

Landings: A Settler Descendent Relationship to Land

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Abstract

Mental wellbeing is influenced by relationships with nature and land. The climate crisis is increasingly recognised as impacting mental health. In Aotearoa New Zealand, ecological loss occurs against a colonised landscape; relationship to land is entangled with historical trauma. Practicing relational psychotherapy within this context requires attention to the way that relationship to land is experienced. This heuristic self-search inquiry examines the experience of relationship to land of a settler-descended psychotherapy trainee. Drawing on Moustakas and Sela-Smith, I use a six-phase process, driven by journaling, poetry, focussing, dreams, and reflective self-inquiry and self-dialogue, to explore my experience. The resulting creative synthesis explores ambivalence and covert hostility within my experience of relationship to land. Four themes are identified: the existential distress and resentment of inevitable death; my relationship to my colonising ancestors; powerlessness, trauma, and resentment in the climate crisis; and how gender and queerness shape my relationship to land. The distress, resentment, and covert hostility to land are uncomfortable to experience; relationship to land may hold defensive aspects of avoidance, denial, and disengagement. As a self-inquiry, this research is not directly generalisable to others; however, it demonstrates the potential complexity and ambivalence of relationship to land, with implications for ecopsychology, mental health, and climate activism.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Elizabeth Brett

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

This dissertation is a heuristic inquiry into my experience of relationship to land as a settler descendent. I bring my identity and subjectivity to it, as a trainee therapist, as a queer and nonbinary person, as a Pākehā New Zealander, as a holder of a body perceived and encountered as female. In honour of that subjectivity and in seeking to make visible my own privilege, and in keeping with the nature of my methodology, I speak in the first person throughout.

In the first chapter, I examine the literature and background of relationship to land in Aotearoa. In the second, I discuss heuristic methodology, research method, and ethical concerns. Over the next four chapters, I explore themes of shadow, settlerdom, climate crisis, and queerness; in the final two chapters, I summarise the insight and understanding I found within the project.

Examining the Literature:

To understand the background against which my research will be conducted, and the existing evidence base, a brief literature review was conducted. This review focused on the relationship between the natural world and mental health, and ways of understanding that relationship within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Terminology is explored and defined.

The natural world and mental health:

The links between mental health and the natural world are well researched. A review by (Bratman et al., 2019) suggests that nature experiences are associated with increased psychological wellbeing and a reduction in risk factors and illness burden of some forms of mental illness. Spending time in nature improves mental health (Cox et al., 2017), measures of stress (Tsunetsugu et al., 2013), cognitive capacity (Bratman et al., 2012), emotional wellbeing (Capaldi et al., 2015), and prosocial attitudes (Brymer et al., 2021). Mental wellbeing is impacted by relationships with and access to natural environments; the therapeutic implications of this are significant.

Ecological losses bring about psychological distress and suffering. Access to nature experiences are decreasing or becoming degraded for communities worldwide (Bratman et

al., 2019) through processes such as urbanisation, industrialisation, displacement, ecological disasters, and climate change. The negative impacts of ecological disasters (Morganstein & Ursano, 2020), ecosystem degradation (Sandifer & Sutton - Grier, 2014; Speldewinde et al., 2009), and climate change (Berry et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2018; Palinkas & Wong, 2020) are linked with increased levels of trauma, mental illness and psychosocial distress. These impacts are felt disproportionately by marginalized groups (Ingle & Mikulewicz, 2020), especially indigenous peoples (Middleton et al., 2020), although Brugger et al. (2013) note that western societies may experience disadvantage in their reduced capacity to feel or articulate emotions around ecological loss. It is likely that the accelerating losses of the climate crisis will continue to cause significant psychological distress worldwide.

Various theoretical frameworks have been proposed to explain the association between the natural world and mental wellbeing. A review by Bratman et al. (2012) suggested most environmental psychology research proposed an unconscious autonomic response of stress reduction related to an evolutionary experience of safety in peaceful natural environments, or a reduction in the cognitive overload brought about by taxing urban environments. By contrast, Mayer et al. (2009) argue that the positive effects seen are a result of connection or relationship with nature, and the corresponding sense of being connected to something greater than the self; the extent to which an individual feels connected to nature may moderate the benefits they are able to receive from contact with the natural world (Lumber et al., 2017; McMahan et al., 2018). This relational frame is particularly noted within research on indigenous groups facing ecological losses (Braun, 2017; Cunsolo, Borish, et al., 2020). Other key frameworks include connections to the natural world as impacting the 'moral identity' and moral wellbeing of individuals and groups (Jia et al., 2017), and land as a source of self and identity (Clayton, 2003). These relational and identity-based frames are particularly relevant to Aotearoa and te Ao Māori.

One weakness of the research body that makes it harder to generalize between studies is the diverging definitions of what constitutes 'nature' or contact with the natural world (Lamb, 1996). In this piece, I will use the umbrella term 'land' mean the natural world as consisting of the soils, waters, and airs of the earth, the organisms that live within them, and the interconnecting relationships between these. In addition to this, my conceptualization of 'land' holds space for the psychospiritual aspects not captured by a positivist worldview - the mauri, mana, and wairua of the land, the symbolic and the unknowable.

The context of settler colonialism:

Aotearoa is a colonised country. Colonisation is a generational system of interwoven cultural, economic, psychological, and ideological processes and forces that work to further the ongoing colonial project of transferring territory, wealth, status, identity, agency and power from indigenous peoples to the colonising group. The wounds of colonisation are immense and ongoing; Aotearoa has entrenched inequity in areas of health, economic status, education, carcerality, and involvement with social services (Rashbrooke, 2013). Particularly relevant to this research are inequities of health. Māori experience higher rates of illness burden (Rangihuna et al., 2018), mental illness (Doyle, 2011), and psychological distress (Ministry of Health, 2019) than non-Māori New Zealanders. Came et al. (2016) argue that these inequities represent a breach of the third article of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which promises *ōritetanga* (equal treatment) to Māori. This troubled context represents the landscape that the people of Aotearoa are grounded in and must build upon.

Land and relationship to land are key in understanding settler colonisation and its legacy in Aotearoa. The primary early mechanism of colonisation was land acquisition; alienation of Māori land through adjudication, legislative processes, and forced purchase, transferred the vast majority of Māori lands to settlers or the Crown (Consedine & Consedine, 2005). The significance of land to Māori is illustrated by the conceptualisation of themselves as *tāngata whenua*, a term that can be translated as ‘people who are the land’ (Matson, 1991), and by the identification of self through *pepeha* that first note the mountains and waters that the speaker belongs to. Māori models of health highlight the importance of *waiora* (healthy environment) and *whenua* (land/land connection), attributing this to a close physical and spiritual relationship between Māori people and the natural world (Durie, 2004; Wilson et al., 2021). Braun (2017) argues that kinship relationships between indigenous groups and the natural environment are not symbolic, but instead carry similar rights and obligations to other relationships. Durie (2001) and Fleming (2018) compare this relationship to western concepts of attachment, noting the potential for disruption of this relationship to have significant impacts on individual and group psychological wellbeing and security. The disruption and loss of colonisation, urbanisation, land alienation, and ecological degradation, suggests a profound and personal grief at the heart of land relationship in Aotearoa.

To the settler coloniser, land and nature were sources of not only wealth and status but identity. The heroic (male) identity of the coloniser ‘clearing the bush’ and conquering nature

(Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005; Dürr, 2008) formed part of the early ‘New Zealander’ identity; this national identity required the ‘discovery’ and naming (re-naming) of the land, and the consumption, assimilation, and appropriation of indigenous knowledge and understanding of the land (Gibbons, 2002). Terruhn (2015) notes that this requires a collective forgetting or disowning of relationships to previous lands and the relationship to land of indigenous people, in order to form a settler identity. Bell (2009) argues that this produces a hollow and inauthentic identity, dependent upon and denying of its relationships to ancestor and indigene. The desire to ‘become indigenous’ claimed by King (1991) and discussed by Higgins and Terruhn (2020) holds both a hostile desire to destroy and replace indigenous people, and a desire for innocence, merger, and redemption through relationship (Bell, 2016; Jones, 1999). Key in this exploration of ‘becoming indigenous’ is that identity, belonging, and relationship to tangata whenua, become entangled with the relationship to land.

Terms and definitions are particularly significant when discussing colonisation: Johnston and Lawson (2004) highlight this when noting that empty lands are settled, while inhabited lands are occupied or invaded. In this paper, I use tāngata whenua to refer to Māori people. I use the term Pākehā to refer to those tāngata tiriti who are of European ancestry and are therefore most able to access systems of white hegemonic privilege.

In Aotearoa, colonisation and the accumulation of hegemonic power has largely been a white endeavour. Lipsitz (2006) highlights whiteness as an intergenerational ‘investment’ maintained by white individuals, communities, and systems, that pays out in economic, social, and cultural capital. For the sake of clarity, I will use settler descendant as an umbrella term to cover those Pākehā who have descended from and carry some of the complex inheritance of their settler-coloniser ancestry. A key point here is that descent may be political or cultural as well as, or instead of, biological or genetic (Gaita, 2013). In general, I will refer to Aotearoa New Zealand as Aotearoa, except in such cases where I distinguish New Zealand as a colonial nation state or concept from the more contemporary bicultural understanding of Aotearoa.

Ecopsychology:

Ecopsychology is a broad field that seeks to engage with and understand the relationship between the natural world and the human psyche. Arising out of the ecological and conservation movement (Fisher, 2012), as well as the work of Searles (1960), it views individuals and communities as interdependent, interrelated, and inseparable parts of the

ecosystems that sustain them (Abram, 1996). Similarly to deep ecology (Naess, 1984), it argues for an ecological understanding of the self and suggests a fundamental disturbance in the relationship with the natural world as a cause of suffering and dysfunction in industrialised societies.

Understanding, working with, and restoring this alienated relationship forms the key task of ecopsychology. Braun (2017) argues that this alienation is a fundamental characteristic of industrial societies, while Shepard (2011) suggests that the alienated, individualist self that is created by these societies is generally unable to accomplish the developmental task of sustainable integration into the ecosystems and communities around it, thus never reaching mature adulthood. Hillman (1998) also critiques the western self as pathogenic and individualistic; he argues that the individualistic self deadens and de-souls the natural world, while inflating the role of the self and the soul, leading to an inescapable internal experience of isolation – a dead thing among dead things, defending against despair with narcissism and over-consumption.

One aspect of ecopsychological theory is the conceptualisation of ecological affect, the emotions experienced in response to ecological losses. Cunsolo, Harper, et al. (2020) argue that these ecological affects are not pathological but instead represent a sane response to the climate crisis, in contrast with Bednarek's (2019) "malignant normality" that denies affect, inhibits agency, and frames ecological losses as ungrievable and therefore worthless (Butler, 2004). Through this lens, the goal of ecopsychology is not to remove or alleviate distress but to build the capacity to experience it.

Ecopsychology in Aotearoa occurs in the context of a society of colonised indigenous people, settlers, immigrants, migrants, refugees, and their often-interwoven descendants. Ecopsychology is critiqued for its failure to reckon with settler colonialism (Jones & Segal, 2018) and environmental racism and inequity (Anthony & Soule, 1998). Fisher (2012) notes that western ecopsychology seeks to understand and restore a relationship to land that may be already apparent and known to indigenous communities; this may lead to dynamics of colonizing indigenous understandings, through appropriation and idealisation, or through devaluing indigenous understandings to centre ecopsychological insights. Socially critical examinations of ecology such as ecofeminism and queer ecology often merge ecopsychology with post-modern and post-structuralist theory (Plesa, 2019; Young, 2012).

Ecopsychology is an umbrella term; the therapeutic praxis of ecopsychology may be described as ecopsychotherapy, eco-therapy, or wilderness or nature therapy (Buzzell et al., 2009), although Fisher (2012) argues that ecotherapy does not encompass the broader social

and philosophical transformation demanded by ecopsychology, which he conceptualizes as political, decolonial, and radical. In this paper, I will use the term ecopsychology to cover psychological aspects of the relationship to land except where a more specific term would be appropriate.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Method

This chapter outlines heuristic methodology and heuristic self-search inquiry, and their applicability to the research topic. It details the method and process of the heuristic self-search inquiry employed, and examines the ethical concerns arising from the process.

Methodology:

What is heuristic methodology?:

Heuristic methodology arises from the work of Moustakas (1990), a key figure of the early humanistic psychology movement. It is a qualitative research method often linked to humanism and phenomenology; it focuses on the researcher conducting an intense interoception of a personal experience of the phenomenon under examination (Mihalache, 2019). This method foregrounds the experience, insight, and intuitive searchings of the researcher; findings explicitly reflect the relationship between the researcher and the research question. Rose and Loewenthal (2006) note that the researcher does not attempt to extend or generalise these findings; that any generalisation occurs in the resonance between the reader and the creative synthesis. Sela-Smith (2002) critiqued and extended Moustakas's work, suggesting that the use of other participants or co-researchers in practice often impeded the internal discovery of the researcher's tacit knowings. She proposed a methodology of heuristic self-search inquiry, that moves away from co-researchers and focuses on the researcher becoming subsumed into and transformed by the research work.

The nature of heuristic methodology leaves it open to criticism. Frick (1990) notes that the free-form and flexible nature of heuristic research may lead to shallow or immature research. Rose and Loewenthal (2006) suggest that the involvement of the researcher with the topic potentially limits their capacity to hear aspects of the story outside of their conscious frame. Sela-Smith (2002) argued that most research presented as employing a heuristic modality did not in fact engage in the kind of deep, transformative self-inquiry she saw as key to the heuristic process. Criticisms of heuristic methodology relate in general to the nature of the process as flexible, intensely subjective, and difficult to evaluate or generalise.

I chose heuristic self-search inquiry in part because it was suited to the nature of my program of psychotherapy and my role as a trainee psychotherapist, as well as to the relational nature of the topic. Rose and Loewenthal (2006) highlight that the relational focus of heuristic research mirrors the relational focus of psychotherapy; that heuristic inquiry requires the researcher to be open to whatever arises within the research, just as the therapist

seeks to be open to what arises in the therapeutic relationship. Moustakas (1990) and Sela-Smith (2002) both highlight the transformative potential of heuristic inquiry; that the researcher is changed by the process of becoming open to their internal experience and making conscious what is unconscious; this mirrors the process of psychotherapeutic change.

Research design:

Method:

This project was a heuristic self-search inquiry, exploring my experience of relationship to land. The process of heuristic enquiry delineated by Moustakas (1990) and extended by Sela-Smith (2002) consists of six phases: initial engagement with the topic; immersion into the experience where the topic becomes the focus of one's existence; incubation, a phase of temporary retreat where the experience is allowed to rest, to promote unconscious engagement and fermentation; illumination, an intuitive and spontaneous process where leaps of understanding and tacit knowledge arise; explication, where the insights obtained are organised, integrated, and analysed; and creative synthesis where the experience and data are understood and re-created in a form that portrays or expresses something of the meaning of the process.

My initial engagement with the question began on some level when my family emigrated from Aotearoa in my childhood. My homesickness was for something that felt indefinable to me about the sky and the trees; I did not have the language to articulate my sense of painful exile. More formally, my initial engagement began with showing up to my first meeting with my dissertation supervisor with a large sheet of paper, scrawled over with twenty ideas around land and its relationship to the psyche. From these interlocking and sprawling ideas, we identified a vividness that came with stories that felt personal; this led to a focus on heuristic engagement with the question.

In the immersion phase, I used journaling, poetry, expressive prose, focussing (Gendlin, 2003), recordings of dreams, and reflective self-inquiry and self-dialogue to explore my experience of relationship to land in the context of being a settler descendent. Examples of these processes included writing out my life in a history of significant trees, and becoming absorbed in seeking out genealogical information about certain ancestors.

One challenge during the immersion phase was a sense of avoidance or reluctance to engage with the process of reflection; I had a sense of being un-immersed, of bobbing back up to the surface. I noticed a reluctance to work on my dissertation, and to be in nature,

previously a habitual source of pleasure and relaxation. This resistance to connect with internal experience was noted by Sela-Smith (2002) as a challenge inherent to the process of heuristic self-search inquiry. Engaging with the sense of ‘not wanting to engage’ proved to be a key process at this time, and allowed me to experience aspects of my relationship to land that felt wildly out-of-frame or uncomfortable to hold.

During the incubation phase, I took several months away from thinking about the topic. My plan was to spend contemplative time in nature during this process; this was disrupted by my city going into Covid-related lockdown. Covid and lockdowns remained a complication throughout the rest of the dissertation process; travel bans and limitations on access to hiking trails and public greenspaces meant that I was writing about the complexities of relationship to land at a time when I and my colleagues were restricted primarily to our own, indoor spaces.

Timelines were a challenge throughout this process. Moustakas (1990) and Sela-Smith (2002) both highlight the conflict between the unstructured nature of heuristic enquiry, and the academic frame of planned phases and deadlines. Covid and lockdowns added another layer of unpredictability to the process.

My experience of ‘illumination’ was in line with Tudor’s (2010) sense of it as a moment or moments throughout the heuristic process. I found that it at times emerged startlingly fast, and at other times slowly – these ‘slow illuminations’ seemed to occur when I was feeling bewildered or stuck by inexplicable material.

Explication and creative synthesis seemed to me to be overlapping and iterative processes. My process of explication involved re-examining and re-viewing the material created in the immersion phase, drawing it into key points and emerging themes. During this process, I also began to link my work to ecopsychological theory, particularly ecofeminism and queer ecology. The creative synthesis that took place during this process was through poetry; I began to write a summation poem to integrate and to express the insights and experiences of the heuristic process. In writing this poem, I also experienced new ways of seeing the material I had produced. As the themes developed, my supervisor and I spoke of weaving a kete; the shape of this kete and the sense of where the weaving was strong or fraying became in itself a source of insight and generative tension.

The result of this process is presented as four themes and two summaries; the themes outline my understanding of relationship to land as bound by the shadow of death, by the legacy of settler colonisation, by ecological crisis, and by gender and queerness. The first summary presented is a creative synthesis of the dissertation, in the form of a poem. This is

presented without examination, in line with Moustakas' concept of synthesis as a creative work, outside the frame of knowledge and analysis. The second summary synthesises the themes explored, and discusses the implications of the findings.

Ethical considerations:

The ethical framework I used within planning and conducting the dissertation was the Te Ara Tika research framework (Hudson et al., 2010). Although this framework was designed for Māori research (involving Māori researchers, participants, data, or methodologies), it occurs within and reflects upon the context of Aotearoa and the coloniser-indigene relationship. As such, it forms a useful lens to examine the ethical implications of the project.

Self-inquiry and heuristic research represent an investigation into an individual's subjectivity and experience. Because this research did not involve other human or animal participants, no ethical approval was sought. Yet we are not only individuals; our histories are shaped by those around us and those who came before us, and are held in common ownership. The heuristic process involved reflection upon the narratives and dynamics of my settler-descended family, including sensitive material such as family violence and harm to children.

Heuristic research runs into the ethical question of whether an individual has the right to engage deeply or publicly with painful or disputed material that is also held by others. This reflects a cultural conflict between western epistemologies of knowledge as individual and available to all, versus indigenous traditions of knowledge as conveying with it relationships and obligations that must be actively bestowed (Jones, 1999). Although I conclude that we have the right to explore our own experiences, elements of the Te Ara Tika ethical framework such as *aroha* (care/awareness), and *māhaki* (respectful conduct), highlight the need to work in a way that shows respect for persons, relationships, and privacy.

An ethical consideration that emerged later in the process, while writing the dissertation, related to self-disclosure and vulnerability. The heuristic process involved intimate examination of my personal history, including sensitive details. I felt a tension between my desire to be authentic and unflinching, to be the ruthless witness that my complex childhood lacked, and my supervisor's concern that I was making myself too vulnerable; that I was potentially re-enacting something violating by leaving myself exposed. I wondered also if pulling back or softening the edges of the material that emerged in the

process reflected a silence, an ethical failure to stay with the discomfort of trauma – what Herman (2015) describes as the tendency of individuals and communities to disown, deny, withdraw their witness to trauma and violation.

The Te Ara Tika guidelines were useful in thinking about how to approach the emergence of sensitive material, both in terms of collective relationships to family history, and my individual vulnerability. In particular, the framework highlights the importance of tapu (restriction), and that the starting point for engaging with tapu as *kia tūpato* (to be careful). From this perspective, the sensitive material emerging in the heuristic process is tapu – it is outside of what is *noa* (unrestricted/ordinary); it has elements to it that are private, sacred, that could cause spiritual harm if treated carelessly. Approaching this material with *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) and *aro ki te ha*, for myself, for the other holders of these stories, and for the reader, meant that I wrote several versions of the central chapters of this dissertation – an original draft that was as congruent as I could be to my original heuristic process, an edited version that removed or reframed sensitive material, and the version included here – a sometimes uneasy balance between the two. My intention has been to be both respectful of and faithful to my experiences; to hold these stories, that are not wholly mine, with great care. All names have been changed. I also note that my exploration of my family history reflects my own perspective and meaning-making; others who hold parts of these stories and places may understand them differently.

Chapter Three: Shadow (the mother who kills you)

The ocean does not mind if you drown. The land does not mind if you starve. Dying is what living things do. *Extract from dissertation journal entry.*

Setting out:

I came to this process with a sense of having held the question for a long time. It arose from my experience of leaving Aotearoa at the age of ten, when my family moved to England. Amid the excitement and the newness and the undeniable beauty of London in spring, with pink cherry blossom against a blue sky and rows of tulips in the parks, I felt an inarticulate yearning, a sickness that felt fitful, discontented and hard to describe. My fantasy is of a spiritual anaemia; a need for some substance I had not learned to extract from foreign soil. Brief holidays to Aotearoa seemed to make it worse; the initial sense of something akin to thirst being slowly eased and restored as I stood in the bush or sea would be followed by a terrible flatness and depression on returning to the UK. Finally I stopped going with my family on these holidays; I decided I would not return to Aotearoa until I could stay. In my mid-twenties, I did.

There was no language available to me as a Pākēha child to express how much I missed the land. The terms we used were homesickness and culture shock; I certainly felt at times homesick for the people and familiar places left behind, or awkward and ill-at-ease within the new culture. Yet the deeper experience was something more like pining. I felt it arise again as an adult, while briefly returning to London to see family. I rode the Underground, hot and crowded, and wished painfully to close my eyes and open them again to find myself on the wide wild beach of home. This sense of half-starved mourning was with me throughout my adolescence and early adulthood; without language, it remained an unsymbolisable interiority, not able to be concretised or understood by myself or those around me.

Part of what motivated me to examine land relationship was making a belated sense of that former experience, and of the lacuna of understanding that surrounded it. Part of it is from love and gratitude to the land itself, to the experience of being filled up as I stand beneath a mātai tree. Part comes from engagement with colonisation and decolonisation, from awareness of the way that I came to have a relationship with this particular land, and the historical and contemporary power structures that weave through that relationship.

Mothers and bitter-mothers:

In this initial engagement, land becomes a benevolent source of psychospiritual sustenance; I suffer when we are parted and am restored by our reunion. This mirrors infantile and romantic attachment; land becomes the Beloved Other, the breast or placenta. In this reading, my needs and desires are morally neutral and require no critique or examination; there are no competing needs or relationships; the land, nurturing and passive, has no needs or desires of its own and exists only to sustain me. Relationship to land is most visible in rupture; when I am connected, I am sustained imperceptibly by an all-giving, inexhaustible, and unconditionally accepting mother.

As a young adult exploring relationship to land, I encountered many alternative spiritual groups who conceptualised and ritualised the earth as nurturing mother; it emerges in places in the ecopsychological literature and is sanitised into ‘ecosystem services’ in research on the relationship between access to nature and wellness. My response to this frame is discomfort – a sense that it is too pretty, too nice, that it holds a tang of artificial sweetness. Klein (1946) suggests the earliest infantile defence is splitting – the ‘good breast’ that gives unceasingly, that nourishes without rupture or boundary, is made separate from the hated ‘bad breast’ that retreats, poisons, is absent when desired, is the source of pain and hunger. The reconciliation of the split object into a whole Other who sometimes gratifies and sometimes frustrates is a key task of the developing psyche.

I work as a trainee therapist in a maternal mental health unit. The splitting off and denial of the ‘shadow side’ of relationship is a common feature of our work with clients. The self-sacrificing, ever-loving mother is an entrenched narrative in modern society (Welldon, 2018). Women who have complex attachment styles and relationships with their own parents, often having navigated childhoods of neglect, trauma, and conflict, come to their pregnancies laden with their own fantasies of how they wish to have been parented, along with a sense that ‘good’ mothers should be perfect, should only ever have loving feelings towards their children, should find every aspect of parenting rewarding. The reality, of course, is that parenting is often unpleasant and difficult, especially when parents are isolated, under-resourced, unwell, and have not been parented appropriately themselves. When the shadow of maternal ambivalence or infanticidal desires (Parker, 2005) emerge, it can be intensely painful to bear; the women I work with may have to find ways to hold feelings of disgust, rage, envy, hatred towards the often much-loved baby. This shadow is not unique to disturbed

relationships; all loving relationships hold within them the desire to exploit, merge with, enviously spoil, consume, destroy, abandon the beloved other.

This complex and ambivalent mother is found within Māori mythology; Papatūānuku, so tightly embraced with Ranginui that her children were stifled; Taranga, who sets her child adrift on the waters; Hine-nui-te-pō, who flees her incestuous father and leaves her children, becoming the death that inevitably awaits them. Mana wāhine, a “specifically Māori form of women’s activism with links to feminism, anti-colonialism and ecocriticism” (Wood, 2007, p. 108) draws on the conjunction of the sacred and the political; Simmonds (2009) argues that the complexity of the links between ‘place’ in Aotearoa and the pūrākau embodied within these atua and the experiences of Māori women are made doubly invisible, by colonialism and by patriarchy. These are not my stories; my own early encounters with Māori stories were children’s books of myths and legends, most focusing on Maui. My cultural touchstones and symbols of the feminine were the Virgin Mary, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty – passive mothers, wicked stepmothers, girls waiting for rescue. There is no ambivalence to them; they are either beautiful, unselfish, and good, or ugly, selfish, and bad; they have no lands to claim or place that is theirs. If they go to Bethlehem, they go to be counted with their husband’s people.

The mother who kills you:

That there was a shadow aspect to my relationship to land became apparent to me early in the process. This was a piece of work I had long looked forward to doing, that I had advocated to be allowed to do; I set aside time to engage in the deep immersion required by heuristic methodology, and then failed to do anything with it. This felt inexplicable, irrational, and outside of my control. Drawing from my psychotherapeutic training, I began to explore not my relationship to land but my resistance to that exploration. My reverie now is of standing by a dark pool, tossing stones in to try to wake whatever dangerous things slept there. I began to write about the indifference and hostility of the earth and sea; mothers who starve or murder or abandon you. More difficult to hold was my own hostility to the earth; in one illuminating but unsettling reverie, I had a sudden intrusive fantasy of harming a young native tree.

This reverie was profoundly incongruent with my sense of myself. Trees are important objects to me. Their complexity, their solidity, their rhythm; the texture of bark and the shape and dapple of leaves. In my dissertation journal I wrote a history of my life in

important trees – the peach tree that my father built a treehouse in; the monkey-tail tree that my brother climbed each summer; the beech trees I watched through the windows of a London psychiatric unit. The story of my life weaves through the branches. Trees become anchor points that hold memories of what it was like in a particular place and time; they are benign and stable companions. The disturbing quality of my reverie became an entry into the aspects of my relationship to land that are territorial, destructive, cruel, sadistic, vengeful.

In my dissertation journal I wrote about oceans and beaches; my brother's drowning; my own near-drowning. The sea came to represent death, inexplicable and sudden. I wondered where the land was in that conceptualisation; whether I held land as life-giving rather than life-taking.

Ecopsychology is concerned with alienation and disruption of the relationship to land. Braun (2017) argues that this alienation is the central characteristic of industrialised societies. This distance cushions us from some of the harsher aspects of embodiment; if the crops do poorly, we do not expect to starve; if we become sick, we expect that medical care will help us. There is an expectation that all women will survive childbirth; that all babies and children will grow to adulthood; that all adults will grow old. When our expectations are subverted it is a tragedy, a broken promise, a sign that something has gone terribly wrong. These expectations are strikingly new; historically, child mortality rates before puberty averaged around fifty percent (Volk & Atkinson, 2013). I wrote this dissertation while in Covid-19 lockdown; a collective effort to prevent death and harm. There were aspects to that which felt like pragmatic necessity, as well as a sense of collective endeavour and sacrifice. In friends opposed to the vaccine, I heard paranoia around harm that felt self-centred, clutching; I came to realise that that clutching feeling was what I found frustrating within the global Covid response – the sense that everyone must be kept alive; that death must be avoided at all costs. In parallel with that was my own panic when a family member became very unwell with Covid. I wondered if it were possible to hold death both lightly and gravely.

I began to think about the earth's relationship with death. A Buddhist order that I have studied under teaches that there is no death, only transformation (Hanh, 2003); the work of grief is to learn to have a relationship with a dead person, rather than a living one. Our current global climate, and the crisis it is undergoing, reflect that the earth was once slow to transform the dead; the coal laid down in the carboniferous period only exists because lignin-heavy trees evolved before microbiota and detritivores that could decompose them. The ghosts of species past are written into current ecosystems; ecological anachronisms evolved

by plants to exploit or defend against vanished megafauna (Galetti et al., 2018); the changes in vegetation in Aotearoa with the loss of the moa (Wood et al., 2020).

And yet for the most part the earth has saving ways: niches are filled; saplings capture the sunlight; the fallen whale becomes an oasis of plenty on the abyssal plain. The bodies of the dead are not discarded but eagerly received back into the energy cycle. In my dissertation journal, I tried to make meaning of my near drowning. I was writing about indifference, as if the earth did not care if I vanished; I began to wonder if instead the earth saw little difference between my living body and my dead one, an epistemic distance (Hick, 2010) more accepting of transience and transformation than I can be.

Hillman (1998) argues that the rise of theism and western cultures shifts the sacred into the human soul, or human potential, thus separating the individual from the wider ecological community. This shift de-souls and deadens the natural world; the narcissistically inflated individual is left to defend against isolation and internal deadness through territoriality and consumption. He argues that western cultures seek to compensate for this lost relationship to land through maternal and later romantic attachment; this impossible demand leaves us perpetually unsatisfied and resentful toward our mothers for their failures. Hillman (1998) and Shepard (2011) also highlight the capitalistic destruction of the natural world as expressing a covert hostility; a vengeful and envious response to our sense of some connection as withheld from us. I wondered if this covert hostility is also existential – that we resent our mothers, and the earth, for giving us over to death and suffering.

As I thought about death, I recalled fragmentary lines from a poem by Anne Sexton; *we are born and it ought to be enough* (Sexton, 2010). Sexton's poem was about evil and understanding; the fragment that stayed with me took on a different personal meaning. I wondered if a birth is all we are owed, whether the haphazard mothering, the sea that feeds and drowns us, is not an unkept promise but a landscape laid out before us, for us to build what meaning we can upon. My sense now is that relationship to land must encompass our relationship to our own death; that we must make some kind of peace with the mother who kills you. Without that shadow and undercurrent, relationship to land becomes flimsy and distorted.

Chapter Four: Settler (my grandfather's dog)

Family land:

In the beginning of the immersive process, I began to think about how my ancestors had come to be in this place. Like many Pākēha families, mine has engaged in a collective forgetting (Terruhn, 2015) where only a few stories are carried through. I felt captured by two of my ancestors – my father's mother, Caroline, who was forced by her father to leave school at fourteen to work on the family farm so that her brother might be free to get an education. My grandmother described it as being chained to the land; she was freed by the second world war, after lying about her education in order to become a nurse and escape the farm. My maternal grandmother's paternal grandmother, Maria, was from an aristocratic European family; as a young girl she watched from behind a curtain as her father was murdered by soldiers. She fled to England with enough wealth or social capital to marry well, then disowned her son for marrying down, prompting the couple to emigrate to New Zealand.

These two women seem to me to hold something of the complexity of relationship to land. For Maria's family, land was wealth, status, and territory. They were not merely landowners but landlords, extracting value from both natural resources and the labour of workers. To win or hold a territory is overtly or implicitly violent; ownership of land requires that the owners or the society they operate in be able to enforce their possession of it. These family lands were lost within the violence of war; despite that, the resources, wealth, and status gained from the land were enough to allow my ancestors to escape and to create lives of moderate privilege elsewhere. Caroline's family owned their farm; although they lived in rural poverty, this asset allowed for the accumulation of generational wealth. The family farms on both sides of my family were ultimately acquired through the alienation of Māori lands; the generational wealth and security gained by my ancestors reflects the larger colonial project of transferring wealth and identity from one group of people to another.

I am primarily descended from settler colonists. These ancestors joined the colonial project at different stages and places. They reflect the concept of political, as well as biological descent (Gaita, 2013); their whiteness and Britishness enabled them to enter the colonial project and accrue benefits from it.

Both sides of my family come from a background of rural agriculture. Agriculture and colonisation are inextricably entwined; the alienation of land was primarily in order to acquire land for European-style farming (Consedine & Consedine, 2005). The existing

indigenous cultivation system, involving collective ownership of land, forest farming, resting and preserving resources, was wrongly interpreted by colonial authorities as ‘waste’ land that was unused; this was a primary justification used for seizing it (Ballara, 1986). The seized land was often cleared by burning, before being quite literally colonised by European crops and herds. This alienation of land and mass ecological destruction was paralleled by a decline in Māori population levels (Consedine & Consedine, 2005; King, 2003). It is linguistically artful to call this process ‘settling’; it invisibilises any question of who or what was ‘unsettled’ or ‘de-settled’. For settlers to begin the work of ‘placing’ themselves, the previous holders had to be dis-placed, or beyond that: un-placed; their relationship to land made invalid, illegitimate, mythical.

My grandfather’s dog:

After arriving in New Zealand, my ancestors moved often; they are buried across the North and South Islands, drawing to mind Mathews’ (2018) concept of European New Zealanders as holding a rootless identity. The strongest link to place is the dairy farm that my mother grew up on and that my father’s brother, who also married into the family, now runs. There are three houses on the land; the young children living there are the fourth generation born on the land. When my extended family, many of them on farms of their own, speak of ‘the farm’, they mean this particular place. I spent most holidays there as a child, at my grandparents’ or at various aunts and uncles. I return for family reunions, weddings, funerals. I have vivid sensory memories of feeding the hens with my grandmother, of cream and brown sugar porridge in blue willow-ware bowls, of the shine on a plum on a cold morning. More complex are the memories of running wild with cousins; there was a feral excitement and brutality to our unsupervised play. We came home with broken bones or ugly scratches, itching with hay and mosquito bites, smeared with mud and cowshit.

The farm was a strata of things that could not be spoken of, laid down over generations. Dysfunction, family violence, sexualised abuse of women and young girls; a painful history that was re-enacted intergenerationally. When I think of my grandfather I think of his dog; a half-trained, abused hunting dog, who was perpetually chained near the drive. To go from one house to another, we had to edge along the fence among the thorny bushes, while the dog, who could not bear children, snarled and yanked at the chain inches from us. Every now and then the dog would escape. I was badly bitten, then told it would not have happened if I had not been teasing the dog somehow. There were very young children

roaming the farm; I am surprised none of them were killed. There was another way around the house, through my grandfather's garden; when faced between the choice of my grandfather or his dog, we chose the dog. As a child, I thought of the dog like my grandfather – dangerous; unpredictable; that we would not be protected from him. The dog now seems to me to express something of the craziness of that place; neglected, abused, frightening; no sane adult to intervene.

My other grandparents lived in a tidy house close to the sea; while the houses of the farm were dirty and cluttered, this house was always immaculate; the small lawn manicured; the shrubby modern garden mulched with bark so that no weeds grew through. The contrast between the two spaces created an implicit learning: that cultivated, clean, manicured spaces were safe and respectful, while spaces that were dirty, muddy, close to the earth, were dangerous and disgusting. This splitting was similar to my grandmother's splitting of rurality as degrading and disempowering, versus the urban as granting agency and control. Like my grandmother, I have chosen urban places; I go into fragments of bush and then return to my small home and the houseplants that live there. Within my relationship to land is an ambivalence to the dirtiness of care and production, a desire to control my environment and have agency and safety within it.

Coloniser:

A key moment in my heuristic process was my disturbing reverie of harming a young native tree; I had a sense of touching into a space that was psychotic or outside of normal functioning. The desire to kill the native tree seemed to me to tap into my hostility toward indigeneity. This hostility is far outside my desired self-concept; it feels profoundly discomforting and shameful to enter into.

The United Nations' (2020) definition of indigenous people as "inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment" highlights to centrality of relationship to land to indigeneity. Māori conceptualise themselves as *tāngata whenua* (people of the land); Boulton et al. (2021) note the complexity of this term, which draws on the idea of land as *whenua* (placenta). Connection to land becomes intimate, based in kinship and spirituality, inextricably linked to *whakapapa* and Māori cosmology.

Colonisation in Aotearoa and the formation of the New Zealand nation state was driven by the acquisition and alienation of Māori lands. Gibbons (2002) suggests that the still-ongoing cultural processes of colonisation were intended to marginalise and discredit the

indigeneity of Māori, in order to position settlers as the rightful inheritors of the land. Thus the settler-coloniser relationship to land is entangled not only with the relationship of coloniser to indigene, but indigenous people's own relationship to land. This indigenous relationship to land becomes an existential threat to the settler-coloniser relationship to land and to their own complex and unstable identities (Bell, 2009), which depend on forgetting and unknowing themselves as non-indigenous (Terruhn, 2015). Shepard (2011) argues that this failure of identity development is not solely colonial but is a feature of western cultures, which never reach an understanding of the self as part of an interdependent ecological community.

Racism and the tropes and narratives that defend white identities from discomfort and loss of privilege are not merely familiar to me; they are familial. My extended family employ them often; I grew up with narratives such as those described by Ballara (1986) and Nairn and McCreanor (2014): that colonisation was so long ago as to be irrelevant, that Māori benefitted from it, that Māori receive unfair privileges and better opportunities than Pākēha, that inequity of outcome is due to Māori failure and poor character. My extended family are primarily European and do not hold whakapapa or identify as Māori; despite this, family history of a Māori great-grandmother was used to justify these narratives - 'we can say it because we have Māori blood'. These narratives feel placed and landed to me; I locate them at the family farm, where I heard them most often.

My settler identity and my whiteness become entangled with the disgust, fear, and shame I felt in relationship to my grandfather and his dog. In connecting to a hostility to indigeneity, I had the fantasy of my grandfather waking within me – of something carried through the land, the umbilicus, the marrow. I had a vivid dream of extracting a ragged clump of blood and tissue through my belly-button; the internal remnants of a placenta. In the dream I felt an intense relief, as if I had been able to remove my relationship to settlerdom and the farm; to un-settle and un-tie myself.

I began re-reading Enid Blyton children's books about farm life. The farm and countryside they describe is clean and kind; white middle-class farmers and their families have high tea and raise orphaned lambs. The worst of the work is done by servants and labourers. Animals are friendly and well-tended; there is no blood or cowshit or casual cruelty. Enid Blyton wrote those particular books for children during the Second World War; the elaborate cosiness of the world she creates is in stark contrast to the rationing and uncertainty that her readers were experiencing. This anodyne utopia is the antithesis of my family's farm; yet the pastoral fantasy reflects the dream that drove the colonial project. My

reflex dive into a fantasy relationship to land was a reaction against an upswell of colonising aggression within my own relationship to land; it is key to note that the particular fantasy I was drawn to was of patriarchal dominance of the land. The white Englishman owns the land and makes use of the animals and his subservient employees; his competence and authority demonstrate his superior national character. As a child, these books were soothing to me because they suggested a rurality that was calm and sane, where my grandfather could not go. As an adult, they acted as a defence of feeling my grandfather rise within me; they also represent the fantasy of the settler-self. There is no competing indigeneity to be reckoned with in these books; the relationship to land is comfortable in its whiteness.

Through focussing and self-dialogue, I identified an anxiety running in parallel with the sadistic impulse. I felt a sense of being unwelcome, unloved; the fear of experiencing myself as invasive and rejected. This brought to mind Bell's (2006) concept of the hollow and fragile Pākēha identity, seeking to bolster itself against collapse. My sense of panic, of almost annihilatory terror, felt primal.

I began to think about infant experience. The first need we have in infancy is to be connected to our caregivers; through skin and pulse and breast, to experience ourselves as cared-for. Winnicott (1960) highlights that the baby only exists within the parent-infant relationship; without a caregiver, the baby can neither survive nor make sense of itself. If a relationship to earth-as-placenta, as mother, is an essential part of our psyche, settler-colonists must defend against an ecopsychological anxiety of knowing themselves as stepchildren, cuckoos, invaders at the breast.

My extended family defended against those anxieties through covert and overt hostility towards Māori. My experience of touching into my own covert hostility, my internalised and inherited biases, felt acutely shameful and anxiety provoking. My relationship to land is shaped by that anxiety as well; a desire to disown and un-relate myself from my settler ancestors, to reject their works and their whiteness, to un-grandfather myself.

I reflect again that I cannot separate out the strands of my relationship to land from my relationship to family, to colonisation, to my ancestors; they are rivers run together. Settlers in New Zealand burnt the bush in order to clear lands for farming; I have ring-barked invasive wild pine. My grandfather, who I did not love, planted thousands of trees. From the ridgeline above the farm, his fields stand out in the patchwork valley, green with trees that have outlived him.

Chapter Five: Destruction (agency in the Anthropocene)

Ecological loss:

To have a relationship to land in the Anthropocene era is to have a relationship with ecological destruction, with complicity, with powerlessness. The climate crisis is driven by the same forces of capitalist expansion and wealth extraction as colonisation. Colonisation in itself is an ecological crisis; the arrival of the first humans into a region is almost invariably followed by the loss of megafauna that are hunted to extinction, or cannot survive a disrupted ecosystem and competition for resources (Sandom et al., 2014). Radiocarbon dating and Māori whakataukī suggest that the extinction of the moa occurred within two centuries of Māori arrival in Aotearoa (Wehi et al., 2018). European colonisation was exponentially more destructive; the replacement of forest cover by cleared land and the introduction of invasive mammals fragmented habitats and drove extinctions. The disruption of the climate crisis is not so much a distinct third ecocide as an ever-more rapid acceleration of a degradation originating in the European colonisation and industrialisation of Aotearoa.

Ecopsychology explores the emotional and psychological responses to ecological losses. Albrecht (2017) suggests that western cultures struggle to language these losses; he coined the term ‘solastalgia’ to capture the existential distress and grief of the loss of a beloved ecosystem, while Clark (2020) describes a concept of ‘Anthropocene horror’ at the relentless destruction of the global ecology. Panu (2020) suggests that ecological affect runs the gamut from anxiety to rage to despair. In my own responses, I see a stew of grief, fatalism, and frustration.

Living through the climate crisis is a slow trauma. We face losses of beloved ecosystems, danger to ourselves, to others, to future generations; we do so in the face of inaction, denial, and our own complicity. We have no rituals to collectively grieve these losses and our complicity with them (Braun, 2017; Menning, 2017); we are left holding tangled parts of the victim, persecutor, and bystander (Clarkson, 1987). The concept of moral injury, the damaging experience of having acted against our deepest values or having failed to prevent such actions (Griffin et al., 2019), allows us to recognise all these positions as traumatic. Glendinning (1994) argues that industrial societies suffer from an ‘original trauma’ of alienation from nature, compounded by traumas of genocide, oppression, war, and ecological loss, that has been normalised into invisibility.

Herman (2015) highlights the slipperiness of trauma. It is difficult remain in contact with, in both the individual and the collective psyche. To prevent a costly reorganisation in response to unwanted information, the information must be somehow kept out of the system; the system becomes incongruent, false, insane – unable to respond to danger. My grandfather's dog was the outward expression of the exploitation, neglect, and abuse in my mother's family. To acknowledge that there was a profound dysfunction at play was impossible; instead, we learnt as children to operate in both the covert true reality of danger, and the collective false reality of denial.

The collective false reality of the climate crisis is what Bednarek (2019) calls 'malignant normality'. Weintrobe (2013) suggests that cognitive knowledge is kept separate from felt experience; Bednarek (2021) highlights that this is an accelerating process, as the suppressed anxiety at this fragmentation increases and requires still more distortion to be kept out of consciousness. The compartmentalisation, positivism, and alienation from nature so entrenched in capitalism becomes not merely a cause of the climate crisis, but a collective psychological defence against the unbearable distress and anxiety of existing within it. To stop the machine of economic progress would require us not only to accept a different model of consumption, but also to come into relationship with our suffering and complicity.

Agency in the Anthropocene:

The rage, frozenness, and despair I feel has a looping quality to it, like eddying water turning upon itself. The ambivalent and uneasy state of collective consciousness of ecological danger and the agitation of global foot-dragging is a hard state to stay with. The body-feel of it is like being a child on the farm; that there is an insanity happening; that we are sleepwalking and we are in danger. I am conscious of an angry fantasy of punitive omnipotence, or a reactive desire to collapse into fatalism.

My fantasy of enacting power speaks to an underlying truth of my experience of relationship to land in the context of ecological loss: I feel powerless. Powerlessness is a key factor in predicting whether distressing events result in traumatic sequelae (Levine, 2015). Perceptions of powerlessness are associated with lower levels of environmental action (Williams & Jaftha, 2020); taking local action is one of the key ecopsychological approaches for treating ecological distress (Baudon & Jachens, 2021). But what does agency look like, in the context of the climate crisis?

One of the narratives of the climate crisis has been around individual action – for each consumer to consume less or differently. This reading casts capitalism, government, and corporate bodies as morally and ethically neutral, invisible; individuals are the only moral actors, and the climate crisis reflects their choices. This reading is beyond insufficient; it ignores the role of government and capitalist forces in shaping the choice-landscape available to the individual. The counterweight to this is collective action.

The importance of community and collective approaches to climate change is not only due to political impact. Baudon and Jachens (2021) note that group efforts to language, share, and ritualise experiences form a significant part of the literature around dealing with ecological distress. This may increase perceptions of individual and group efficacy; access to a supportive community is also protective against trauma (Levine, 2015). This implies that relationship to land is shaped by our actions, as much as our reactions; that it is collective as well as individual.

My experience of rage feels powerless; I associate it with feeling like a child, with antifeminist narratives where becoming emotional is cast as losing objectivity, becoming irrational, being shrill and unlikeable. By contrast, Kretz (2017) argues that anger is valuable as a political force to bring about change, while Stanley et al. (2021) found that it was a predictor of engagement with collective action. Other concepts of agency include exploration and acknowledgement of grief (Woodbury, 2019), of active hope (Macy & Johnstone, 2012), and changing one's relationship to nature and wildness (Bednarek, 2021). The concept of *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) has complex links to place and spirituality; Walker et al. (2019) highlight its potential to affirm relationship, identity, and agency, to the benefit of *mana whenua* and the land. These processes all involve attention to relationship to land and our emotional, spiritual, cultural, and ecopsychological responses to the climate crisis.

Action is often framed as based in love for the natural world and its beauty. Plumwood (2008a) argues that our sense of connection to the beauty of nature and our local ecology is a disowning and denial of the ugly places that we are connected to and supported by – the factory farms, the landfill, the negative externalities visited upon the developing world. The cultural mythos of New Zealand as a nation-state is tied in with the beauty of the landscape; the idealisation of pristine, untouched wilderness removes Māori from the aesthetic gaze (Boyle, 2016) and supports colonial narratives of the settlement of unoccupied land (Ballara, 1986). Shadow is invisibilised; complexity is removed; our rubbish is sent offshore.

The branding of 'Pure New Zealand' creates a dualism of purity versus pollution; the 'dirty' reality of inequity, racism, and historical trauma invalidated in favour of a national self-perception of fair and stainless egalitarianism (Dürr, 2008). Narratives of purity are central to eco-nationalist and eco-fascist movements (Campion, 2021). The desire to return to a harmonious 'native' ecosystem that removes and protects against invasive elements and restores the connections between people and place damaged by modernity is a jumping off point for both ecological activism and ethnonationalist eco-fascism. Another problematic aspect of purity-based idealisation of the natural world is reductive idealisation of indigenous groups as ecological noble savages (Grande, 1999). This reading casts Māori as performing redemptive ecological labour on behalf of white capitalism and is hostile to the reality of indigenous people navigating systems of ecological loss as complex actors with needs and motivations beyond those offered to them by the idealising observer. I wonder now whether we can attend to grief and hope and guardianship without disowning the shadowed places of relationship to land.

Grieving for whales:

When I began to write about ecological loss, I found fatalism and distance came most easily to me. I thought about the earth I know as one incarnation among mass extinctions and evolutionary explosions. As I worked on this dissertation, billionaires engaged in a private space race and talked about colonisation of Mars, accompanied by stories of worker exploitation, tax avoidance, and carbon emissions from their industries. Late capitalism does not put forward a convincing case for humanity; I began to wonder if we deserved to survive the crisis we have created. Amid this, my brother had his first child. Though I have chosen not to be a parent, I enjoy the children of my stepsiblings, cousins, and friends. Unexpectedly, I found my fatalism growing painful with the birth of my brother's child as it had not with other children in my whānau; I felt an intense grief for him in his inheritance of the world. I joked to a friend that I had bad news: we had to fix the planet after all.

I notice a jumpy discomfort when I try to be present with my feelings around the climate crisis. My grief takes the shape of whales; I think about microplastics and warming seas and the sonic landscape; I recall documentaries about calves fading and pods dwindling. I feel frightened by the depth of my sadness; that if I entered into it fully, I would be lost in grief, unable to function. I am conscious of not having a schema for grieving whales; there is no funeral or mourning dress. If I go to my therapist or a friend to say, "I'm really sad about

the whales”, we do not seem to know what to say next. I do not know how to be sad about the whales and also go to work, drive to the supermarket, see my own clients. My grief feels inhibited, unlanguageable, made complex by my own complicity and powerlessness; I do not know how to apologise to whales for the terrible harms that we have done to them. I do not know how to stop harming them.

I experience myself as a coloniser of whales; a beneficiary of industrial and economic systems that exploit whales and their environment for profit, or shed the toxic dregs of our endeavours into their bodies. I feel like part of a covert war on whales; I wish that we could surrender. I notice within myself the fear that if I grieve for whales, I will also have to grieve for albatrosses, for polar bears, for deforestation, for indigenous peoples, for my nephew; that I will be devoured by grief and shame and helplessness. I become aware that I have a bus to catch; my grief contracts. I feel guilt over setting it aside. Resentment wakes; the whales are making me feel distressing emotions. It is unfair that I should feel so bad, when I would be on the whales’ side, if I knew how. I begin to feel defensive. The whales are treating me unfairly; they are not sufficiently appreciative of my sadness for them. There is nothing I can do; the whales should stop trying to make me feel guilty. I have deadlines to think about, and problems of my own; my life is hard enough without the whales making it worse.

In the shutting down of my grief and compassion, I am conscious of my own hostility waking up. My projection of my own discomfort onto the whales reflects the relationship of whiteness to indigeneity. It draws to mind Bell’s concept of Pākehā guilt and distress as self-absorbed, projected out onto Māori in a fantasy that innocence or redemption might be granted, or in a defensive refusal and reactive hostility (Bell, 2004). My disowned suffering and shame come back at me; it feels like an attack. Within my distress over the climate crisis, I feel the thread of resentment against the land I am mourning for. As distressing as it is to be present with the climate crisis from a place of love for the earth, it is harder still to stay in relationship from a place that acknowledges my resentment, my apathy, my sense that there is perhaps as well a mutual hostility between us.

Agency and action may well be a counterbalance to hopelessness. I have a fantasy of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) as a great work of humanity; an ethical revolution where environmental restoration becomes the primary focus of society. Yet agency too steps away from shadow; it is likely that much of what we do will be in vain, that despite our efforts, ecological losses over the next century will be extreme. I wonder now if there is also agency in bearing witness, in remaining present with the earth in its dying and the things that we have wrought.

Chapter Six: Queer (encia)

Gendering myself:

Throughout the heuristic process, I found myself distracted. I would attempt to immerse myself in my relationship to land; instead, what seemed to boil forth was my relationship to gender. My sense of my gender has always been of something other, of the gender categories I was offered by my culture and socialisation as not capturing my experience, of femaleness fitting too tightly in some places and too loosely in others. I experienced my gender as private and undefinable. In the immersion phase, I felt as if my gender had somehow escaped. My reverie was of trying to stuff a sleeping bag back into its case, only for it to slip out again. I wanted to be more openly non-binary, more gender congruent in my presentation and paperwork. In dialogue with myself, I tried to explain that I didn't have time for this aspect of myself to sprout; that I was busy with my studies and clinical work; that there would be time to explore my gender next year. My dissertation was a particular concern; I did not want to change my research topic; I could not afford to have gender hijack the process. I felt an inexplicable sense of terror, as if I was hurtling down a slope with very little control of my trajectory. Entwined with the terror came a euphoria of feeling outwardly congruent to an internal experience of gender.

During the heuristic process, I tried to live more congruently to my gender, to consciously frame myself as a nonbinary person when moving in the world. I noticed a shift in my way of being; I had a sense of butchness and assertion becoming potent within my muscles. It was a significant contrast to the inhibition, frozenness, and numbness that I had often felt when framing myself as female. I felt that there was a feral and sharp quality to my nonbinary self, a sense of knowing the borders of my body and being prepared to defend them; of not feeling like a disputed space. I had a feeling of fully inhabiting my body. This opened a sense of a somatically experienced relationship to earth. There is a contrast between the sensory feeling of my nonbinary somatic relationship to earth – vivid, aggressive, robust – and my gender dysphoric, false-female somatic relationship – anxious, inhibited, settling into passivity. I recalled the idea of *querencia*, the place in the ring where the bull finds himself and makes his stand. I began to think of it as queer-encia, a standing place, a *tūrangawaewae* anchored in queerness. I wonder now whether the inhibited quality of my relationship to earth when constructing myself as female reflects the ways that society socialises girls and women to self-restrain, to avoid aggression, to inhibit sensuality.

A particular focus during my half-involuntary gender exploration was my name, and whether I would change it to something that felt more gender congruent. I lamented to my therapist and friends about the necessity for names. Why did I need a name? Why do any of us? I had a fantasy of capturing each other through sensory flashes instead of names, where I might be represented by a tree, by the underside of a canopy of branches, seen from below.

This idea of the tree stayed with me. My concept of gender is of it drawing from three wells, from the masculine, the feminine, and from a third well which is unknowable. I experience my gender as drawing slightly from the feminine and profoundly from mystery; when trying to articulate it to friends I came again and again to the idea of my gender as tree. To fit 'tree' into a gender binary is nonsensical; plant reproduction is so complex that animal models of biological sex and gender are barely relevant. Although some nonbinary xenogendered people use symbolic or aesthetic language to define their gender, my sense of the tree is closer to Morin's (2017) playful exploration of metaphor as escaping the confines of cis-ness and trans-ness, of an approach to ecology and biology that is liberatory and transformative. An example of this is Griffiths' (2015) exploration of what queerness means when we are not singular individuals, but emergent communities of cells and microorganisms, reproducing and recreating ourselves in diverse ways at every level.

I notice also my embarrassment, a sense that it is perhaps nonsensical or adolescent to describe my gender as 'tree'. The process of writing this dissertation was often uncomfortable; I felt a sense of recurring shame that it was solipsistic; that it was not 'academic enough'; that the fluidity and interconnection of what I saw as my relationship to land would be critiqued as fanciful or magical thinking. Gaard (2017) argues that queer ecology and ecofeminist theory must engage critically with the objectivist and scientific framework, and create space for experiences and perspectives outside the empirical frame. My cringing away from my own heuristic process and insight reflects the super-ego I have created from the definitions made available to me; that some things are adult, rigorous, pragmatic, worthwhile, estimable, while others are embarrassing, teenage, sentimental, unscientific; a hermeneutics of self-loathing. My reverie of my gender as a tree feels linked to my relationship to land; the way I think about that relationship feels shaped by my own internalised heterosexism and queerphobia. The meaning I make is that my relationship to land arises out of my nonbinary identity; that my relationship to land is gendered even while it is agendered.

Ecofeminism and queer ecology:

The relationship of my ancestors to land was defined also by gender. Caroline and Maria's relationship to the lands of their families was implicitly temporary; they were expected to marry and leave. Male preference primogeniture was particularly expressed within Caroline's narrative, where she was expected to leave school in order to support her family and her brother's education. Agency over her own life only became possible within the disrupted social structure of the Second World War. Maria's agency is present in her attempts to control her son's marriage and bloodline; when she denies him his patrimony, he becomes in a sense de-landed, emasculated. To re-masculate himself he must re-land himself, acquire capital or territory. His emigration to New Zealand can be read as an expression of gender, as well as class; Cosgrove and Bruce (2005) highlight that the colonial mythscape of New Zealand was of the heroic white male 'conquering' the bush.

Unlike their sisters, my grandfather's grandsons have mostly positive memories of the farm. To them, our grandfather was a temperamental giant of a man who took them fishing and hunting; the occasional thick ear and diatribe was easily ignored. At his funeral, many recalled those trips fondly. My eldest uncle cried as he spoke about his father's greatness. His ashes were scattered on the farm; small children spluttered when the wind blew them back in their faces. His daughters and granddaughters said quiet things to each other about endings and acceptance. I felt a sense of bizarreness to it, as if two realities were overlaid on each other. I experience the world of women as the reality beneath a delusional and denying world of men; what feels congruent and real to me about the female aspects of my gender is the citizenship of this women's reality.

In my dissertation journal I find recurring motifs of breast and milk, of womb and blood, of placenta and umbilicus. This springs not only from the idea of earth as mother or whenua but from the realities of the dairy farm. The insemination and yearly pregnancy of the cows; the skittering bobby calves penned away for slaughter as their mothers bellowed; teaching them to drink by letting them suck on my milky hand. My siblings and I hand-reared an orphan lamb. We named him Cuddles; when he outgrew the urgent suckle of the bottle, he went to live on a sheep farm. He struggled to adjust to the herd and was slaughtered for meat.

I have fond memories of my grandmother's hens. A few years ago, my mother raised a set of chicks from the egg; one chick was pushed from the nest and was too weak to feed. We fed it droplets of sugar water and took turns carrying it in our cleavage to keep it warm.

Another chick had a distressing deformity; my mother killed it with a brick. Food and nurturing, sexuality and violence, birth and death become entwined.

Ecofeminism argues that humanity's relationship to land can only be understood through the ways that patriarchal societies have viewed the feminine: the 'economic man' that benefits from capitalism is white, colonialist, male, and oppressive of people and non-human others that do not benefit or are harmed by capitalism; capitalism is dependent on hidden exploitation, theft of wealth, and slavery in order to create perpetual growth (McMahon, 1997). Queer ecology argues that western relationships to land and epistemologies of scientific understanding are not only grounded in patriarchal sexism but in heteronormativity. Levick's 1911 observations of the 'depravity' of Adelie penguins so shocked him that he encoded them in his journal in Ancient Greek; they were elided from publication and instead privately distributed to scientists. Bagemihl's (1999) exploration of sexual diversity in animals concluded that there is no universal template of what sexuality is and how it is expressed.

Queer ecology can be viewed as an extension and critique of ecofeminism and ecopsychology, or as an interdisciplinary field where queer theory is used to interrogate the essentialisms and binaries of environmental and critical ecology studies. Here, 'queering' references the disruptive and anti-essentialist rejection of dualism, completionism, and certainty. Particular dualisms and dichotomies challenged by queer ecology are human/nonhuman/more-than-human, singular/collective, male/female, plant/animal, scientific/spiritual. An ecofeminist or queer ecology lens connects and integrates different domains of exploitation, blurring the borders between them; in this frame, the neglect, exploitation, and violence of the farm, the racism expressed towards Māori, the colonial alienation of the land away from *tāngata whenua*, the disruption of the pre-contact and pre-colonial ecosystems, the flow of nitrates into water systems, the destruction of remote rainforest to grow palm oil plantations as supplemental animal feed, the methane emissions of dairying, the neglect of my grandfather's dog, and the use and slaughter of farm animals are interrelated. They tell a story of the way western cultures relate to land, to sexuality, to conflict, to the processes of eating and shitting and dying; of the way that power shapes our relationships to land, and land shapes our relationship to power.

On eating and being eaten:

Land is sustenance. There is a brutality to the energy cycle that cannot be avoided; in the endless cycle of predator versus prey; in the defences and communications by which plants try to avoid being consumed (Kost & Heil, 2006); in the micro-conflict of paternal genes of the foetus attempting to deepen the infiltration of blood vessels and obtain more of the mother's resources, while the maternal genes and mother's physiology struggle to regulate what is given (Malnou et al., 2019; Ziomkiewicz et al., 2019). Our earliest experiences of being fed are gendered; sustained by womb and breast; the costs of reproduction born disproportionately by female animals.

I feel a sense of weariness when I touch into my relationship with food. Animals and plants make it clear through their behaviour that they do not consent to be killed or harmed; global food production systems are socially inequitable and ecologically destructive. There is a relentless and inescapable quality to it. We dine on suffering; eat or starve. There is a tension in individual ecological action such as veganism; we are acting within our local context and zone of control, as imperfectly as our choices. And yet there is an isolationist smugness to it, a sense that our individual ethical self-concept is more important than collective social change; that if we do not participate in a particular form of ecological destruction, we escape responsibility for it.

Curtin (1991) and Plumwood (2000) argue for a contextually sensitive relationship to eating animals and animal products that aims for an ethic of care and responsibility; this approach respects the relationships of indigenous peoples and subsistence hunters to the animals they eat and critiques ecologically costly processed vegan products. I am conscious of my own persistent fantasy of zero-impact food systems, of techno-utopias, of being a brain in a jar, free of the squalid aspects of embodiment. This fantasy plays into ideas of human exceptionalism, where we do not need to be part of an ecological community; where we are clean and not animal. I come back also to the image of the tree; an ethical fantasy of photosynthesis, of grandmother trees and networks below the ground, of energy without suffering. On the forest floor, seedlings wither, waiting for a break in the canopy.

In counterbalance, Plumwood (2008b) suggests that the antidote to human exceptionalism is to make peace with being eaten oneself; although Plumwood is referring to death, I reflect that we do not only contribute to the land and the energy web through our deaths but through the processes of living; the microbiota and commensals that occupy our skin and guts; our shit and urine; our shed menstrual blood; the building of another body in

pregnancy and breastfeeding; the burial of the whenua to be eaten back into the earth. I wonder if there is space to queer the experience of being eaten; to be playful and joyful about the ways in which we shed energy into the ecological web throughout our living and dying; that our relationship to land includes the way we are made and unmade into each other.

Listening to rivers:

Queer theory and eco-feminism are concerned with consent. For relationship to land to hold aspects of I-thou rather than I-it (Buber, 2006), there must be a space held for land to be in relationship with us, to consent or refuse to relationship, for land to have agency and perception, though in a form that it might be difficult or impossible for us to interpret. I feel a tension between the mechanistic and the animistic. The little river on the farm is so loaded with runoff that it is considered unswimmable. When watercourses become inimical to humans, is this a communication that the river does not consent to being polluted?

What is a river? Is it a hydrological basin, the water moving through it at any moment, the ecologies it contains and supports, the cultural memories and meanings embedded within it, a more-than/other-than-human atua with identity beyond what we ascribe to it, or something else entirely beyond our understanding; is it all these things? How would we know?

Gaard (2017) argues that white people are trained by culture in a hierarchy of listening; those who are dominant speak, while those who are not are reduced to a passive listening; human and non-human others not valued or acknowledged by white, colonial, patriarchal worldviews are non-hearable. She suggests that the capacity to be in relationship with others, including land, requires white people to build their capacity to actively hear what Orange (2020) describes as the voice of the devastated Other. To be in relationship with land suggests an ethical imperative to try to receive what the devastated land might wish to convey.

One aspect of this is to privilege and amplify the voices of indigenous groups who have a tradition of communication with the land. Another is to flex the idea of consciousness and selfhood; Bateson's (1972) concept of the eco-mental system called Lake Erie being driven insane (losing the ability to organise and understand itself) through pollution is an example of this. Bateson extended this to suggest that the insanity was in not understanding that we are part of an eco-mental system that includes the lake; that we are made insane by ecological degradation in the same way that other aspects of the ecological community are.

I draw from this that to have a relationship with a fragmenting ecology is to encounter disconnection, alienation, incohesion, insanity within myself and my culture, as well as my relationship to land. I feel a hermeneutic “inclining towards” (Smythe & Spence, 2012) the title of Rosenhan’s (1973) paper, “On being sane in insane places”; it reminds me of the strange and nightmarish feeling of denied insanity at my grandfathers’ farm. My sense is that to be sane in insane places first requires an acknowledgement of the ways that we, and the places that we are part of, are insane.

As I was writing this dissertation, birds flew into the house where I was staying, again and again. My host was perplexed by it. More birds hopped along the porch; they stood in the open doorway, chirping loudly, until I looked up from my computer to ask what they wanted. I felt as if they had a message for me, one I could not quite hear or understand. I wonder if it was only that when I looked at land, the land also looked at me. Here I am, says the bird. Here we are.

Chapter Seven: on landing

i.

crumpling lizard skin, tree clung
 old spine mountains ease in
 to drink from black water

skeining over the rock
 the fine white hair of your grandmother's sister
 caught for a moment in the wind

ship-cradle, doubtful
 harbour
 cloud river waiting

long ago the smell of tar
 came up the inlet like a new wind
 forest song like cathedral bells

strangers shouting to be heard.

ii.

in boats of iron and eggshell
 we come like blown thistledown
 like shoaling fish; like locusts waking
 in some season of our own

in boots of leather and certainty; in seasick hope; in hunger
 dragged like muddened skirts
 like pariah dogs; like the things
 left behind when armies pass through

to be your children; to have our turn

at your breast and at your carcass
 to say
 be my mother: be milk and meat
 be bone and blood

let me lie upon you
 name me and know me
 let me crawl inside you
 and eat my way back out.

iii.

came over the cold forest hill from the blue bay
 the wide valley written out
 in mist and farmland

the sun, primrose-pale, in evening slant
 through winter trees. for an instant
 I see London morning; frost in the park
 iron railings, lacquer-black,
 fleur-de-lis.

I who walked on Welsh beaches and thought of red threads,
 pōhutukawa silver-green over the water; I who learnt only by fractions
 to love soft mornings and the drift of mizzling rain
 against grey stone.

the paddocks are wet and green and tussock, pitted and tagged
 like an old man's skin. under the grass
 the ghosts of old rainforest, burned clear
 by men who thought of English fields, smooth as falling velvet
 who grew like scattered thistledown; who planted oak,
 who woke under strange stars

the heart divided; the chest
split open

by the pull of distant tides; by forest-ghosts
by London morning.

iv.

some ribboned womb, ragged red
black as clotted blood
drawn out from the navel as i watched
a placenta in reverse: i thought
this is the organ of belonging; i thought
what a relief to be rid of it

two fingers, stubby and grimed
like the hands of a farming man
they pressed into my navel. i vomited in the shower, remembering.

blue willow ware
reeling on the table; holed and spiked
the milky tea puddling beneath them

rats in the walls and the
gloss of fur half seen through the chewed places; rats beneath the garden
the squirm and kick of the iron spade. i thought
i am dreaming; i thought
my body is unguarded somewhere and it is sleeping.

vi.

your body is just the same
when you are not in it; you are still
meat and bone; there is still
a place for you at this wide table. climb up
lie down.

you are still
wanted by this earth; your mother
does not mind that you are
growing colder and the dance
has gone out of your veins

you will be eaten and go about
in a thousand small bodies

she will love them just the same

v.

in the long now i was still as a taniwha dreaming;
learnt the shape of my body in trees and the calling of birds

bones that were bare and were cold and were changeless and silent
in a sky that was restless and breathing and tasted of rain

there was much to be learned from the freezing and falling of waters
the salt and the drag of the sea as it brushed at my sides

beat out the turn of the stars in the flicker of sunsets
come the rain come the wind come the chill like a clench of a heart

i heard little warmths wake up in the rustle of greening
they curl on the earth as if held in the palm of a hand

these are the things that are mine; the stones in the water
the grass like a river unravelled; the rising of wings

i am the god of the green and the things that reach upwards
and the things that are small and are blind and are close to the ground.

vi.

on landing

you slide out of your private ocean

gasping like a gutted fish

what a world awaits you. it will be

jagged and sweet by turns. it will taste

like milk and salt

knot you closed and slice you free; call it the first wound

call it landing:

one breath.

call it birthright

one breath

Chapter Eight: Summary and Discussion

In this chapter I summarise my experience of relationship to land, and discuss links to the wider field of relational psychotherapy in Aotearoa.

Summary:

Doing this self-inquiry felt like making landfall on uneasy ground. The connecting theme is uneasiness, unsettlement, a *terra infirma*. There are aspects of my relationship to land that are easy to hold, warm and smooth as a stone in the sun. Beneath my pleasure and gratitude in the trees and the sky and the shine of a bird's eye, I found boggy patches and places that felt strange and unhappily familiar by turns.

To separate my findings into the four themes of shadow, coloniser, climate crisis, and queerness was in some ways artificial; these strands weave together into a kete that I hope captures something about complexity and discomfort. My mind goes to Te-Ika-a-Māui, laid into by the brothers of Māui; the ground left behind is rugged and hard to cross. This is a wounded earth, populated by wounded people; the relationship between them is shaped by those wounds, and shapes them in turn.

There is an existential challenge to relationship to land. To have a body is to be made of meat; to survive may require us to endure discomfort, distress, degradation. At the end of it comes death, to us and to all whom we love. If we experience ourselves as part of an ecosystem, an energy web that transforms but does not extinguish, then death is in some ways survivable; we come from the mountain and river and then we return to them. Alienation from the earth requires us to be individuals, in our lonely and fragile bodies. In the doctrine of human exceptionalism, the only way to survive death is to have a soul and a god to keep it for you. Earth is temporary, fleshly, left behind.

Alienation from land in western societies was a recurring theme, linked to theism (Hillman, 1998), industrialisation (Braun, 2017), settler colonisation (Bell, 2009), and ecological loss (Glendinning, 1994). This alienation from land becomes an original wounding, made ordinary by the passing of generations. Alienation from land has three tangled roles: it is an outcome or symptom of this initial wounding; it provides a distance from earth that allows the capitalist and colonialist systems to keep running; it acts as a psychospiritual defence against the ambivalence and distress running through our relationship to land.

Alienation from land becomes literal in settler colonisation. Colonisation requires the displacement of two peoples; land, wealth, status, and systemic power are transferred from the indigenous people to the colonisers. Perhaps displaced or economically shut out of their countries of origin, settlers re-enact that displacement on another group in order to land themselves. In the process, they must give up their previous relationships to land, and take on an unstable, defensive, settler identity.

In writing about my grandmother and great-great-grandmother, I wrote about the ways that their relationship to land was shaped by power and gender; the lands that they gave up or fled from, and the spaces they claimed as their own. I wrote as well about my grandfather, and the violence and dysfunction of the family farm. My relationship to land as a settler descendent is shaped by my desire to reject what I view as patriarchal, racist, violent; and by my awareness that I carry that heritage and that covert potential in myself.

Power and agency are also key in examining the experience of relationship to land in the context of the climate crisis. The interwoven traumas of alienation to land, the existential threat of ecological loss, and our own complicity in it, are made sharper by our powerlessness to speed change. Within my grief and rage, I experience a fatalistic despair, and a covert resentment and hostility to land. This reactive hostility is a defensive reaction to my distress and guilt, and mirrors the hostility of my settler ancestors to the indigenous people they displaced.

Ecofeminism and queer ecology form a frame that weaves together threads of industrialisation, colonisation, and the climate crisis. Through an ecofeminist lens, capitalism is driven by extraction of wealth with no regard for negative externalities or the exploitation of marginalised people, animals, and ecosystems. Consent is a key issue in ecofeminism; it seems clear that ecologies do not consent to losing their internal coherence to pollution and ecological disruption. An ethical relationship to land may require us to build capacity to hear and respect the voices of the land.

Queer ecology draws on and extends ecofeminism, challenging the dichotomies of human/non-human, male/female, scientific/spiritual. My relationship to land feels anchored in my identity as a genderqueer person; the queer perspective, of fluidity, potential, and criticality, becomes an avenue to examine my relationship to land.

Collectively, these themes express something of the relationship to land that I encountered within the self-inquiry process. The relationship drew from ecopsychological frames and spaces, as well as socio-political and spiritual; I found that the frames became hard to disentangle. My relationship to land is both honouring and ambivalent, holding

strategies of defensive avoidance and detachment, covert hostility and inherited bias. It is shaped by my whiteness, my urban-ness, my ancestors and their own complex relationships to land and to each other. It is the root I put down in order to connect to the earth that sustains me; it is a queer space where wounding and healing become fluid and entwined. I have a sense of land relationship as mutual, of there being something in land that relates to me in turn. It remains elusive, transpersonal; difficult to hear or to explain.

Discussion:

This dissertation was undertaken as part of a degree in psychotherapy. Relational psychodynamic psychotherapy is a psychological therapy that seeks to alleviate, heal, and transform suffering and distress in order to enable the individual to find meaning, resilience, and fulfilment. It views the self as relational, carrying patterns and defences that once enabled the self to survive but may now be inhibiting the capacity for agency and joy.

The distress engendered by ecological loss and alienation of relationship to the natural world is relevant to all fields of mental health. The connection between psychotherapy and the natural world is made explicit in the NZAP Code of Ethics (2018), which lists respectful interdependence with all living beings and the natural environment as a key principle. Psychotherapy is particularly concerned with building the capacity to experience and hold emotions, particularly those elided from consciousness or defended against, and with the ability to connect to others in meaningful and rewarding relationships (Shedler, 2010). Despite this, psychotherapy's history in western thought and focus on intrapsychic processes or interpersonal relationships may make it harder for non-human or more-than-human relationships to be addressed within therapy; Macy (1995) notes that therapists may interpret ecological affect as pathogenic or a projection of internal distress. Ecopsychological awareness of relationship to land is likely to be highly relevant to relational psychotherapy.

Understanding relationships, particularly primal and early relationships, is central to psychodynamic psychotherapy. Attachment theory argues that infants have a need to form a relationship with a primary caregiver, and that they will adopt psychological and behavioural strategies to gain closeness and alleviate the stress of separation (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1979); these strategies influence the individual's approach to intimacy and relationship throughout life. Other-than-secure attachment styles are commonly framed through a 'deficit' model, as representing a failure to reach a secure attachment, while Crittenden and Claussen (2000) suggests that they represent a creative adaptation to a

complex psychological landscape in the mother-infant dyad. A key implication of this is that the space of relationality and intimacy is not always easy to navigate; that we may adopt strategies of avoidance or anxious connection-seeking in order to manage the stresses of relationship. (Feeney et al., 1994). Fleming (2018) highlights that Māori concepts of attachment include relationships to non-human/more-than-human others, such as whenua (land) and wairua (spirit); clients' relationality may be impacted by or shape their relationship to land.

Trauma is another key frame that is used to understand the experiences of psychotherapy clients. Clients may experience the climate crisis or alienation from land as an unconscious or conscious trauma. Theories of transgenerational trauma suggest that trauma shapes the lives, psyches, and physiology of future generations (Jawaid et al., 2018; Salberg & Grand, 2017); as a country of colonised indigenous people, settlers, immigrants, refugees, and their descendants, most people in Aotearoa will have contemporary or ancestral trauma that relates to the loss of ties to land.

Ethical psychotherapy is sensitive to the experience of the other, and the psychosocial and cultural systems that the client exists within. Dalal (2013) argues that therapy not grounded in an understanding of the power structures and systemic forces that the client is subject to is likely to miss or misconstrue the client. An inability to conceptualise or hold space for the client's relationship to land would represent an ethical failure, particularly with in the bicultural context of Aotearoa.

Psychotherapy demands the therapist have some awareness of their own self and experience, in order to distinguish between self and client and to reduce the potential for the therapist's enactment or avoidance within the therapeutic relationship. Rogers (1957) identified therapist authenticity/congruence as key to the process of therapeutic change. The ecopsychological view of the western self as unable to articulate or experience their disturbed relationship to land or their ecological distress suggests an inauthenticity that parallels Bell's (2006) concept of the inauthentic settler identity – both antithetical to the ideal of the congruent therapist. Through this lens, working as a psychotherapist in Aotearoa demands that the therapist examine their relationship to land, and the ways in which it is impacted by ecological loss and colonisation.

As a heuristic self-inquiry, this piece of work has not sought to be generalisable; this limits its applicability to understanding the experience of others. A possibility for further research would be the inclusion of co-researchers, to widen the field of experience and to potentially capture aspects of relationship to land invisible to me. As a whole, it speaks to the

complexity of relationship to land, the distress and disowned ambivalence it may contain, and the defensive use of denial, disengagement, and avoidance to navigate these uncomfortable affects. This has implications for ecopsychology, wider mental health care, and ecological activism.

I feel changed by the process of conducting this inquiry. I feel more conscious of the ambiguities and uncertainties within my relationship to land, the bubbling forth of covert resentment and hostility. I feel the shadow of my ancestors in my bones; they move as I move. I have a sense of land as a non-human other, both alien and familiar; something that knows itself through roots and stones and microbiota; that sees with the eyes of birds.

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