and to develop a fuller understanding of the ways in which a symbolic encounter with the other-than-

human might be theoretically located and experimentally investigated. I suggest that this empirical work should ideally be regarded as a preliminary exploration of method that in future could be replicated or developed, with a more expanded version perhaps introducing additional participants and alternative locations as a means of contributing to the reliability of findings. Results obtained from the application of this method have, I believe, successfully demonstrated the existence of an dynamic that can arise spontaneously in a natural setting that might be thought of as symbolic, and I am hopeful that the refinement of themes resulting from study observations and transcript analyses may, in themselves, prove useful in understanding how best to understand such experiences as they occur in nature-based practice or research. One significant outcome of this study is that it has shown that a phenomenological approach to nature-based empirical investigation can positively contribute to depth psychological methodologies and understanding, and has, I suggest, illustrated a suitable methodology by which this might be applied.

Conceptual application and the language of the symbol

Despite one consistent feature of Jung's symbol being its existence beyond the grasp of language it is clear that there is a distinctly linguistic – specifically *semantic* – relevance to the way in which Jung describes the concept. In his definitions of the symbol, he portrays it as distinct from the sign in that it is multivalent, containing more than one single (and unambiguous) referent, although any given signifier can, he suggests, be either sign or symbol depending on the attitude of the perceiving consciousness. In addition to the symbol being what might be described as a *dynamically constellated focus of meaning and significance* there is a further stipulation given by Jung for the 'true' symbol, which was that it should always contain imminent or latent material that held the possibility of future meaning(s) to emerge. This essential feature of the symbol was one of the characteristics drawn from my conceptual study that I originally highlighted as potentially challenging in terms of its application to an outdoor nature-based context, as it was not immediately clear how a physically extant phenomenon might contain a latent meaning.

It was this quality, however, that ultimately proved to be one of the most interesting aspects of examining environmentally-encountered symbolic material and one that, I felt, shed additional light on the symbol's semantic indeterminacy. Working with a recognition that that emergent or imminent material would need to be implicitly identified by using a variety of data sources as well as my own interpretation, I began to see that meanings did appear to present themselves as coming to consciousness for participants. This led me to consider that, just as any signifier might function as a symbol when seen from a particular perspective, any other-than-human object might also present the possibility for new meanings or associations (i.e., new referents) to emerge for an individual. This, in turn, suggested to me that the symbol exists in a constant *in potentia* state to which imaginative, creative and dynamic interactions might contribute new signifiers, with the multivalence of the symbol and its as-yet-unknown referent being, in this way, intrinsically related.

Just as Jung in his early writing on libido and psychic energy observed that anything potent or highly charged with energy will present with a wide range of symbolic meanings, it does seem as if the dynamism of the symbol and its function of constellating meaning are related to each other. The more that meaning is channelled and converges in one place the greater the focus of energy that is attracted there, giving the nexus of association and significance a dynamic intensity, and perhaps also its numinous, 'charge'. It may be significant, in this respect, that those participant accounts in which meaning, imagination and affect constellated around the encountered object were also those where a recognition of the numinous qualities of the other-than-human proved most likely to appear.

Another area appeared to require investigation was that of the 'undirected' or 'fantasy thinking' style (that in Jung's view was closely allied to the 'symbolic attitude') being consistently represented by him as *unadapted* to the outer world. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 above, fantasy thinking is assumed by Jung to be inward looking, subjective and not capable of accurately reflecting reality. However, when he describes 'primitive' or 'archaic' consciousness as having a symbolic style of perception Jung does acknowledge that many significances might converge

around a single referent, with cultural, historical, mythological and imaginal material collectively attaching to a place or phenomenon. From the perspective of the Indigenous language speaker this systemic complex of knowledge is undoubtedly experienced as *supremely* adapted, and, as suggested in ecopsychological theory, illustrative of an intersubjective and non-exploitative relationship with the environment. It could be suggested that this is, in fact, exactly the kind of 'adaption' towards which we currently need to move.

A further theoretical challenge that was considered in relation to the nature-based symbolic encounter was Jung's early assertion that the 'primitive' way of seeing significances in the outer world should be understood as the projection of inner psychic content, with this approach to meaning again, seeming to disregard Indigenous worldviews. From the perspective of projection, any meaningfulness perceived in natural phenomena is seen solely as a result of 'inner' material being applied to an 'outer' object, thus dismissing the possibility of there being any inherent meaningfulness or import in the object itself. This view obviously privileges the reality of the human observer and locates meaning exclusively within the human mind, rather than recognising it as arising from a dynamic interrelationship with other forms of existence and/or the containing environment. My empirical study therefore sought to observe incidences of projection as well as evidence of fantasy thinking with the aim of understanding how these themes might appear in the context of nature-based encounter.

Although it was not possible to gauge the level of 'adaption' experienced by participants in my empirical study, it was possible to see a fluid movement of association between imaginative or fantasy thinking and an ecosystemic or intersubjective appreciation of the environment. The imaginative entering into the perspective of the other-than-human, such as wondering how it would feel to be a tree or to grow around a branch like ivy, despite being metaphorically apt for participants' own situations, seemed, rather than an overlay of content, more like a dialogue in which the experienced object could inform the individual experiencing it and guide them into further awareness. Even in the single instance where some level of projection may have been

occurring, rather than assigning a definite state to the perceived object the participant explored ideas in an "as if" manner rather that invited further enquiry.

If the natural environment can be said to provide a suitable condition for symbolic perception to emerge it may be that some conceptual extension or modification of the concept of the 'symbol' is required in order to apply it reliably and effectively in this context. As discussed above, when Jung revised his earlier opinion of projection and the reality of the 'spirit' in matter a possibility was opened up for a new understanding of the symbol as a mediator between *psyche* and *ecos* and thus a way to understand the experience of meaningfulness in relation to a containing environment. In finding the symbolic in the world around us we discover, perhaps, that our psyche is, at its deepest level an 'organic' unconscious and the symbol a vital, living thing as it intrinsically contains the dynamism of the other-than-human.

Final thoughts

It is, I believe, important to recognise Jung's own movement towards a more integrated view of the relationship between psyche and matter as well as to note his acknowledgement of the formative role the natural environment has played in the evolution of mind. Jung's observation in 'Mind and Earth' that mind could be understood as a system formed by adaption to the earthly environment could be said to correlate with Edward Wilson's biophilia hypothesis (as discussed above), where our innate affinity for nature is said to result from our long co-evolution within it. We might also recognise that just as psyche has developed in relation with the natural environment, its representations of reality – such as symbols –must also have originally arisen from our interactions with the physical environment. This might then indicate that we have an inherited propensity to recognise symbolic representation in the natural world, as well as a predisposition to recognise something of ourselves in its myriad forms of being. Thus, perhaps it is through a symbolic style of engagement with our containing environment that we can find our psyche contained, authentically reflected and organically guided.

With these observations in mind, it feels more accurate to speak of a psyche that recognises its own patterns and dynamics in the natural world rather than of one that overlays its own content on an otherwise inert backdrop. As demonstrated in my empirical study, the symbolic object encountered in the natural environment has the potential to constellate cultural, imaginative, geographic, utilitarian and personal associations, as well as to situate the psyche in a web of ecosystemic connections. This approach fits more comfortably, perhaps, with Jung's notion of the *Unus Mundus* and through this brings additional plausibility to the idea of an *ecological unconscious* as proposed by ecopsychological theory, thus supporting an understanding of the interrelation between psyche and matter that is not assumed to be the result of projection. It also suggests that if mind can find meaningful representation in an interplay of significances between *psyche* and *ecos* it is then justifiable to speak of an '*eco-symbolic*' dynamic to which Jungian theory regarding the symbol can be fittingly applied.

To contemplate this idea of a *psyche-ecos* 'feedback loop' further: a psyche that recognises its own equivalence in a containing environment might thus recognise something of its own belonging, its own interdependent relationship with the ecosystemic whole. Just as study participants found both personal significance and ecosystemic awareness constellating around meaningful objects and Indigenous language speakers describe multiple meanings converging around certain environmental phenomena, a holistic – or systemic – way of harmoniously experiencing ourselves in the realm of the other-than-human might be argued to also be a *symbolic* one. In the idea of the *eco-symbolic* I suggest that we can consider the potential implications of that awareness, for both our own and planetary wellbeing. As Jung says:

> "All mythology and all revelation come from this matrix of experience, and all our future ideas about the world and man will come from it likewise."
>
> (CW8, para. 738)

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Reflective nature practice – exercise instructions

10 mins – mindful attunement

- Begin by noticing your breathing – the length of the breath, where the breath enters and where it travels to in your body
- Gradually extend your awareness to the physical space around you
- Begin to notice the sensory aspects of the environment – what can you hear, smell, touch, what patterns can you see?
- Extend your attention into the whole of your environment and release any fixed focus on specific features of your surroundings

15-30 mins – mindful exploration

- When you feel you have reached a relaxed engagement with what is around you, begin to move through the space, continuing to connect with your surroundings in an open and curious way
- As you move through and experience the space around be attentive to which particular natural feature, process or object attracts you – you may experience this as feeling drawn towards something, an impulse that something has 'called' you, or as an interest in a natural object or process

60-75 mins – solo reflective practice

- When you have selected the focus for your reflective practice find a comfortable place to position yourself (this may be seated, standing or a combination of both over the duration)

- Begin the recording function on your recording device, and set a timer for the remaining period (90 mins less the time spent on the mindful exploration stage, as above)

- Take your time to connect reflectively with your chosen focus and when you are ready begin to record your impressions – these can be thoughts, feelings, images, fantasies, stories or memories, or anything else that emerges for you

- Allow yourself to freely follow any associative ideas, images, feelings and trains of thought that your chosen focus brings to mind, and to enter periods of silence as desired

- Try to keep self-censorship to a minimum and allow your thoughts to move fluidly in and out of the specific focus, allowing your mind to 'wander' and 'return' at will

- If you find you are struggling to engage with the process, you can use the following questions to encourage further reflection (as provided on individual prompt card):

    - "How am I experiencing this aspect of the natural world?"
    - "What thoughts/feelings emerge for me?"
    - "What does this experience prompt in me?"
    - "What is interesting about this aspect of the natural world?"

- When your timer sounds you may stop recording on your device

- Give yourself plenty of time to come out of your reflective practice and to move out of your physical position

10-60 mins – Creative representation (optional)

- If you feel motivated to express or integrate this exercise creatively you can take up to an hour to produce a representation of your experience

- Creative representations may be recorded (via your device), written, drawn or constructed (N.B. on leaving, please remove any non-natural items that you use for physical installations)

- Your creative product will, with your permission, be photographically recorded

APPENDIX 2: Follow-Up Questionnaire

STUDY FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Your name: _____ Date of participation: _____

Please take as long as you need to respond to the following questions and answer them as fully as you feel you are able.

1.	Have you recently had any specific concerns or issues on your mind? If so, please briefly list them and how you feel they affect you.
2.	Can you describe how you selected the focus for your solo immersive exercise?

3.	What did you notice about your initial reactions to your chosen surroundings?	
4.	Do you have any observations about the solo immersive exercise itself or how you felt afterwards?	
5.	Did you produce a creative or representational response to the solo immersive exercise?*	☐ Yes ☐ No
6.	How deeply immersed did you feel you were in the solo exercise?	☐ Very immersed ☐ Partially immersed ☐ Not at all immersed

(* photographic record to be attached with permission)

APPENDIX 3: Code Manual

THEMATIC ANALYSIS: CODE MANUAL

DEDUCTIVE (theory driven)

THEMATIC CATEGORIES (SYMBOLIC, as per Jung)	CODE	WF1	WF2	WF3	WF4	WF5	WF6	PILOT
Hypothesised to evidence a Jungian 'symbolic' style of engagement with the natural environment		Key (essential) criteria are listed in bold						
Multivalence (multiple/constellating significances)	**J Multiplicity**		☑	☑				
Metaphorical significance/interpretation of object	**J Metaphor**	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	
Imaginative or fantasy thinking	**J Fantasy**	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅
Evidence of emergent (unconscious) content	**J Emergent**		☑	☑			☑	
Presence of affect (personal/emotional significance)	J Affect		✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	
Numinosity	J Numinosity	✅	✅	✅				✅
Dynamism	J Dynamism		✅					
Evidence of projection/overlay of unconscious material	J Projection					✅		
Synchronicity/coincidental occurrence	J Synchronicity							

THEMATIC CATEGORIES (ECOLOGICAL as per Ecopsychological observation)

Hypothesised to indicate the incipience of an 'Ecological Self' as described in ecopsychological literature								
Awareness of surrounding ecosystem	E recognition	✅	✅	✅	✅	☑	✅	✅
Awareness of surrounding ecosystem and inclusion of self	E integration		✅	✅	✅	☑	✅	✅
Immersion in surrounding ecosystem and loss of separate self	E absorption		✅	✅				
Expression of concern for other-than-human object/environment	E solicitude	✅	✅	✅		☑		
Recognition of/ attribution of agency for other-than-human object/environment	E agency	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅	✅
Reciprocal engagement with other-than-human object/environment	E reciprocity		✅		✅			☑

THERAPEUTIC/TRANSFORMATIVE

Therapeutic relevance of experience	T relevance	✅	✅				✅	✅

INDUCTIVE (data driven)

(Gratitude)	(I Gratitude)							✅
Reminiscence prompted by other-than-human object/environment	I Reminiscence	✅	✅	☑		✅	✅	
Creative inspiration	I Inspiration			✅	✅	✅	✅	
Heightened sensory awareness	I Sensory	☑	✅	☑	☑	✅	✅	
Time distortion	I Temporality						✅	
Creative response produced?		yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	no

KEY:

✅ Theme explcitly present in data

☑ Theme implictly present in data

✅ Theme identified in Questionnaire data

APPENDIX 4: Theme Keywords

KEY TERMINOLOGY

J Multiplicity	Meanings	Signfiicances	Connotations	Interpretations	Associations						
J Metaphor	Metaphor(ical)	Analogy	Comparison	Association	Similarity	Like	As if	Represents			
J Fantasy	Imagine	Fantasise	Create	Visualize	Picture	Envision	Fancy				
J Emergent	Realise	(Be) aware	Recognise	Discern	Figure out	Learn	Grasp				
J Affect	Feeling	Emotion(al)	Sentiment(al)	Happy	Sad	Protected	Peace(ful)	Joy	Love	Hate	*etc*
J Numinosity	Amaze(ment)	Mystery	Wonder	Marvel(ous)	Fascinate	Magic(al)	incredible	Reverence	Awe	Holy	Sacred
J Dynamism	Energy	Dynanism	Power	Force	Vigour	Momentum	Potency				
J Projection											
J Synchronicity	Synchrony	Coincidence	Fortuity	Opportune	Timely	Fluke	(By) Chance	(By) Magic	Serendipity		

APPENDIX 5: Theme Tables

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Metaphorical interpretation(s) *J-Metaphor*
1	Groups of clouds	Island chains
2	Winter as dormant season	The benefits of taking time to rest and go inward
2	New growth in spring	Being hopeful about the future
2	Dead leaves falling and new buds	Potential for new growth in letting old things fall away
2	Resilience and survival of tree	Developing own ability to endure and weather storms of life
2	Age and experience of tree	Age leading to more acceptance of world events
3	Symbiotic plant species	Relationship and levels of intimacy, possible damage to another
3	Twisting tree branches	Having to grow around things in life
4	Pond algae	Cells of the body
5	Falling leaves	Gifts, reminders
5	Grass bending inward	Being embraced, wanting support
6	Age and experience of tree	Perceptions and relative experience of older people
6	Leaf variations	Being aware of people as distinct individuals
6	Falling leaves	Release of stress, “decompression”
6	Movement of wind	Cleansing and releasing through breath

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Fantasy *J-Fantasy*
1	Wispy clouds	Imagining the clouds as an island chain
2	Tree	Seeing the tree as it will be in the future
2	Tree	Having roots growing from feet into the earth
3	Other-than-human creatures	A ‘fairy tale’ encounter and communication
4	Algae	Imagined as a blanket you could walk on
5	Textured branches	Imagined (humorously) as churros
5	Low branches	Memory of imaginative play when branch was horse
6	Patterns of bent grass	Mountain ranges

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Unconscious/Emergent content *J-Emergent*
2	Age of tree, tree through seasons	Possibility of being more like a tree: sanguine, tolerant, less anxious
3	Ivy growing around branch	“The ivy’s time?” (in creative response), being more accepting
6	Protected/sheltered location	Upcoming decisions, recognition of tendency to choose safe options

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Affect *J-Affect*
2	Rustling leaves	Being soothed
2	Autumnal colours	Sadness, feeling of absence
2	Walking through leaves	Joy, wonder, excitement
2	Crunching acorns, cracking twigs	Fun, enjoyment
2	Warm sunshine	Feeling 'good'
2	Woodland (familiar setting)	Feeling cared for, peace, calmness
2	Arch of trees	Safety, protection, being held
3	Clinging ivy	Tearfulness, love
3	Log pile habitat and ivy	Sadness, poignancy, love
3	Cut and dying branch	Fury, frustration
4	Beetle	Companionship
4	Sun breaking through cloud	Positivity
5	Sun above the trees	Feeling of hope, positivity
6	Pile of logs	Welcoming *(noted in questionnaire response)*
6	Sound of birdsong	Enjoyment (associated with memory)
6	Natural setting	Happiness (associated with memory)
6	Wind blowing across face	Being energised, relaxation

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Expression of wonder/awe *J-Numinosity*
1	Blue sky	Wonderful
2	Tree that has grown from acorn	Magical
2	Rustling leaves	Wonderful
2	Thistles	Fascinating, sense of wonder
2	Grass seedheads	Sense of wonder
2	Thorns on dog rose	Marvelling
2	Natural setting	Amazing
3	Mushroom	Amazing, incredible
3	Part of tree trunk	Extraordinary, weird, amazing, perplexing
3	Sunlight	Stunning, "Wow"
3	Beech trees	Amazing
3	Ivy	Extraordinary, fascinating, utterly beautiful
3	Mushrooms in crack of branch	Fairy-tale, magic, beauty

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Dynamism *J-Dynamism*
2	Ladybird	Energised by sun
2	Bee	Energised by sun
2	Buds on trees	New life, growth
3	Bug, nettles,	“alive yet dead”
3	Tree trunk	Not dead – alive = “fairy tale”. New life out of old.
3	‘Dead’ Branch	“alive yet dead”
3	‘Dead’ Ivy	New life from old
4	Algae on pond	Underlying life, activity

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Expression of concern for entity/environment *E-Solicitude*
1	Natural setting of site	Health of environment, littering
2	Resilience/adaptability of tree	Human damage of natural world, greed
2	Squirrel eating acorn	Not wanting to disturb the squirrel
2	Hornet	Self as more of a threat to nature than nature to self
2	Natural environment	Distress at people hurting nature, destroying natural objects
3	Mycelia on bark	Possible trauma for mycelium by exposure to light
5	Leaning pieces of grass	Imagining grasses being in need of support
5	Sounds in grass, mouse?	Humane catching of mice (as in childhood)

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Attribution of agency to entity/environment *E-Agency*
1	Bird of prey flying overhead	Imagining the bird deciding what to focus on
2	Old oak tree	Ascribing wisdom and sensory experience to the tree
2	Ladybird on a blade of grass	Imagining the ladybird feeling enjoyment
2	Squirrel	Imagining squirrel assessing threat posed by participant
2	Bees at beehive	Seeing bees as “full of purpose”
3	Wind blowing	Imagining wind is talking, not knowing what it is saying
3	Mycelia on bark	Wondering if mycelia experience trauma when exposed to light
3	Spider walking on twisting ivy	Ascribing holistic understanding to the spider
3	Ivy climbing round branches	Querying if friendship exists between ivy and tree
3	Nosie of trees and wind	Wondering what is being said by trees and wind
4	Beetle	Beetle appearing to work hard towards unknown goal
4	Caterpillar	Speculating on knowledge and awareness of caterpillar

5	Leaning pieces of grass	Imagining leaning grasses needing comfort and support
5	Rooks growing quieter	Speculating that the rooks are contented and at peace
6	Trees	Considering life experience of trees and what they have witnessed

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Reciprocal engagement with entity/environment** ***E-Reciprocity***
2	Natural environment	Wanting to only take from nature with permission
2	Squirrel	Considering whether squirrel feels threatened
2	Bees at beehive	Reciprocal care for/by nature
4	Caterpillar	Greeting caterpillar as "friend"

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Awareness of ecosystem with loss of separate self** ***E-Absorption***
2	Tree (in introductory exercise)	Desire to be in centre of tree and to be a part of it
3	Ivy growing round branch	Querying of self as being the ivy

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Awareness of ecosystem(s)** ***E-Recognition***
1	Saplings	Health and growth of plants, variety of forms and species
2	Growth of tree from acorn	Conditions necessary for acorn to become tree
2	Strength of tree, growth rings	Nature adapting to given circumstances
2	Squirrel eating acorn	Awareness of being in squirrel's home/territory
2	Nettle and bramble flowers, bees	Seasonal provision, nature "always working together"
3	Ivy	Home for many species: bats, birds, insects
4	Pond algae	Interconnection, multiple lifeforms & activity underneath
6	Grasses growing together	Nature interacting with other parts of nature

Participant	**Natural phenomenon/object**	**Awareness of ecosystem to include self** ***E-Integration***
2	Hornet	Recognition of being one of all living creatures, connection
2	Woodland	Being part of nature "not just a visitor", connection, reciprocal care
3	Twisted bark	Desire to enter inside, sense of merging
4	Beetle	Not feeling alone when other creatures present
6	Woodland setting with view	Experience of self as being "in the company of nature"
6	Nearby trees	Trees becoming "more welcoming" & comfortable with proximity

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Retrieved memory *I-Reminiscence*
1	Natural setting, clouds	Thoughts from childhood, grandfather
2	Aeroplanes overhead	As a child, finding trails in the sky to be exciting
2	Crunching acorns underfoot	Childhood memories, joy when doing this
2	Kicking up leaves	Childhood memories, love of doing this, state of wonder
3	Twisted tree trunk	Things that were "grown around"
3	Ivy	Father, who would have removed ivy from trees
5	Silver birch tree	Favourite childhood place
5	Finding peace in environment	Peaceful, "secret" spot in derelict garden frequented in youth
5	Sounds in grass	Catching mice in grandmother's chicken run
6	Pile of logs	Christmas
6	Deer jumping	Childhood dog jumping in water like a deer
6	Bird song	Walking to school as a child
6	Bird song	Watching birds at grandparents' house, feeding ducks
6	Being in nature	Holidays with family, going for walks in natural settings

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Creative inspiration *I-Inspiration*
4	Various observations	Disappointed art materials not to hand as hard to recall observations later
5	Sounds in grass, mouse?	Idea of writing a story "about a little mouse"
5	Various observations	Inclination to memorise things for drawing or painting later
6	Natural environment	Thoughts of artistic pursuit, nature as inspiring
6	Patterns of bent grass	Appearance similar to an artwork, "expressive" way to relax

Participant	Natural phenomenon/object	Therapeutic impact/awareness *T-Relevance*
1	Breeze, warmth of sun	Calming and settling effect
1	Natural environment	Resolution to use techniques and remember parts of experience
2	Various perceptions	Process of vocalisation found to be particularly relaxing
2	Old oak tree	Possibility of remembering insights and learning from them
6	Texture of grasses	Relaxing to touch natural objects
6	Natural environment	Trigger for positive feelings and memories
6	Natural environment	Beneficial to spend time in nature, positive experience, calming
6	Natural environment	Enhancement of connection with, and processing of, emotions