

The generosity of birds: Ecopsychology, animism, and intimate encounter with wild others

Brian Taylor

<http://animistjottings.wordpress.com/>

Abstract

Theodore Roszak identified loss of an animist sensibility as a significant cause of both ecological crisis and existential discontent. The first section of this essay calls for a democratic and dialogical ecopsychology capable of engaging with other-than-human agency as well as the full spectrum of human vulnerability, and argues that contemporary animist responses to dualism and transcendental spirituality need to attend to extra-ordinary experience. Across many cultures, past and present, birds mediate between humans and a divine realm and are associated with beliefs about, or experiences suggesting, survival beyond death. A second auto/biographical section looks at how the author's relationship with kingfishers and a close friend's relationship with corvids came about, and developed, under very different circumstances, and how a sequence of timely appearances by birds illuminated the latter's death.

Keywords: Animism, birds, autobiography

Introduction

The most precious and also the most mysterious aid has most often come to me from birds ... It is not for naught that the bird appears as the spiritual assistant, even the spiritual master, in many a tradition (Irigaray, 2004: 197).

The setting was narcotic ... The nightingale was a shaman, experienced, rhetorical, insistent. I sank into its charms, a willing initiate. A shooting star arced over the bush in which it was singing. As I edged closer, its song seemed to become solid, to be doing odd things to the light. I was aware that my peripheral vision was closing down, and that I had no sense of where I was in space. And then, just for a few seconds, the bird was in my head and it was I who was singing (Mabey, 2008: 48).

Luce Irigaray's assertion that birds have given her precious and mysterious assistance, and her willingness to discuss her open-hearted attention to their presence as a

philosopher, marks a radical departure from Cartesian human exceptionalism. Although her particular claim may be vulnerable to charges of anthropomorphism there is an increasing recognition of subjectivity, sentience, and agency, in other-than-human beings, not least birds (Irigaray, 2004, epigraph; Plumwood, 2002: 56-61; Van Dooren, 2014; Bekoff, 2013). After studying the social habits of guillemots for forty years, the eminent ornithologist Tim Birkhead has described them as “basically people” (Morris, 2012). Indigenous communities have been reminding ethno-ornithologists that “birds are not just feathered self-replicating machines, but sentient beings that may speak to us (if we are ready to listen) and that demand our respect” (Hunn, 2010: xii).

In many premodern, non-Western, and indigenous traditions birds have been, and still are, regarded variously as totemic companions, messengers, spiritual guides, psychopomps, bearers of the souls of deceased humans, or manifesting deities. Birds have been widely associated with stories and beliefs about survival beyond death, and figure quite prominently in shamanistic traditions (Rowland, 1978; Eliade, 1964/1989; Halifax, 1981). In ancient times bird watchers –*dāgil issūri* in Babylon, and *oinoskopoi* in ancient Greece– were interpreters of omens. Such was their cultural status that the Greek word *oiōnos/ornis* came to mean both bird and portent (Flaceliere, 1965). In Old High German *galdr* referred both to bird song and to the chanting of spells and incantations, and in Old English *galdor*, a spell or enchantment, and *galan*, to sing, combine in *nihtegale*, the bird that became “a sort of familiar” in the life of the naturalist Richard Mabey (Davidson, 1981; Lockwood, 1984; Mabey, 2010: 9 and epigraph). Although the derivation of our modern English word *auspicious* from the Latin *avis* a bird, and *specere* to watch, may seem anachronistic, fragmentary testimony, and findings from a recent study of End of Life Experiences, confirm, at the very least, that belief in the possibility of extraordinary communication between birds and humans has survived into the late- or post- modern West (Cocker & Mabey, 2005: 233, 264; Marzluff & Angell, 2005: 135-8; Fenwick et al, 2009).

Until I began to meet and dream about the common kingfisher, *Alcedo Atthis*, in mid-life, I was only dimly aware of this rich heritage of inter-species relationship. At the time I was untangling some personal history with the help of a compatible therapist who seemed alert to the magical as well as political and ecological dimensions of everyday life, feeling my way towards a consistent form of animist practice, and though I didn’t know it at the time, heading towards a complicated and protracted bereavement. Most of my subsequent encounters with kingfishers have taken place along industrial and post-industrial stretches of the Calder Valley in West Yorkshire, where the Industrial Revolution – Karl Polanyi’s ‘Great Transformation’ – severed the lives of formative working class communities from sensory contact with more-than-human nature (Cato, 2013; Thompson, 1963/1968). The River Calder, though much cleaner nowadays, runs through stone built channels and culverts, alongside a restored

canal, past crumbling and restored mills, terraced houses, flats, and industrial estates. Where the kingfishers that I visit live, the river runs beneath towering pylons, and is bordered by trees strewn with industrial plastic. Climate change has significantly increased the frequency and severity of flooding.

I. Towards a political ecology of precious & mysterious assistance

Ecopsychologies

... what defines ecopsychology is precisely the view that ecological crisis has a subjective or interior dimension and that psychospiritual work is a necessary condition for building an ecological society (Fisher, 2013: 226).

Theodore Roszak began his early polemic *Where the Wasteland Ends* with a brief indictment of white Western masculinity and capitalism but aimed his critique almost entirely at the suppression, first by the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and then by reductionist science, of an “essentially magical worldview” that he called “the Old Gnosis”. Although universalising concepts such as this, and the notion of an “ecological unconscious”, which he derived from Jung’s collective unconscious, have been critiqued for homogenising Western understandings of diverse and historically denigrated cosmologies, Roszak’s advocacy of mythology, ritual, visionary knowledge, respect for dream life, and reciprocal communication with nature, remains salient in an era of evangelical scientism (Roszak, 1972: 118).

Rozzak argued that the newly secular hegemony of the Enlightenment – Blake’s “single vision” – marginalised a sacramental attitude towards nature that once enabled Westerners to converse, as Wordsworth did, with trees, seas, clouds, birds, stones, and stars. His conception of nature as “quite simply, the universal continuum, ourselves inextricably included ... that which mothered us into existence”, would be shared, in principle at least, by most contemporary animists (Roszak, 1972: xix, xxv, 116-8, 316, 7-8). In *The Voice of the Earth*, Roszak suggested that indigenous animism, in which matter is “infused with mind, will, and intent”, may be a better model of reality than Newtonian atomism, and asked whether the loss of an animist sensibility that places ethical restraints upon environmental exploitation and abuse may account “not only for our ecological crisis, but for our crazy-making discontent” (Roszak, 1992/2001: 82).

Contemporary ecopsychologists have embraced many of Roszak’s themes but from a critical perspective his call to mainstream ecopsychology by pathologising ecological harm and alienation and pressing for categories of “environmental craziness” (such as his suggested “dysfunctional environmental relations syndrome”) to be included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)* appears highly problematic (Roszak,

1992/2001: 330-331). In *Radical Ecopsychology*, Andy Fisher rejected Roszak's appeal to "the full weight of psychological authority", including use of the *DSM*, but endorsed his assertion that ecologists need to address "the unreason, the perversity, the sick desire that lie at the core of the psyche" (Fisher, 2013: 54, 15, 211).

I share considerable common ground with Fisher but would want to resist conceptualising ecological deprivation, alienation, irrationality, or violence, as psychopathology, since this associates such phenomena with normative diagnostic discourses that routinely locate the source of distress and madness within subjugated individual selves, thereby directing attention away from complex and overlapping operations of power. A growing archive of testimony from direct experience demonstrates that the victim blaming habit of diagnosing 'dysfunction' is uncondusive to pragmatic let alone precious and mysterious assistance¹. For critics of medicalisation, neither Fisher's reframing of psychopathology as "giving voice *logos* to suffering *pathos* of the soul" in relation to the Buddhist notion that suffering is inherent in the human condition, nor James Hillman's similar notion that "the soul pathologises", are likely to render the term palatable. The despair and self harm being addressed in community-owned approaches such as the heroin addiction recovery project in New Mexico that Fisher mentions in the context of a brutal history of capitalism and colonisation, for example, might be better described as emotional injury² (Fisher, 2013: 70-72, 223; Hillman, 1991: 6, 143).

Unlike Fisher, I have found postmodern social theory an invaluable resource, not least because it informs some of the most productive critiques of the psych-disciplines. Many practitioner theorists who have engaged with the service user/survivor movement as well as taking individual service users' stories seriously, acknowledge a debt to Michel Foucault. In a recent overview of the burgeoning field of critical psychology, one such theorist, Ian Parker, presents a helpful set of deconstructive and reconstructive principles.

Parker's deconstructive principles highlight the tendency of psychology to separate 'real psychologists' from their all too often dehumanised objects of study, reduce phenomena to the domain of the individual, and privilege abstracted explanatory models at that level over other possible perspectives. There has been much debate amongst critical psychologists about how far "something can be salvaged out of the wreckage of our critique" (Parker, 2015: 23-24). If this sounds unduly rejectionist, it

¹ Kutchins and Kirk (1997); Newnes et al (1999, 2001); Wallcraft and Michaelson (2001). Roszak's allegory about a benevolent psychiatrist (i.e., psychoanalyst) working in a concentration camp was particularly unfortunate given that a medically-led "euthanasia" campaign resulted in the mass murder of psychiatric patients in Nazi Germany (1992/2001: 220-221; Wertham, 1966: 158).

² The term 'emotional injury', intended to make the social causes of distress and madness explicit, came from Ann Plumb, an activist involved in *Survivors Speak Out* in the 1980's (*Pers comm*).

may be worth recalling that, in his early work, Roszak detailed the horrors of aversion therapy (under the heading *Therapy by Terror*) and referred, for example, to the “torment, maiming, confinement, and harassment of beasts” in animal experimentation (Roszak, 1972: 266-7, 273).

Parker’s reconstructive principles address the structural inequality between psychologists as experts and “those upon whom supposedly correct knowledge is implemented”. He argues that alienation, including “fear of nature”, can best be overcome by establishing collaborative relationships in which “people who are usually treated as ‘objects’ by psychologists are engaged with as active agents”, acknowledged as experts-by-experience, and invited to become partners in the co-construction of knowledge. Rather than privileging individual interiority, critical psychologists “put social change at the heart of ethical practice” and support participation in social networks and cultures of resistance. Psychology of this kind hopefully becomes “a resource for overcoming alienation” (Parker, 2015: 23-4, 2014). I would add that advocacy based frameworks need to engage with the complexity of power dynamics within and around therapeutic settings, for instance where vulnerable men’s dual positioning needs to be addressed with due sensitivity, and that for some of us inner work may be prerequisite to meaningful social participation (Taylor, 2006: 204-5).

Postpsychiatry, a pared down, dialogical, and democratic, approach to psychiatry, that listens to service users/survivors individually and collectively and attempts to meet perceived needs, not least by providing practical support, is another potential reference point for critical ecopsychology. Unlike the radical anti-psychiatry of the 1960’s, postpsychiatry does not claim to have an alternative a-priori understanding of distress and madness. Because it is based on a post-Cartesian understanding of mind that emphasises meaning and interpretation rather than simple causal explanation, it recognises the importance of social context and refuses to prioritise biological perspectives (Bracken & Thomas, 2001, 2005).

I draw attention to these perspectives because some ecopsychologists still resemble Parker’s “real psychologists” insofar as they operate within a self-referential professional-scholarly culture, construct abstracted models of cognitive processes, define syndromes, deploy objectifying diagnostic labelling, and appear to report “case studies”, albeit anonymously, without consent. Given the proliferating global appetite of mainstream psychology an expanded post-dualist conception of mind, that “turns the psyche inside out” by locating mind in the world, could exacerbate a tendency to psychologise the social and the spiritual, and privilege the power/knowledge of psychology over other explanatory dimensions (Fisher, 2013: 216; Parker, 2015). It is crucial, therefore, that critical counter currents within ecopsychology challenge such tendencies and develop democratic and collaborative ways of working.

Contemporary animisms

Animism is irrepressible because its a valid perception of the natural world as having dignity, vitality, and mentality (Roszak, 1998).

The eminent Victorian anthropologist Edward Tylor adopted the term animism in order to signify “two great dogmas” in the religious beliefs of both the “lower races” and his contemporaries: that the souls of individual creatures survive death, and that spirits of various kinds can intervene in the material world and influence human lives. He believed that scientific rationality would eventually supplant such absurd notions. Since the 1990’s, a new ecological and relational understanding of animism has emerged, variously influenced by Merleau-Pontian phenomenology, post-Cartesian ethnography, and dialogue with indigenous traditions (Tylor, 1871/1913; Abram, 1997; Harvey, 2005, 2013; Bird-Davis, 1999; Willerslev, 2007). Irving Hallowell’s mid-twentieth century account of the world view of the Ojibwe people of the Beren’s River, in Manitoba, Canada, has been pivotal to this reconceptualisation (Hallowell, 1960/2002).

As an ethnographer, Hallowell facilitated the transition from colonial era primitivism, by way of a Boasian “science of man”, towards contemporary post-Cartesian and dialogical approaches. He was, however, also heavily influenced by psychoanalytic thought, and pioneered the deployment of psychological concepts, notably the Rorschach Psychodiagnostic Test, in the study of “so-called primitive or nonliterate” peoples. His own account, in which he admits to bribing reluctant Ojibwe participants with tobacco and chocolate bars, makes clear the inappropriateness of such procedures, but he persisted in the hope that further studies might provide “significant data on the actual incidence of psychotic and neurotic traits in such a population”. Hallowell’s Rorschach work duly opened the floodgates for research into a purported “Aboriginal North American personality” and associated psychopathology, and despite its obvious methodological shortcomings was approvingly cited decades later in the psychological literature on alcoholism amongst the Ojibwe (Waldram, 2004; Brown & Gray, 2010: 479, 484-5).

With the benefit of hindsight it is difficult to understand how Hallowell, given his “deep identification with the Indian”, could have inhabited the power/knowledge discourse of the psych- disciplines, much of which has arguably been as pejorative and exclusionary as the polemics of colonialism, with such enthusiasm (Brown & Gray, 2010: 9) Fortunately an “emic” Hallowell who attempted to understand his hosts’ world as they saw it, and whose ethnographic writings are valued as historical record by their descendants, came to the fore in the late 1950’s as he developed an “ethnology of mutual engagement”. Crucially, this entailed overcoming the natural/supernatural binary of Cartesian cosmology and rejecting “the psychological dismissal of cosmic life as projective personification” (Morrison, 2013: 45).

Hallowell found that the Ojibwe referred to other animals, ancestors, “spiritual beings”, dream visitors, some “inanimate” objects, and “natural” phenomena such as thunder, or the Sun, as *persons*, and expressed this expanded notion of personhood in the now quite widely adopted neologism *other-than-human persons*. This relational orientation towards the world expressed and encouraged an ethic of respect (Harvey, 2005, 2017). In his seminal late essay *Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View* Hallowell still framed his argument in terms of “psychological unity and dynamics”, “cognitive set”, and “behavioural environment”, but these explanatory concepts now appear at best superfluous to his attentive discussion of indigenous Ojibwe understandings and practices. As I read it, the late Hallowell, who no longer aspired to become a “real psychologist”, portrayed a culturally constituted notion of selfhood – a communal, ecological, and cosmological discourse – that radically exceeded mainstream psychology’s closed circle of disenchantment and individualisation (Hallowell, 1960; Venn, 1984: 139; Parker, 2015). This is evident, for example, in the importance his Ojibwe informants accorded to dialogue with dream visitors, ancestors, “spirit guardians”, and the “owners” of animal and plant species.

Whereas Abram and Harvey concern themselves with ecological and social relations in the context of a potentially animate, agentic, and communicative materiality, my experiences and involvements have led me to focus on phenomena that may be closer to a new Earth-centred spiritualism. I have argued elsewhere that in the process of deconstructing the Cartesian natural/supernatural binary we risk marginalising the very domain of experience that Tylor hoped scientific rationality would eradicate (Taylor, 2012: 112-116, 2015). Brown and Gray, for example argue that as Hallowell’s ideas “*gained substance*, he moved ... from discussing ‘spiritual entities’ to realising that what he was *really* writing about were ‘other-than-human persons’ “ (Brown & Gray, 2010: 359, my italics). Harvey contrasts Tylor’s interpretive schema that focussed on “belief in spirits” or “supernatural postulates” with Hallowell’s ideas that evolved in response to his hosts’ perception of a world that was not divided into natural and supernatural realms, and “did not require metaphysics” (Harvey, 2017: 36). I would like to suggest a different reading of Hallowell, and a complementary ontological perspective.

It occurs to me that Hallowell may have retained terms such as “soul” (a “vital part” that can detach from the body), “spiritual masters” (of various non-human species), and “guardian spirits” in his late essay – alongside the inclusive term “other-than-human persons” – simply because he had long accepted that some of the phenomena described by his Ojibwe informants had quite close analogs in Western spiritualism and related fields. He could not, however, have known that the striking account of a return journey to *djibaiàking*, “the spirit (or ghost) land”, that he reproduced in a 1940 essay, would turn out to share some of the hallmarks of “Near Death Experiences” as defined by Raymond Moody and others in the 1970’s and beyond. I suspect that the hegemonic modernist reluctance to acknowledge such testimony on

its own experiential and relational terms influenced an earlier Hallowell's decision to present the material as an opportunity to understand how "native beliefs" functioned (Brown & Gray, 2010: 377, 408-9; Corrazza, 2008).

From a human vantage point, cosmic nature may appear riven with dualities such as Sun and Moon, light and darkness, life and death, male and female, mind and body, spirit and matter. Western culture has, of course, long construed such axes of difference dualistically and hierarchically (Plumwood, 1993: 31-33). Echoing Roszak's theme, Patrick Curry argues that religious monism split "spirit" and "soul" from the materiality of embodiment, paving the way for modernity to consign them to the margins, along with enchantment and divination, and cites Max Weber's insight that disenchantment proceeds by splitting "concrete magic" into "rational cognition and mastery of nature" on the one hand, and "mystic" experiences ("only magic") on the other (Curry, 2015: 8, 2012). From this perspective it becomes evident that the distortion and oppression signified by dual-*ism* is the problem, not dual-*ity* per se, and that we construct "spirit" and "soul" as supernatural because of a historical act of hubris that reduced "nature" to a signifier of life-forms regarded as less-than-human.

It also occurs to me that on a pragmatic level, given the long history of medicalisation of voice hearing and visionary experience, an ecopsychology guided by principles of pluralism, self-advocacy, and respectful relationship, would want to respond sensitively to such intensities (Romme & Escher, 1993). The initial process of opening up psychically can be disorientating enough without having to deal with a cultural denial of "the reality of spirits", and we now know that many people feel unable to share extra-ordinary "end of life experiences" for fear of being thought mad (Fenwick et al, 2009). My inclination, therefore, is to reclaim spirit as an unambiguous signifier of the profound alterity of otherworldly presences or persons who, despite their opaqueness to positivist enquiry may, under some circumstances, be sensed as ready-to-hand and involved in the affairs of this world. Some such term is surely needed if we are to "recognize the ability to experience different levels of reality as one of the normal human abilities" (Willerslev, 2007: 149-158; Turner, 1994: 94).

Andy Fisher, following Kovel, proposes a post-metaphysical understanding of spirit as "a mode of experience that tends in the direction of re-union with [may we add, 'the rest of'] nature, or that works to overcome splits between realms of being". This formulation could equally apply to "spirituality" and "the sacred" (Fisher, 2013: 97; Kovel, 2007) Practitioners of divination have long expressed a sense of ontological continuity by "working with more-than-human spirits" for the benefit of animist communities (Curry, 2010: 8-9). A comparable sense of interconnectedness emerges in Heraclitus' evocation of living depth as taken up by James Hillman in relation to soul (*psyche*), and by Heidegger, for whom "Being tends to lie hidden". According to

Heidegger, the term phenomenology derives from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning “that which shows itself”, and the verb *phainō*, to bring into daylight (Ingold, 2000; Hillman, 1991: 22; Polt, 1999: 25; Krell, 1978/1993: 73-77). Following the work of practitioner-theorists of divination who use Heidegger, I like to talk about ‘showings’ rather than ‘synchronicities’, mainly in order to emphasise other-than-human agency, but also to evoke diverse traditions of seership (Greenbaum, 2007: 16-18). I am also mindful of the language of birders, who talk about a bird “showing well”.

The earlier juxtaposed quotations from Richard Mabey and Luce Irigaray (epigraphs) emanate from very different ontological perspectives on liminal encounters with birds. Mabey, who is widely acknowledged as the doyen of British nature writers, and a lifelong conservationist, is “an intense and passionate materialist” who once described himself as a “transcendental materialist” in order to convey the sense that the living world “transcends itself into the realm of the hyper-real”. The passage in which he briefly becomes a singing nightingale’s assistant is all the more striking because of its author’s resistance to ungrounded spirituality. Interestingly, given Roszak’s reference to a perceptual lens through which greater realities can be apprehended, Mabey describes “a piercing moment of heightened perception, as if a lens had been clamped over my eye”. This occurred during the last stages of an anxiety attack during which he became “convinced he could pick out minute details of the world nearly a quarter of a mile away”. Rejecting “supernatural” explanation, he lingers uncomfortably over the word soul, before observing that “at times, the gratuitousness of creation, its sheer wild playfulness, can only be understood as a kind of unscripted comedy” (Roszak, 1992/2001: 93; Mabey, 2008: 41-46).

Luce Irigaray, by contrast, came to her encounters with birds from an initially conventional religious background. Although her descriptions give little indication of interest in the lives of birds beyond those moments when they are perceived as giving succour or guidance to suffering humans, she too was deeply moved by “the capacity that birds have of singing in harmony with the state of the universe, of celebrating nature such as it is in the moment”. Tilghman describes Irigaray’s notion of the “sensible transcendental” as “refusing the logic that demands the opposed hierarchical dichotomies between time and space, form and matter, mind and body, self and other, and man and woman, that currently organize Western civilization’s discursive foundations”. Consistent with countless folk tales, Irigaray’s “angels” – which seem quite closely related to birds – mediate “the interval between the sensible and the transcendental” (Irigaray, 2002: 56; Tilghman, 2009: 40-41).

II. Animist Field Notes

Auto/biography and disclosure

Following Harvey's much quoted definition of animists as "people who recognise that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others", I offer the concluding auto/biographical section of this essay as work-in-progress towards an approach to dialogue with ecological others that avoids appropriation, draws on something like "the whole being", and overcomes conceptual chasms between the "social", the "natural", and the "spiritual" (Harvey, 2005: xi; Okley, 1992: 3).

My decision to present personal material has been influenced by a growing body of critical auto/biographical and auto/ethnographic work that situates lived experience in relation to various configurations of all-too-human power (Stanley, 1992; Jackson, 1990; Church, 1995; Denzin, 1989) and that takes indigenous epistemological principles seriously by asserting the value of both transformative experience and story telling (Wilkes, 2006). I have also been influenced by Foucauldian accounts of psychoanalysis as a confessional practice that configures the lives it purports to explain by inciting disclosure (Taylor, 2006: 193-206) as well as by feminist exhortations for men to write about personal experience, and by diverse forays into self-help therapy, psychotherapy, and counselling, some of which were very helpful³.

In a voyeuristic confessional culture, care needs to be taken to protect moments of anguish and/or intimacy from intrusion, whether because the scars of emotional injury have been slow to heal, or for reasons of confidentiality. For animists, spiritual experience is one of the sites of intimate relationship that needs to be protected from casual scrutiny. The Ojibwe, for whom dreams represent an opportunity for dialogue with "the grandfathers" during which the dreamer may receive help with everyday concerns, or blessings that confer particular powers, are far from alone in prohibiting casual disclosure of such material (Hallowell, 1960/2002: 40). It is, in any case, inherently difficult to communicate extra-ordinary experience.

With these considerations in mind I use a traffic light protocol when drawing upon the archive of life writing amassed by my former selves. Some material has necessarily been withheld or protected by omitting details, or changing names. Although what follows is an account of my own experiences, I've chosen to write about events that illustrate the importance of loving relationship, close collaboration,

³ Grosz, 1993: 203-4. The politics of therapy are complex but, crucially, the therapist I found was reasonably client centred (he saw himself as an advocate for my unconscious processes), and made provision for people unable to pay much, or at all (Taylor, 2006, Chapter 10). I had been in crisis myself and had been aware of the dangers of authoritarian therapy since a friend in the 1970's had been admitted to hospital after a therapist pushed him to "open up" prematurely.

reciprocity, and other-than-human agency.

Peter

Astonishment, I think, is the other side of the coin to the very openness to the world that I have shown to be fundamental to the animic way of being. It is the sense of wonder that comes from riding the crest of the world's continued birth. Yet along with openness comes vulnerability (Ingold, 2011: 74).

I rejoice with the children of green bonnets (Goode, 1989).

In the foreword to a book of his poetry, an adult education tutor describes her first meeting with my late friend Peter in the following terms: “He was instantly noticeable. He wore a coat and scarf over several layers of clothes, tassles, and fringes, and many colours, the whole crowned with a feathered hat. Magpie in more ways than one. Mostly he was silent but when he spoke or dictated to me, his words flowed like a soul released”. He had brought up seven children as a single parent, and was feeling lonely after they'd left home. Thinking that prison was the only place people like him could get an education late in life, he'd been trying to work out how long it would take him to learn to read and write, and what sort of crime he would need to commit in order to get a sentence long enough to complete the task. He had always had a vivid inner life and expressed its imagery verbally, but had no idea there was a word for what he had always done: poetry. “He is the most natural poet I've ever met. He lives, breathes, dreams his poetry. His paintings are poems. His poems are paintings. He knows no dividing lines” (Hilary Dyter, in Goode, 1989: 7-8).

Peter, who eventually accepted the term dyslexic, would catch wrong trains, buy the wrong food, or get hopelessly lost. He had great difficulty remembering names, and because he was unable to read or write, lost many jobs – including one as a cable jointer with the electricity board which he left when offered a promotion that he feared would entail written work – so had worked emptying bins and digging holes in roads. During a very difficult childhood in a Victorian flat on the wrong side of 1930's and wartime Huddersfield, he received almost no formal education and would hang around an air vent outside Lyon's Coffee House in order to catch the smells of food. His curse and blessing of difference was, therefore, inextricably bound up with structural inequality, emotional injury, and oppression. Unfortunately the educational psychologist he was referred to turned out to be less interested in any of this than in sexually abusing his young client.

Despite, or perhaps because of, what he had experienced, Peter was deeply appreciative of the beauty of the living world. Astonishment was practically his default position. One day, when I was helping his shaking elderly body negotiate the stairs up to his flat – he suffered horribly from “benign essential tremors” as well as

other taxing health difficulties in his later years – I asked him whether he still wanted to carry on painting and carving. “Oh, yes”, he replied, “I still want to lustre my eternal bubble”. When I asked him where this image came from, he told me that once, as a child, when he was out exploring some wild/waste ground near where they lived, his attention had been caught by an infinity of light pouring through a dewdrop. He had held on to this image throughout his life, and eventually included it in various paintings.

Here is an extract from the blurb he wrote (with my secretarial assistance) for an exhibition in 1994:

The Spark of Pollen – This is like the Pollen Bringers – the sunlight. Celebrating the poetry of nature, the world of reading, not just the written word but the spark of pollen. The reading of the unwritten word. The small unhatched gods in the imagination house. We can take a flight of freedom, of pain, of anger, of happiness. That’s why there’s so much blue, green, and yellow in it. This is the reverse of the Moon on the Window, this is the Sun on the Canvas.

During Peter’s childhood, his best friends were animals. When he was nine he was adopted by a wounded Jackdaw (possibly a Crow) and nurtured the bird back to health for over a month. His new friend stayed in a corner of his room, woke him in the morning, picked his nose while he lay in bed, defended him if anyone came to the door, and came round town on his shoulder. He became “one o’flock”, and retained an affection for corvids, especially magpies, throughout his life, seeing them, much as Ted Hughes did, as working class birds. Like him they could make a living for their families from other people’s waste. Birds were often woven into his paintings.

Because he suffered periodic bouts of what he called “the blues”, and had once used N.H.S. crisis services when his preferred remedy – a trip to see a Blackpool comedian to have “a good belly laugh” – hadn’t sufficed, his painstakingly conceived work was sometimes mistaken for art therapy. On two occasions he gathered his paintings and sculptures together for exhibitions entitled *All Life Lives on a Leaf*. This phrase, adapted from the work of Zimbabwean sculptor Bernard Takawira, encapsulated his deep appreciation of the beauty and interdependence of all living beings⁴: “I saw a green butterfly at Northern College and it just turned my head to butter”. Many of the paintings expressed elaborate mytho-poetic stories, and some were given evocative names, such as *The Children with Green Bonnets*, *Thunder and Lightning Behind a Feather*, *A Touch of Pollen*, *These are the Stone Gods*, *The Guardian (of all Spirits)*, and *The Epicentre of Water*, but mostly he wanted people to

⁴ Bernard Takawira made a sculpture entitled *Hanging on a Leaf*, and wrote “All Life Hangs on a Leaf. The oxygen we breathe and the food that sustains us all come from the leaves”. See <https://arctangent.smugmug.com/Art/Art-Exhibitions/Chapungu-Exhibition-at-Powell-Gardens/Zimbabwe-sculpture-Chapungu-older-edits/i-MPQX5HW>

respond to them spontaneously⁵.

I got to know Peter when he was hosting a tricky anti-sexist men's group in his fifth floor 'palace'. In the early days of our friendship, we went for a walk up one of the many local cloughs (wooded side valleys) and had a very close encounter with a resting Tawny Owl. When I saw how he responded to the bird, I knew immediately that we shared important common ground. Peter must have thought so too. Some weeks later he said he had a present for me, and handed me a roughly hewn but highly evocative carving of an Owl merging with a tree trunk. This wonderfully charged representation of owl-kind watches over me as I write. Peter had a strong sense of relationship with the wood or stone he worked with and would occasionally make a carving as a protective or healing talisman. Whilst working on *The Guardian (of all Spirits)* he referred to the piece as a person and compared working on the emerging sculpture with the privilege of being present when his children were born⁶. He referred to some of his carvings as totem poles, but would have been interested to hear that our Anglo-Saxon forbears believed their *weohs*, carved wooden figures placed at shrines, and *stapols*, larger carved posts, transmitted the primordial creative energy they knew as *ódr*⁷.

Peter was an attentive, curious, empathetic, and appreciative listener with a unique and surprising mind whose capacity for astonishment never descended into pastoral romanticism. He had been an activist in "the world of reading and writing" and was steeped in the politics of self-advocacy, so could be quite sharp at times. I followed the twists and turns of his journey as an artist, and he would listen eagerly to my reports of bird encounters and dreams. We became very close friends, and supported each other at difficult times in our respective lives. This close emotional communication enabled us to share the nuances of our respective 'spiritual' connection with other-than-human allies and friends. In a world where many people respond to such stories with compulsive scepticism, jealousy, competitiveness, or trivialisation, I cannot overstate the importance of having someone like Peter, who simply *knew* what I was talking about.

Although he was passionate about the living "h-earth", Peter lived most of the latter part of his life in housing association flats with no access to a garden. When he did finally move into a prefab with a garden in the last few years of his life, he was too infirm to look after it himself, but would chuckle in apparent recognition at the robust side of more-than-human nature being played out there. He, of course, never

⁵ Some images of Peter's art work can be found at: <https://animistjottings.wordpress.com/saying-goodbye-to-peter-2/>

⁶ *Peter's Stone God*, a video film made by Amanda Ravetz in 1996.

⁷ Note 'Odr' is pronounced 'oother' (Bob Trubshaw, 2012. *Souls, Spirits, and Deities*, Heart of Albion. http://www.hoap.co.uk/souls_spirits_and_deities.pdf)

read a book about animism, and never used the term. I wasn't able to have enough conversations with him about it, but my sense is that he would be quite happy that his art was being celebrated as an expression of contemporary animism⁸.

How I got to know the common kingfisher

There is. Perhaps, above all, a desire to receive the gift, which is a desire for simplicity, a very simple and direct gesture of receiving ... I do not think these concerns are esoteric. I believe that they are registered every day in ecological engagements, from rituals marking seasonal changes, to the common sacrament of food (Drinkwater, 2005: 204).

On Christmas Day 1988, I went for a walk along a stretch of river near the centre of a busy town in the south of England. My attention was caught by an improbably brilliant bird diving repeatedly from tree branches and a concrete drain cover. This was my first sighting of *Alcedo Athis*, the common kingfisher, in adult life. My mother had been upset that I was staying with my partner's family and would not be visiting until the New Year. After a difficult phone call, I went back to the river and saw more kingfishers. One flashed past, a few feet beneath me, her phosphorescent blue green plumage lit by winter sunshine.

Kingfishers began to appear in my dreams, and in an unusually vivid Spring Equinox meditation. In the first few dreams the condition of the bird, the river, and various female figures, seemed to reflect changes in my inner state following some work I was doing with a therapist. Previous involvements in radical self-help therapy had given me space to purge past hurts, reconnect with my body, and explore the difficult and potentially risky terrain where 'therapy', visionary experience, and 'spirituality' overlap, but may have left other challenges unmet. Now that I was working in a quite demanding environment I no longer wanted to give attention as a way of receiving attention.

Any doubts I may have had about going to this therapist were allayed when, on my way home after our first session, his 'totem' bird – I'm not sure whether we used the term – came right up to me in an urban park. We often considered the significance of animal encounters, but were both aware that, as Freud put it, "things employed as symbols do not cease on that account to be themselves" (Freud, 1973: 266). He facilitated some more emotional and bodily reconnection, but more importantly, I think, shared useful insights into relationship issues, and validated my emerging sense of who I might become in relation to both human and more-than-human worlds.

During this period "rituals marking seasonal changes", and the study and practice of

⁸ I mainly read poetry to him, and only became interested in animism during the last few years of his life when our time was mostly taken up with practical and personal matters.

Western astrology and other forms of divination, deepened my attunement to “the soul’s essential relationship to time”⁹ (Heidegger, 1988: 162). With the benefit of hindsight, I’m struck by the extent to which I was both obstructed by cultural discourses that disavow the ubiquitous presence of the sacred within nature and the agency of other-than-human beings, and protected by benign unconscious processes such as not noticing.

Fortunately I was, as yet, completely unaware that that initial sequence of events involving kingfishers foreshadowed my mother’s death, and a difficult and protracted bereavement that would radically change the course of my life. There were straws in the wind. Signs were beginning to form, but would only come into focus some time later, when my mother talked about her lifelong identification with kingfishers, and how she had embroidered a pair on a fireguard as a young girl. Only then, for instance, would the import of my first kingfisher dream, which had come on my birthday, and involved the rotting corpse of a kingfisher, become startlingly clear.

Soon the portents became more obvious though. In an unforgettable session, on the 19th of May 1989, having seen, sensed, and recoiled from, “a horrendous image of a cancerous breast”, I found myself overcome by a flood of grieving that, exceptionally, over-ran the therapist’s hour, and persisted throughout the next day. This made very little sense. Only ten days previously I had visited my mother and found her fit and active. The rest of that year was uneventful, but on the 23rd of November, she phoned to say that she’d had a lump in her breast tested a while ago, but hadn’t thought any more about it until a recent check-up. Although she hadn’t asked, and hadn’t been told, it soon became clear that the lump was malignant. From that point on our conversations were increasingly dominated by the demands of her illness, and by a parallel crisis that was brewing in the family. Only much later would I realise, from the date of her check-up, that her initial breast examination would have been in mid to late May.

As things turned out, that initially incomprehensible outpouring of grief preceded my mother’s death, and my ‘real’ bereavement, by just over two years, so for me it has become a potent marker of the limits of therapeutic interpretation, and rational knowledge¹⁰. Only later did I discover that divinatory dreams, prescient grief, and transformation into bird form after death, are hallmarks of the ancient Greek story of Alcyone, after whom the common kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis*, takes its species name (Miller, 1916). The mythical Halcyon breeds at the winter solstice, the calendrical

⁹ For a historical overview of astrology see Campion (2008, 2009), and for a postmodern animist take on the field, Willis and Curry (2004).

¹⁰ I have cited this event, along with another outpouring that occurred nine years after the death, against the medicalisation of mourning deemed inappropriate because of its length or duration (Taylor, 2006: 183-184).

point marking the rebirth of nature in the northern hemisphere. In folklore, the kingfisher was said to renew its plumage after death “as though the vital spark still survived” (Armstrong, 1975: 84).

My work with the therapist ended amicably about two months before my mother’s death. Because events around the death were compounded by simultaneous crises in two important non-domestic areas of my life, the ensuing bereavement was convoluted, protracted, and intense. During that painful but transformative time the act of writing enabled me both to tease meaning from the sometimes necessary comfort of forgetfulness as worlds broke and reformed, and interpret my newly intimate connection with other-than-human persons. Keeping reasonably intelligible ‘field notes’ – a varying combination of diaries, dream diaries, and records of wildlife encounters, spiritual practice, and divinatory moments – over several decades helped me to understand at least some of what was being said around me, and to me, in non-human languages, in ways that simply would not have been possible had I been reliant on the vicissitudes of memory alone.

In the wake of my mother’s death, kingfisher dreams and encounters came thick and fast. My field notes show unequivocally that unusually close or vivid encounters with kingfishers tended to coincide with further upwellings of grief. I became sensitised to the critical importance of the sometimes uncannily precise timing of such encounters, and to an intimacy of communion quite unlike anything I’d previously known, and learned that dreams, meditation imagery, and visionary experiences, were no less real than material encounters.

I read voraciously on kingfisher lore and ornithology, and corresponded with other devotees of *Alcedo Atthis*. Rose Eastman, who with her husband Ron Eastman had made the first film of kingfishers underwater and in the nesting tunnel, thereby significantly advancing ornithological knowledge, told me that she too often dreamed of kingfishers (Eastman, 1969, and *pers comm*). Her kingfisher dreams were apparently unrelated to intimations about survival beyond death, but she turned out to be doing a spiritual healing course, and suggested that my mother may have been contacting me through the symbolism in my dreams. Not least because my mentor in these matters was a spiritual healer, I was open to such a possibility. Events and circumstances around the time of my mother’s death, of the kind that Peter Fenwick calls “End of Life Experiences”, had left little room for doubt that something extraordinary, in the sense of radically beyond quotidian awareness, was happening (Fenwick & Fenwick, 2008). On returning from the hospice for the last time, for instance, I found a large print bible beside her bed with a kingfisher bookmark marking a passage about signs being sent. I was, nevertheless, reluctant to ‘fix’ the meaning of dreams, visionary imagery, or close encounters, by adopting a rigid vocabulary.

Against the grain of rational scientific discourse, ‘common sense’, and my own

caution, I was also beginning to suspect that kingfishers themselves were communicating with me, perhaps through some kind of ‘guardian spirit’ or ‘owner’ of the species. I came to understand such phenomena in terms of *divinatory relationship*, in which meaning is subjective, relational, plural, and contextual. Following Geoffrey Cornelius, I take divination to refer broadly to any practice of “consulting with the gods”, or their intermediaries, in order to bring matters of concern “within the guidance of the sacred” (Cornelius, 2003: 129-30; Curry, 2010). As Irigaray and others remind us, birds have often been regarded as intermediaries between humans and a divine realm (Irigaray, 1996: 141).

From a divinatory perspective the strong association in mythology and lore between kingfishers (and other birds) and notions of survival beyond death is neither diluted nor invalidated by the necessary recognition that for many people contact with and/or dreams about kingfishers (or other birds) may *not* be associated with end of life experiences. Equally, the subjective significance of a sighting or encounter need not be invalidated by the necessary recognition that most of what kingfishers (or other birds) do is ‘not about us’. We humans can, after all, learn to read and respond to such moments in more than one way.

How birds marked Peter’s death

Had I not kept an archive of records I would not have been able to piece together the sequence of events surrounding Peter’s death in 2012. This is not the place to go into detail about the multiple health challenges he faced towards the end of his life, but as the ‘Benign Essential Tremors’ that shook his body worsened and turned the routines of daily life into a succession of almost insurmountable obstacles, I became increasingly involved with domestic practicalities and was often in and out of his house.

In an unusually vivid dream, on the 13th June 2011, I was having an intense dialogue with another man in which I told him I have absolute certainty that something continues after death, and that I’ve felt this since a major bereavement in mid-life. He said he thought there was nothing beyond the moment of death, and asked me if it wasn’t dangerous to say I was certain. I replied that I was only certain there was something, some continuation of life. He then gestured towards Peter. I went over to Peter and (somehow) cradled him in my arms, gently ‘launching him’ as he crossed a line – at which point I woke with energy crackling all over my body, and a strong feeling of having been visited, so got up and ‘worked in the silence’ for a while.

That afternoon I was worrying about the dream, and about Peter, so decided to have a look at the astrology¹¹. *At the precise moment* that Peter’s horoscope appeared on

¹¹ Astrology can give an idea of the timing and duration of stressful periods.

my computer screen, I was distracted by a scratchy clattering noise. Turning my head towards the source of the sound I saw that a young Eurasian magpie, *Pica Pica*, had landed on the window frame, less than five feet away from me, and was peering at me through the glass. I felt an immediate charge in my subtle body as the bird maintained eye contact for a while, before flapping back to the bird table. Apart from an occasional diminutive blue tit looking for flies, no bird had ever come on to my window before.

About a week later the same young magpie, presumably, came back and perched on top of my slightly open window, shuffled around cocking his or her head as if listening to me, and once again maintained eye contact for quite a while. I felt very loving towards the bird, as would many a naturalist during such a sustained close encounter. As the moment deepened my feelings about what was happening to my elderly friend mingled with a profound sense of gratitude towards the bearer of such precious and mysterious assistance.

The next day, when I told Peter about these visitations, he said “of course the magpie has always been very special to me”. At that moment a particularly violent spasm threw his head back and his body was shaken by a series of awful tremors. Apparently the “tremors” had got so much worse about two weeks before that he’d had to stay in for several days until his body calmed down.

I’d forgotten how intense Peter’s identification with magpies had been. In the introduction to *Moon on the Window*, the book of poems published in 1989, before I knew him well, he had written:

Who is this book by? Magpie. I chose magpie, first time I wrote anything, because I am a magpie. I listen to conversations, pieces of poetry, wireless programmes, and when they leave an impression inside me, either the jewel, sadness, or the happiness, whatever it may be, I make it into my own vision ... I felt very comfortable working under magpie. It was an advantage because people would discuss my poetry and not know it was mine, so there was an honesty about what they said ...

About a year later, on the 5th of August 2012, I was feeling uncharacteristically low. My partner persuaded me that we should go to a favourite spot a few miles away. We parked the car and walked down to a fishing lake. Almost immediately, I noticed was a brilliantly lit kingfisher perched on one of the anglers’ fishing platforms, only five or six feet away, almost as if waiting for me. The bird took off, and flew, unhurriedly I thought, tracing an arc of sapphire light across the still green surface of the water. We walked quietly round to the next pond where I immediately spotted him again – there was no red on the bill, so this was a male – close to the path, at about head height, in a goat willow overhanging the water. He turned briefly to look at me, then flew further along the tree-lined pond. I’d never seen a kingfisher there before, so hadn’t been expecting this. Not for the first time *Alcedo Atthis* left me in tears.

That evening mountainous clouds unleashed a dramatic thunderstorm that flooded the valley, and on the next day day Peter had a serious fall. The day after that he had another fall, and was taken into hospital. On the following day I visited him there. During the evening two Tawny Owls performed a hair-raisingly beautiful, fierce, and passionate, climactic duet, at close quarters, on the hillside¹².

Peter left us that night.

Postscript

Brian Taylor passed away suddenly in February 2018 from a stroke. His epitaph is embodied in his blog at: <https://animistjottings.wordpress.com/>. It is a true reflection of his great sensitivity and eloquence, and love of the world and all beings in it.

– Portia (his partner of 38 years)

Please note that Brian's email address <b.taylor@phonecoop.coop> is still active at the time of publication and any emails will be read by his partner.

¹² Tawny Owls are vocal residents hereabouts but it is very unusual to witness a full blooded duet between two owls perched close together. I hadn't seen a kingfisher since the previous November, so that bird, and another seen in a location indicated in a dream about a month later, and linked to another outpouring of grief, were the only two I saw during 2012. I didn't meet another until October 2013, and there were no further kingfisher dreams until July 2014.

References

- Abram, D. (1997). *The Spell of the Sensuous* (pp. 137-8). New York, Vintage Books.
- Armstrong, E.A. (1959). *The Folklore of Birds; An Enquiry into the Origin and Distribution of some Magico-Religious Traditions*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin.
- Taylor, B. (2006). *Responding to Men in Crisis; Masculinities, Distress, and the Postmodern Political Landscape*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Taylor, B. (2012). Birds, Liminality, and Human Transformation; an Animist Perspective on New Animism. *The Pomegranate, the International Journal of Pagan Studies*, 14.1: 108-127.
- Taylor, B. (2015). Taking Soul Birds Seriously; a Post-secular Animist Perspective on Extra-ordinary Communications. *Paranthropology, Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal*, Vol 6.2: 21-31.
- Bekoff, M. (2013). *Action in Cognitive Ethology*. In Harvey, G. (ed.), *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism* (pp. 395-402). Durham, Acumen.
- Bird-Davis, N. (1999). "Animism" Revisited; Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology. *Current Anthropology*, 40, Supplement: S67-S91.
- Bracken, P. & Thomas, P. (2005). *Postpsychiatry, Mental Health in a Postmodern World*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Bracken, P. & Thomas, P. (2001). Postpsychiatry, A New Direction for Mental Health. *British Medical Journal*, 322: 724-727. Accessed 25/11/15 from <http://www.chrysm-associates.co.uk/images/PostPsychiatryANewDirectionForMentalHealth.pdf>
- Brown, S.H. & Gray, S.E. (2010). *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies, Essays 1934-1972*, A. Irving Hallowell. University of Nebraska Press.
- Campion, N. (2008). *The Dawn of Astrology; A Cultural History of Western Astrology: The Ancient and Classical Worlds*. London, Continuum.
- Campion, N. (2009). *A History of Western Astrology, Volume II; The Medieval and Modern Worlds*. London, Continuum.
- Church, K. (1995). *Forbidden Narratives; Critical Autobiography as Social Science*. Luxembourg, Gordon and Breach.
- Cocker, M. & Mabey, R. (2005). *Birds Britannica*. London, Chatto and Windus.
- Cornelius, G. (2003). *The Moment of Astrology; Origins in Divination* (2nd edition). Bournemouth, Wessex Astrologer.
- Corrazza, O. (2008). *Near Death Experiences, Exploring the Mind-Body Connection*. London, Routledge.
- Curry, P. (2012). "Revaluing Body and Earth". In Brady E. & Phemister P (eds.), *Human-Environment Relations: Transformative Values in Theory and Practice* (pp. 41-54). Dordrecht, Springer. Accessed 8/12/15 from <http://www.patrickcurry.co.uk/papers/Revaluing%20Body,%20Place%20and%20Earth.pdf>
- Curry, P. (2015). "The Enchantment of Learning and 'The Fate of Our Time'". *Re-Enchanting the Academy* conference, Canterbury Christ Church University, 25-27 September 2015. Accessed 25/12/15 from <http://www.patrickcurry.co.uk/papers/The%20Enchantment%20of%20Learning%20%28print%20version%29.pdf>
- Curry, P. (ed.) (2010). *Divination, Perspectives for a New Millennium*. Farnham, Ashgate.
- Davidson, H.E. (1981). "The Germanic World". In Michael Loewe & Carmen Blacker (eds.), *Divination and Oracles*. London, George Allen and Unwin.
- Denzin, N. (1989). *Interpretive Biography*. Newbury Park, Sage.
- Drinkwater, C. (2005). *Ecology and Postmodernity*, PhD Thesis, University of Leeds.
- Eastman, R. (1969). *The Kingfisher*. London, Collins.
- Eliade, M. (1964/1989). *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. London, Arkana.
- Fenwick, P. et al (2009). Comfort for the Dying: five year retrospective and one year prospective studies of end of life experiences. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics* doi: 10.1016/j.archger.2009.10.004.

- Fenwick, P. & Fenwick, E. (2008). *The Art of Dying*. London, Bloomsbury.
- Fisher, A. (2013). *Radical Ecopsychology; Psychology in the Service of Life* (2nd Edition). Albany, State University of New York.
- Flaceliere, R. (1965). *Greek Oracles*. London, Elek Books.
- Foucault, M. (1975/1977). *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of the Prison* (trans. Alan Sheridan). Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Freud, S. (1973). *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. London, Pelican.
- Goode, P. (1989). *The Moon on the Window*. Hebden Bridge, Open Township.
- Gosler, A. with Buehler, D. & Castillo, A. (2010). "The Broader Significance of Ethno-Ornithology". In Tideman and Gosler (eds.), *Ethno-Ornithology* (pp. 31-39). London, Earthscan.
- Greenbaum, D.G. (2007). "Rising to the Occasion; Appearance, Emergence, Light, and Divination in Hellenistic Astrology". In A. Voss, & J. Hinson Lall (eds.), *The Imaginal Cosmos; Astrology, Divination, and the Sacred* (pp. 9-24). Canterbury, University of Kent.
- Grosz, E. (1993). "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason". In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies* (pp. 187-215). New York, Routledge.
- Halifax, J. (1981). *Shaman, the Wounded Healer*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Hallowell, I. (1960/2002). "Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View". In G. Harvey, *Readings in Indigenous Religion* (pp. 17-49). London, Continuum.
- Harvey, G. (2005). *Animism, Respecting the Living World*. London, Hurst.
- Harvey, G. (ed.) (2013). *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, Durham, Acumen.
- Harvey, G. (2010). "Animism rather than Shamanism: New approaches to what shamans do (for other animists)". In B. Schmidt & L. Huskinson (eds.), *Spirit Possession and Trance: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Continuum Advances in Religious Studies (7) (pp. 14-34). London, Continuum. Accessed 15/12/15 from http://oro.open.ac.uk/21963/2/Animism_rather_than_Shamanism_article.pdf
- Harvey, G. (2017). "Tylor, 'Fetishes', and the Matter of Animism". In P. Tremlett, G. Harvey & L. Sutherland (eds.), *Edward Burnett Tylor, Religion and Culture* (pp. 29-46). Bloomsbury.
- Heidegger, M. (1988). *The Essence of Truth* (translated by Ted Sadler). New York, Continuum.
- Hillman, J. (1991). *A Blue Fire, Selected Writings* (edited by Thomas Moore). New York, Harper Collins.
- Hillman, J. (1979). *The Dream and the Underworld*. New York, Harper and Row.
- Hunn, E. (2010). "Foreword", In S.Tidemann & A. Gosler, *Ethno-ornithology; Birds, Indigenous Peoples, Culture and Society*. London, Earthscan.
- Ingold, T. (2000). "A Circumpolar Night's Dream", *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (pp. 89-110). London, Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Irigaray, L. (1996). *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity within History*. New York, Routledge.
- Irigaray, L. (2002). *Between East and West; from Singularity to Community*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Irigaray, L. (2004). "Animal Compassion". In P. Atterton & M. Callarco (eds.), *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* (pp. 195-201). London, Continuum.
- Jackson, D. (1990). *Unmasking Masculinity; A Critical Autobiography*. London, Unwin Hyman.
- Kovel, J. (2007). *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* (2nd Revised edn). London, Zed Books.
- Krell, D.F. (1978/1993). *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*. London, Routledge.
- Kutchins, H. & Kirk, S.A. (1999). *Making us Crazy; DSM – the Psychiatric Bible and the Creation of Mental Disorders*. London, Constable and Co.
- Lockwood, W.B. (1984). *The Oxford Dictionary of British Bird Names*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Mabey, R. (2010). *The Barley Bird, Notes on the Suffolk Nightingale*. Ipswich, Full Circle Editions.
- Mabey, R. (2008). "The Real Stuff". In M. Benjamin (ed.), *A Passion for the Earth: Writers, Scientists, and Activists Explore our Relationship with Nature and the Environment*. Vancouver, Greystone Books.
- Marzluff, J. & Angell, T. (2005). *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*. New Haven, Yale University Press.

- Miller, F.J. (1916). translation of Ovid, *Metamorphoses, Book XI*. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press.
- Morris, S.. (2012). "Skomer's Birdman Returns to Keep Watch on Guillemots", *The Guardian*, 16th July.
- Morrison, K. (2013). "Animism and a Proposal for a Post-Cartesian Anthropology". In G. Harvey, *Handbook of Contemporary Animism* (pp. 38-52). Durham, Acumen.
- Newnes, C., Holmes, G. & Dunn, C. (eds.) (1999). *This is Madness; a Critical Look at Psychiatry and the Future of Mental Health Services*. Ross on Wye, PCCS Books.
- Newnes, C., Holmes, G. & Dunn, C. eds (2001). *This is Madness Too; Critical Perspectives on Mental Health Services*. Ross on Wye, PCCS Books.
- Okley, J. & Callaway, H. (eds.) (1992). *Anthropology and Autobiography*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Parker, I. (2014). "Psychology Politics Resistance: Theoretical Practice in Manchester". In B. Burstow, B. A. LeFrancois & S. Diamond (eds.), *Psychiatry Disrupted: Theorizing Resistance and Crafting the (R)evolution*. Montreal, Quebec: McGill Queen's University Press.
- Parker, I. (2015). *Handbook of Critical Psychology*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Plumwood, V. (2002). *Environmental Culture; the Ecological Crisis of Reason*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Romme, M. & Escher, S. (1993). *Accepting Voices*. London, MIND Publications.
- Roszak, T. et al (eds.) (1995). *Ecopsychology; Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*. San Francisco, Sierra Club.
- Roszak, T. (1972). *Where the Wasteland Ends; Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society*. London. Faber and Faber.
- Roszak, T. (1992/2001). *The Voice of the Earth; An Exploration of Ecopsychology* (2nd Edition). Grand Rapids, Phanes Press.
- Scott Cato, M. (2013). *The Bioregional Economy; Land, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. Earthscan/ Routledge.
- Stanley, L. (1992). *The Auto/biographical I*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Thompson, E.P. (1963/1968). *The Making of the English Working Class*. Penguin.
- Tideman, S. Chirgwin, S. & Sinclair, J.R. (2010). "Indigenous Knowledges, Birds that have 'Spoken' and Science". In S. Tideman & A. Gosler (eds.), *Ethno-Ornithology* (pp. 3-13). London, Earthscan.
- Tilghman, C.M. (2009). The Flesh Made Word; Luce Irigaray's Rendering of the Sensible Transcendental. *Janus Head*, 11(1), 39-45. Accessed 17/12/15 from <http://www.janushead.org/11-1/Tilghman.pdf>
- Turner, E. (1994). "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia". In D.E. Young & J. Goulet, *Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounter* (pp. 71-95). Peterborough, Ontario, Broadview Press.
- Tylor, E. (1871/1913). *Primitive Culture*. London, John Murray.
- Van Dooren, T. (2014). *Flight Ways, Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Venn, C. (1984/1998). "The Subject of Psychology". In J. Henriques et al (eds.), *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (pp. 119-152). London, Routledge.
- Waldram, J.B. (2004). *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North American Aboriginal Peoples*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Wallcraft, J. & Michaelson, J. (2001). "Developing a Survivor Discourse to Replace the 'Psychopathology' of Breakdown and Crisis". In C. Newnes (2001: 177-189).
- Wertham, F. (1966). *A Sign for Cain; An Exploration of Human Violence*. New York, MacMillan. Accessed 16/12/15 from <http://psychiatrized.org/LeonardRoyFrank/MiscArticlesOnPsychiatry/asign4cain.pdf>
- Wilkes, B. (2006). "Reveal or Conceal". In J.G. Goulet & B.G. Miller (eds.), *Extraordinary Anthropology, Transformations in the Field* (pp. 53-84). Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press.
- Willerslev, R. (2007). *Soul Hunters; Hunting, Animism, and Personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Willis, R. & Curry, P. (2004). *Astrology, Science, and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon*. Oxford, Berg.