

Title of Review: Ecopsychotherapy: one world, many voices.
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A review of *Towards an Ecopsychotherapy* by Mary-Jayne Rust. Published by Confer Books, London, 2020, 151 pages. Price £12.99 (paperback) ISBN: 9781913494124 (e-book available)

An early winter morning.

Out walking.

No wind or rain today.

Sculpted by waters whipped high by the storm winds and tides of recent weeks, the ground in North Wales is literally shifting. We (Lynne and Vienna) have witnessed this process of change before. A few days ago, as we walked here for the first time together, Lynne pointed out changes to the coastal path compared to her previous visits. Our reactions were of shock and sadness, then we walked on.

We return today. Another cold morning. As we approach this section of footpath on the Llyn Peninsula we notice even more collapse. Observing the impact of tides, wind and rain over the last few days on the soft richly coloured soil, we see roots no longer embedded in earth, exposed to air and stones released from the ground ... tumbling onto the shore below. We pause and reflect ...

Witnessing what is happening to this Welsh footpath we recognise that these changes are linked to seasonal weather changes and that these are a micro-cosom of wider processes of global ecological shifts and climate crisis. The ground is shifting and changing from the impacts of human presence, human neglect and responses from the rest of nature. How can 'we' as walkers on this planet avert further collapse?

We are at a cross-roads.

*Are we humans not **all** at this a cross-roads?*

Reading Mary-Jayne Rust's 'Towards an Ecopsychotherapy' is an opportunity to be curious about a range of eco-practices, including ecopsychotherapy, situated within awareness of the climate crisis. In choosing to co-write this review, we (Lynne and Vienna) are responding to this invitation, curious about, and hopeful, that others will join a necessary wider dialogue about ecological awareness of the field within which we live and/or practice therapy. There is a profound challenge within the invitation, to be open to a 'new' way of conceptualising the world and the 'traditional' format of psychotherapy. One that may fundamentally shift perceptions of humanity's relationship with all life on earth.

Ecopsychotherapy expands the narrative about human relationships recognising them as thoroughly entwined with earth and all life that comprises the planet. To fully understand climate chaos and human psychological responses to it, necessitates taking 'a long hard look at where we are, in order understand the roots of our malaise and how to bring ourselves back into balance' (Rust, 2020, p5) . Mary-Jayne Rust is not alone in writing about the necessity or urgency of re-appraisal. Others writers (Adams, 2015; Bednarek, 2019, 2020, 2021; Taylor, 2021) have published to Gestalt and to wider audiences about the need for an ecological lens, a conceptualisation of the ecological-self and recognition about the width of the field.

Overview

The devastating effects of climate catastrophe upon the planet are becoming more and more evident and tangible. Fear, overwhelm and grief rise as the earth and the life upon it gradually gets scorched, battered and flooded; vital parts of our eco-systems are being destroyed. As with all trauma; this can bring up feelings of anger and rage as well as feelings of despair, helplessness and overwhelm. The scale of destruction is huge; so vast that it is hard (though urgent) to respond both as psychotherapists and as human beings. The growing awareness of climate emergency has also highlighted the greater level of responsibility some human cultures have for this (specifically those organised around processes of consumption) with little regard for the environment that we are all part of.

Differing psychotherapeutic communities, as well as increasing numbers of the wider population, are recognising the part people have played in the creation of this worldwide crisis and the response-ability we each have to find a way to respond. For those setting out on this journey, this book offers context to understanding how consumerist cultures have put the earth at such risk. So this is a helpful book for new-comers to this area of thinking, reflection and practice. as well potentially for those who are already exploring and integrating ecological issues into their lives and an ecological lens in to their professional practice.

Towards an Ecopsychotherapy is a clear, succinct and accessible book. Mary-Jane Rust offers useful thoughts and possibilities about these ethical and existential dilemmas. She offers contextualisation, achieved through a well-researched and deeply thoughtful understanding of the historical context and development of ecological thinking in psychology and psychotherapeutic practices. Her discussion of the opportunity offered by ecopsychotherapy as a developing area of practice is rooted in her own extensive experience, writing and teaching. Her background blends working as a Jungian analyst and being an Art Therapist. Mary-Jayne Rust describes herself as an ecopsychologist and her writing energetically conveys her commitment to this area of practice without preaching. Rust's long interest in this field has enabled her to create an engaging overview which investigates how the last few centuries of human history have contributed to our current problems. She explores the many complex 'psychological 'layers and the cultural attitudes which have brought our earth and all the creatures upon it (human and non-human) to a heart-breaking and startling, tipping point. This 'small' publication has considerable ambition; expressed in the apparently modest aim to present 'a flavour' (Rust's own description) of a large and intricate range of eco-practices and theory, whilst situating these

within thorough questioning of the way dominant values have shaped non-indigenous historical, cultural and professional contexts.

Mary-Jayne Rust doesn't present simple solutions; there are none. She does offer an analysis of non-indigenous cultures' disconnection from nature; an overview of the range of ecologically-informed practices plus useful insights into the developing practice of ecopsychotherapy that can contribute to a broader type of healing. Reading this compact book is an opportunity to digest that, whilst there are no simple solutions, psychotherapists can *mobilise* (Zinker 1978, Joyce and Sills, 2001) from potential overwhelm or desensitisation towards action. In terms of agency, they are well positioned to be aware and responsive to wider societal issues, either professionally or in other ways. Configuring self as part of, and in relation to, field (Parlett 1991, Woollants, 2012) can be understood by psychotherapists as being open, receptive and aware of their own (and able to meet clients') responses to the environmental crisis. Mary-Jayne Rust states that Ecopsychotherapy embraces a relational philosophy which supports the making and restoration of connections. A relational philosophy is fundamental to Gestalt (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951; Yontef (1993); Hycner & Jacobs (1995). Awareness that disconnection from self (and/or other) is disconnection from the field of which we are part, suggests that Gestalt and what Rust is presenting here as Ecopsychotherapy, are well-aligned theoretically and philosophically.

This slim, readable volume weaves together themed sections. Seven short chapters address the practice of therapy outdoors, the diversity of eco-therapy practices including therapy in a therapy room which is eco-relational, ecopsychology, psychological responses to ecological crisis, anthropocentrism, ecopsychotherapy and eco-psychotherapy community based initiatives and projects. Throughout, Rust integrates case-studies and small vignettes demonstrating her own understanding of the ways eco-informed therapeutic work can inform the the therapist and be helpful to clients. Chapters 1 & 2 focus specifically on the development and rapidly-growing interest in various eco-related therapeutic approaches, paying particular attention to what psychotherapy can bring to the table. Chapters 3-5 set out the context of our current crisis, exploring the origins of our disconnect from the rest of nature, and the changing cultural attitudes (particularly in the West) which then fuelled this split further. In chapters 6 and 7 she pulls together the various threads which run through the book, including the lessons to be learned from the life-style of potential indigenous populations. Chapter 7 looks towards the future and describes and reflects on the the growth of ecological community projects around the globe. Readers are offered insights into the reintegration of the fullness of our own human nature and powerful healing to be found in re-embracing the rest of the natural world.

Mary-Jayne Rust explicitly invites readers to choose their own pathway through the chapters. As co-reviewers, who are both Gestalt psychotherapists though with different practices and interests, we experimented and navigated our own journeys. The remainder of this review is structured around two main themes which emerged from our subsequent dialogues about the book. We begin by looking at theory and concepts and move on to consider practices matters, within the review we have indicated some of the ways that *Towards an Ecopsychotherapy* may speak to gestalt and the timeliness and political relevance of this emergent area of practice.

So, whilst *Towards an Ecopsychotherapy* is a small book; its message is huge. Rust presents philosophical and ecological history and suggests ethical practice values that have the

potential to support restoration of healthy relationships (with both self as well as environment). She offers insights into the social and cultural values that dislocate people from their ground, pointing to a deep-rooted malaise in western culture. This is evidenced in a dominating attitude toward the rest of nature and the planet, perpetuated through consumption and an attitude of entitlement and found mainly in non-indigenous cultures. Such abuse enables destructive consumption and exploitation to flourish. Mary-Jayne Rust explores current and developing shifts in attitude; those that recognise and accept responsibility for creating the rebalance that is needed for humans to live sustainably and with greater respect for the rest of nature. The author situates the contributions of a range of ecologically aware and informed therapies and practices within her wider recognition of the urgency of climate crisis.

Ecopsychotherapy: theory & concepts

One of the key messages in this book is the carefully-constructed and researched argument that: the human race's ongoing dissociation from the rest of nature lies at the root of our current ecological and social crisis. Rust draws on many sources to demonstrate the impact of this disconnect - ranging from the extremities of climate change, to the physical depletion and pollution of earth, plus the growing malaise in the human psyche and soul; manifested in a range of mental health issues such as addictions, trauma and anxiety.

A central narrative of the eco-based therapies that have developed over the past few decades, Mary Jane Rust highlights, is the view that: 'we once knew we were part of the web of life - physically, psychologically and spiritually' (Rust, 2020, p52) and, that, belonging involves, every naturally occurring aspect of our planet. In other words: 'the web of life is not just a collection of beings, but more like a continuum of 'earth-water-sky-tree-air-creatures-sun-human. Trauma arises when relationships within that continuum are disrupted (and) healing ourselves cannot be done in isolation' (Rust, 2020, p1).

The multi-faceted implications of this premise are immense. Drawing on numerous ecological thinkers, theologians, psychologists, and psychotherapists who, from the last century onwards, were beginning to voice concerns, the author engagingly traces the history of disruption from, what had once been, a harmonious, sustainable, relationship between humankind and the rest of nature. The domestication of agriculture; industrialisation; and the development of science, are all cited as likely agents for this ongoing split: in which humans gradually began to see ourselves as separate and superior to the rest of the natural world. In time, as is now widely voiced, Rust spells out how Western, industrialised cultures, in particular, came to view this planet and all its wonderful lifeforms, as *things*, rather than *beings* - real estate, to be plundered, oppressed and exploited, in order to serve humankind's developing needs and ambitions, with little regard for the long-term consequences. This is summed up well in a quote she selects from Carl Jung's writings in 1977: 'Through scientific understanding, our world has become de-humanised. Man feels himself to be isolated in the Cosmos... No wonder the Western world feels uneasy for it does not knowwhat it has lost through the destruction of its numinosities. Its moral and spiritual tradition has collapsed and has left a worldwide disorientation and dissociation.' (Jung, 1977, p254-255 in Rust, 2020, p53). Rust (2020) cites similar sentiments from eco-psychologist Theodore Roszak; and eco-theologian Thomas Berry who stated, 'The Universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects' (Berry, 2006, p149 in Rust,

2020, p 56). In short, this book questions whether, we humans, have, well and truly, sold our souls for economic growth and the emptiness of consumerism.

In exploring this premise, Rust explains and deftly moves between a wide web of linked theories and thoughts that have developed since the early days of eco-psychology (a term coined by Roszak in 1992, cited by Rust, 2020, p51), though the movement began decades earlier. Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring* from 1962, described by Rust as a 'seminal publication', was the first to draw attention to the problems of 'pesticide abuse and the human domination of nature - illustrating how human wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the earth' (Carson, 1962, cited by Rust, 2020, p54). Rust evidences how this fundamental human shift in perspective has played out in many different, but often very negative ways, over time. Fundamentally, it opened the door to anthropocentrism - a concept which describes the human trend to see ourselves as superior to all other life forms, including other human beings, with a growing sense of the need to control and dominate taking root.

She notes that, as early as 1930, Freud's major work 'Civilisation and Its Discontents' reflected the prevailing cultural narrative, - that natural forces are a dangerous thing to be feared and vanquished - a battle to be overcome - even within one's self. This view, she explains, lies at the heart of our cultural narrative in the West. She also cites cultural historian Richard Tarnas, who describes how rationality and the intellect became prized as the more worthy human qualities moving forwards, while our embodied life as creatures - ie our instincts, emotions and intuitions - were denigrated as primitive, ignorant, wild, dangerous and untrustworthy. (Tarnas 2007, cited by Rust, 2020, p12). Rust argues that the rest of nature: creatures, plants, sea and land, largely came to be seen as objects, to be conquered and used, rather than as active beings and phenomena, to be respected, honoured and worked with. She points out that this is clearly reflected in the development of Western languages, in which objectification and categorisation has become the cultural norm.

Importantly, given that language constructs meaning and relationships, Rust notes and gives examples of ways in which the English language is infused with an implication that humans and nature are separate entities and that our language reflects the on-going anthropocentrism and dehumanisation of the world, as cited above. Rust cites Greenway (1995) who alerted readers to the paucity of language to adequately express a totally interconnected relationship. Additionally, Macfarlane (2015 in Rust, 2020) states that language is impoverished, for instance, it is unable to adequately describe the connective experiencing reported by participants in eco-therapeutic practices such as wilderness therapy. The phrase *nature/human relationship*, illustrates this point. Alternative choices could be, the *relationship between humans and nature* or *human connection with nature* yet both these phrases convey separateness. Is *nature/human relationship* better able to capture the totally interconnected relationship which Rust states is fundamental to ecopsychotherapy? Rust reinforces that it is important to be aware of the values steeped into words that are commonly used so that language that presents humans as separate from, superior to or objectifies the rest of nature can be challenged by eco-psychology and ecopsychotherapy. The underpinning issue is that the dualistic language within non-indigenous cultures reflects the fractured nature/human connection and continually reconstructs the human/nature disconnection (Greenway, 1995 in Rust 2020, p74) which is the root of the problem. This linguistic deficit situates Rust's acknowledgement of her own sensitive attempt to find language that is sufficiently nuanced. She gives the example of

'going out into nature' (Rust, 2020, p6) which carries the message that humans can step in and out of the natural world. Her choice is to use the phrase the 'rest of nature' rather than simply nature. The rest of nature conveys that humans are already and always part of what is described. As part of her challenge to commonly used dualistic language she interchanges this phrase with less compact terms from the wider literature which may be more unfamiliar to readers, including the 'other-than-human-world' and the 'more-than-human-world' - originally introduced by Abram, 1997 (cited in Rust 2020).

Recognising and not colluding with anthropocentrism is also of interest to psychotherapists because, as Rust suggests, it is linked with other forms of human control and attempts to colonise; including human to human oppression, such as sexism, racism and slavery. She refers to the work of ecologist John Seed, who describes anthropocentrism as 'human chauvinism' towards nature and towards people who he points out are seen as closer to the earth with a: 'lower more animal nature. For some this justifies their domination and abuse; the genocide of indigenous peoples, the transatlantic slave trade, and the oppression of women are three examples. It is this collection of oppressions that enable capitalism to function' (Seed, 2007 cited Rust, 2020, p58).

Many other examples of widespread and institutionalised oppression and a dangerous disregard for the diversity are expressed and explored within the volume, alongside a reflection on how humans have also internalised anthropocentrism - often becoming both the oppressor and the oppressed. Rust suggests that, in line with dominant cultural values, most Westerners have integrated an internal split in which the more creaturely parts of ourselves, are denied, oppressed and/or colonised. Gestaltists are familiar with the journey of reclaiming hidden and oppressed parts of ourselves i.e. the 'underdog' (Perls et al, 1951). However, while parts of the book are dedicated to charting some of the possible routes to follow, Rust is also careful to point out that this should be done with care and sensitivity from an authentic spiritual base, so the journey is not based on further oppressions such as cultural appropriation or use of privilege.

In essence the author spells out how much of human society and culture has become hugely out of balance with the rest of nature, earth and with ourselves. She points out that the breaking of the spiritual link that humans once had with the land and all its creatures - which many indigenous people still hold dear - has been greatly eroded, particularly led by the Western, consumption-based world. This, as we humans are now discovering, presents a problem for all of earth's lifeforms.

Mental health issues

The ecological focus of the mainstream press, so far, has been largely on the physically destructive impact human beings have wreaked on our planet, through the unsustainable use of earth's resources and centuries of pollution which have resulted in climate change. These are hugely concerning issues, given that they are destroying the very habitat/environment we depend upon for life. However, the emergence of eco-psychology and other eco-informed types of therapy, have put an increasing focus on the psychological impact of our disconnection from the natural world and parts of our own human nature.

Highlighting well-established therapeutic theories such as trauma, and the human capacity for avoidance and denial, Rust also provides an insightful context in which to deepen our understanding of the growing epidemic of a range of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, addiction, narcissism - affecting both adults and children.

Rust voices her perspective alongside those of several other eco-psychologists, in making the case that Western culture is suffering from a collective condition of 'separation sickness' - experiencing a communal grief - that is manifested lived out in individual pathologies/illnesses. She writes,

I have likened consumerism to a giant collective eating problem (Rust 2005, 2008b) where recovery is not a carbon diet but rather an awareness of hunger longings, and how we become satisfied at a deeper levels. When we are educated to think that the earth is a collection of resources for our use, it is little wonder that narcissism is on the rise: when entry into adulthood is marked by material acquisitions and career success, and when the future is so radically uncertain, is it surprising that so many young people suffer from mental health problems or turn to crime (Rust, 2020, p64-5).

Insights from other eco-psychologists are also referenced to reinforce this separation sickness perspective; Paul Shepherd's book *Nature and Madness* (1982) suggests we hit a turning point in human history at in which we suffered the loss of a wild tribal childhood and it's traditional rites of passages in to adulthood - leaving us 'ontologically crippled' in 'an adolescent culture, struggling with fantasies of of omnipotence.' (Shepherd, 1982, cited by Rust, 2020, p63).

Rust also points us to Chellis Glendinning (1994, cited by Rust, 2020, p64) who senses that Western Culture is suffering from **an** original trauma caused by the systematic removal of our lives from nature and 'the life force itself'. This also resonates with Zhiwa Woodbury's view: 'that climate change would be better described as 'climate trauma' due to [the] ... alarming news of this apocalyptic crisis unfolding in our world' (Woodbury, 2019, cited by Rust 2020, p65). Woodbury also suggests that humans struggle to face this crisis, due to the backlog of undigested, intergenerational traumas Rust makes the point that we are all suffering from overwhelm and 'when wounds can't be faced and healed, inevitably people are drawn to whatever ways of coping they can find, such as denial addiction, distraction, collusion and hidden despair [and] the trauma is then passed on through generations' (Rust 2020, p65).

Overall this is a stark diagnosis with wide-ranging implications. This book invites the reader to face-up to the dire situation we find ourselves in and begin to emerge with the empowered stance of: 'the trauma stops here, with me' (Rust, 2020, p66). Rust attempts to show us how we can face this growing crisis with more clarity and hope for change. Mary-Jayne Rusts' argument could be endorsed by many in Gestalt, as she is advocating that the way forward, both individually and collectively, is a cultural shift to our sensibilities.

Rust's book invites integration, including two particularly poignant thoughts, and these fit well with Gestalt. The first involves deeply embracing the joined-up, holistic thinking that lies at the heart of Gestalt. One example of this would be to notice how often trauma tends to be individualised in the Western world (Taylor, 2021) without acknowledging the

connections it has to the culture we all swim in - the impact of the field (Parlett, 1991). Another example, is to consider the view that 'eco-anxiety is 'not a pathology, but rather an authentic, response to an extremely worrying situation.' (Rust 2020, p120). The second is that therapists are invited to hold **the** possibility of a change of narrative - a new earth story which re-balances the present Western mind-set by reclaiming some ancient wisdom and integrating it with the achievements of the scientific and the rational mind including appropriate, modern cosmologies (Tacey, 2009, cited Rust, 2020).

In advocating eco-psychotherapy as a way forward, it is clear that Rust feels that some significant shifts in consciousness and approach are required. What Rust puts forward as a much needed shift could be argued as already available as part of a Gestalt's holistic lens, process-orientated therapy, concepts such as field theory (Parlett, 1991) and the self-in-relation (Perls et al, 1951). Rust writes, 'Most therapeutic approaches predominantly address relationships between humans, while ecopsychotherapy invites us to expand this to include our earth story, the context or continuum in which our human relationships sit.' (Rust, 2020, p1). With this theoretical shift, a practice emerges which supports healing and connection for self with self (internal), with other as subject rather than object (human beings and the rest of nature). It is this philosophical, relationally informed, inclusive practice that Mary-Jayne Rust writes about as ecopsychotherapy.

Eco-therapies, ecopsychotherapy and practice

In terms of what eco-therapies offer, Rust provides an overview of a multiplicity of established practices in Chapter 2, then introduces some community examples in Chapter 7. She **also** acknowledges rites from indigenous cultures such as, Aboriginal 'walkabouts'; pilgrimages by the Celts, a wide range of other 'wilderness' rites of passage and indigenous peoples' plant, tree and animal relationships. In non-indigenous cultures and most notably since the 1960's, she points to horticultural therapy such as Grut, 1992), nature therapies and environmental arts therapies (e.g. Siddons Heginworth, 2008) to names some examples. Rust stresses that 'there is no 'right' way to practise' (2020, p49) acknowledging that they each work at different levels, with different therapies suiting different clients and groups.

She point out the body of research (for example MIND, 2007) illuminating the positive health impacts (physical and emotional) of time spent outdoors and the spiritual nourishment that can be experienced. The power of outdoor elemental relationships within psychological practices is highlighted. The 'Wild Therapy' of Totton (2011) is introduced as an example of the unhelpful polarisation of domestication and wildness. By differentiating itself from established orthodox practices, Wild Therapy aims to restore balance and integration of this polarity.

Rust's approach makes it possible for readers to appraise her account of the development of ecopsychotherapy in context, which fits with Gestalt's situated approach. She presents a narrative about ecopsychotherapy in chapter 6, where various themes and principles are brought together. The themes presented there provide the reader with an obvious route to appraisal of what she specifically differentiates as ecopsychotherapy. Rust offers focus on practice issues, reflecting on the challenges facing practitioners, as well new opportunities for those weighing up whether and how to integrate an ecological lens. Her discussion highlights the dangers and inappropriateness of psychotherapists adopting a pragmatic

approach by simply moving therapy outdoors or in seeing ecopsychotherapy as the introduction of new techniques into client work without having fully digested the philosophical and theoretical heart-and-soul of a nature-integrated therapeutic approach. Totton is cited as emphasising, that *wildness* is a quality that can be cultivated, 'It is an attitude of mind rather than a bag of tricks' (Totton, 2001 in Rust, 2020, p 42). She notes that Wild Therapy and Ecopsychotherapy can be practiced in a therapy room and do not depend on physically re-location of sessions. For instance, experiments on contact with a plant or stone located within the therapy room can facilitate exploration of disconnections and connections with the rest of nature. This illustrates that there are many layered ways of engaging and working with 'nature' and that it is an integration of complex connections that is needed, in place of polarities such as insider/outside, nature/human.

To be ethical, any kind of shift or expansion of practice to a nature-focused approach requires practitioner sensitivity to cultural appropriation. As referred to earlier, appropriation is theft and in this situation would be an abuse. It constitutes a continuation of a colonial past and reproduces white-privilege. As such, it would be a form of unowned oppression. She stresses,

... it is vital to pay attention to cultural appropriation as well as maintaining professional client-therapist boundaries. It is also apparent that a new form of working therapeutically is emerging out of the times we are living through: central to this is the notion of reciprocity. Where healing the individual and healing the earth are indivisible (Rust, 2020 p49).

A linked point and important process to reflect on is power and control. Psychotherapists are already aware of the various ways in which power manifests in the therapeutic relationship. They are more than likely to have already given thought to how power relations are sculpted by the configuration of the therapy room: positioning and choice of seating, for instance. Does eco-psychotherapy have the potential to create a new and 'neutral ground' by reconceptualising boundaries and human relationship with the rest of nature; loosening control, as suggested by Totton (2011), e.g. when sitting side by side with a client on a fallen tree?

Rust also notes that changing the familiar practice context and containment of the therapy room may heighten concern, describing one of her own as 'it took a little while to shake off a sense of unease, paranoia even, that I would be spotted by a colleague and 'struck off' for transgression of boundaries!' (Rust, 2020, p9). She illustrates ways that ecopsychotherapists might respond. For instance, a sense of contained, sufficiently safe space can be created as part of therapy which takes place outdoors. To support their own ground, therapists need a developed awareness of their own relationship with their environment, with the rest of nature before offering/contracting outdoor sessions with clients. This would include their relationship with a particular location where they may offer. Fundamentally, ecopsychotherapy is about being ecologically situated whilst supporting the client's process and discovery of themselves, in relationship with the land and therapist (whether introduced explicitly or arising spontaneously).

Therapists' awareness of their own connection with the rest of nature is therefore regarded as vital to avoid some of the pitfalls that are pointed out. Mary-Jayne Rust encourages readers to explore what the land itself already holds and could be available to contain,

support and nourish the therapeutic process and relationships. This could be the ways in which a particular location may offer physical markers to contribute to boundaries for the therapeutic space with a client. An 'imaginary threshold' might also be negotiated or, in the course of therapeutic work clients may spontaneously identify thresholds and boundaries themselves. The process might include inviting a client to notice and consider their 'edges' e.g. what signifies safety, threat or creates interest or energy? Given the reciprocal relationship with the rest of nature that ecopsychotherapy represents, it might be that the land's guidance, permission or otherwise is tacitly recognised.

Ecopsychotherapy is fundamentally a relational, embodied practice. By expanding beyond human-centric relationships, it enables exploration, differentiation, inclusion and integration of the wider world with self. There is alignment with Gestalt's essential relationality and recognition of the interconnectedness of the field; since neither the embodied self, nor the field, are *outside* when the door of the therapy room closes.

The growing presence of working outdoors, or indoors with relational, ecological-awareness is also reflected in Mary-Jayne's call for psychotherapy training to include ecological awareness and practice so that trainees thoroughly integrate ecopsychotherapy as part of their journey to being psychotherapists. This might be regarded by some as a call for curriculum and training standards to be incorporated. This could impact on authentic wildness and, therefore, potentially elicit resistance. However, as with other practices to minimise what is out of awareness, psychotherapists who are curious and willing to develop familiarity or to challenge with their own/relationship to earth, climate trauma and the rest of nature, are likely to be able to navigate such terrain with clients and supervisees in an authentic and grounded manner. Personal and professional connections can manifest and be supported through various ways of being in contact with the rest of nature or expressing distress and a desire for greater respect for the planet through environmental or political activism.

Conclusion

An impressive feature of *Towards an Ecopsychotherapy* is the balance struck between exploring psychotherapeutic practices that are ecologically informed and situating these within the wider context of psychological responses to the ecological crisis within which we are all located. Rust suggests that irrespective of the particular presentation for individuals or groups, responses are underpinned by a profound fragmentation of the nature/human connection. Eco-aware psychotherapists and practices can support mobilisation and re-connection. Potential is there to create the conditions for movement from a trauma 'freeze', desensitised state, or otherwise 'stuckness' towards agency and responsiveness.

Rust concisely presents a wide and profound range of thinking about human reconnection with the rest of nature. She points readers to the significant, well-established and cross-disciplinary literature encouraging access to intellectual, research and philosophical enquiry. For psychotherapists who have already explored this terrain, this slender volume can provide a useful aide memoir. For those new to ecopsychotherapy/ecopsychology, this is a solid, accessible, succinct yet wide-ranging introduction. On a purely practical note, there is a user-friendly index, invaluable for weaving through the wide ranging discussion presented and cross-referencing ideas. Quotations from original sources add depth and support the

author's careful unpacking of complex ideas. This is one of the book's strengths and we have tried to reflect this especially in the Theory and Concepts section of this review. Practice is also attended to, with examples of Mary-Jayne's experience of client work, and a range of challenges and issues are clearly identified for practitioners to chew over.

From the process of reviewing and discussing this book we (Lynne and Vienna) suggest that Gestalt's core principles and the arguments put forward by Rust about Ecopsychotherapy, align well. These principles support therapists' holding professional, personal awareness and ethical responsibility about their own and collective responses to wider social and political conditions (Goodman, 1977). Responses which pivot on therapists' awareness of, and reflections about, individual and collective relationships with the wider field. The writings of Buber (1996), Perls et al (1951), Perls (1992) and Serlin, 1992) record ways in which field theory is inclusive of the rest of nature (Duff & Steensen, 2021). Gestalt's holistic nature, emphasis on relationality and its core theoretical pillars of dialogue, phenomenology and field theory means that, at the least, Gestalt is well placed theoretically, ethically and epistemologically to embrace ecopsychotherapy as Rust presents and explains it.

Some have explicitly argued that Gestalt psychotherapy is already and has always been a profoundly ecological approach. Writing about Gestalt therapy, ecology and ethics, Taylor (2021) advocates such an ecological approach to trauma practice. This builds on her earlier writings of a grounded, resourcing approach to trauma work (Taylor, 2014; Taylor and Duff, 2018). The concept the ecological self, 'a sense of self that is embedded in the land and interwoven with the web of life' (Rust, 2020, p112), therefore has particular resonance in the context of thinking about collective trauma, climate crisis and ecopsychotherapy. Amongst other gestalt writers, Bednarek's reflections (2019 & 2021) on the threats of climate change and living in an uncertain and threatening world, invite expansion from concern with the 'I' to a relational perspective that incorporates the living world rather than objectifying it. Mary-Jayne Rust's description of ecopsychotherapy (a therapeutic practice that is anchored by its fundamental relationality with the world in which we are situated) echos what these writers have already given voice to, making figural that this is already present within the ground of Gestalt.

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Profiles to add