Casting a Line to the Land:
Narratologies of Embodied Rituals and Connectivity to Place

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Casting a Line to the Land:
Narratologies of Embodied Rituals and Connectivity to Place

by

Zoë Latham

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Art, Design and Architecture

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I would like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors for helping to guide this research and provide invaluable advice. My Director of Studies, Professor Robert Brown, your supervision continues to be reliable and unwavering, helping me find my own way into architecture, inspiring a passion for learning and now teaching. Dr Mathew Emmett (Associate Professor in Architecture) for your helpful insights into research processes and methods.

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Without the time, stories and pasties shared on the riverbanks with my fellow fly anglers this research would not have been possible. Thank you for sharing your fly fishing and life experiences with me. See you all on the rivers in the new season.

University of Plymouth friends, you have all been a huge support. Toshiko and Ioana, you have been incredible to be around, work alongside and learn from. Linda, Sally and Eva, our research gatherings have been watery highlights – whether conference organising around a kitchen table or floating down the river to escape cows. Thank you for your lively creativity, compassion and for sharing this journey.

Hannah, Chaya, Harriet and Leonie thank you for continually making space for ridiculous fun, keeping me feeling like myself and for bringing the extra joy of your daughters Aubrey, Ivy and Isla into my world.

Lastly, I couldn’t have done this without my team. My family. Mum and Dad, you have always believed in me and given me courage. Mum, you bought Brian the ‘fly fishing lesson for two’ that started this side quest. Thank you, Brian, (and Hudson), for letting this be one of the many adventures we go on together.
Author’s Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee. Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

This study was part of a Doctoral Teaching Assistantship for which it was also required to complete the Professional Development in Academic Practice programme: Introduction to Teaching and Learning module. As a result, the author achieved the status of Associate Fellow of The Higher Education Academy in recognition of attainment against the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and learning support in higher education.

A programme of research training and development was undertaken (completed - not for credit) in ADA700 Research Skills and Methodologies in Art, Design and Architecture and MARE 700 Research in the Arts & Humanities between September 2018 and January 2019. The author also attended micro-phenomenological interview training October 2021.

Relevant seminars, conferences and screenings were attended, and those where the author shared research findings are listed below. Research papers were published and research events co-organised on themes relevant to this study: rivers and identity, experiencing and embodying the river through film and access to local waters were co-organised.

Publications

Latham Z & Ward L (2021) 'How might we simulate a riverside experience through virtual collaboration?' AVANCA | CINEMA 950-956 DOI Open access

Latham Z & Brown R (2018) 'Shenzhen’s Urban Villages: Dialogic cultural landscapes and resilient rituals'. Socio.hu Social Science Review, (Special Issue No. 6) DOI Open access

Presented PhD related research and films at Academic Conferences


July 2021. AVANCA International Film Conference. Presented 'How might we simulate a riverside experience through virtual collaboration?' a paper and film co-authored with Linda Ward.
May 2021. EDRA Just Environments. Presented 'The Dialogics of Tulous: a simultaneous presence and embrace of difference across cultural landscape, heritage and space' a paper co-authored with Prof. Robert Brown and Anqi Dong

May 2021. Architecture and the Built Environment Annual Research Conference. Presented ‘Casting a line to place’ PhD methods and findings.


Conferences Attended

September 2022. Talking Place: A Symposium. Three days of conversation about place and creativity.

March 2021. The Rivers Trust Conference: Water at the heart of climate resilience. An online conference putting water at the centre of the climate conversation [online]

March 2021. Technological Earth Visions: Remote Views and Disembodied Landscapes


May 2020. The Landscape Research Group, The happy chance that gives rise to existence: senses of place around the fire pit.

May 2020. The Landscape Research Group, Landscape and Goodness, conversation with Yi-Fu Tuan and Ken Olwig.

September 2020. British Society for Phenomenology’s Annual Conference on Engaged Phenomenology by Dan Zhavi


Zoë Latham, Dr Eva McGrath, Dr Sally Sutton co-organised a hybrid workshop to explore current issues and debates associated with access and the ‘right to water’. During this time, participants were asked to examine barriers, challenges, and opportunities, as a means of identifying how local communities can shape the future of their own water space(s). The workshop sought to find practical solutions to address the complexities of access,
ownership, affordability, and funding. Online participants included the founder of the Thames Baths project, the River Trust, Thames 21, Founder of the Future Lido’s group, a representative of Plymouth City Council, Marine Park Monitoring Officer and other water focused academics from other disciplines. This workshop was supported by a successful bid for research and career development funding.

2021 River Plym: Experiencing Source to Sea. Immersive Film Experience.

Zoë Latham (architecture) and Linda Ward (filmmaking) collaborated with Musaab Garghouti (data visualisation and simulation) to develop a 360° film that explored the embodiment of the river. Researchers invited attendees of the Futures21 Festival of Discovery to submerge themselves within the Devonport Market Hall 360° immersive dome. In the dome, attendees were able to explore the underwater environment of the River Plym from source to sea. Flowing downstream, along an ever-changing waterscape, with ebbs and flows between freshwater tributaries, peaty landscapes to the sea at the mouth of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.

2019 Flows of Entanglement: how rivers shape identity. Co-organised conference with Dr Sally Sutton and Dr Eva McGrath within the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) Biennial Conference, University of Plymouth.

Co-conveners invited scholars, from a diverse range of disciplines to consider the entangled and fluid ways in which rivers shape identities. The language of rivers has seeped into our vocabulary: inspiring expressions and conceptions of everyday life, oscillating between land and water, shaping political, cultural, social and environmental discourses. We live on and by rivers, we have songs dedicated to rivers. We seek to cross rivers on ferries or bridges, by swimming or wading. It is no wonder that time has etymological connections with tide as poets, artists, novelists and academics consider the ebbs and the flows of histories: reflecting and responding to the river itself, the lives it sustains, its cultural narratives and wider ecosystems. Rivers are places of connection but also of distinction.

Talks and workshops were interactive and defined by multi-perspective discussions that explored meanings and representations of rivers, documenting how we live on, by, or with rivers. Scholars at all stages of their research came to the river’s confluence through narrative, politics, culture, art, and everyday lives.

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Signed: [Signature]

Date: 18th July 2023
Abstract

Casting a Line to the Land:
Narratologies of Embodied Rituals and Connectivity to Place

Zoë Elizabeth Latham

This research argues for a re-conceptualisation and extension of place within architectural praxis that is reflective of broader discussions of meaning and environmental experience. This study examines the alignment between place and ritual theory as a way to better understand phenomenon that inform a greater connectivity between embodied and meaningful experiences with the environment. This will be explored through the act of fly fishing.

Fly-fishing is relevant as the focus of the study owing in part to the author’s own experience as a fly angler. The relationship between the act of fly fishing, being part of nature and being in the world is meaningful. By conceptualising fly fishing as a form of ritual and process of ritualization, this study looks at how ritual affords fly anglers a connective relationship with place. This ritualized connection extends beyond mere doing and evokes cultivation of a deeper sensibility of and towards place. Present here is recognition of the role the body and ritual plays in enabling the formation of this sensibility of place.

This research is advanced through narratological methods of autoethnography, storytelling, cognitive mapping and film. This way of working builds on the power of narrative and image-making to expose individual meaning-making. Employing these methods forms a
holistic representation of experience, and so overcome potential disconnects that can arise between meaning-making efforts and actual experience.

This research recognises that we that are embodied beings, and our embodied experiences are central to our relationships with place. Through this study, the researcher aims to develop a greater understanding of what place means – notably in how we generate a connection to place through our bodies – and to draw upon this insight to expand architectural discourse with a better understanding of connective and meaningful phenomena.
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## Glossary

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<tr>
<td>critical circularity</td>
<td>the body's ritualised interaction with the environment that continually redefines the spatial-temporal context, generating and reproducing cultural dispositions, infusing both the body and place with meaning (Bell 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwelling</td>
<td>an embodied and skilled engagement with the environment that offers a feeling of being in place and or at home, an anchor from which individuals know where and how they are (Ingold 1996).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embodiment</td>
<td>a way of conceptualising being in the world whereby the body is the primary medium through which we perceive and understand our surroundings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emplacement</td>
<td>the reciprocal and situated relationship between embodiment and the environment, emphasizing their inseparability and interdependence (Kawano 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifeworld</td>
<td>the world as a natural and experiential attitude against which individual perceptions, actions and interpretations are reconstructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>a dynamic, subjective, and lived environment with the capacity to hold significance and meaning for individuals, constructed through interactions, perceptions, and emotions (Tuan 1975, Relph 1976).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place attachment</td>
<td>the cognitive, affective, and behavioural connection individuals can form with a specific place (Altman &amp; Low 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place identity</td>
<td>the deeply personal sense of self and belonging associated with a specific place, rooted in innate worldviews and life experiences (Manzo 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritual</td>
<td>a category of human experience that holds social and cultural significance by cultivating individual and collective identities while creating moments of personal meaning (Bell 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritual body</td>
<td>the embodiment of ritual practices that enables individuals to internalise specific acts and places, the body serves as the fundamental source and classification system (Bell 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritualization</td>
<td>a process that extends the concept of ritual beyond traditional associations emphasising differentiation and contrast between practices, distinguishing them from everyday activities (Bell 1992).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of place</td>
<td>the relationship between people and place and the associative meanings attributed to a particular setting (Seamon 2021).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worldview</td>
<td>a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that shape an individual's or a group's understanding of the world.</td>
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Preface

'We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.'

(T. S. Eliot 1943)

As I opened the envelope labelled "1996," I recognised my younger self in the faded photographs. Stood mid-river, net in hand, curious, lost in the moment and unaware of time passing. At that moment, a sense of serendipity washed over me. Here I was, sat at my university desk, scouring books for theories that could help me understand how and why I felt such a profound sense of connection to the rivers I fish. Yet these pictures in my hand presented possible answers. This place had long been a part of who I am. The river, the water, the land – a place I felt at home.

Our minds cannot be considered as tabula rasa, they don’t passively absorb what is presented to them. They are shaped by biases, recollections, experiences, and intentions that colour our perceptions and shape our ways of thinking. Undertaking this research has demanded reflection on my own sensibilities, that find their roots in my childhood days outdoors, but today pervade my architectural praxis that seeks out ways of designing that feel right. Architect, Juhani Pallasmaa expounds this correlation between our experience of the world as architects and our resulting expression through architecture, suggesting

‘Architecture is a means of philosophising about the world and human existence through the embodied material act of constructing […] architecture is also an artistic expression as far as it transcends its purely utilitarian, technical and rational realm and turns into a metaphoric expression of the lived world and human condition’ (Pallasmaa 2009, p.115).

As such, there is value in looking inwards at ourselves, at our experiences in order to find ways to better understand lived reality. To find praxes that can unearth what it is about...
design that feels right, to ask where that feeling and intuition or sensibility come from, and ultimately how to design places for others that feel right for them too.

During my Master of Architecture degree my understanding of place changed, and it grew in meaning through cross-disciplinary discussions around my own experiences and architectural praxis. When prompted to write about place I hesitated, reluctant to mention it, but I couldn’t stop thinking about the places I fish and how I feel there. Encouraged by my Director of Studies, Professor Robert Brown, I wrote about fly fishing. My latent energy and passion for architecture finally breached the dam. What had always seemed like abstracted architectural ideas that I couldn’t quite grasp became tangible and better understood as something rich, deep-rooted and meaningful. I came to recognise my practice of fly fishing spoke of something more than fly fishing, and more profoundly about a way of connecting to place.

In parallel to the pursuit of understanding this embodied sensibility to place, I found myself reflecting upon the experience of living in China and America which brought to light an interest in the equally nuanced ritualized, cultural dimensions of place. Immersing myself within completely different ways of living had forced me to become more aware of my own presuppositions, at the same time, allowing me to recognise although there are plenty of ways of doing things, people choose to do particular things in particular places that are often ritualized and often rooted in cultural structures that cultivate and frame our experience. These particularities can be obscure and hard to identify. Experiencing this difference allowed me to recognise the various ways people connect to places.

My interest in theories of place lie in the inseparability from human life. To question architecture’s sense of place is to foreground experience and meaning of the built
environment. More positivistic architectural discourse has tended to dominate the discipline, falling short in describing contemporary urban conditions as multi-layered or as place-centred, or simply through a more human perspective. On the contrary, through architectural praxis and fly fishing I am exploring ways to express something of a creative tension between myself and the places in which I dwell. Fly fishing has become my touchstone and way of knowing, an existential foothold on the world. My fly angler-disciplined senses, way of seeing and feeling the land lead me to deeper insights of place.

Figure 0.1 River Plym, 1996
1. Introduction

1.1 Research Context

How do we connect with place? What makes this connection meaningful? How do we make sense of these connections, even when the nature of that connection and its meaning is obscure? These fundamental questions are important to consider in the design of the built environment, notably in practices of placemaking.

Some lines of architectural discourse have become increasingly interested in ideas relating to place (Avarot 2010, Malone 2017, Manzo 2003), valuing concepts of sense of place, place attachment, place identity and placemaking. This discourse considers place a relevant way to examine architectural experience (Seamon 2017), but it has been recognised that place discourse is yet to grasp all dimensions of place relations (Manzo 2003). Architectural discourse with an interest in place recognises there needs to be a shift away from disciplinary tendencies of ‘form and determinism’ to broader understandings of ‘meaning and environmental experience’ (Malone 2017, p.62). Echoing these concerns, geographers who founded place theories (Tuan 1977, Relph 1976) are critical of current placemaking practices that largely seek to quantify more qualitative experiences (Relph 2008), reducing understandings of place to numeric data (Thomas 2016) and aesthetics (Hayden 1997, Jiven & Larkham 2003).

Place theory seeks to examine human experience and meaning. Too often, as evidenced by the current state of practice, architects fall short in applying place theory to placemaking, negating the experiential and philosophical dimensions of place. This study seeks to explore these dimensions of place experience and meaning through my own observations of ritual. Life experiences in different cultures have revealed that ritualized ways of being foster a
strong sense of place. This study examines ritual discourse to explore the how ritual can foster these place relations.

Ritual is understood here as a category of human experience and analysis (Bell 1990), that has the capacity to cultivate meaning (Kluckhohm 1949) and identities (Parkes 1995). Ritual studies look beyond form and phenomenological ways of thinking about the self and world into the obscure, examining both the conscious and subconscious processes of ritual experience. Rituals are way of making and remaking our worlds (Bell 1992), offering a sense of direction, orientation and a resilience through an awareness of our own sensibilities (Kawano 2005). Ritual theorists recognise embodiment, situatedness and meaning making are processes through which a culturally constructed world can be consciously manipulated through ritual (Bell 1992). Ritual studies offer a vein of untapped richness that in the past has offered disciplines such as anthropology a new way of understanding social reality (Hylland Eriksen 2001).

This research makes an original contribution to knowledge by drawing together advancements in ritual studies to examine dimensions of place. The study will expand understandings of ritual and place simultaneously by examining my practice of fly fishing – a ritualized act through which I have my strongest sense of connection to place. Fly fishing is a specific method of angling that unlike traditional fishing methods that rely on the weight of the lure or bait, uses a weightless lightweight human-made fly to imitate insects or other aquatic creatures. It requires skilful casting of a fly line to position flies on the water’s surface or just under the surface.

In architectural placemaking, meanings are typically projected onto people; places assumed to have inherent meaning acquired through their making by a design team outside that place that informs subsequent actions of inhabitation. This study will seek to
understand the formation of meaning differently, from *within* people through their own
generation of and experience of particular phenomena in particular places. This recognises
people’s ability to emplace their own meaning onto place. To examine this alternative
perspective of meaning making, the research will present a comprehensive understanding
of the experiential and philosophical dimensions of place, in particular, how people form
meaningful connections to place, through an examination of ritual and human experience.

Where theories of placemaking often fall short in translating into human-centric
practices, and geometric space is prioritised over lived space (De Certeau 1984, Dovey
1993), this study proposes a conceptualisation of ritual that can bridge these theoretical and
practical gaps. From this perspective, this study tests the efficacy of ritual theories to
analyse experience and notions of individual and collective identity in relation to place,
significantly expanding the ways ritualization and the ritual body can be understood in
relation to architecture and placemaking. As a result, the study will re-establish the central
role of the body in architecture as a source of knowledge, understanding and therefore
meaning making. More specifically, through an inquiry of ritual, this research will reveal the
embodied, situated and meaningful capacity of ritual for fostering a meaningful connection
to place.

1.2 Research Aim and Questions

The overall research aim is to better understand the ways in which we connect to place,
using a study of the ritualized act of fly fishing as a site of inquiry (which I will later explain
as to why it is a viable site). The thesis and the content of the analytical chapters (Chapters
5-7) have been shaped by three research questions that have emerged in relation to the
research aim. Prior to addressing the questions below, fly fishing will be analysed through
the theory of ritual (Chapter 4) in order to understand the way fly anglers think about the
world, how they act within that constructed world and what this means to them.
RQ1: What enables an enhanced connection to place?

RQ2: Understanding ritual and processes of ritualization can foster a connection to place, what meanings of place are generated through ritual and processes of ritualization?

RQ3: What role do narratologies of ritual and process of ritualization play in revealing connectivity to and meanings of place?

These research questions evolved through a literature review (Chapter 2) and an interest in potential gaps in theory/knowledge. Research question 1 (RQ1) reflects the starting point for this thesis when I wrote about place during the Master of Architecture programme, which triggered an intense curiosity about the nature of place, and how we identify and connect to places. The formation of this overarching research question came from that initial curiosity around the experience of place, in particular, looking to reconcile how we have the capacity to experience a deeply embodied sense of place and current modes of placemaking. RQ2 recognises ritual as a way of enabling connection to place and seeks to find out more about the nature of meaning making in relation to place. RQ3 queries what narratological methods bring forth and contribute to the knowledge of ritualized place relations.

1.3 Thesis Structure

After delineating the overall intentions of this these in Chapter 1, key theories relevant to this study are explored in greater detail in the literature review at Chapter 2. This chapter reviews academic literature relevant to the study and is structured through sections on place and ritual.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methods used. It introduces narratology as a way of examining experience holistically, and outlines the various methods used for
data collection, namely situating oneself alongside participants as a situated researcher, storytelling, autoethnography, cognitive mapping and film. This is then followed by an overview of data collection and analysis, ways of engaging participants, the micro-phenomenological interview training undertaken and methods of disseminating research.

Chapter 4 conceptualises fly fishing through the theory of ritual, describing what it is that fly anglers do through the lend of ritual. Participant’s stories are analysed as ritual attributes and the process of ritualization. This chapter offers insights into what fly anglers do, the way they do it, why they do it that way, and how they think about what they do.

Chapters 5-7 respond to research questions 1-3 respectively. Each chapter explores gathered narratives to unravel various dimensions of place connectivity, experience and meaning. Chapter 5 is centred on how ritual has the capacity to connect us to place. This chapter looks at the embodiment of place experienced through the ritual act of fly fishing, the situatedness felt by anglers after observing and attending to the landscape as fly anglers, and processes of emplacement that establish ritual as a way to make place through the acting out of ideas into a particular place. Chapter 6 turns towards the layers of meaning in relation to ritual and place revealed through fly anglers’ narratives. This chapter reflects on embodied mnemonics and emotional conceptions of ritual and place. Observing a shift from the physical and embodied relations to place those akin to ‘feeling at home’ and being a part of a place (with others) and a distinct shift towards care and conservation of place. Chapter 7 identifies the merit of narratological methods as the different narratives begin to reveal the significance of individual a priori on the meaning they make and take from fly fishing and the impact this has on identity.

To conclude, Chapter 8 summarises key findings that relate to each research question. This chapter ends with possible future directions for research and applications of knowledge gained.
2. Literature Review: Defining the Field

This chapter defines the fields within which this study is positioned and contributes to – place, ritual and fly fishing. It draws from a range of disciplinary perspectives, in particular, cultural and human geography, anthropology, environmental behavioural studies, landscape experience\(^1\), ritual studies, and sociology. It details the emergence of placemaking as a theoretical concept in the design of the built environment, the background of place theories and the value of adopting a place-centred approach. Following this, fly fishing as a way connecting to place will be outlined, and scholarly work relating to the experience of fly fishing. The chapter also examines the background and key aspects of ritual theory that relate to this study such as ritualization and the ritual body and how ritual is discussed in architectural discourse. At the end of the literature review a ritual understanding of place is offered for further examination in this study.

2.1 Placemaking

Understanding what we mean by place becomes increasingly important with the rise of architects and planners claiming place and placemaking as a means of regenerating urban space (Sweeney et al. 2018). At the same time, studies on place, sense of place, place attachment, place identity and placemaking are being increasingly applied to design, planning, stewardship, and the restoration of places. These studies vary in scale from homes to cities, landscapes and even ecosystems (Beatley & Manning 1997, Stewart et al. 2013, Vanclay et al. 2008). Geographer Edward Relph argues place-centred approaches are emerging as a reaction to increasingly commodified, globalised, standardised or placeless

\(^1\) The nature of my own knowledge within these fields is largely contextualised in the landscapes I have lived, worked and fly fish in, whether urban or rural landscapes. Therefore, throughout the study theories of landscape experience, landscape research and landscape phenomenology are also intrinsically embedded within the development of ideas.
urban built environments and that the overall impact of such homogenizing processes ‘is the undermining of place for both individuals and cultures, and the casual replacement of the diverse and significant places of the world with anonymous spaces and exchangeable environments’ (1976, p.143).

The importance, and relevance, of local places to people has previously been examined (Harvey 1996), with observations shared by geographer Doreen Massey: ‘the search for the ‘real’ meanings of places, […] is interpreted as being, in part, a response to a desire for fixity and for security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change’ (Massey 1991, p.26). Supporting this, architectural theorist Iris Avarot believes sense of place is the desired result of placemaking and is ‘a human need, essential for well-being and feelings of safety, security and orientation, and a remedy against feelings of alienation and estrangement’ (Avarot 2010, p.202). She has voiced that the term placemaking has been exploited as a commodity leading to the disillusion and discreditation of phenomenological placemaking²;

‘The disillusion is a result of the exploitation of placemaking as a means rather than an end in itself, and the discreditation is due to the removal of the naïve mask and critical analysis of the components and presuppositions of the concept’ (Avarot 2010, p.204).

As noted by Massey, a place or placemaking should be thought of in terms of the meaning and identity it holds for people – and what fosters those things within a place. For Avarot, a sense of place should offer a sense of direction and a fulfilment of human needs. Yet, Avarot suggests placemaking has shifted from its phenomenological roots, and has instead become a way of practicing, a way of interacting, with lesser focus on what the feeling of a place is or the philosophy of experience and meaning. She suggests the application and

² Place in the urban context is considered a social construct (as opposed to phenomenological or based on empiricist analysis) and following post-structuralist reasoning, was therefore associated with power forces and exclusion of others (Avarot 2010, p.207).
consideration of the term placemaking is failing due to a misunderstanding or misrecognition of its component parts, challenging and seeking deeper understandings of place.

Place has become somewhat of a buzzword (Cross 2001), with many of the placemaking practices in urban design and architecture seeking to quantify qualitative views of inhabitants or users. Place is often compartmentalised into a series of ‘techniques for placemaking’, a term that is generally undefined but appears to refer to the creation of pleasant public spaces’ (CABE 2000 in Relph 2008). In these instances, place is often discussed in terms of matrices, value-ratings and offsetting issues of subjectivity with expert ratings (Thomas 2016). Place is also employed as a method of focusing on characteristics and aesthetics of a place as a way of defining it and designing for it (Hayden 1997, Jiven & Larkham 2003), or a process for institutions and communities to improve neighbourhoods and public spaces through ‘physical and creative interventions’ (Project for Public Spaces 2007). Architect Patrick Malone suggests the increased interest in place has the potential to make theories more inclusive; however, he believes the issue ‘is still how to move from the nursery slopes of use and perception, or form and tendency towards determinism, to a larger understanding of meaning and environmental experience’ (Malone 2017, p.62).

Building on these observations of how place is being employed as an oversimplified approach, Malone posits that architects have a tendency to overvalue the impact of built space on human-environmental relationships and social processes. Concurring with the need for developing place-centred practices and theory, architect Lynne Manzo states discourse on place still ‘does not fully embrace all dimensions of people’s emotional

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3 Other social sciences also largely avoid the term place in favour of more quantifiable areas of research (Buttimer & Seamon 1980, Seamon 2002, Stefanovic 1998). Many of which assume a division between ‘person and world, between body and mind, between feeling and knowing, between subject and object, between theory and practice, between nature and culture’ (Seamon 1993, 14).
relationships to places’ (Manzo 2003). Before we can understand fully what these shortcomings are we need to examine the development and potential of place theories.

2.2 Place Theories

As the disciplines of human and cultural geographies emerged in the 1970’s so too did the need for a distinction between space and place. From the humanist perspective, space is thought to be an objective and abstract phenomenon, while from a positivist perspective place is seen as subjective, existential and particular (Tuan 1977). The humanistic concept of place has evolved from a phenomenological perspective, concerned with attachment and meaning as opposed to the detached sterility of the concept of space. Yi Fu Tuan’s text, *Space and Place* (1977) is one of the most significant texts in human geography, expressing human understandings of place through ideas of meaning and experience (Cresswell in Hubbard et al. 2008, Yacobi 2017). Tuan considers place an area defined by its emotional attachments and relationships, even noting links between place and their personal identity. He describes his understanding of place:

‘Place is a centre of meaning. In size it ranges from a rocking chair or a fireplace within the home to a neighborhood, town, city, region, and the nation-state. Experience occurs in different modes, relatively passive ones like touch and smell and active ones like seeing and thinking. Place is a construct of experience in all its modes. Small places can be known directly and intimately through the senses. The reality of the larger place depends more on indirect experience gained through concepts and symbols. For a fully developed sense of place, passive experiences must be supplemented by active perception and awareness’ (abstract from Tuan 1975, pp.151-165)

Important to take from these foundational ideas of place is the intertwined nature of place, meaning and experience – considered by those who developed place theories as inherently connected. Multiple strands of place philosophies have developed since it’s theoretical conception fifty years ago. The strands of sense of place, place attachment and place identity each adopt a multidimensional attitude that takes into account experience; values,

Sense of place is a holistic and inclusive concept, somewhat of an umbrella term, articulating the relationship between people and place, encompassing place attachment, identity and associative meanings that a person/community attributes to their environment (Seamon 2021, Erfani 2020, Lim & Barton 2010, Rogan et al 2005). Sense of place was defined by Fritz Steele as a particular experience in a particular setting (1981); a definition whereby the inclusion of experience transforms abstracted ideas into lived, felt and meaningful notions of place. Consequently, place is understood as having the capacity to encapsulate the experiences and aspirations of people.

Parallel to discussions of sense of place are place attachment theories which explore the bonding between people and places (Altman & Low 1992, Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001, Friedmann 2010). Place attachment concepts embrace subjective characteristics often expressed through three components: affective (emotion), cognitive (thoughts, knowledge and beliefs) and practice (behaviour and actions) (Proshansky et al 1983, Kyle et al. 2004, Altman & Low 2012). Environmental psychologists Seth Low and Irvin Altman study place attachment through it's social, material and ideological dimensions, recognising we choose our places through various forms of inhabitation and activities (Altman & Low 1992). Place attachment looks to what people think about and do in place to form a connection, whereas place identity is credited to one’s more innate worldviews and life experiences (Manzo 2003). Geographer Patrick Devine-Wright states: ‘the connection (and sometimes confusion) between place attachment and place identity illustrates the strong

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Within sense of place theories, there are a few differing approaches: phenomenological (Griffero & Tedeschini 2019), empiricist-analytical (Manzo & Devine-Wright 2021) and constructivist (Cresswell 2014). The phenomenological approach sees sense of place as a human experienced, intrinsically embedded in a physical place. The empiricist analytical approach considers sense of place the subjective knowledge of place that evolves over time. Alternatively, the social constructivist approach does not consider meaning generated through experience, but imposed through socio-cultural readings (Seamon 2021).
ties between identity and emotion’ (Devine-Wright 2012, p.269). Place identity research focuses more towards the self and physical environs (Sarbin 1983, Twigger Ross & Uzzell 1996, Lovell 2003), whereas personal issues and experiences are considered products of a larger political, social and economic reality - influencing our relationships to places (Manzo, 1994).

2.3 Value of Adopting Place

Relph firmly believes in the significance that place holds for human life; defining place as an environmental locus that, in time and space, draws together individual or group actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings (Relph 1976, p.29-42). In many ways, we all relate to places. Sometimes we enjoy the feel of a place. Sometimes we are made to feel out of place. We all live in and move between places, in turn, gaining a sense of rootedness or belonging to certain places shaped by interactions between people and other places (National Research Council 2002). The significance of place lies in an individual’s conceptualisation of place that is largely ineffable. Although we can readily think of and talk about places, we are less aware of how we have come to belong to and connect them. Professor of Architecture David Seamon (2017) claims place is the lived component of our lifeworld that is most relevant for examining architectural experience. Lifeworlds are the ground of our knowledge rooted in lived experience, the lens through which we as individuals view the world made up of prior experiences, intersubjective perceptions and meanings (Husserl 1936). When we have a particular experience in a particular place, that experience is informed by our individual disposition, who we are, what we think, how we think and our memory. Our sense of place is intimately connected to our thinking-feeling selves. Analogous to this is a recognition of place as a powerful phenomenological concept, owing to its very constitution; it offers a way to specify more precisely the experienced wholeness of lifeworlds (Casey 2009, Donohoe 2014, Malpas 1999, Relph 1976). This
phenomenological theory of place was introduced to architectural discourse through Christian Norberg Schulz’s notion of genius loci (1979), his writing adopting ideas from philosophy, human geography, architecture, and cultural anthropology (Vecco 2020). Genius Loci can be thought of as the spirit of place, the entangled human-environment relationship of dwelling, and psychological functions of orientation and identification (Norberg-Schulz 1979 pp.18-23). Norberg-Schulz states, ‘to gain an existential foothold man has to be able to orientate himself; he has to know where he is. But he also has to identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know how he is in a certain place’ (ibid, p.18). Experience of place is therefore not just phenomenological but an indiscernible mix of experiences, memories and socio-cultural dispositions and many more things. The wholeness of place experience, and a recognition of the phenomenological dimensions of place, resituates design processes within the complicated yet important context of relationships; relationships between people, and relationships between people and places (Teder 2018).

2.4 Understanding Experience

Connection to place is impossible to contemplate in abstract isolation; in order to understand our relations to place we need to get a sense of the whole picture or the whole experience. Experience being ‘a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows his world’ (Tuan 1975, p.151). Scholars have suggested many ways to try and understand the experience of place. Relph posits that we can attempt to understand the multifaceted nature of place as a phenomenon of experience by examining properties of place, ‘such as location, landscape, and personal involvement’. He believes some assessment can be made as to the degree to which these are essential to our experience and sense of place’ (Relph 1976, p.20). Geographer Peirce Lewis believes that when talking about sense of place, ‘[i]t is often easier to see its results in human behaviour than to define
it in precise terms’ (Lewis 1979, p.28). Although this may be true, his suggestion relies on an external observer’s ability to perceive when someone is experiencing a sense of place. This approach fails to recognise the significance of the internal, cognitive dimensions of place. Sociologist Thomas Gieryn suggests, rather than trying to observe behaviour, we put the task of deciphering place back in the hands of the people experiencing it. He says, ‘[p]laces are not only materially carved out of space but interpreted, narrated, understood, felt, and imagined – their meanings pliable in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time, and inevitably contested’ (Gieryn 2000, p.455). Gieryn recognises the intangible components that make up a sense of place and connection. His approach suggests to understand an individual’s connection to place we must know more about the interpretive, storied, experienced and conceptualised components making up a connection to place. Similarly, sociologist Shmuel Shamai agrees with Relph in that location alone is not enough to form a sense of place; there must be a depth and prolongation to the experience of place. He writes, ‘ritual, myths, and symbols help in strengthening the attachment to place’, defining place as a bundle of meanings, symbols and qualities that a person or collective associate with a particular locality (Shamai 1991, p.348). There have been attempts to rank certain place phenomena based on personal experience. Relph refers to this as degrees of insideness and outsideness of place. Within this ranking of place are spatial and political implications regarding ownership and rights to be in place, for instance ‘knowing one’s place, a ‘woman’s place’ (Hayden 1997, p.16), or ‘alienation’ and ‘not belonging’ (Relph 1976, p.51). Another such approach to understanding sense of place is Shamai’s sense of place scales. These represent the levels to which one can experience a sense of place. He breaks them down into the following: (1) knowledge of and (2) belonging to a place, (3) attachment (emotion and meaning) to and (4) identifying with a place (blending with a place’s needs), and commitment to a place through, (5) involvement in place and (6) sacrifice for a place (Shamai 1991, p.349). These scales are indicators as to the processes behind experiencing a sense of place, and to the degree in which one can
experience a sense of place and connection. From these approaches, place is beginning to be thought of as a process. A process of developing an attachment to place that can be individual, social, cultural, and perhaps even biological (Farnum et al. 2005, Galliano & Loeffler 1999, Hay 1998, Low & Altman 1992). While many place researchers specify longevity in place as key to deepening place meaning, little in-depth research has actually studied other dimensions of place experience – specifically emotional connection and sense of belonging to a place (Backlund & Williams 2004; Stedman 2003).

Aforementioned place approaches have looked to describe, rate and dissect ‘parts’ of existing places in an attempt to look at place experience, but in the landscape planning and management disciplines they have taken this a step further and begin to use this to inform future practice. In these disciplines, place thinking is applied in two interesting ways; mapping place-based meanings as embodied concepts such as special places, sense of place and place attachment and secondly, these mappings are later used to inform the sensitive governance of places, landscapes and ecosystems (Williams 2014, p.75). Involved in these projects is researcher of urban-rural sociology Dr Daniel Williams. Through his research, he draws attention to the plurality of place and asserts place meanings, knowledge, and practices as always situated (ibid). Williams also pertains placemaking is less about the kinds of meaning we attach to place and instead calls for a form of placemaking that seeks to ‘understand conceptually or empirically how people fashion their world into places’ (Williams 2014, p.78). The fashioning itself comprised of ‘both material practices through which people transform the landscape, and social/discursive practices such as experiencing, naming, planning and managing places’ (ibid). One can therefore infer, through thinking about and doing things in the landscape we are making sense of it, that we are fashioning our own places through situated and embodied engagement. Consequently, just as we begin

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5 Williams (2014) has developed a layers of place meaning diagram. Meaning goes from a surface level of inherent meaning, to instrumental, socio-cultural then identity expressive.
to understand place as a process, Williams sees placemaking as having the potential to be considered the tool for understanding that process.

Sociologists, geographers and landscape planners are leading the way in the development of place research. They have sought to understand the degrees to which people connect to a place or parts of places and have been able to use these understandings of place relations to rank and manage places. These people-place relationships are yet to be fully realised through architectural and urban design, revealing an apparent disconnect between what is being discussed in place theory and what is being practiced and built. Seamon raises his concerns in applying a place-centred design approach, stating ‘a sense of place cannot be designed and created in all its details, since by its very nature, place is largely ineffable and indeterminate’ (Seamon 1993, p.2). Adding to that is Williams’s assertion that places can offer different experiences for different people simultaneously (2014).

2.5 Place Summary

Place is a broad and complex area of study that has been developed by geographers and applied by many other disciplines that seek to develop experiential and meaningful conceptions of the world around us. Placemaking has emerged as a term and way of thinking in the design of the built environment. To understand how we connect to place is to better understand human experience and ways of knowing the world. Buildings and landscapes have the capacity to be meaningful places. They can be grounds for orientating people in the face of change, they can become places people identify with, and hold enduring in their memory. Four things relating to the nature of place stand out:

- Although place is centred around experience and meaning, the cognitive and affective aspects of place relations have yet to be fully understood
- Placemaking typically overemphasises place as the projection of meaning onto people, and foregrounds activities of making and remaking places instead of exploring experiential and philosophical dimensions of place.
- Place is phenomenological, experiential and embodied, mnemonic, symbolic and storied, informed by socio-cultural dispositions and individual lifeworlds.
- Place is not only significant to the individual but is plural – experienced differently by many.

There is a great capacity for place to take on more of a role in the design of the built environment, if understood and practiced differently. To better understand how we can design with and for place connectivity we need to investigate these lesser explored dimensions of place experience. To do this, the following section reflects upon my own experience of fly fishing, how it connects me to place and introduces discourse that posits fly fishing as ritualized. It is anticipated that this line of inquiry can provide greater insight into the role of ritual with respect to the overarching research question of this study:

**RQ1: What enables an enhanced connection to place?**

### 2.6 Connection to Place Through Ritual

This study was inspired by my passion for fly fishing, the sense of connection to place it bestows upon me, and a curiosity of how the rituals of fly fishing facilitate this feeling. Before fly fishing, landscapes largely felt external to myself, places I would passively engage with and move through. Fly fishing is different. It asks me to spend enough time in the water that I notice what is happening to it, to become a part of it. In these situated moments, human existence feels somewhat different, outside of the everyday. Through
specific modes of paying attention, fly fishing offers an opportunity to recentre myself. To rewire something inside that gets chipped away at, everyday away from the river. The embodied interrelations transform my state of mind. My cluttered, jumbled thoughts becoming quiet. My mind still and focused. A successful day fly fishing lies not in filling one’s creel basket but in finding a place within what we don’t fully understand (Knight 2017). This phenomenon carries a meaningfulness with it, beyond simply ‘feeling good and close to nature’, its meaningfulness is derived from the way it makes me feel, connected and belonging to a place. As such, rituals and processes of ritualization seem filled with fundamental capacities of changing how we experience and understand places (Bell 1992).

Others have previously made links between fly fishing and ritual. Most notably, Samuel Snyder, religion scholar and author of *New Streams of Religion: Fly fishing as a Lived, Religion of Nature*, refers to fly-fishing books as *ritual* manuals, and to fly fishing and fly casting as ‘ritually waving a wand’ (Snyder 2007). Journalist Adam Clymer started a New York Times article ‘Fishing for trout in April is a ritual that celebrates the sport’ (Clymer 1986). Similarly, columnist and angler Mark Palz, in one of his pieces recommends the fly angler must ‘embrace the rituals’ and describes fly fishing as a way to be ‘mindful of every thought and act’ (2016).

In the UK alone, there are about four million anglers (Franklin 1999, Simpson & Mawle 2005) but despite this popularity, academic accounts of angling are relatively rare (Bull 2009). There are a number of studies that look to the relationship anglers’ have with the environment. Of most relevance to this study are accounts of anglers’ encounters with waterscapes (Bull 2011), multi-sensory watercraft practices (Eden & Bear 2011), fly fishing and religion (Snyder 2007), anglers’ emotional attachments to place informing collective practice (Nightingale 2012, 2013), and recently, wider cultural studies of fly fishing that
have examined the place-centric ethics of social community, environmental stewardship
and political action (Willard 2020). There is an emerging scholarly interest in fishermen’s
experience-based knowledge and the embodied and social dimension of their becoming
anglers (Ervik et al. 2022).

Global interest in angling has increased, aligning with ‘a new environmental ethic’
(Willard 2020, p.4). Fly fishing provides a unique lens through which to study how anglers
understand, relate to, and value the natural world with many anglers expanding their gaze
from themselves to thinking more holistically - like a far-reaching watershed (Snyder 2016).
By using fly fishing as the lens through which to examine place and ritual, this study will
meaningfully add to the limited academic accounts of angling. In particular, this study will
look at how fly fishing can be conceptualised as ritualized.

The following sections looks specifically to the development of the term ritual and key
aspects of ritual theory that relate to understanding experience of place such as the
ritualization of certain acts and places, and the role the ritual body plays in the experience
of embodiment and situatedness through ritual. At the end of this ritual section, there is an
examination of architectural discourse to see how ritual is thought of in relation to the built
environment and if the same primacy is given to the body in relation to experience.

2.7 Ritual Theory

Before this study, my understanding and interest in ritual was limited to place-specific
architectural practices, such as Randolph Hester’s Sacred Structures and Everyday Life (1993)
which employed sociological methods for the participatory design of landscapes. His work
explored unconscious relationships to place, whereby ritual was present in many everyday
patterns of community life\textsuperscript{6}. The work revealed unexpected places of collective sociocultural significance, their value intertwined with the community’s collective subconscious\textsuperscript{7} and their representation through everyday rituals. For that reason, I primarily understood ritual as informal, unspoken and intangible to those doing it and those observing it – yet completely tied to place, and lifeworld or habitus\textsuperscript{8}. Hester’s way of working echoes what Henri Lefebvre would say in \textit{The Production of Space} (1991), i.e., architecture is a process not a product, and that recognising every day, embodied rituals have the potential to transform space. In addition to that, I was interested in the idea of rituals having the ability to bring resilience to people in the face of change or imposition, something Michel De Certeau wrote about in \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life} (1984). De Certeau suggests everyday rituals and other routine practices can define spatial alternatives within an imposed structure. Describing ritual as ‘providing space’ for actions to be undertaken, creating a field which serves as a base or theatre (1984, p.124).

The idea of ritual first emerged as a formal term of analysis in the nineteenth century to identify what was believed to be a universal category of human experience (Bell 1992, p.14). Often associated with religious ceremonies and performances, ritual is used to describe a ‘… a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order’ (Pearsall 1998, p.1603). Alternatively, ritual is commonly thought of as a fixed, regular routine or habitual activity. Religious studies scholar, Catherine Bell, who notably charted the evolution of the field of ritual studies in \textit{Ritual Theory Ritual Practice} (1992), disputes narrow ideas of ritual as simply or solely a matter of routine or habit of ‘the dead weight of tradition’ (p.92) but rather a

\textsuperscript{6} Sacred places were considered important as they ‘represented home or provided roots’, and ‘perhaps a useful definition of sacred structure would be those places – buildings, outdoor spaces, and landscapes – that exemplify, typify, reinforce, and perhaps even extol the everyday life patterns and special rituals of community life.’ (Hester 1993, p.279)

\textsuperscript{7} The sacred places ‘were neither distant enough in history nor were they removed enough from daily life to be seen as special’. Their value resided in the community’s collective subconscious’ (Hester 1993, p.280)

\textsuperscript{8} Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of habitus: a set of dispositions and ways of perceiving the world that are ingrained in us through our backgrounds, therefore are often shared with others from a similar background. Our habitus, or way of thinking and acting is said to inform how we act in the present (Bourdieu 1977).
category of experience and analysis. In addition to this, it has been suggested that rituals have the potential to cultivate who we are (Parkes 1995). In doing so, they can make life meaningful by reaffirming an understanding of life through our own interpretation and meaning (Kluckhohn, 1949).

According to Bell, rather than ponder the definition or look for specific rituals, we should look at what ritual does (by means of the concept of ritualization, see below). Consistent with this, anthropologist Satsuki Kawano, (drawing upon Bourdieu 1977, Ortner 1984 and Bell 1992) says rituals are more than something that’s just repetitive, stylised, prescribed or social routine, and they in fact involve many layers and processes of embodied and emplaced meaning (Kawano 2013, 114). These processes can support individuals constructing culturally patterned, socially rooted interpretive possibilities and ‘create moments of personal significance and engagement even for those who lack religious commitment’ (ibid, p.120).

Bell’s writing on ritual has been the foundation upon which the expansion of the term has grown to cover both the studies of religion and more broadly, societal phenomena. As such, anthropologists, sociologists, historians and philosophers are increasingly using ritual as a tool for understanding how ‘people make and remake their worlds’. Bell claims, ‘few other terms have been more fundamental in defining issues basic to culture, society and religion’ (Bell 1992, p.3). Anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen echoes Bell’s acclaim for ritual study in its application within his field, proposing ‘it can be seen as a synthesis of several important levels of social reality’ (2001, p.227).
Of the main anthropological approaches to ritual\(^9\), the *symbolic* (Geertz 1973, Tambiah 1979, Turner 1969), *cognitive* (Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994, Renfrew 2007) and *practice* (Bell 1993, Bourdieu 1977) approaches are the most pertinent to this study of place relations. By looking at the defining characteristics of ritual from within these aforementioned approaches, one can draw out new ways of explaining and developing analytical tools for understanding the processes of ritualized experience and what it can mean to those practicing ritual. In early ritual studies, ritual characteristics were described by ethnologist Raymond Firth as a multifaceted, patterned phenomena often formal, symbolic and socially sanctioned (1951, p.222). Similarly, social anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah says ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication – patterned, sequential and expressed in various ways characterised by a level of formality and repetition (2013). Fifty years later, these characteristics of ritual are still considered applicable; anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport’s description of ritual refers to it as a performance of sequences of formal acts and utterances (1999, p.24). Bell has since grouped these characteristics into six basic attributes of ritual\(^10\): formalism, traditionalism, disciplined invariance, rule-governance, sacred symbolism, and performance (Bell 1997, pp.138-169).

### 2.8 Ritualization

Ritualization is a term that carries notions of ritual beyond the traditional associations with religious institutions and formal worship (Gluckman 1962). Rappaport posits ritualization as particularly relevant for the study of human behaviour/human ritual (ethology) as the term emphasizes interplay and *contrast* with other practices (Bell 1992, pp.88-90). Bell states,

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\(^9\) For a more extensive list of the key anthropological approaches to ritual see Insoll 2011.

\(^10\) Bell states, these are neither exclusive or definitive.
‘ritualization is a way of acting that is designated and orchestrated to distinguish [...] what is being done in comparison to the other, usually more quotidian, activities’ (Bell 1992, p.74). The significance of this attitude lies in stepping outside of the everyday, constituting itself as different and contrasting to other ways of being and thinking. Ritualization includes repetition of tradition but distinguishes this as being carried out within a new context – making it a whole new act. The production of differentiation (that defines ritualization) through ritual action in place can create a more sacred place (ibid). Also known as a ritual context (Kawano 2005). The ritual context is itself created through enactment of ritual; this is subsequently set apart from nonritual contexts (Kawano 2005, p.116). Specifically, Kawano suggests, ‘[t]he production of ritual context owes much to the use of the actions and environments that resonate with – or differentiate them from – the daily routine’ (Kawano 2005, p.6). There is also an element of formality and or fixity to ritualization, a prescribed way of doing things. Lastly, and arguably most importantly, ritualization is rooted in the body.

2.9 Ritual Body

Increasingly, the body is granted a critical place in the social construction of reality; some going as far as to say ‘[n]o body, no ritual’ (Grimes 2014, p.306). Consequently, ritualization is always rooted in the body, processes of ritualization produce a ‘ritualized body’, this body is fused with a sense of ritual and cannot be understood apart from the immediate environment around it (Bell 1990, pp.98 -100). This draws attention to the co-production of a ritual body and the formation of place, through reciprocal and cyclical process of embodied interaction. Through ritual, we learn to embody certain acts and places through a particular cultural structure and way of thinking. Turner has argued for the primacy of the body, suggesting it is the human organism itself, and not society, that is the ‘fons et origo’ (the source/ origin of something) of all classification (1967, p.90). Ultimately affirming our bodies as the central way we experience and make sense of the world around us. Of equal
importance, the body is always conditioned by and responsive to a specific context or place (Bell 1992, p.100). Bourdieu states;

‘[i]t is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form par excellence of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating buy the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world’ (1977, p.89).

How our bodies experience and appropriate a space projects something of ourselves onto it just as much we respond to it. The term ‘critical circularity’ puts forward this cycle, Bell suggests, the body’s interaction with the environment redefines the space-time environment. Critical circularity allows one to consider the body’s interaction with the environment both generating it and in turn moulded by it (Bell 1992). Kawano also discusses this interface, stating, the ‘[i]nteracting ritual body and ritual site mutually constitute each other, producing and reproducing cultural dispositions in which body and place are embedded’ (Kawano 2013, p.7). Kawano also reflects on the intertwining of ritualized acts and the environment in her use of the word emplacement – the embodiment of meaning and value in the environment. Emplacement being the act of performing/acting out an idea in a specific environment. As such, places are part of people; people are part of places (Kawano 2013, p.55).

2.10 Ritual in Architectural Discourse

Architect, Peter Blundell Jones is said to have re-cast architectural theory by bringing together architecture and ritual to form an anthropology of building in Architecture and Ritual: How Buildings Shape Society (2016). Jones takes architecture as a point of departure in order to engage with more humanistic ideas from the discipline of anthropology. This comes from a critical positioning of architecture’s current object/ visual oriented mode of production in favour of an architecture linked to meaning and identity. Jones believes architecture is deeply linked to meaning and identity, ‘providing a mirror that reflects our
world, our knowledge about it and the way we interact with it’ (Jones 2016, p.3). In turn, he proposes architecture should mesh socio-spatial processes: habits, beliefs, rituals\(^{11}\) and expectations of society in order to reinforce the built environment. Although he does not discuss ritualization, there are clear links to be made here about processes of ritualization and its link to the making of meaning and affirmation of identity. The very meaning of ritual residing in the structures of the acts themselves (Bell 2009, p.89) – a way that we distinguish place, and it becomes part of our worldview. This dynamic is explained by Bell as critical circularity;

> ‘a focus on the acts themselves illuminates a critical circularity to the body’s interaction with this environment: generating it, it is molded by it in turn. By virtue of this circularity, space and time are redefined through the physical movements of bodies projecting organizing schemes on the space’ (Bell 2009, p.99).

Bell’s notion of critical circularity speaks to the relationship between our body and the place within which it is embodying and situated. With these descriptors of processes of ritualization, emphasis is less on any kind of formal act of ritual and more about the processes of what is being done (in contrast to other ways of doing things) and what it does for the person experiencing it. Through processes of ritualization the relationship between the body and place is cyclical, constantly informing the other, reiterating a connection and conceptualisation of meaning.

Jones’s conception of ritual is revealed through his readings of architectural case studies in which rituals are practiced, articulating ways in which architecture shapes experience, sometimes without conscious awareness. These rituals, whether ceremonial or everyday, are ‘framed’ and ‘defined’ by the buildings—giving focus and orientation for those who use them. In passing, Jones puts forward a more enlightened idea of ritual, pointing out: rituals

\(^{11}\) For most architects, ‘ritual is yet another of the hundreds of elements to be taken account of in conceiving effective designs’ (Finch 2015).
‘exist along a continuous scale in contrast with one another […] ritual is ever present […] most of the time it is evidently and positively social, invested in things done together and agreements about how to behave’ [emphasis added] (Jones 2016, p.9). Jones later states ‘[p]erhaps architecture was born of ritual’ (Jones 2016, p.115), a reflection challenging his perception that architectural rituals were omitted from contemporary discourse (Ren 2017).

Similar to Jones, art historian Jas Elsner, in his chapter Material Culture and Ritual, suggests there is lack of ritual ideas in material culture (material culture here encompassing architecture) (Elsner 2012). Elsner notes a surprising lack of cross-fertilisation between anthropological studies of ritual and material cultures; including ‘artefacts, buildings, enclosures or landscapes as spatial or geographic frames for rituals’ (Elsner in Wescoat & Oosterhout 2014, p.3). He puts this down to opposing disciplinary approaches to ritual, suggesting, in anthropology, ritual studies are based on observed data and in art history, archaeology or architectural history – ritual is an inference, derived from material cultures and accompanying context/ writings. To Elsner, interest in ritual for material cultures is about reinforcing things (usually historical artefacts/ spaces) with a deeper structure of meaning and intention but these are more often than not presented as inferences – what we read into things retrospectively. Elsner’s notions of observed and inferred ritual create an unhelpful dichotomy which he is unable to disentangle religion from ritual, even when discussing ritualization and Renfrew’s non-religious rituals12 he ruminates on them as vague inferred religious acts. This suggests another struggle with ritual, and maybe reason for the lack of cross-fertilisation, is that the term is often used as shorthand for religion, or a ‘dustbin category for all kinds of sacred, mystical and emotional urges’ (ibid, p.5). Elsner’s ideas of ritual are still caught up in the primitive, negating the shift in focus that emerged across disciplines to focus on overlooked ordinary and everyday cultures (Hall 1990).

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12 Renfrew’s example of a non-religious ritual refers to ‘taking up citizenship of a new country, can be highly ritualized (or not), just as religious actions may be ritualized (or not) (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, pp.65–67) in (Renfrew 2007, p.290).
Elsner outlines that in more than twenty years the *Journal of Ritual and Art in Context* has published only two articles touching upon any form of material culture. He proposes the interface between ritual and material cultures has not been fulfilled yet and believes it is due to scholars shying away from theology. In more recent developments of ritual theory, it is clear ritual is not primarily something *observed or inferred*, it’s something people experience. The juxtaposition of these methods for understanding ritual only allows for best guesses as to implied meaning and intention – and these may not be religious. For instance, archaeologist, Linda Hurcombe, who looks to the social construction of sensory perception of materials of past societies, says ‘artefacts have always been considered evidence or technology and craft’ (Hurcombe 2007, p.534). Not only does Hurcombe not subscribe to one of the two methods outlined by Elsner, her interdisciplinary work furthers ideas of material culture in pursuit of holistic judgements through sensorial perception and narrative.

Ray Lucas’s book *Anthropology for Architect’s* (2020) is a prominent example of cross-disciplinary praxis that interrogates the interface between ritual (among many other forms of individual and social life) and material cultures, through processes of architectural design practice. Lucas consciously evades an external anthropological gaze, and in doing so sidesteps potential inference *onto* architectural artefacts. Instead, he combines theoretical frameworks from anthropology with architectural graphic skillsets to propose a more ‘nuanced reading of the socially constructed aspects of architecture’ (Lucas 2020, p.xiv). Within his book, Lucas draws upon symbolic and performative anthropological approaches to ritual; particularly the adaptive nature of ritual, the ways in which ritual is responsive to context and ritual liminality (the passage from one state to another) (ibid 2020, p.160). Not only do these approaches demonstrate a secular and inclusive understanding of ritual, but
they offer rich grounds for a more sensitive way of designing the built environment based on human needs and sense – individually and collectively.

Architect, Han Hollein, considered architecture as ritual. Through his architectural practice he would exaggerate tradition and meaning by means of new relationships. Hollein argues architecture as ritual, as well as being a means of preserving body temperature - and he uses ‘transformation, whether of size, scale, materials or function, as a basic design tool’ (Hollein 1986). This interpretation of ritual knits together the body and its needs with the built environment around it, ritual here being understood as a verb, a way of practicing architecture that foregrounds the body and necessary transformation of the space around it. At a similar time, Architect, Gavin Hogben discusses a possible changing role of ritual in architecture suggesting:

‘Ritual formally defined man’s collective action in the face of awesome nature. It marked the cycles of the heavens and celebrated the ages of life. Today’s rituals promote and protect the psyche of solitary man in the daily business of a largely incomprehensible society’ (Hogben 1989, p.54).

Prior to industrialisation and globalisation, architecture was often a manifestation of the place and the people in which it was situated. Relph argues, increased mobilities, and electronic interconnectedness have broken down what was once a rooted sense of place; suggesting the narrow but deep experience that once was normal has given way to briefer experiences of many different places (Relph 2008). Today, deep-rooted connections to geographical contexts, natural cycles and our wider environment have been severed and with it our ability to make sense of the world around us. Hogben’s writing reinstates the idea that we have the burden of making our own meaning within these changing, incomprehensible and increasingly placeless places through our rituals; rituals that help orientate us through our everyday embodied practices of interaction.
Blundell-Jones positioned buildings at the fore of ritual studies, saying ritual is framed and defined by the spaces in which they occur. He recognises ritual as a meaning making process but doesn’t recognise the significance of embodiment in this process. Elsner puts forward methodological incompatibility for studying ritual within material cultures, suggesting a clash between observation and inference of historical rituals and an avoidance of theology. Challenging Elsner’s construct, Lucas’s work ties together anthropology and architecture providing significant insight into the performative and adaptive aspects of ritual and ways in which architectural design can be responsive to that.

2.11 The Body in Architectural Discourse

Today, many architects operate with a partial and reduced conception of the human body where the bodily form is still independent of the architecture and the architecture independent of the body (Imrie 2003). People are inhabiting cities where increasingly, consideration of the body is removed from processes in which the built environment is produced. In the book *Body, Memory and Architecture*, Kent Bloomer and Charles Willard Moore attempt to re-examine the significance of the human body in architecture, putting emphasis on the role of the body in asserting, ‘in it’s beginning, architecture derived from body-centred sense of space and place’ (1977, p.5). Sarah Robinson, in her talk *Second Skin: How Architecture Touches Us* (2015), articulates connections between the cognitive sciences and architecture, and in doing so discusses the prevailing architectural paradigms and dualisms that negate the role of the body in our relation to the world around us. Robinson identifies a western emphasis on individualism, industrialisation and technological progress at all costs, which has become the dominant model responsible for much of our contemporary architectural landscape. She considers this insensitivity as denying the interdependence that makes us human in the first place. Over the past thirty years, just like ritual studies, the disciplines of biology, psychology, cognitive neuroscience and
phenomenology have been finding evidence for the ‘bodily basis of mind and meaning, while architecture has perhaps been caught up in convoluted cerebral games that denied emotional and bodily reality altogether’ (Robinson & Pallasmaa 2015, p.3).

Architect Maria Da Piedade Ferreira, in her paper, *Embodied Emotions: Observations and Experiments in Architecture and Corporeality*, suggests this new branch of embodied knowledge has not been considered enough (Ferreira 2015). Considering this potential, Bloomer and Moore believe the most essential and memorable basis for understanding spatial feelings lies in our bodily experience (1977, p.x). There are a few ‘contemporary architects such as Peter Zumthor, Steven Holl, and Juhani Pallasmaa’ that defend their more phenomenological position in architecture as an expression of the sensorial experience of the body (Ferreira 2015, p.57), provoking a unique way of being that speaks to all senses at the same time (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The majority of more recent literature on the sensory experience of architecture and the built environment reflects the reductive nature of architecture today, suggesting people’s senses have been considerably overlooked through the construction of decorporealised environments and a focus on ocular centrism. This is the domination of vision over other senses – how things look as opposed to how we experience and conceive them through multiple forms of embodiment (Degnen 2016, Pallasmaa 2005). Professor of Geography Gary Bridge defines this manifestation as the city ‘ridding itself of bodies’, a shift from the Greek *polis*13 where the body was celebrated as the epitome of human excellence and full citizenship (Bridge 2005). In Henri Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis, the city’s rhythms converge at the body, in the everyday, ‘in a conflict between great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat’ (1997, p.73). The prevailing architectural paradigm of today undervalues the fact that it ‘is in, and through,

13 The city considered in its ideal form for philosophical purposes.
the body that space is perceived, lived and produced’ (De Boeck 1998, p.30). Bridge concludes, bodies and their particularities were lost from the planning imagination and the city was decorporealised (Bridge 2005, p.15). Echoing these ideas, Pallasmaa writes,

‘the dehumanization of contemporary architecture and cities can be understood as a consequence of a neglect of the body and the senses […] an imbalance in our sensory system, [being] today’s growing experiences of alienation and loneliness related to a certain kind of pathology of the senses’ (Pallasmaa 2005 cited in Ferreira 2015, p.58).

Lefebvre acknowledges a dominance of rationalisation over the body:

‘The architectural and urbanistic space of modernity tends towards [a] homogenous state of affairs […] everything is alike. Localization – and lateralization – are no more. Signifier and signified, marks and markers, are added after the fact – as decoration. It is also the space of blank sheets of paper, drawing boards, plans, sections, elevations, scale models, geometrical projection and the like […] a narrow and desiccated rationality of this kind overlooks the core and foundation of space, the total body, brain, gestures, and so forth. It forgets that space does not consist in the projection of an intellectual representation, does not arise from the visible readable realm, but that it is first of all heard (listened to) and enacted (through physical gestures and movement).’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.220)

Bridge’s perspective on the relationship between the body and cities is that of transaction.

He suggests transactional body relations are organised in certain ways and involve relationships between rationality of the social body and the speculative, performative aspects of the historical agents. For Bridge, this approach is represented most strongly in the work of pragmatist John Dewey (Bridge 2005, p.18). Dewey’s understanding of the mind-body is deeply connected to space:

‘A sessile organism requires no premonitions of what is to occur, nor cumulative embodiments of what has occurred. An organism with locomotion is as vitally connected with the remote as well as with the nearby; when locomotor organs are accompanied by distance receptors, response to the distant in space becomes increasingly proponent and equivalent in effect to response to the future in time. A response toward what is distant is in effect an expectation or predication of a later contact (Dewey 1958, pp.256-257).

In Jones’s writing on Architecture and Ritual (2016) he doesn’t acknowledge the ritual body or the role of the body in our experience of architecture and ritual at all, but in his concluding
remarks, under the heading sense of direction, he acknowledges the body as a geometer; a way of finding our way in the world. He elaborates upon this through ideas of hunting-gathering, suggesting the landscape as our original mnemonic reference point for understanding memories and perceptions – and that modern ‘artificial’ landscapes still bear some of this role (Jones 2016, p.343).

Within the limited architectural discourse, the body is depicted as a wayfinding device (Jones 2016); informed by memory and perception to navigate our landscapes, and in a constant mode of transaction with the world around us (Bridge 2005). These ideas have a body-centred sense of space, valuing embodied knowledge (Ferrerira 2015) and feelings as a bodily basis of meaning making (Bloomer and Moore 1977).

2.12 Ritual Summary

Ritual studies have been developed by religious studies scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, historians and philosophers to find new ways of understanding the processes of ritualized experience and what it can mean to those practicing ritual. Ritual is more than something habitual, repetitive or traditional and deserves greater attention for what it can do for us and reveal about the nature of our experience:

- Ritual is a category of experience and analysis that is culturally patterned, meaningful and can cultivate who we are
- Ritual is symbolic, cognitive and rooted in practice
- Ritualization is a process of contrasting and distinguishing some of the things we do from others. It is a conscious step outside of the everyday into a different place
The ritual body is central to the experience of ritual and ritualization. Ritual fuses the body to place in a process of critical circularity, whereby the body is considered the source of our understanding of the world around us.

Ritual in architectural discourse usually refers to more formal, traditional and ceremonial notions of ritual, and fails to engage with developments in ritual theory (ritualization and ritual body) that categorically expand it's meaning.

Architects, in prioritising formal and visual aspects of design, have de-emphasised the relation of the built environment to ourselves and our moving, thinking and feeling bodies. This study examines ritual in order to better understand the interface and relations between human experience and the places around us.

2.13 Ritual Understanding of Place

Foundational to this study is the recognition of ritual as a tool for understanding how people make and remake their world into places. This understands place as being the particular part of the world we make for ourselves, something we inhabit and embody. As geographer Nadia Lovell posits, we define our own places and in turn, they define us (Lovell 2003).

Warranted here is further examination of the ways in which place relations have been defined as comprised of cognitive, affective and practice elements (Altman & Low 2012, Kyle et al 2004, Prohansky et al, 1983, Shamai 1991). Further to this, place identity and meaning are linked to affective experiences of place through links between emotion and identity (Devine-Wright 2012). Resonating and aligning with these elements, ritual theorists contest ritual to be comprised of cognitive, practice and symbolic processes (Bell 1993,
These processes relate to six ritual attributes, formalism, traditionalism, disciplined invariance, rule-governance, sacred symbolism, and performance (Bell 1997). Bell further notes that cognitive aspects of ritual (thoughts, beliefs and knowledge) inform how we act and help us form an embodied knowledge. Ritual practice or action, helps us build a ritual body that cannot be understood out of place (Bell 1990). She adds, symbolism within ritual is culturally constructed, changing the way we interpret the world, making experiences meaningful and cultivating who we are. In essence, the places where we enact ritual become places of meaning.

Places are the spaces where life occurs, where architecture has the potential to become meaningful and ritual studies may offer a language and tools for making sense of and articulating meaning within that lived world. Through the review of literature, this study reveals a clear, yet unrecognised synergy between place attachment characteristics and ritual attributes, evidenced in the diagram in figure 2.1. This theoretical alignment offers an exciting opportunity to expand place theory in terms of revealing wider dimensions of place experience; in particular, the cognitive and affective aspects of place relations that have yet to be fully understood. With a better idea of ritual’s role in the formation of our places, we can explore the meanings(s) afforded by ritual. Although the diagram reveals the alignments between place and ritual theories, a direct connection is yet to be made between the enactment of ritual and place experience. This requires further understanding of meaning-making processes. This gap, therefore, leads to the next research question that this study seeks to explore:

RQ2: Understanding ritual and processes of ritualization can foster a connection to place, what meanings of place are generated through ritual and processes of ritualization?
Figure 2.1 Literature review diagram, demonstrating alignments between place and ritual theories.
In order to examine the space revealed between place and ritual theories and to answer the emergent research questions, this study proposes looking closely at the subjective experience of ritual and processes of making meaning through stories. The stories we choose to tell can be seen as constructs of human experience that are inclusive of more ambiguous and complex dimensions of individual and collective phenomena, providing a holistic context that allows individuals to share their experiences (McAlpine 2016, Gill 2001, Mitchell & Egudo 2003). In order to better understand how we experience and connect to place this study adopts a narratological methodology, positing humans as storied creatures. This approach is rooted in the epistemological belief that we create our own meaning through the process of telling stories – ‘meaning is not (objectively) ‘out there,’ but (subjectively and relationally) created through the stories people tell to make meaning of life’ (Ervik et al. 2022). Through the analysis of stories, this study will explore links between ritual and place; seeking to understand human experience and the formation of meaningful place relations.
3. Research Design and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced theories of place and ritual to define the cross-disciplinary field within which this study examines the ways in which we connect to place. This chapter details the use of a narrative approach as a holistic means of examining experience and the meaning associated with it. It initiates the narrative process by firstly discussing my positionality within the study, highlighting my situated role as an active participant. It further elucidates the methods employed to effectively convey personal narratives and establish fruitful relationships with potential participants. To enhance the depth of inquiry the chapter introduces micro-phenomenological interview skills, which serve as a valuable tool for capturing nuanced experiences and gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Following this, the chapter provides a concise overview of how the study was expanded to encompass a broader range of perspectives. This expansion was achieved through the incorporation of narrative inquiry, cognitive mapping, and film as means of gathering and analysing the voices and experiences of other individuals who engage with or encounter similar phenomena. The chapter subsequently outlines the methods used, including data analysis, additionally, it introduces the application of visual methods, which facilitate and communicate the development of emergent ideas and themes arising from the data. The chapter concludes by addressing the ethical considerations inherent in the research process and the various methods of disseminating research methods and findings throughout the study.

3.2 Research Design

This thesis seeks to better understand our relationships with places through the exploration of experience. Experience is a universal term for the various ways through which a person
knows and constructs reality (Tuan 1979). Rooted in the belief that we make sense of our world through experience and create our own meaning through experience, this thesis adopts a pragmatist epistemological stance, whereby each person’s knowledge is considered ‘unique and created by his/ her experience’ (Kaushik & Walsh 2019, p.5). Pragmatist philosophy rejects traditional assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and inquiry (Kaushik & Walsh 2019), opposing Cartesian dualistic framings of reality, asserting that human thoughts are innately linked to action. Pragmatism holds that human knowledge and practice is cyclical, one impacting the other through active and evolving interactions and experiences (Paul 2005). This reality is not deemed static, it changes, as does the place within which the action is enacted. Sociologists Leanne Kelly and Maya Cordeiro observe a shift in classical pragmatists ‘away from using nouns, to a focus on ‘know-ing’ and ‘learn-ing’ (Kelly & Cordeiro 2020, p. 1). They argue this allows researchers to move beyond objectivist conceptualisations to ‘exploring and understanding the connections between knowledge and action in context’ (ibid). The pragmatist paradigm is always contextualised (e.g. social, historical, political) and explores the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of a research agenda, for example ‘what can stories reveal about a place’ and ‘how do we connect to said places?’

Figure 3.1. Diagrammatic interpretation of pragmatist paradigm in relation to context of this study, Dartmoor.
What became significant in the course of this study was not only examining the field of study, but also critically interrogating methodologies that would enable a greater insight into the matters of the study. A range of recognised and relevant forms of qualitative approaches were explored, such as grounded theory, case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative research. Each of these methods look to understand experience but have diverse intentions. Summarised below is an understanding of these methods, which when interrogated more fully identified their merits and demerits, which ultimately helped reveal the methodology used in this study:

- The aim of grounded theory is to generate a theory from views of a large number of participants alone (Strauss & Corbin 1998). As this study emanates from my own experience in the first instance, a method such as grounded theory doesn’t allow for this subjective influence so was therefore discounted.

- A case study method examines something (a case) within a bounded system (Cresswell 1998). This goes against the highly relational nature of place, experience and meaning.

- Ethnography is a method for studying a particular social or cultural setting first-hand, usually explored through observation and participation (Atkinson et al. 2007). Ethnography seeks knowledge of the social world and social meanings (Brewer 2000). Although this study could be seen as intrinsically ethnographic, as I, the researcher, participate within the subculture of fly fishing, an ethnographic approach seeks to interpret that subculture in and of itself and it’s context (Harris 1968) rather than look outwards to wider, more connective notions of place.

Sociologist Martyn Hammersley suggests a conflict between the acquiring of information relating to the wider world and typical ethnographic studies that are situated in local phenomena, and suggests looking to other forms of social science research for wider, more diverse contexts (Hammersley 2006).
Phenomenology as a philosophy permeates much of the theories used in this study to explore an understanding of lived experiences and consciousness (Heidegger 2006, Husserl 1970, Ingold 1995, 2002, 2011, 2021, Merleau-Ponty 1962, Seamon 2002, 2015, 2018). Phenomenological research is concerned with understanding lived, social and psychological phenomena, what experiences mean to people, from the perspectives of people involved (Welman & Kruger 1999). Researchers have previously acknowledged a reluctance of phenomenologists to propose techniques for understanding diverse phenomena beyond that of a thick description (Hollway 1997, Hycner 1999, Groenewald 2004). An objective of phenomenological research is to capture the ‘essence’ of the experience of a group, negating individual participants’ wider relations and lifeworld (van Manen 1990). Engaging in phenomenological research requires the researcher to ‘suspend preconceived knowledge’ (Bliss 2016) through a process called epoché in order for data collection and analysis to be considered valid (van Manen 2017, Giorgi 1994, Speziale & Carpenter 2007).

Like our conceptions of place, a narrative approach draws simultaneously on the world around (a physical world of facts) and the world of the individual experience (Pearce 2008). Narratives are one of our principle ways of understanding the lived world; ‘without story there is no identity, no self, no other’ (Lewis 2011, p.505).

Narratives are commonly used to explain our identity to someone; the first steps of joining a community start with ‘the narratives of life we exchange’ (Ricoeur 2016, p.33). We tell stories when we want someone to know who we are; the function of narrative is to give the ‘who’ of the action (Arendt 1983). Through narrating, processes of giving order, adding emphasis, inclusion and exclusion are ways of making sense of something and connecting it to ongoing relations and thoughts. It is this meandering, backwards and forth characteristic of narrative that has the potential to uncover fuller, more layered understanding of
experience. This quality of narrative reflects the reality of the way we make sense of the world (Lewis 2011). Narrative offers a situated understanding of experience (Pearce 2008), relations, and identity so it is of no surprise it has been previously engaged with in the study of place.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, to understand an individual’s connection to place we must know more about the interpretive, storied, experienced and conceptualised components making up a connection to place (Gieryn 2000). Tuan proposes stories and places as mutually constituted; narrative is an intrinsic part of producing place, and place in turn fosters and produces narrative (Tuan 1991). A narrative approach reaffirms this interplay between people, places and actions that are mutually constituting; as Merleau-Ponty said, a story ‘is the subject’s taking up of a position in the world of his meanings’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p.193). The formation of a narrative is based on ‘…a meaning-making process’ (Bell 1999, p.16). If we can understand this storied, meaning making process behind an experience we are more likely to understand how a person comes to feel connected to a place.

Just as we have established that place transcends mere location, narrative transcends mere description, by shaping it with meaning (Pearce 2008). De Certeau (1984) adds stories ‘constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places’. Narrative methods have previously been implemented to examine place relations including: place bonding, place attachment, place identity, place meaning and the sense of belonging to place (Manzo, & Devine-Wright 2013, Lippard, 1997). Narrative was chosen by others to investigate place because of its discursive style that embraces Massey’s view about the way places are made and remade as relational (Massey 1991). Applying a flexible, open-ended narrative approach to place relations has revealed perspectives often marginalised from research and society.
(Fullilove 2014, Durgerian 2019). Embracing a relational view of place, narrative has been established as a way to build psychological explanations of relationships, conveying normative, relational, political, and material consequences (Di Masso, Dixon, & Hernández, 2017). Narratological studies of place reveal, ‘just as place meanings and people-place relations are dynamically and strategically constructed in talk and interaction, so too are place attachments’ and that ‘personal constructions of place-identity are themselves constantly shaped by wider cultural meanings through which individuals actively fashion a sense of identity’ (Manzo, & Devine-Wright 2013, p.82). The use of narrative in previous place studies has looked to explain meaning, attachments and individual ways of making place, but importantly, these relations have been understood within wider cultural meanings.

3.3 Narratological Approach

‘The only thing that keeps us from floating off with the wind is our stories. They give us a name and put us in a place, allow us to keep on touching.’ (Tom Spanbauer 1991, p.190)

The three main methodological stances to narrative are naturalist, sociocultural and literary (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007). The naturalist approach examines rich descriptions of participant experience and what they mean to them. The sociocultural approach looks for broader, common cultural narratives and the literary approach is often employed alongside either the sociocultural or naturalist approach and looks more at the story arcs, and structure of storytelling. For more detailed description see (McAlpine 2016, p.35). This study adopted a naturalist narratological approach to examine the intersubjective experience of a particular phenomenon, valuing the meaning and experiences within individuals’ stories over broader patterns.
The terms ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are often used interchangeably by social science
and qualitative researcher Karen Lumsden (2019) suggests the term ‘story’ is more familiar
and conversational whereas, ‘narrative’ has more formal characteristics. Clandinin and
Connelly reflect on their own ‘in-between’ distinction within their research:

‘When referring to participant situations e.g. classroom field records, interview data
and so on we tend to use ’story’ to refer to particular situations and ’narrative’ to
refer to longer term life events.’ They further clarify, ‘When we refer to research,
research method and researchers we use the term 'narrative' exclusively’ (Clandinin

This study adopts the same distinction. When discussing the research design, methodology
and concluding reflections the term narrative is used, and when conversing directly with
participants and asking them to engage in the narrative processes, I asked them to share
their stories.

**Storied Experience as Holistic, Relational and Meaningful**

We as humans naturally live a storied existence, the richness and meaning of our collective
stories reveal the diversity of human experience (Muindi, Ramachandran & Tsai 2020).
Most people could agree that narrative is part of our everyday life (McAlpine 2016, p.33),
and some go further suggesting ‘[n]arrative being is human and human being is storied’
(Lewis 2011, p.506). Narrative is said to be so pervasive in our everyday lives that if ‘we
change our story, we may even change our lives’ (ibid). Getting to know ourselves through
the world and its stories ‘we come to know the world through [emphasis added] our
experiences and our stories’ (Lewis 2007, p.11). Our narrations of life provide a ‘robust
way of integrating past experience into meaningful learning, locating oneself and others in
the account, and foreshadowing the future’ (ibid). Narratives have the capacity to absorb
the ambiguous and complex nature of individual and collective phenomena and can
provide a holistic context that allows individuals to reflect and reconstruct their personal, historical, and cultural experiences (Gill 2001). Stories are essentially individual constructs of human experience (Mitchell & Egudo 2003, p.5), and the stories themselves can go on to influence how a narrator thinks of themself and acts (Holley & Colyar 2009). Patrick Lewis, a narrative scholar suggests ‘we take in stories, our own and others and tell them back to ourself and to others in a recursive process that augments our understanding’ (Lewis 2011, p.506).

Storying experience and retelling stories informs others how one thinks of themselves and others; the sharing of stories is also about seeing and hearing how others respond to one’s own stories. This dialogic idea of narrative is grounded in Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of learning, which suggests that personally meaningful knowledge is socially constructed through shared understandings (Clandinin 2006, p.149). A narrative provides a ‘robust way of integrating past experience into meaningful learning’, at the same time locating oneself and others in the past, present and future’ (McAlpine 2016, p.33). Narrative values multiple ways of knowing (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007); and enables us to ‘document variable and shifting ways of understanding experience, both within and between individuals’ (McAlpine 2016). Although there is no one right method to investigate the dimensions of experience we don’t usually describe or attempt to disentangle, stories can suggest meanings embedded in practices beyond what an individual consciously knows (Gaete Celis 2019). Through storytelling, ‘humans narrate ways of knowing and being’ (Lewis 2011, p.505), stories facilitating the construction of knowledge (Mitchell & Egudo 2003) and the explication of meaning (Polkinghorne 1995).

This study adopted a narratological approach to build an understanding of the experience and specific ways of connecting to place through ritual. The relational recounting of stories explored the experience and meaning of fly fishing as a group of individuals. This study recognises the complexity and the plurality of experience,
perspectives, and voices, and draws upon a range of narrative based qualitative methods, for understanding both individual and collective dimensions of place connectivity through fly fishing. Pragmatists do not consider the world as an absolute unity therefore research around understanding the construction of knowledge and experience often adopts a mixed methods approach that looks to various forms of data collection and analysis rather than subscribing to one way (Cresswell & Poth 2016). Mixed and multimedia outputs allow for possible interactions and connections to be made beyond traditional, static text (Tobin & Hsueh 2007, Walker & Boyer 2018). Narratives can be obtained through various forms of production and representation (Rambo & Carolyn 2020). This study embraced this pragmatist, multimodal way of collecting narratives which unfolded throughout three stages: beginning the story, living the story, and reconstructing the story\textsuperscript{14} illustrated in figure 3.2 below.

\textsuperscript{14} This three part structure was set out in Clandinin and Connelly’s \textit{Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry} (1990).
Figure 3.2 Diagramming research design
Beginning the Story as a Situated Researcher

I began this study by defining a particular experience that warranted further examination; my connectivity to place experienced through the ritualised act of fly fishing. This positioned me as a situated researcher, studying a phenomenon within and alongside participants. I examined this positionality through an autoethnographic study, the focus being to understand my positionality through the telling of my own story, as a researcher in relation to the context. Later, this helped understand myself in relation to participants and their stories. I initially used writing and field notes to express the experience, emotion and connectivity felt when fly fishing. I then added the visual medium of film to further explore and portray this experience. The process of filmmaking unveiled deeper, more phenomenological dimensions of the experience which I later folded back into the writing. Early in the PhD process I undertook micro-phenomenology interview training, to help with the elicitation of stories (my own and others’), a method for deepening the examination of subjective experience.

In order to expand this study, I had to find ways of building relations with potential participants for a storied exchange of shared ways of knowing and experiencing. This study required talking to other fly-anglers who fished in the same places as I did. To do this I attended a local fly fishing related event and captured people’s interest with a topographic model of the context in which this research would be situated. Potential participants were invited to pin their favourite fly fishing place on the map – this invitation allowed for further discussions about the research and, if appropriate, I asked potential participants to meet for a follow-up day on the river to share stories about fly-fishing.

Living the Story: Wading Upstream Together

The next stage was to undertake a narrative inquiry to expand and triangulate my emerging understanding of phenomena with the stories of others who engage with or experience the
same or similar phenomena. The main objective being to facilitate the elicitation and
recording of stories as a primary source of data collection. *Situated* in the river alongside
participants I asked them to tell me stories, asking open-ended questions about experiences
and memories of fly fishing. As this discussion unfolded, we took it in turns casting and
wading upstream along their favourite stretches of the river. This dialogue was captured
through *film* as a form of participant observation. At the end of our day on the river, I
asked to see each participant’s favourite fly fishing *photograph*, something I had asked them
to bring prior to our day together. This served as prompt for delving deeper into more
significant aspects of experience and meaningfulness. With this photograph in mind, I
asked participants to create a *cognitive map* relating to ‘this particular day on the river’ –
spatialising the recollection of stories, memories and experiences. The purpose of this
exercise was to further examine the dynamics of human-environmental relations and
conceptions of place. At the end of each day, I updated my field notes, highlighting any
major themes, reflections or stories that emerged. Amassed, collections of stories,
photographs, mappings, and notes formed a layered mosaic of research data.

*Reconstructing the story*

Having completed the narrative inquiries, I undertook a *thematic analysis* of the stories in
relation to research aims and theoretical approach. Through this process, I organised an
expansive narrative, or big story for each participant comprised of transcribed interviews,
film stills, images, maps and postproduction collages. I analysed these collections for
moments in stories, or snippets of dialogue relating to research questions and themes
around place connectivity and ritualised practices, maintaining a contextualised
understanding of each story.

Throughout this analytical process I engaged in a reconstruction of the narratives in
dialogue with participants through a process of digesting, discovering, and restructuring our
combined voices. Emergent from this newly established shared ground were new narratives and ideas, which then became the subject of follow-on dialogues with participants. Out of this reiterative process arose a refined understanding of the shared ground and new trajectories. This reconstruction extended to the graphic postproduction of written and visual data, examining key ideas from each participant’s collection of stories I was able to look critically at the data and compose collages that were representative of idea formation, dialogue and the participant’s sense of the experience.

3.4 Beginning the Story as a Situated Researcher

This study has been inextricably bound to my experience, interest, and familiarity with the subjects. My experience of fly fishing saw me well positioned as a situated researcher, whereby my situated knowledge required a constant process of looking inward and outwards, from self-reflexivity to reflections in relation to others (Rose 1997). Situated knowledge emerged as a critique to positivist generalization and objectification, highlighting the contextual, experiential, and relational nature of knowledge production (Haraway 1991). An approach that acknowledges and embraces ‘subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher’s influence on research’ is autoethnography (Ellis et al. 2022, p.274).

3.4.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research method that combines autobiography (auto) and ethnography (ethno) as a means of investigating the researcher’s own experience through analysis (graphy) of personal narrative (Ellis 2004, Ellis et al. 2011, Holman Jones 2005 Mentz et al. 2020). It is a methodological tool for situated researchers to understand the connectivity between the self and context (Muncey 2010) and the relations between researcher and researched (Ellis & Bochner 2005). Autoethnographies are an articulation of
one’s own experience, values and assumptions around a subject and the presence and position of oneself within it (Ellis et al. 2010, Short et al 2013), useful to be aware of before speaking to others and developing more transferable scholarly ideas (Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang 2010). It has been argued, autoethnography epitomizes a reflexive turn in fieldwork for human studies,

‘by (re)positioning the researcher as an object of inquiry who depicts a site of interest in terms of personal awareness and experience … [it] orchestrates fragments of awareness—apprehended/projected and recalled/reconstructed—into narratives and alternative text forms which (re)present events and other social actors as they are evoked from a changeable and contestable self’ (Crawford 1996, p.167).

Autoethnography refers to both a research process and the product of the approach (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010); expressing thoughts, emotions, experiences, and social processes associated with an identity or issue that are contextualised in broader, societal-level phenomena (Rambo & Carolyn 2020). These expressions can take the form of a standard written format and/or more artful forms of representation (for example, plays, art, music, and poetry) (ibid). For example, I initially kept field notes, as shown in figure 3.3. These captured immediate thoughts and reflections when spent fly fishing, paired with photographs and sketches highlighting key parts of the day or experience.

Figure 3.3. Researcher’s field notes from a day on the river.
When writing about my experience of fly fishing, I was initially focused on understanding my connectedness to Dartmoor, and the sense of rediscovering it for myself through fly fishing. Dartmoor is one of the landscapes I grew up in, but it became more meaningful to me through fly fishing. The first of the two autoethnography extracts below expanded upon field notes into something that sought to describe my experience and feelings about fly fishing and what it offers me. The reflective process allowed me to reach out to various disciplines’ theoretical avenues in order to form a new line of narrative along which to explore ideas relating to research aims. One such example is featured in excerpt 1, whereby I make reference to the personal, theoretical and analytical writing of Sara Maitland to further explicate a phenomenon I experience. The second excerpt recounts a particular story of mine,

1) As a fly angler I feel connected to places, namely riparian landscapes. I appreciate seemingly small, moments however fleeting. Perhaps even more so if they are. I feel and embody places through ritualized practices in such a way that the place is mnemonically etched into my body forever, in its fullest sense. Fly fishing requires more of myself — a fullness of my body and being, that I only employ a small slice of in most of my daily life. The focus required during these moments connects me to something bigger than just myself. Writer Sara Maitland describes a similar sensation she experienced when she was walking the hills of north-west Scotland, ‘…And there, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, I slipped a gear, or something like that. There was not me and the landscape, but a kind of oneness: a connection as though my skin had been blown off. More than that — as though the molecules and atoms I am made of had reunited themselves with the molecules and atoms that the rest of the world is made of. I felt absolutely connected to everything. It was very brief, but it was a total moment…’ (Maitland 2010, p.63)

In my own way, as a fly angler, from time to time I experience a fuller sense of being through fly fishing.

2) In one instance, I vividly remember the feel of my unusually coarse, damp sleeve cuffs, heavy from persistently wiping the drizzle off my glasses, rubbing against the back of my hand as I was aiming my fly casts to rising rainbow trout in the middle of the river. The river was loud. High, dark green-brown, and flowing from left to right. My shoulder ached from trying to make my casts reach far beyond the recommended capacity of my rod. The reflections of watery light obscured my vision further, the sound of an intimidatingly fast river flowing over car-sized boulders, mythical glimpses of wildlife, clambering through overgrowth, conversations. I remember it so well because this was the moment and place, I caught my first ever trout.

15 Relph states, in Place and Placelessness, (1976) that Artists and art critics, landscape architects, psychologists, sociologists, architects, urban designers, philosophers, historians, literary critics, anthropologists, planners, health practitioners, and diverse species of geographers have all subsequently staked a claim to place and written extensively about it.
The extracts above, are a different style of writing to what has come before this, that being the abstract, introduction, theoretical context, and research design of this study.

Nevertheless, the writing functions in a similar way, engaging the reader in an idea by telling a story, in this instance through sharing my experience of an immersive encounter. The stories reveal essential elements of a narrative: a construction of the self, a narrative arc encompassing goals and intentions, ways of acting and making connection, depicting the passage of time, and gradually uncovering the individual significance of the experience (McAlpine 2016, Coulter & Smith 2009). Extracts of my autoethnography have been threaded through the analytical chapters of this study to serve as a narratological tool for immersing the reader in a different way approaching and understanding the theoretical and analytical ideas that emerge. In addition to the written autoethnography I used filmmaking as method for exploring the embodied capacity for communicating experiences.

3.4.2 Filmmaking

Film was used to further narratives, firstly as an autoethnographic tool to develop self-reflective ideas and secondly as a form of participant observation during narrative interviews in the field. Ingold’s writing on the act of drawing (2011) and, more specifically, the process of reflective creation and becoming knowledgeable through ‘way-fairing’ (2007), providing a conceptual framework for expressing the aspects of filmmaking and the assemblage of visual elements in postproduction that I have come to appreciate. Visual anthropologists Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz (2015) extend Ingold’s conceptualization of thinking through making to visual ethnography and specifically anthropological film – a method of examining cultural practices that involves the generation of a more temporal, mobile knowing pursued

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16 I have become familiar with using film to capture the multimodal dimensions of experience, test the multiplicity of media that film can achieve and the multiple scales and methods of the design process. Armature of Informal Trade (2018) Alitsia Lambrianidou and Zoë Latham. Dir. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMwBxiEFpdg
through engagement and relationship’ (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2015, p.266). Within this approach filmmaking is ‘a means of knowing with rather than knowing about’ (ibid, p.271). Filmmaking and image creation in this study have become an important step in participating, engaging, shaping, understanding, and knowing phenomena for myself, and alongside other participants. Film in this sense is useful for exploring relationships with environments. Professor Fred Truniger, researcher of visual narratives, argues filmic representation transforms ‘the way in which we see and create images of our environments by extending the repertoire of both seeing and image production’ (Truniger 2013, p.15). Architects Igea Troiani and Hugh Campbell suggest film has the potential to encapsulate more than an image or a drawing, rather it presents a new sensory reading of space which can inspire others to see and experience new values to their surroundings (Troiani & Campbell 2019). During the course of the study, my engagement with these praxes have become increasingly abstracted and phenomenological, trying to capture, convey and share more obscure, affective dimensions and corporeal conceptualizations of phenomena. The shift from filming design processes and acts of model making to autoethnographic reflections on fly fishing and fly tying was captured in my autoethnographic film, from which I have exported stills to illustrate various pieces of autoethnographic writing throughout the study:

Figure 3.4 Autoethnographic film still signalling continued ways of making and connecting to landscapes. Link to autoethnographic film (2019) Zoë Latham. Dir.: https://youtu.be/B9T8xp83WIA
Pairing film with autoethnography has proved significant in that ‘the retrospective significance of a film often differs from the prospective significance intended by its maker’ (Hockings 2009, p.38). When employing film to further autoethnographic studies, the planning and making of the film itself required a different consideration and articulation of more detailed ideas, sounds, thoughts and embodied acts. The value of this autoethnographic application of film laid in my intentions as it’s maker - in what and how I sought to capture through film. Arguably, how I chose to construct a representation of experience was as telling as what was written in the autoethnography itself. My intention was to simply explore the experiences in the writing I had already done, but the process of making the film made me experience my connection in a different way. For example, when I got to the river, the act of putting the camera below the surface reaffirmed and exaggerated the sensation I feel the first time I come into contact with the water and how this felt in relation to the whole process of fly fishing. This was something I hadn’t thought of as important in the writing alone, but through the process of filmmaking it seemed to immerse me in the moment, and it felt central to the phenomenological nature of experience. To develop the elicitation of experience, I undertook further learning in micro-phenomenological interview training.
3.4.3 Micro-Phenomenology Training

I first learnt about the new scientific discipline of micro-phenomenology through a talk I attended during PhD researcher training. The discipline arose due to a small but increasing number of cognitive science researchers believing that in order to study cognition one must enter the subjective dimension as it is lived from the inside as opposed to observation from the outside\(^7\). Accessing these dimensions of experience has proven difficult to date, but micro-phenomenologists believe gaining access to our lived experience is not out of reach. They think it is about how we access it, which they suggest ‘requires a particular expertise, which must be acquired’ (Petitmengin et al. 2019, p.4).

Micro-phenomenology captured my interest when I was initially reflecting on the kinds of stories I was beginning to collate, although they were working well as a mnemonic device, there was little insight into the how of experiential and cognitive phenomena were manifesting. In a bid to better understand the how of experience I sought out and attended a micro-phenomenology interview training course. The micro-phenomenological interview methods seek to discover new realms of subjective experience. The process is initiated through the evocation of a specific memory that is situated in a singular moment of time and space (one significant story). The memory is explored through two viewpoints: diachrony – the chronologic unfolding of experience in and synchrony – deeper levels of description of sensorial qualities and feelings. From the diachronic timeline of a story’s details, key moments, or micro-gestures can be more closely interrogated in a synchronic way to revel the layers of awareness in terms of perception, attention, senses and emotions.

Training demonstrated that accessing one’s own subjective experience is a complex task due to the subconscious threshold subjective experience bestrides. Claire Petitmengin

\(^7\) For more extensive writing on subjective experience and introspection, see special issues of the Journal of Consciousness Studies (Jack & Roepstorff, 2003, 2004; Varela & Shear, 1999).
micro-phenomenologist and researcher, proposed most people are unable to become aware of their subjective experience let alone describe it, she suggests:

‘Our most immediate and most intimate experience, that which we live here and now, is also that most foreign to us and the most difficult to access. Turning our attention to our consciousness, and a fortiori describing it, calls for an inner effort, a special kind of training, a specific kind of expertise’ (Petitmengin 2006, p.230)

What Petitmengin posits, is that although we know how to carry out actions, we only have a partial consciousness of how we go about doing them. One of her examples is, asking you (the reader) to precisely describe the rapid set of mental operations used to memorise the content of an article. Generally, we do not know how we memorise, observe imagine, relate things to one another, because we are focused on the objective of the task at hand (ibid, p.233).

Micro-phenomenological interview training gave me insights into how to elicit memories, guiding the interviewee back to a time and place in order to delve deeper into memories and experiences. By the time I completed the training I was unable to return to participants for further interviewing due to COVID-19 and other time constraints, but I did successfully apply the knowledge gained from training to the analysis of data, recognising key moments of interest in narrator’s gestures or language. I also conducted a written micro-phenomenological self-interview to examine a specific moment within a key story of catching my first trout. This was informed by the prompts given during the training course, which proposed questions relating to a bodily feeling. For example:

*When you feel this, what do you feel?*
*Where is this sensation? Is it located somewhere?*
*Does it have a size?*
*How intense is it?*
*What is it like?*
*What kind of feeling is this feeling?*
(Prompts by Claire Petitmengin’s micro-phenomenology interview training)
I developed answers to these questions and wrote about a particular experience. As with the initial autoethnographic writing, I then used film to visually test, communicate and unravel these feelings and phenomenological dimensions of the experience.

![Image](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyu9GvxqMg0)

**Figure 3.6. Micro-phenomenological film study river praxis, memory + making (2021) Zoë Latham. Dir.**

3.4.4 Building Relations and Engaging Participants

Having begun in true auto-ethnographic fashion, with what I knew; fly fishing on my home waters of Dartmoor National Park I then sought out others who also fly fished there. Early in this study I attended a Wild Trout Trust event that was supported by the Westcountry Rivers Trust (a local environmental charity). This event took place within Dartmoor, the place I planned to conduct fieldwork and I knew many anglers would be in attendance who already had an interest in trout and fly fishing. In order to instigate discussions and engage fly anglers with the proposed study, I constructed a scaled topographic model of Dartmoor (figure 3.7 below) and invited people to pin their favourite fishing place. Attendees of the event were drawn to the model, enjoying a chance to see and understand Dartmoor at scale. The model offered a chance for people to orientate themselves, to get to grips with the relationality of the place, to see how the rivers and reservoirs connected and responded.
to the terrain. The model prompted discussions and often led to the sharing of stories and experiences of places. If fly anglers seemed particularly interested to be a participant, they added their contact information to their pin.

One of the major issues with narrative approaches is they can be time consuming (Bennett 2002; Cook 2005, Jorgensen 2015), especially in building relationships with participants (Lyons & LaBoskey 2002) and in the collection of extensive narrative data from each participant (Bell 2002). Following the initial Dartmoor event, I built a rapport with fellow fly anglers through informal discussions and engaging through social media. Through these relationships, I sought out a wider and more diverse population of fly anglers to take part. I had originally planned to engage ten to twelve participants, but as the fieldwork unfolded, seven seemed more than enough both in terms of time management and the amount and variety of data collected. All anglers were English, including six males and one female, and were aged between forty and seventy. Although the distribution of males and females is unbalanced and there is a lack of diversity and younger participants, it is representative of the freshwater anglers engaging with this place, and the UK more broadly.\footnote{In the UK, 95\% of angling licence holders are male and 94\% of those that went fishing between 2003 and 2005 were white (Simpson and Mawle 2005).}

Having established a level of interest and trust, I sent out a more specific request about engaging more seriously in the research project. I arranged a day fly fishing together with each participant on a Dartmoor river of their choosing to undertake a more detailed narrative inquiry.
Figure 3.7 Dartmoor topographical model depicting local rivers.
3.5 Living the Story: Wading Upstream Together

Establishing a dialogue between myself as a situated researcher and participants, we undertook a process of co-constructing an understanding of the experiences we have and the meanings we associate with them; ‘making sense of the complexities of the real world’ through our intersecting experiences and connection to our environment (Patton 2002, p.69). Positioning myself alongside participants required a constant level of reflexivity; looking both ‘inwards’ at how I identify myself, and ‘outward’ at my relation to my research and what is described as ‘the wider world’ (Rose 1997, p.309). Undertaking these ‘reflexive procedures’ allowed me to be aware of and lend my own subjective experience to participants facilitating broader conversations when asking participants to invoke deeper phenomenological understandings (Goldstein 2017, p.163). Narrative inquiry and autoethnography scholar Arthur Bochner writes, ‘[t]he call of these stories is for engagement within and between, not analysis from without’ (Bochner 2012, p.161). The process allows participants to ‘read with’ and ‘read themselves into’ stories, or to juxtapose them with the stories of their own lives, no matter how different or displeasing (Berry & Patti 2015).

This process gave salience to the idea of researching as an intersubjective meaning-making process (Gaete Celis 2019). By situating myself beside participants, we were able to see more together; our collective situated knowledge offering ‘mutually immanent social relations among researcher and researched, who collaborate and settle for a mutually agreed upon knowledge’ (Caretta 2015, p.490). Together, we were able to co-produce a richer and more plausible representation of experience and see where various people’s experience intersected with each other and in relation to their wider contexts. My stories told alongside their stories built a sense of trust and mutual understanding in the co-construction of knowledge around our shared experience. The following text outlines how

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19 Existing between conscious minds; shared by more than one conscious mind.
I drew upon a wider range of methods in order to build a spatial understanding of experience and capture more nuanced interactions with the river.

3.5.1 Narrative Inquiry

In the next stage of this study, a narrative inquiry was undertaken to expand and triangulate my emerging understanding of phenomena with the stories of others who engage with or experience the same or similar phenomena, inviting other fly anglers to tell their stories and thereby building a broader perspective alongside my own. The primary objective of narrative inquiry was to facilitate the elicitation of stories, a powerful example of collecting data about individual lived experience (Connelly Clandinin 1990). This method has recently been employed by a group of cross-disciplinary researchers Hilde Ervik, Tone Pernille Osterna and Alex Stromme20 to study fishermen’s experience-based knowledge. Researchers believed the use of storytelling helped articulate the ‘embodied culture’, ‘lived community of practice’ and ‘social dimension’ as a form of fisherman’s knowledge (2022, p.43). These stories can reveal subtle social information about the norms, rules and expectations (Smith et al. 2017). Situated knowledge and individual ways of knowing are however ‘inherently partial’; each of us offering a limited perspective (Haraway 1988, p.585), therefore an exchange of stories can help reveal more about intersubjective experiences.

Anglers are particularly good storytellers. From my experience, anglers love to exchange fishing tales. Every time I go into a fishing tackle shop or meet other anglers, we recount fishing travels, secret fishing spots, tips, tricks and flies, and reminisce about ‘the monster fish that got away’. This exchange is a sense-making exercise, a way of understanding ourself through the other. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur describes this as ‘it is impossible that man may know himself directly or introspectively. It is only by a series

20 Hilde Ervik and Alex Stromme (education and pedagogy), Tone Pernille Ostern (education, arts/ dance).
of detours that he learns about the fullness and complexity of his own being and of his relationship to Being’ (Idhe 1971, p.7).

Knowing this, I was confident going into the field that interviews with participants could be unstructured, but I did employ some techniques to elicit storytelling. I started by defining myself as person with similar interests – sharing my own stories and building trust. Positioned in the water beside each participant, I prompted them to share stories by asking open-ended questions regarding their experiences and memories of fly fishing. Throughout the day I would ask questions, such as ‘how did you get into fly fishing?’, ‘what is your preferred way of fly fishing?’. I encouraged participants to elaborate on stories and negotiated meaning with spontaneous questions in response to individual and shared experiences on the river. I would supply linking statements to clarify meanings and make supportive comments to continue conversations and the elicitation of detailed stories. Some discussions were about the present, shared experience of fishing together, fishing side by side or simply walking the river. Their discussions ranged from being rooted in past experiences, and other activities related to fly fishing such as fly tying or tangential things such as work, home and family.

Alongside the elicitation of stories, we were actively fly fishing, something that helped prompt further discussion into the nuances of what we both engage with, each of us observing one another’s techniques and approaches to the river. I captured these impromptu actions and responses through film.

3.5.2 Participant Observation Through Film

Film took on a more subtle role during participant narrative interviews in the form of participant observation (figure 3.8). Participant observation helps researchers gain an
understanding of phenomena from the point of view of the participant (Musante & DeWalt 2010), it requires the researcher to have an increased awareness and attention, to tune into a thing we don’t usually consider (Spradley 2016, p.56). Because my main focus was to enable participant storytelling, film acted as my second set of eyes and ears. As such, the value of film for participant observation laid in its ‘ability to record nuances of process, emotion, and other subtleties of behaviour and communication that still images can only suggest’ (Collier 1986, p.144). I attached a GoPro to my chest waders and set it film throughout the day, capturing not only our sharing of stories but the unplanned and unarticulated, highly embodied actions that contribute to fly fishing. Due to the nature of fly fishing, both the participant and I were facing upstream, I stood over their shoulder to be close enough to capture sound but giving them enough space to cast their fishing rod back and forth, through the air around us. After a few minutes together, participants didn’t pay attention to the camera and felt comfortable sharing their stories. The film footage itself became the main source for storied transcriptions, with the visual component serving as a reminder when discussing more immediate encounters of our experience together. For instance, a participant would refer to a particular way of acting in response to a river condition or feature which I could later refer to and describe in more detail through the film.

One challenge I faced during this phase of the data collection was a reliance on conditions, e.g., one of my interviews ended up in a café overlooking a river that had burst its banks and was unsafe to fish. For another interview, the fly angler was carrying a recent injury, so we didn’t fish together, we just walked and talked.
3.5.3 Cognitive Mapping

Human behaviour and more specifically our relations to place are always situated and cannot be fully understood apart from its context. One method in which our experience of situatedness can attempt to be understood and represented is through cognitive mapping.
(or mental mapping). Environmental psychologist Jack Jen Gieseking suggests cognitive mapping is a way for people produce and experience space, forms of spatial intelligence, and dynamics of human–environment relations (2013). A cognitive map ‘is an abstraction which refers to a cross-section, at one time, of the environment as people believe it to be’ (Downs & Stea 1973, p.xiv). Gieseking argues that like narrative, cognitive mapping offers another lens into the way people produce and experience space – they can help us see ‘how the physical, remembered and imagined space intersect in the production of place’ and a sense of place – how it is conceived and lived (Gieseking 2013, p.720). As such, cognitive mapping created in association with narrative inquiry is a method commonly used for understanding the role and meaning of space and place in everyday lives affording an additional way of seeing a participants world21 (Downs & Stea 1973, Gieseking 2013, Hayden 1997, Saarinen 1984). Cognitive maps serve as coat hangers for assorted memories, places as the anchors for narratives, rooted in perceptions and memories, ‘the particular features of the map depend on each person’s experience’ (Robinson & Pallasmaa 2015, p.143). Maps provide a vehicle for recalling and decoding information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in everyday spatial environments; this sense of place is ‘essential to any ordering of our lives’ (Downs & Stea 1977, p.27). Tuan suggests cognitive maps can also make known goals; characteristically human migration patterns and imaginary worlds (Tuan, 1975).

In this study, cognitive mapping was employed as an additional way of seeing and hearing participants experiences that may have otherwise gone unheard if based solely on verbal exchange. Towards the end of our narrative interview, I asked participants to think about their chosen photograph in relation to the place and requested them to generate a map of that specific memory in relation to the place. I provided a range of materials for the map

21 This approach draws upon Lynch’s work, aimed at capturing a sense of the city. He describes mental maps as a representation of the relationship between the physical environment and cognition (Lynch 1960).
creation such as: a range of paper sizes, (A4, A3 and rolls of trace), the style of paper has been considered to exert an influence on the form and style of maps generated by individuals (Kitchin & Freundschuh 2000). I also chose to provide pencils (mechanical and regular), marker pens, coloured pencils, and highlighters to offer layering, labelling, and use of colour. As they were generating their map, I asked them to describe what they were thinking about, although several participants spontaneously described their thought process. During this cognitive mapping process, I encouraged participants to discuss the construction of their map, and the story behind it. Participant’s recollections seemed to bring the places back to mind through the reliving of their journey as they described their mapping. Each cognitive mapping process revealed something more about the individual and their understanding of spatial relations.

The time participants took to generate their cognitive map varied. In some cases, participants labelled a few place names in a sequence, completing the exercise in under five minutes, others asked if they could undertake the exercise home and share their maps with me in the future. Participants who undertook their mapping later and from home, used materials they were familiar with and took a great deal of time over what they produced.

It is important to note, these cognitive maps were not always a conventional spatial map – some were flow chart type diagrams, others comic style illustrations, stream of consciousness writing, and one participant even built a website in response to the cognitive mapping prompt (see figure 3.9). Although cognitive representation often takes the form and function of familiar cartographic maps, it is not necessary. This is likely in part due to the fact cognitive mapping ‘can be challenging as it relies on the graphic ability of the drawer’ (Castree, Kitchin & Rogers 2013, p.464). Different people spatialized and conceptualised their places and relationships to the environment differently and were comfortable using different approaches. The cognitive mapping processes largely acted as a
mnemonic device; a cue to summon scenes from the past allowing participants to restructure knowledge and experience in a way that furthered the sharing of stories.

Figure 3.9 Scans and screen captures showing the various ways participants interpreted and produced cognitive maps.
3.6 Reconstructing the Story

Having completed the fieldwork and gathered bountiful narrative data in various forms I undertaken a thematic analysis of the many stories in relation to research aims and theoretical approach. After compiling an expansive narrative, or big story, for each participant comprised of transcribed interviews, film stills, images, maps and postproduction collages I analysed them for content relating to research questions and themes around place connectivity and ritualised practices. During this analytical process, I actively participated in the (re)construction of narratives by engaging in dialogues with the participants. Through a process of assimilating, uncovering, and reorganizing our collective voices, I shared the emerging narratives and ideas with the participants, who in turn provided their feedback. This ongoing dialogue served to refine areas and topics of research interest. By compiling our interconnected stories, valuable insights were gained into the phenomenon of experience, threads of stories intertwined, particular and focused yet revealing something of the larger context, and of the self within that place.

3.6.1 Data Analysis

After each day spent on the river with a participant, I transcribed the narrative interview, then downloaded film footage and scanned in the cognitive maps and photos given to me. While the day was fresh in my mind, I would make notes of what seemed significant to that individual and began relating observations and stories to theoretical lines of inquiry (figure 3.10). This early analysis was key, because there would often be periods of time away from the analysis and it was important to process fieldwork reflections in good time. The transcriptions gathered from the field were then more thoroughly thematically coded (figure 3.11) and the analysis identified key themes that emerged in the data relating to research questions and key themes of place and ritual. Full transcriptions have been omitted from the thesis due to the amount of information they hold that might jeopardise
participant anonymity. Instead, key quotes have been selected and shared throughout analysis. These transcriptions can be made available upon request with approval from participants.

Figure 3.10 Field notes and initial reflections of day on river with a participant.

Figure 3.11 Thematic processing of reflections and transcriptions.
This analysis brought to light other themes that arose from the narratives which shed light on the research questions and aims, offering insight into meaning making processes. By analysing the various forms of narrative data (autoethnography, cognitive mapping process, participant observation film footage alongside the verbal narratives) this study sought to understand what the rituals and processes of ritualization in fly fishing are (Chapter 4). It was anticipated that results of the analysis would provide enlightenment on how fly anglers connect to place through the rituals and processes of ritualization of fly fishing (Chapter 5) and how they find meaning within that experience (Chapter 6). Within these chapters, narratives were analysed and intersections between individual experiences highlighted. These holistic forms of narrative also reveal points of divergence around experience and meaning, where fly anglers have differing individual views, ways of doing things and sensibilities (Chapter 7).

In a bid to co-construct a broader understanding experience and the meanings associated with them, participants were invited to read and comment on various findings that emerged adding a ‘validation check’ to the analysis process (Creswell & Miller 2000). Sample comments are included in figure 3.12, demonstrating an appropriation of ritual as a way participants have subsequently thought about other aspects of their life.

“...and I’m going to need to read it a few times more... it might actually be the only thing I read/need to read for quite a long time. I can’t actually take it all in. It’s what I’ve always wanted to read about fly fishing, that hasn’t been written yet... everyone else is playing catch up!”

“This... is like old men and their allotments... it's looking ahead, planning and dreaming.”

“Every would be fisherman or woman should read this... it's the art of angling”

“Rituals... “I'm going into hospital and all I want to do is fish to feel grounded and ground me to prepare and calm me and to make memories to sustain me while healing”.”

Figure 3.12 Participants’ comments and reflections on findings chapters.
3.6.2 Graphic Postproduction

Each of these methods added to a holistic understanding of each individual’s experience. In order to interrogate emerging narrative themes, I found it useful to collate and scrutinise the data graphically. It was often through these processes of postproduction collaging and layering of film stills, participant photographs and stories, themes began to make more sense with clearer connections between the various forms of data collection. This method of graphic testing required the careful selection of key images and words from stories to be brought into a blank page. I created sequences, timelines of images and words, layering re-emerging places, objects, people or landscapes. The diagram in figure 3.13 illustrates how the various narrative based qualitative methods related to one another and how they added up to form a greater, more contextualised narrative. Figure 3.14 shows a participant’s typical narrative comprised of a film still taken from being situated alongside the participant on the river, at the top, transcriptions of a whole day’s stories, his favourite fly fishing photograph of him with a gold ringed dragonfly and his cognitive mapping revealing his knowledge and love of the ecologies along the river. Figure 3.15 shows my own narrative developed through the micro-phenomenological self-interview. Images that were a result of this graphic postproduction are distributed throughout the thesis, illustrating the various ideas and themes analysed.
Figure 3.13. Narratologies diagram illustrating how various narrative based qualitative methods come together.

Figure 3.14. Example of combined participant narrative. A complete collection of participant narratives can be found in Appendix A.
Figure 3.15 Researcher’s own narratology and micro-phenomenological self-examination emerging from the significant story of catching first trout. The top image shows a collage of cognitive map, autoethnographic film stills and key photographs. Below sequence of images are stills from the micro-phenomenological self-interview film.
3.7 Ethics and Informed Consent

The research design has followed University of Plymouth Research Ethics Policy (2018) to ensure mitigation of harm or risk related to the pursuit of this study. Ethical Approval was granted in May 2019 before commencing fieldwork. Fundamental to the ethical approval of the study was participant informed consent. This process ensured participants knew they were engaging in a research project, that their anonymised contributions would be used in the study, and that they were aware they had the right to withdraw. At the beginning of any interview with participants, I took a printed copy of a Participant Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) and read it with them; if they understood and were happy to proceed, they would sign the form.

3.8 Methods of Disseminating of Work

In parallel to undertaking this research I have tested, discussed and shared methodologies with those in relevant fields and at events aligning with core themes. Early in the PhD journey I was invited to co-convene Flows of Entanglements: how rivers shape identities panel at the Association of the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) 2019 Biennial Conference entitled Co-emergence, Co-creation, Coexistence. Our panel engaged forty-five international participants over two days. During the event I acted as both chair for the everyday embodiment panel and was a participant in a methodology round table discussion. The event helped understand where my research sits in relation to other water-oriented lines of inquiry, and I have continued to work with fellow co-conveners in organising events relating to our research around the water. Most recently we held a workshop called Right to the Water (2022) whereby fifteen people got together to look at possible future research relating to the access of Plymouth Sound, the body of water providing a natural harbour in Plymouth. We had attendees from Plymouth City Council, Tamar Estuaries, Rivers Trust, and the National Marine Park.
In parallel, I have been disseminating experimental and experiential film praxis, in particular, testing immersive and embodied qualities of creating cinematic space and shared experiences. Most of this research has been a cross-disciplinary venture with fellow PhD student and lecturer in film Linda Ward. We met whilst both sharing research films at *Test Space: Expositions of practice led research* (2019), a research event hosted by University of Plymouth Fine Art department. During COVID-19 lockdown, we continued to collaborate online; we developed ideas of a digital river and asked *How might we simulate a riverside experience through virtual collaboration?* We presented this at the AVANCA International Film Conference (2021) and published the paper later that year. Our most recent film *The River Plym: Experiencing Source to Sea*, was created for the Festival of Discovery (2021) which was hosted in the Plymouth Market Hall 360° dome. I used this opportunity to experiment with new technologies and to build my skillset, bringing our immersive film and watery experience to more people. The film produced through the micro-phenomenological self-interview *River, Praxis + Memory* was screened at the *Bodies of Water* film screening, University of Plymouth (2021).
Figure 3.16 Images from various events through which filmic work was disseminated. Films features have been created collaboratively with filmmaker Linda Ward.
3.9 Summary

This chapter has connected the main narratological approaches of this study justifying a range of narrative based qualitative methods for the collection of data that examines the relational experience of connectivity to place through ritual. Storytelling was a method used to understand lived experience. Autoethnography revealed connectivity between the self (as researcher) and context, situating me alongside participants within and the place of study. Cognitive mapping revealed participant’s sense of place and spatial understanding – how it is conceived and lived. Film was used two-fold; to further examine autoethnographic studies by transforming the way in which thoughts were communicated and developed and as a form of participant observation capturing phenomena from the point of view of the participant. This enabled me to advance three things: 1) I detailed strategies employed for carefully collecting and analysing data; 2) I introduced micro-phenomenology as a method for accessing deeper levels of self-reflection; 3) and I also demonstrated how research and methodological insights have been disseminated. The employment of these narratological methods leads to the third and final research question of this study:

RQ3: What role do narratologies of ritual and process of ritualization play in revealing connectivity to and meanings of place?

The following chapters (4 - 7) examine the collective narratives, weaving together mine and others’ perspectives furthered through a continued examination of relating theoretical discourse. Chapter 4 is a conceptualisation of fly fishing through the theory of ritual. Chapter 5 looks at how ritual has the capacity to connect us to place. Chapter 6 uncovers the meanings of ritual and place for fly anglers’ and Chapter 7 considers the role narratological methods have played in understanding ritual, place and associated meanings.
4. Conceptualising Fly Fishing Through a Theory of Ritual

4.1 Introduction

This chapter defines what fly anglers do through the theoretical lens of ritual. To understand the rituals of a group, or subculture, is to understand the way they think about the world, how they act within that constructed world and what this means to them. Rituals ‘embody the worldview, beliefs and passions of a group’ (Davis-Floyd 1992, p.10); they also demonstrate something of the structure behind how these things manifest. By examining fly anglers’ stories, I demonstrate how fly anglers ritualize aspects of fly fishing, privileging particular ways of thinking and acting over other practices and how fly fishing aligns with six ritual attributes (formalism, tradition, disciplined invariance, rule governance, symbolism and performance). This will set out what we as fly anglers do and how we view our subculture early in the findings, offering a footing for following chapters that examine the effects of ritual.

In these analytical chapters, participants are referred to as narrators to remind us of the storied nature of the study. The analysis is written from the perspective of being within and among narrators as we are all fly anglers sharing and constructing this knowledge together.

4.1 Ritualization of Fly Fishing

Ritualization is a nuanced reading of ritual that is defined by difference, privileging ways of doing and contrast. Ritualization is as a form of practice that distinguishes itself from other practices, and what it accomplishes in doing so (Bell 1992). Bell argues ‘this view suggests that the significance of ritual behaviours lies not in being an entirely separate way of acting, but in how such activities constitute themselves as different and in contrast to other
activities’ (Bell 1992, p.90). This is pertinent to understanding the cultural structuring of the rituals of fly fishing, illuminating how fly anglers learn to frame and experience the world around them in a particular way.

One of the first modes of ritualization is how narrators distinguish fly fishing from other forms of fishing through their stories and experiences, making statements as to what sets it apart from other forms of fishing. Then, within fly fishing, fly anglers classify a hierarchy of informal stages or accomplishments in fly fishing that differentiate a novice from an experienced angler. There also emerges differentiations between the kinds of places and times we chose to fly fish, seeking out immersive landscapes outside of the everyday.

4.1.1 Distinctions From other Forms of Fishing

In the UK, there are three main categories of targeted fishing: non-migratory (fishing non-migratory trout and all freshwater fish), migratory (salmon and sea trout) and sea fishing. A variation of these categories is coarse, game and sea fishing. This distinction separates trout, grayling, salmon and seatrout out of non-migratory and into game fishing, and therefore coarse fishing refers to the pursuit of all remaining freshwater fish. These disparate types of fishing are steeped in historic and socio-economic implications (Broek 1985).

Coarse fishing is the most widespread type of angling in England (Angling Trust 2016), it was once associated with the working classes ‘fishing for tea’ but today the fish species targeted through coarse fishing are usually returned to the water instead of taken for food. The most common species of fish targeted in coarse fishing are carp, barbel, pike, perch, roach, bream, chub, and catfish and these can be found in rivers, canals, lakes or ponds. Two of the main fishing techniques used in coarse fishing are lure and float fishing.
Lure fishing sees the angler pull soft rubber lures and hooks through the water to imitate a small fish, worm or other creature that some species of fish eat or attack. Float fishing involves a float of some sort being attached to the line that sits on the water surface above a baited hook, the float moved when a fish has picked up the bait.

Game fishing is practiced on a river, stream, loch or reservoir and targets wild fish as well as stocked fish, with historic ties to notions of ‘relaxation’, ‘art’ and ‘sport’ forms of leisure time of the middle and upper classes (Broek 1985). Game anglers target trout, sea trout, salmon and grayling. Fly-fishing is the most common form of game angling, but spinning techniques are also used to target these species. Fly-fishing involves a weighted line for casting, and an artificial fly (usually tied using feathers and animal hair). The fly is cast to fly imitate insects either on the surface or just under the water. Spin fishing involves a flashing metal or plastic spinning lure that can either float or sink as it is pulled through the water it imitates small fish or creatures fish would eat. Sea fishing can be done from the shoreline or a boat, and can target bass, cod, plaice, pollack, mackerel. All of the aforementioned methods can be applied to sea fishing, lure, float, fly and spin fishing. See figure 4.1. for a diagram of different form of fishing at the variations in lures and equipment. Saltwater fly fishing in the UK has seen a recent rise of interest influenced by practices in the USA and Japan. Each of these forms of fishing require a variation on the rod, reel line and lure set-up. These can be seen in figure 4.1.

Within the angling community there are subcultures, that have emerged around specific techniques and specialisms, targeted species, types of places or other distinctive features of fishing. Iain McGilchrist, scholar and psychiatrist suggests, ‘[j]ust as a person may tend toward one view or the other, so may a culture. A culture is, after all, an aggregate of the points of view of those who form opinion and impress upon us their take on the world.’ (McGilchrist 2017, p.107). These distinctions emerge from within a broader culture of fishing, the subcultures reveal the varying way cultures are experienced, understood and
interpreted by those within the subcultures (Hall 1993, p.11). Sociologist and cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, in writing about ritual and subculture (1993) suggests subcultures are focused around certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate the subculture from wider culture.

![Diagram of fishing types and equipment](image)

**Figure 4.1** Common types of fishing and equipment

This research focuses on the subculture I am inclined to call fly culture – with an emphasis on fly fishing for trout and drawn towards the idea of ‘wild fish in wild places’, chasing trout further and further upstream to discover more remote, possibly unknown, unfished waters. As delineated, fly fishing is just one of many methods for catching fish with a hook.
and line. It is a method that has been long been employed by cultures all over the world for centuries. Since the origins of fly fishing, ritual-like processes such as tying flies and casting lines have been enacted by fly anglers (Schuster 2021). In 2021, evidence was found of prehistoric fly fishing on the banks of the Jordan River Dureijat (Gonen 2021). The fly fishers at Dureijat were part of the Natufian culture, the people in prehistoric Israel were pioneers in fish hooking techniques, making line and dressing\textsuperscript{22} flies (Schuster 2021). This subculture of fly fishing exhibits a distinctive enough shape and structure to make it identifiably different from the ‘parent’ culture of fishing. But, since it is a sub-set, it must also be a significant thing which binds and articulates it with the ‘parent culture’ (Hall 1993, p.14), this binding is the pursuit of fish. The varied practitioners place different meanings on fly-fishing whether it solely be for sport, leisure, sustenance or something else. This subculture is an amalgamation of people from all social, cultural, economic backgrounds and geographical spaces, but that have some shared ideas, values and meaning taken from the experience of fly fishing. The subculture of fly fishing has distinct patterns of life and rituals that frame our ways of acting within and experiencing the landscape, some of which are timeless and remain unchanged since prehistory, and others that are newer, rooted in conservation. It has been necessary to outline other forms of fishing as narrators mention them as a grounding for comparison in the following study.

One line of commentary that emerges from narratives is general shift from engaging with coarse and sea fishing towards fly fishing, with it being seen as more challenging and connective. Narrator 3 used to primarily identify as a sea angler, which he described as targeting fish at the base of the water column and the seabed. The water column is a conceptual column of water that goes from the sea surface to seabed, the term is often used by oceanographers to describe the differing physical and chemical compositions of

\textsuperscript{22} Also known as fly tying, is the craft of making an artificial lure that represents the flies of fish eaten by other fish.
the water. He later became interested in fishing at the top of the water column and was
subsequently introduced to fly fishing through a friend. Narrator 3 felt spin fishing was
‘like throwing a ball for a dog, the first few goes is quite a nice little process, if you get a
few bites that’s nice but if you blank its boring as hell. Whereas a blank day fly fishing is
just a good walk along the river’ (Narrator 3, p.2). What he’s describing is how the different
fishing methods (spin fishing and fly fishing) require different kinds and degrees of
engagement and embodiment. Spin fishing requires the angler to drop a heavy lure to the
bottom of the sea and retrieve the lure by winding in the reel, as the metal lure rotates, it
should attract fish as it travels past them. This, for Narrator 3 is a less attentive method
than fly fishing. Comparatively, fly fishing is as much about sight fishing as it is feeling the
line. To cast requires constant movement, the fly can’t sit on the water longer than a drifts
length – the time it takes the line cast on the river surface to move past you and become
taught, at which point the fly gets submerged. Fly fishing in this sense requires a broader
engagement with the river as a whole – less of a shot in the dark. According to Narrator 3,
this distinguishes fly fishing again from other forms of fishing, he says ‘the fly fishing
process is much, much more special, you just don’t get that with spinning or ledgering23, or
any of those things, you’re just throwing it and hoping’ (Narrator 3, p.9). Similarly,
Narrator 5 described his transition through the various forms of fishing; ‘I sort of used to
do mainly coarse fishing then just fishing, well, any sort of fishing. Then did any sort of
fishing and fly fishing. Then slowly sort of drifted more and more to fly fishing’ (Narrator
5, p.1). For these narrators fly fishing offers a different kind of experience to others’
methods of fishing. Different due to a unique sense of immersion in the experience
through proximity to nature (e.g., standing in water at times as opposed to on land or in a
boat). Different in that all the bodies’ senses are engaged – sense of touch with hand on the
line, the feel of water on the legs as you wade, and the embodied performative elements
such as casting tuning the body to the landscape around. Fly fishing appears different in

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23 Another, less common method anglers use by fishing a static bait on the bottom of a lake or riverbed.
that is allows us to engage with broader experiences, with some saying it’s not about the fishing, narrators seem to fly fish for the above experiences and feelings and not really for catching a fish (which we tend to release anyway). One of these broader experiences is that of fly tying, as many narrators make their own fly fishing flies which are miniature, nature inspired works of art that require skills in observation and imitation.

4.1.2 The Fly Fishing Stages

Not only is fly fishing distinguished from other forms of fishing, within the process of fly fishing and learning to fly fish there are more nuanced differences or stages that mark unofficial rewards. Narrators are more often than not marking and remembering their *firsts*, the first trout in stillwater, the first wild trout on a nymph in the river, then the first trout on a dry-fly, then the ultimate – a wild trout on a river rising to a dry-fly you have tied yourself. Each of these stages is technically more challenging, and achieving each new objective feels like going up a level.

The first stage of an anglers’ practice is ‘I just want to catch a fish, any fish’. This is the main objective when first learning to fly fish, and I would add the feeling returns, in part, at the start of every new season. Each season not feeling as though it’s started until you catch your first fish of that season. Earlier in our fly fishing ‘career’ the catching of fish is *essential*, a ‘blanked’ day, as we call it, is deemed a bad day and yourself a failure, or there’s just no fish (there’re almost always fish). Learning to fly fish is often tied to the special person that introduced you to it, or back to it. Many anglers learn to fly fish from family members, though some through friends and colleagues. Narrator 5 recalls how he learned,

‘I taught myself but there was one chap who was helpful, well really helpful; he was a really influential fisherman in the area. An amazing fisherman and he sort of helped in the right way. He didn’t stand there saying do this do that, just sort of you
want to try that, if he suggested something generally it was good. A really nice chap’ (Narrator 5, p.3).

This stage of learning to fly fish relies heavily on the immediate community, it tends to be a more social stage in our fly fishing lives. A sense of discovery forces us to seek out reassurances of any uncertainty on what, where and how we are practicing. The catching of a fish solidifies our skills and knowledge, without which we cannot be sure of ourselves - in our understanding of the place, the water, their water-craft, fish behaviour, or fly-life patterns. At this stage there is little care about how we are doing things, other than just getting the line on the water, and less awareness of what is going on in the environment around us with an immediate focus on the fly on the water.

The second stage is about ‘catching as many fish as you can’. This can look like fishing for anything and everything at all times of year, starting on the first day of the season and then switching tactics to target different species of fish in order to fish through the winter. These are long, cold and hard days on the river, not taking a break, and fishing until exhaustion – as long as you’re trying to catch as many fish as you can. During this stage we don’t really trust our intuition or gut instinct yet, changing tactics and approaches often, finding anything that works. But this is a vital stage whereby skills are honed, more fish means more experience learning how to handle fish well and learning to read many different types of water. Catching more fish is considered a clear mark of skill and ability, the only sign that you are doing something right at this stage.

The third stage is about the size of the catch. After all that time catching lots of smaller fish it’s about tricking the bigger, smarter trout who are great at slipping the hook, and putting up a fight. At this stage we might spend more money for the experience of bigger fish. There is quite a cost to accessing stocked waters which also often require the
accompaniment of a specialist guide. If we were to go it alone, it takes a lot more patience and skill to find, trick and net a bigger fish. At this stage everything comes into play, our skills in watercraft, casting, fly-knowledge and application, fish handling, and environmental sensibilities. If we are fortunate enough to hook a big fish, we aren’t yet experienced or prepared in essential fish netting and landing techniques. Many a time a big fish will make a beeline to the nearest underwater cover, whether that be a downed tree or the places of sanctuary such as the deep waters between boulders. As the trout bunkers down, it can often slip the hook. Successfully fishing for big fish will leave even the most experienced angler highly adrenalised.

Then there’s stage four, where I believe most of the narrators and I find ourselves - it’s not about catching fish. What we speak of, often to one another, is about just being out there. Fish welfare and landscape conservation become increasingly important with many anglers becoming stewards of the river, devoting serious time and effort in bettering the environment. A case in point is Narrator 3, now, an experienced fly angler and consequent conservator at the Westcountry Rivers Trust and Wild Trout Trust. His views towards the conservation of fish species and river landscapes aligning with his actions, he believes, ‘this isn’t about a blood sport or hunting it’s about a culture that benefits the environment as much as it takes from it – if not benefits more than it takes from it’ (Narrator 3, 3). This may sound paradoxical for non-fly anglers, but it is common for ‘ritual actions [to] evoke moral meaning in embodied form’ (Kawano 2013, p.53). These moral meanings and sensibilities, formed by the individual have the ability to form collective action. Ritual practice theories recognise this capacity in ritual actors, as active participants can use ritual forms ‘strategically to their advantage’, reproducing and changing cultural norms (Kawano ibid, p.4). The impact of anglers’ actions, and ways of being in landscape, aiming to benefit
the environment more than it takes as Narrator 3 put forward, has gradually become an ethos of many clubs and organisations.

At this stage we have honed our skills in the craft, as Leeson suggests, ‘[t]he craft of angling is the catching of fish. But the art of angling is a receptiveness to these connections’ (Leeson 2006, p.3). Once we attain a certain competence in fly fishing, we are more reflective, self-aware enough to know fly fishing makes us feel different – better. We try to work out why, some suggestions being the ions in the water, a sense of zen and meditation, adrenaline, being in blue and green spaces. Likely a combination of all these things. I believe all of the narrators and myself are in stage four, sharing stories and trying to make sense of why fly fishing means so much to us. None of us have thought about what’s next, or what happens after stage four. I did once read about a fly angler who no longer goes to the river to fish. He was able to feel enough positive sentiment from just being by the river. I know I’m not there yet.

Not only can differentiation be a stark contrast, like literally being in one place doing one thing, then being in a different place doing a different thing but it can also be more nuanced. Narrator 6 describes these various strands or layers to fly fishing that we work through or towards throughout their life.

‘As you get older there’s that seven stages of fishing thing, where first you want to catch a fish, then you want to catch loads of fish then you want catch the biggest fish, and then you don’t really care. You get to the stage where I am now where you’re happy to be out and it’s so much more than fishing. It’s not about catching fish, you almost learn not to catch – it’s not important.’ (Narrator 6, p.1).

These layers or stages of approach as Narrator 6 suggests are not imposed as a formal structure, or rule of fly fishing but manifest as an informal differentiation within the culture of fly fishing, a sort of hierarchy of ways of acting or a sign of progression of an angler’s development. This idea has been spoken of by other anglers in interviews and in their own
writing. Schoenbaum makes note of the guide’s own version of this hierarchy, surprisingly similar to Narrator 6’s;

‘When I was young,’ he says, ‘it was about catching fish. Then it was about catching many fish. Then it was about catching bigger fish. Now I get satisfaction out of enabling other people to catch fish.’ (Schoenbaum 2021).

Certain aims need to be fulfilled before progressing to the next level. Sociologist, Bryan Hobson, in his writing specifically about the Leisure Value Systems and Recreational Specialization: The Case of Trout Fishermen (1977), referred to these stages as a continuum of behaviour, from general to specialised. Through extensive interviewing of trout fishermen (263 anglers in the US), he concluded, over time, anglers become specialised, with this is a shift from fish consumption to preservation and greater value and emphasis put on being in nature and the setting associated with trout fishing (1997, p.174). I believe these stages embody a ‘sense of ritual’ and by deconstructing them we get a sense of some of the intricacies of the cultural logic behind these forms of fly fishing. Examining the stories of narrators alongside my own experience of moving through these stages, I will attempt to analyse the classifications of these stages, and what differentiates them and what they mean to us fly anglers.

4.1.3 Outside the Everyday

Narrator 6 expresses a different act of differentiation in which he chooses to go fishing for an intense period of time and away from home, as opposed to some anglers who prefer to go fishing little and often close to home; both approaches seem to be restorative to positive mental well-being. The act of going elsewhere to fish and stay is arguably a chance to live differently for a short period of time, privileging distinctive of ways of being. Narrator 6 stated, ‘[b]ecause we don’t fish at home, we go on a holiday and do a week’s fishing, so you’re really immersed in it and immersed in the landscape, immersed in everything.’ (Narrator 6, p.5). This distinction is about physically and mentally moving oneself from one
place to a different place, not just for a short moment or few hours but for a week or more – as Narrator 6 states, for enough time to feel a sense of immersion in that place. Narrator 6 used his mental mapping to depict his thinking process when deciding to go fly fishing. His mental mapping took on the form of a comic strip, shown in figure 4.2.

Often fly fishing is as a way of changing one’s mental state, as Narrator 6 relates to recent experiences of loss:

‘It’s been a really sad time and it’s nice and important to get away. The polar opposite of all my life is being out there [referring to the river]. My day-to-day view is a Chinese takeaway and a lighting shop. When I look out the window where I am most days, I don’t see green, I don’t see anything, that’s it. I’m lucky I come down here. My view’s crap nine hours a day but it’s the family business, it’s got to be done, that’s why my mind does drift. That stupid drawing of me thinking about flies, that’s my entire life’ (Narrator 6, p.20).

As an angler experiences the restorative benefits of fly fishing it becomes a tool for managing mental-health and wellbeing. Writing on environmental behaviour, Kaplan (2001) suggests angling is a way to escape from daily stress providing moments for respite and restoration. In the Fishing for Answers: Final Report of the Social and Community Benefits of Angling Project it is stated, ‘[r]esearch suggests mental restoration is best achieved through environments and activities that provide breaks from the effort of sustaining tired cognitive patterns’ (Brown et al 2012, p.33). Describing the need for a break and a desire to be in a place that is the ‘polar opposite’ to his everyday pattern, Narrator 6 continues,

‘I’ve had a really stressful couple of months, really depressingly sad. I was quite down yesterday and knew I had to get down there [referring to the river] to work through stuff and then I came back a different person. Fishing for mental health and mental improvement…’ (Narrator 6, p.20)

Narrator 6 uses fly fishing as a self-differentiated mode of ritualization, counter to his day-to-day urban life. This part of the ritual process, of getting away to the other place for an extended period of time, is an intricacy of ritualization for this particular narrator. Narrator 6 positions the ritualization of fly fishing outside of the norm, something he does in a
different place and that provides a different way of living and being. This is something Kawano describes as ritual and non-ritual occasion, ‘[r]ituals also involve a variety of bodily and place-related practices that are strictly confined to ritual occasions, thereby distinguishing ritual from nonritual life’ (Kawano 2013, p.115).

Figure 4.2 Narrator 6’s mental mapping.
This is not the same for all anglers, as many of the narrators have a preference for home waters, privileging a level of comfort experienced in that ‘familiar space’ (Bell 1992), and gaining the restorative benefits on a more frequent but possibly less immersive scale. Over time, Narrator 6 has used the act of going fly fishing as a way to escape a place he is less at home in – the city, a more modern and techno-centric life. He recognises in order to change his state of mind, to feel different, he must first get away from the city. Philosopher and founder of the term deep ecology, Arne Dekke Eide Naess argues,

‘it takes time for the new milieu to work in depth. It is quite normal that several weeks must pass before the sensitivity for nature is so developed that it fills the mind. If a great deal of technique and apparatus are placed between oneself and nature, nature cannot possibly be reached’ (Naess 1990, p.179).

Naess expresses an appreciation for people who are able to foster such a sensitivity. A climber himself, his experiences of being in the mountains have offered a sense of oneness, wholeness and a deepening identification (Naess 1990, p.177). I would similarly argue the fly angler, taken out of the city and venturing along the river, cultivates a sensibility. We learn to read and become part of the river through the ritualization of fly fishing, over time developing a real and embodied sensitivity to nature.

4.1.4 Ritualized Contexts

Bell regards ritual practice as situational and strategic; ‘a ceaseless play of situationally effective schemes, tactics, and strategies – the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation’ 24 (Bell 1992, p.82). She is referring to a playful way of being in a place in the sense that we are constantly testing and trying out practices, improvising and finding our

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24 Bell uses Bourdieu’s (Outline Theory of Practice) notion of strategy that stresses activity apart from following rules, and de Certeau’s (The Practice of Everyday Life) ‘strategies’ and tactics’ as ways of operating or doing things. Bourdieu suggests strategies are ‘subtle combinations’ that can navigate the rules, ‘playing with possibilities offered by traditions’, this allows them to create their own relevance rather than directly applying them (Bourdieu 1977, p.54).
own way within the rules of tradition or formalism (further discussed in following section). This understanding of practice holds the body central to situating oneself within and interacting with an environment; the body ‘always conditioned by and responsive to context’ (ibid, p.100). Therefore ritualization, when practiced in different places responds to different environmental conditions, improvising with our culturally prescribed strategies each time. Whenever we employ a set of practices (or strategies and tactics), we in turn get a better understanding of that particular context through ritual. Bell argues, ‘[t]he essential strategy of ritualization is how it clarifies or blurs the boundaries that identify it as a specific way of acting’ (Bell 1992, p.203). The strategic application of ritualized practices is what differentiates ritualization from other forms of activity.

Fly fishing characteristically takes anglers to an ‘other space’ that is outside of the everyday. At the heart of the angling landscape is the river; water shaping the lands and forming liminal spaces along the edge, a threshold we explore in pursuit of trout. This place requires us to pay attention to specific parts of the landscape and ecology; being near and on the water is transportive. This is a fly anglers ritual context, always at the water’s edge – an other place. Philosopher Michel Foucault suggests a watery landscape inherently produces a sense of an ‘other space’, a space that lies outside normal and everyday parameters of human existence (Foucault & Miskowiec 1986).

Every time we go fly-fishing to these specific landscapes, there are specific things we have to use and practices we have to employ for the act to be fly fishing. All of these components, in and of themselves are interchangeable. The things we use change, each rod and line are chosen based on the type of flies you’re going to cast that day. The way we do things or our practices of casting, line mending, wading, and other various watercrafts have to be adapted to suit the particular river. A cast depends on the landscape around, such as tree cover or open space. The type of waters we fish also change from small brook streams,
a fast flowing river, or vast, still bodies of water. Each change requires a variation of practices. Narrator 5, takes particular enjoyment from fishing as many different rivers as he can, this started unconsciously, but was one day realised:

‘I had a real thing with fishing new waters. It became an obsession but once I’d fished somewhere a few times, alright the river changes all the time so it’s never the same, but there’s interest in walking upstream and not knowing what’s upstream – it was really interesting.’ (Narrator 5, p.3)

‘Ages, and ages ago I was sat at a bar with a friend talking about fishing. And he went, ‘you must have fished a few rivers?’, and I said, ‘I have no idea’, I’ve never kept a diary or anything. But I thought I wonder how many I have fished... so I started writing them down and making this list and thought blimey that’s quite a few, so I think I added up and it was 87! Funnily enough I got to 87 without trying to fish as many as I can. Just an interest in fishing new places.’ (Narrator 5, p.4)

As we learn to fly fish, we’re testing a set of practices for which we are not certain whether or not they’ll be fruitful. It’s a moment in time in our fishing journey when we are testing our ritual body, embodied intuition, through applying newfound knowledge to unknown places. Like Narrator 5, I would say we all take great enjoyment from the sense of discovery one feels when visiting new rivers and successfully connecting with the river in a way that reaffirms your knowledge and skill of watercraft, fly presentation technique and catching fish; it’s a very rewarding experience. Although involving all the same ritual features and attributes, applying them to a new ritual context forms a different experience, especially compared to fishing one’s home waters. Lovell suggests,

‘[t]he creation of ritual contexts comes, not only from acting bodies, but also from the environments that contain them. Bodies do not act in a vacuum. Whether in a house, a neighbourhood, or a shrine, it is necessary to take ritual environments as seriously as the ritual bodies that act in them, (Lovell 1998 in Kawano 2013, p.7)

By fishing a place you know well, there are less unknowns (even though as Narrator 5 said, the river is always changing), and over the years we begin to know the rivers intimately. We know when trout are likely to ‘wake up’, where underwater features are, when the river is warm enough for insects to hatch, and what flies are likely to be successful with particular types of fish. Although each particular day, situation or moment is different, the set of
practices and ritualization remains the same. I would suggest, by continually challenging himself to practice fly fishing on new waters Narrator 5 is honing his skills set, with each application of practices, comes a new set of responses and knowledge about environmental conditions and cues.

4.1.5 Summary

Fly anglers explicitly employ ritualization as a way to set apart our particular way of fishing, to differentiate the levels and experiences of key milestones within fly-fishing and to demarcate ritual places – venturing to somewhere outside of the everyday to fly fish. Processes of ritualization demonstrate how fly fishing is constituted as different and in contrast to other activities from the perspective of lived experience. Ritualization, the ritual body and meaning making will continue to be considered in the following section that examines ritual attributes.

4.2 Ritual Attributes of Fly Fishing

The defining properties of ritual have been grouped by Bell into six basic categories, each focusing on a major attribute of ‘ritual-like’ action: formalism, traditionalism, disciplined invariance, rule-governance, symbolism and performance. These groupings are neither exclusive nor definitive but are common throughout ritual discourse, but many scholars credit Bell for explicitly distinguishing them in Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions (1997, pp.138-169). Others have made comparable but partial lists, notably Professor of Religion and Culture Ronald Grimes who posited six modes of ritual sensibility: ritualization, decorum, ceremony, liturgy, magic and celebration (1995, p.35). Similarly, Rappaport listed what he considered to be the obvious aspects of ritual, inclusive of formality, performance, and instrumentality (1979, pp.175-77). These basic ritual attributes relate to the form,
function and meaning of ritual and provide a lexicon, and in this study, a framework for analysing how cultures ritualize activities. Bell suggests by looking at how these attributes are used in ritual-like activities (such as fly fishing), it is possible ‘to see dimensions of the significance and efficacy of ritual activity that were not so obvious’ (ibid, p.139). Professor of Archaeology, Timothy Insoll, in the *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion*, posits Bell’s categories as an instructive way of looking closer at defining ritual, beyond what broader definitions of ritual can offer (2011). To explore the various ritual attributes, I will test examples of each in relation to stories shared by narrators and my own commentary. These will be measured against various ritual, narrative and fly fishing literatures and any new understandings of the capacity of ritual will be identified.

4.2.1 Ritual Attributes: Formalism

Formalism in fly fishing arises through many processes or sets of gestures. One example is the build up to, preparation for and specific order to a day on the river. This process can happen hours, days or even months before the fly fishing itself. This usually consists of thinking about going fishing considering where to fish, getting the appropriate gear ready, a journey to a chosen river, careful packing of seasonal flies, building the rod, threading the line, tying on the fly, applying floatant to the fly, and so on. This build up and process forms a sense of anticipation that is very much a part of the experience of going fly fishing. Depth psychologist25 Dr Tracy Marrs, describes this fly fishing sequencing as ‘a pattern of actions filled with meaning and symbols that make it a ritual as well a sport’ (2016).

Formalism in this sense is what gives shape and structure to a day’s fly fishing. There are some fixed gestures and sequences, which are essential to fly fishing, some of which are identified above. Other than that, each fly angler performs them and organises them in

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25 Depth psychology is the field of study that explores how the unconscious aspects of the human experience influence psychological conditions and treatment.
their own way, this is informed by their individual sensibility. In one example during our day in the field, Narrator 5 asked me,

‘at what point do you start fishing? Do you start fishing when your fly lands on the water? Or does it start when you’re putting your waders on? Do you decide to go fishing and then leave, or are there things that happen that you know you’re then going fishing?’ (Narrator 5, p.10).

His line of questioning is indicative of that individual sensibility and an awareness of the differences between fly anglers’ approaches. For me, a day fly fishing begins in my mind. It starts when I’m sat at my desk imagining the feeling of being somewhere else - back in the river, feet on the riverbed, focusing upstream, intent on seeing a rising trout and the cold, drag of water all around me. Having imagined being physically in the river, my thinking extends out in a wider, connective way to the sense of being in and a part of landscape. As I imagine all the places I could go fly fishing I recall a number of things that can impact a day on the river. I ask myself if we had rain recently? Which rivers would fish well in high or low water levels? Is it tourist season? Will the coaches of tourists have arrived on the moors yet? If so, I better head out early, or late, or avoid those accessible stretches of water all together. Do I have the right flies? As I begin processing these thoughts, I recount previous trips to those places, working out what kind of day that this might lead to. This thought process will continue as I begin my journey to the river. Narrator 5 describes his experience of a similar process, this recollection emerged as he drew his cognitive map of a day's fishing, he relayed:

‘I can go anytime I want as I'm self-employed. […] I'll start thinking about places on the journey. That’s when my fishing starts. I start thinking, of places, and then I’m getting ready to go fishing. It'll go from there, there’s only three or four places on the way, going onto the A30 at Launceston, going past Brent Knoll near Burnham, crossing the bridge, the roundabout at Newport, then Abergavenny, Tower Garth, and then you go over the top and drop down into the Wye. And that’s the mental journey that’d be my map if you wanted a map’
‘these are just points. Everything changes at Abergavenny\textsuperscript{26}, if I’m going [fishing], when I get to Abergavenny it’s the end of the dual carriageway and you’re really going into Wales. The landscape is changing. Abergavenny is a real transition.’

(Narrator 5, p.10)

Narrator 5’s mental map reflects the aforementioned sequence of points and places along the larger journey of fly fishing (top map in figure 4.3). Narrator 5’s process of beginning, or getting ready to go fly fishing was similar to mine. I hadn’t really thought about it until he asked his questions about when we start fly fishing. We both mentally visualise the initial stages of fly fishing, I guess a form of psyching ourselves up, preparing, applying all past knowledge to the future prospects. Grimes would argue, this is the moment we choose to engage with the rituals, the moment we are mentally opting in, in the mind, before physically enacting anything (2003).

Each angler had a variation of a routine or sequence of ritualized processes that they chose to enact during a day’s fly fishing. However, Bell would remind us that ritual is ‘never simply or solely a matter of routine’, (Bell 1992, p.92). Instead, routinization and habitualization can be considered \textit{an} approach to certain cultural situations. Bell discusses notions of routine activity in relation to ritualization, she outlines ‘[t]hese activities are differentiated in the very doing and derive their significance from the contrast implicitly set up between them’ (Bell 1992, p.91). Because each angler has their way of doing things, it foregrounds and differentiates diverse preferences.

\textsuperscript{26} Although I engaged with this participant due to their experience fly fishing on Dartmoor, he has more recently shifted his fishing focus towards Wales, and due to the discursive nature of the narrative inquiry, I allowed the conversation to be taken in any direction I felt could be insightful.
For instance, Narrator 7 chose to describe her routine of a day’s fly fishing with emphasis on the journeys to and from the river;
'So the routine, we walk down and the route is really special and meandering. We go past these lovely big oak trees and the castle. You walk over a rail track, and it could be any time in the last century, it’s timeless. It’s fields [...] you can bear what’s going on all around. From here, walking down the hill. Getting excited’ [emphasis added] (Narrator 7, p.19).

Then when talking about leaving a day on the river, and travelling the route in reverse Narrator 7 notes how the journey ‘helps you reprocess everything no matter how bad a day you’ve had’ (Narrator 7, p.19). In reflecting about this process or routine of hers later in the day she added,

‘when we come down here, you’re dictated by the weather and everything. Often we go flying down when we arrive. And that’s always our best day of all the days. Traditionally, that’s always our best day’ (Narrator 7, p.17) [emphasis added].

Narrator 7 puts emphasis on the journey to and from the river as a routinised approach to her way of thinking about fly fishing, which sees the separation of spaces, going from one place to another as key to being in a different state of mind and purpose, and in some ways, even time. She notes the time spent walking to and from the river as particularly reflective and has a sense of timelessness – at least in a fixed state. She describes how this is different to when she first arrives in the area, describing herself as flying down to the river. There is something about this first day on the river that is consistently exciting and good – as she notes it’s always their best day. This notion of a best day is representative of Narrator 7’s experience of a mental shift, a transition from everyday life to her fly fishing state of being, when her anticipation of getting to the river is rewarded. A best day on the river is not necessarily marked by quantity of fish caught, but a good feeling that is probably a sign of good weather (no wind and some sunshine are particularly good conditions), anticipations met, a changed mental state and an overall feeling of enhanced well-being.

Another routinised ritual Narrator 7 enacts is the blessing of the water; she stated, ‘[y]ou have routine don’t you … a process and routine, like we bless the water.’ (Narrator 7, p.19). I had to look into this to see if it was commonly practiced, as it’s not something I am
personally aware of within my own fly fishing routines or of those in my immediate fly fishing community. Blessing the river is traditionally an annual ceremony that marks the opening of the salmon fishing season (notably performed on the Tweed and Tay rivers of Scotland). A local Vicar performs a service on the banks of the river and then a procession of pipers and anglers make their way to the water’s edge. An elected local dignitary is invited to perform the blessing, rowing out into the river, and pouring a cup of whiskey into the water. This is often followed by the first cast of a symbolic fly upon the water. Afterwards people gather and enjoy a drink.

This relates closely to the value Narrator 7 places on her first day’s fishing. The blessing was once tied to local dependency on the rivers to live and had more of a focus on blessing the work of the fishermen. The roots of such a blessing are likely to draw from many religions that each have their own rituals around the blessing of water for prosperous fishing. These days, the blessings practiced on the fly fishing rivers of Scotland are adapted to take into account environmental concerns, in turn blessing everything that lives in the river as well as the people who fish (Hall 2022). Although her enactment of this ritual is not likely tied to any form of dependency, it is a highly ritualized marker of the commencement of her time in the river. Interestingly, her engagement with this blessing is probably the most formal activity shared throughout the entire fieldwork. Bell describes what adding this more formal gesture can do in terms of ritualization of the activity:

‘The ease with which one simple gesture can heighten or diminish formality […] parallels the way in which similar gestures can set a ritual situation off from daily routines or integrate it with those routines. Hence, the ritual-like nature of formality draws our attention to the way in which the contrasts with other activities—implicit and explicit, delicately signalled or dramatically marked—are intrinsic to the very construction of ritual activities’ (Bell 1997, p.144).

In contrast, Bell goes on to note the ways in which people deploy rituals are not necessarily reliable or uniform. In comparison to Narrator 7’s more formal blessing of the water, I recognise there are less acknowledged moments of our routines such as wetting one’s hand.
before touching a fish. When I hook a fish and reel it in, I try to minimise harm. Small changes in the way we catch, handle and release fish can have more positive outcomes once the fish swims away. Once netted I keep the bag of the net in the water, this minimises air exposure, keeping the fish’s mouth and gills submerged and breathing. Before touching the fish in any way, I dip my hand into the river water to ensure my skin is wet, if I didn’t, my dry hand would remove the protective film on the trout’s scales that protects it from disease. Once unhooked, the fish is released immediately. These are science-based best practices, that are becoming part of each angler’s individual evolution; a changed practice for some, rooted in new beliefs relating to conservation (Bell, 1992, p.92). For most fly-anglers this has become their evolved practice. Another example is the turning of a stone to see what fly larvae are present in the river system. To the fly angler, understanding the fly life from below the river is important; figure 4.4 below shows this process of turning the stone in order to match the hatch. Dropping my hand into the marginal depths of the river I find a palm-sized stone, pick it up out of the river and turn it over. On the underside is often a range of various bugs and fly life. The insect to the left of the below image is a (well-camouflaged) black stonefly that had just hatched and emerged. The image to the right shows a collection of caddis fly larvae casings that are constructed by the larvae and are fixed to the rock. In time, larvae emerge from these casings and swim to the water surface – hatching and becoming potential trout food. Through my autoethnographic filming of these moments, of reaching into the water to turn stones, I recognise it as a key moment of physical contact. These are ritualized keystones of our engagement with the river, signalling best practices such as ‘keep fish wet’ and ‘match the hatch’. It is when

27 Keep Fish Wet promotes the use of science-based best practices to catch, handle, and release fish, further principles of best practices for catch and release outlined on their website. Available at: https://www.keepfishwet.org/principles [Accessed 23 July 2022].
28 Each season sees a changing presence and predominance of certain species of insect that the trout feed upon, this informs what fly an angler presents. The most common is the Mayfly hatch (May – June), and is an exciting time for any fly angler.
my skin first touches the water upon arrival at the river, and I begin looking more closely at the river. This patterned practice instigates my embodied connection to the river.

![Figure 4.4 Turning of riverbed stones to reveal fly caddis larvae and their self-constructed protective casings.](image)

In these moments, formalism is informing our various formal and informal ways of acting, which Bell would suggest ‘promote overarching values and cultural conventions’ (Bell 1997, p.144). Reflecting on narrators’ stories relating to formalism, I believe that although not everything we do is the same, there are certain acts and thoughts within our journeys, blessings and interactions with the river and ecologies that are culturally prescribed. They are reflective of fly anglers’ core values and factors that make fly fishing what it is to us.

**4.2.2 Ritual Attributes: Tradition**

How an angler determines their equipment, and how they approach the river can be heavily informed by rules of tradition. Bell suggests, maintaining traditional forms of practice acts as a tool for legitimisation. She states traditionalization;

‘may be a matter of near-perfect repetition of activities from an earlier period, the adaptation of such activities in a new setting, or even the creation of practices that simply evoke links with the past’ (Bell 1997, p.145)
In UK fly fishing you can’t talk about tradition without mentioning the works of Izaak Walton (1653). Waltonian fly fishing is discernible by a dry-fly cast upstream to an actively rising trout. Many still practice this traditional method and consider it more sportsmanlike compared to other fly fishing techniques that use weighted flies that accesses trout potentially not feeding below the surface. I think it would be fair to say, most fly fishing of today is informed by tradition, whether that be the places we fish, the gestures enacted or the way in which we tie and use flies. In discussions with Narrators 6 and 7 they shared an interest in fly tying, noting, ‘it’s that historical association again isn’t it?’ (Narrator 7, p.21).

Fly anglers use flies that imitate riparian inhabiting insects, anglers often buy flies from an angling shop, but many anglers also opt to tie their own. Fly tying in its elf is highly ritualized, the buying, the imitation, the mustering of materials, the shaping and forming of the tying. Both anglers really enjoy the sense of connection to past ways of fly fishing and fly tying through what they do today. Fly shops can be the centre of a community and source of all knowledge.

Fishing continues to be heavily informed by the seasons, seasons relating to hatch cycles, spawning cycles, the life cycle of the mayfly. These have long been written about, and held as traditions, by the likes of Walton and other angling writers such as Ted Leeson;

‘As the year spirals upwards into the thinner, cooler atmosphere of autumn, summer lags here, and wildflowers long dried husky seed pods in the valley are just beginning to bloom in the mountains. […] Time telescopes itself, and could you cross-section a season, summer would show the concentric rings of a tree trunk, expanding iterations of an archetype, like a rise form.’ (Leeson 2006, p.134).

I find that, the rituals of fly fishing, and engaging with the rivers during these traditional times of year make us pay attention to seasons and ecological cycles. Each time we return to the river, there are seasonal changes that influence fishing. Narrator 7 notices this, he says ‘it’s also the seasonality isn’t it. Seasonality, insects, all the trees…How everything is connected, so connected’ (Narrator 7, p.5). Fly fishing has and always will heavily revolve around these cycles. As the air and water temperature rises, vegetation and tree growth
provides the structures for insects to hatch from the water and thrive. These insects emerge from their self-built casings from the riverbed in their nymph form at various times throughout the year (as shown in the previous figure 4.4). This informs the rationale for selecting what flies to fish with and when. Mayflies are the insect most associated with fly fishing – the abundance of the hatch often going hand in hand with the quality of the fishing.

In contrast, Narrator 5 has formed his own traditions and rituals of fly fishing that he simply refers to as ‘things’. These ‘things’ he refers to are moments that define the start and finish of his season’s fishing each year. In winter, Narrator 5 explains, ‘It’s a thing. If I can get a grayling on a dry fly in December, then it feels like I have got the most out of the season. It’s not common but not uncommon – just for an hour midday, see a rising fish’ (Narrator 5, p.4). Similarly, Narrator 5 used to have a particular way of beginning the season in April:

‘We’d always go for two or three days camping at the end of April, all we did was fishing. There used to be great field you could camp in on the river, a few beers, a fire and just go fishing. It was always the start of the season and you never knew, it was sort of, at that time where it was either you had early spring you’d be there in a t-shirt and sit out til its dark, or it’d be freezing cold and chucking it down with rain. It was right on the transition, if it was early it was great’ (Narrator 5, p.10).

Many fly anglers have their own ‘things’ or rituals, and Bell calls this ‘the invention of tradition’ (1997, p.148). Traditions can be invented through a ‘process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition’ (Hobsbawm 1983, pp.1-4). For instance, Narrator 7’s adaptation of blessing the water. She and her angling companions draw inspiration from a past fly fishing traditions and make it something of their own, making their own tradition that formalizes the start of their fishing. For me, I try to start my season fishing the upper most part of the East Dart River on Dartmoor (show in figure 4.5). This was the place I first went fly fishing here in the
UK; it’s a place, high in the watershed, where the fish hold at the beginning of the trout season, from mid-March to early April.

There feels something momentous about this particular part of the river. It requires walking a bit further, climbing higher, and wading further. It is not a ‘let’s go for a quick fish’ kind of spot. It is a commitment to a day out on the river, with plenty of clothes and food for changing weather conditions. Here, I follow along subtly trodden angler’s paths that weave towards and along the river’s edge. Seeking out this particular river feels like somewhat of a pilgrimage. More often than not, the more treacherous the landscape the more rewarding the river and fishing feels. The landscape reaches up and away from the river, an undulating tapestry of rugged upland, stitched with dry stone walls and characterised by sporadic, ancient stone rows, granite tors and large swathes of yellow gorse. These landscape patterns form a kind of historic, socio-cultural palimpsest where marks of previous cultures, ways of living and working, even if attempted to be extinguished are left behind as traces to be discovered (Meinig 1979, Lewis 1979, Jackson 1989). What’s left is a multi-layered record of successive inhabitation, some partially erased, some an enduring form of cultural landscape, where culture is a process enacted within the landscape (Cosgrove & Jackson 1987).
Figure 4.5 Collaged map and photographs of the East Dart River, tracing my route along the riverbank.

Exploring this place at the start of every fishing season has become my own tradition, my thing. Fly fishing allows me to conceptualise this piece of landscape in my mind, reclaiming
a space on the land that I connect to and situate myself within. These traces are seen as momentary lines in the grasses that become a more permanent line on my cognitive map, connecting memories to places. Although my physical presence in the landscape is temporary, it becomes forever a place in my mind. Fly fishing reaffirms my being in the landscape, affirming my human scale and senses. In many ways, the place epitomises what fly fishing should be like to me; wild, solitary, and hard work. But seeing the river surface burst into life with rising and wintered hungry trout is incredible. My first experience of this place has me drawn back at the start of every season.

4.2.3 Ritual Attributes: Disciplined Invariance

One of the most common characteristics of ritualized behaviour is the quality of invariance; characterised by ‘a disciplined set of actions marked by the precise repetitions and physical control’ (Bell 1997, p.150). Disciplined Invariance puts emphasis on the choreographed and repetitive actions and self-control required to enact them. Emphasis is put on this enactment being rooted in the present context. Where traditionalism looks to the past in order to inform today’s enactment of ritual, invariance is more concerned ‘with ignoring the passage of time in general’, the gestures and acts seemingly timeless and unchanged by the people enacting them (Bell 1997, p.150). Ritualized practices that entail disciplined invariance,

‘s specifically seek to foster holistic and integrated experiences that close the distance between the doer and the deed, and transform the precise and deliberate gesture into one of perfect spontaneity and efficacy. Some strategies of invariance envision, implicitly or explicitly, a process of training by which studied mindfulness moulds the actor’s basic disposition so as to foster action that is inherently anonymous, unattached to the particularities of the self.’ (Bell 1997, p.150)

There are many actions in fly fishing that involve this kind of repetitive and controlled form, some examples being the tying of a fly – the rotary binding of materials and the casting and the retrieving of line. I would argue learning to cast a fly-line is the clearest
form of disciplined invariance in fly fishing. The choreographed and rhythmic elements of casting are both a means of directing attention through physical activity (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). These tiny acts and awareness’s need to be considered and enacted simultaneously and all within a few seconds of one another. Once you learn to recognise the feel of a good cast, and practice using the techniques and gestures in various different environments, it becomes intuitive, instinctual and less mechanical. Figure 4.6 on the following page shows various moments within a single cast, the orange line being my fly line that is weighted and carries the fly to the water surface.

Narrator 7 compares learning the choreography of casting the fly-line to ballet; ‘It’s just the action, it’s so balletic and beautiful’ (Narrator 7, p.4). When we learn to cast, it doesn’t feel natural or balletic, it develops with practice. As skill develops, the act itself becomes somewhat pre-reflective or preconscious29, the motion becomes fluid and responsive to the minutiae of the environment. The disciplined invariance requiring a level of precision in order to make each gesture as mindful as possible (Grimes 1995). In this sense once your mind is clear of the processes, it becomes open to the feel, focus and ensuing mindfulness.

Angler and author John Gierach indicates a correlation between the invariable act of casting and the meditative effect, ‘anglers […] primarily seek an opportunity to stand in a river, meditatively cast a line, and commune with nature’ (Gierach 2005).

When these motions, as described by Narrator 7 and Gierach, become unthinking, it initiates something Seamon refers to, borrowing from Merleau-Ponty, as the body-subject:

‘Body subject is the inherent capacity of the body to direct behaviors of the person intelligently, and thus function as a special kind of subject which expresses itself in a preconscious way usually described by such words as ‘automatic’, ‘habitual’, ‘involuntary’, and ‘mechanical’. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, in Seamon 1980, p.155)

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29 An individual’s immediate, uncritical reaction to something prior to any conscious evaluation.
Figure 4.6 Casting my line, a collage reclaiming space in the landscape through my cast.

This thinking rejects common belief in cognitive and behaviourist theories that the body is passive, with no regard of the experiencing body responding to things in the environment.
Rather, Seamon suggests ‘the body acts in an intentional way which tackles the behaviour needed as a whole and proceed to carry it out in fluid, integrative fashion […] the body is intelligently active and through this activity efficiently transforms a person’s needs into behaviours (Seamon 1980, p.156). These intentional, fluid movements are also referred to by Seamon as ‘body-ballet’; actions of the body-subject that have become central to their skills and/or artistic sensibilities. Through observing those who have formed their own form of body-ballet, it is said their movement is organic, integrated, and easily adapted to particular scenarios. These reactive, and organic embodied ways of knowing are demonstrated through the fly anglers cast.

Narrator 3 describes his instinctive response in the act of setting a hook, this is what happens after a cast when a trout rises to your fly – you have to set the hook or risk losing the trout before getting it into the net. He talks about this in particular relation to a shoulder injury. Due to injury he planned to avoid angling for some time but he later contemplated going fly fishing without a hook in order to avoid actually catching any fish and furthering his injury – but quickly recognised the instinct and impulse still to motion the setting the hook overriding the redundancy of attempting to set a hook that isn’t there. An act so innately tied to witnessing a trout rise he would still go through the motions hook or no hook. In reminding us that ritual is always enacted through the body, Bell describes how rituals such as this, become embodied over time, forming a ritual body. She goes as far as to say the body produces ritual; through a circular process of performing and embodying practices makes ritual in itself;

‘Essential to ritualization is the circular production of a ritualized body which in turn produces ritualized practices. Ritualization is embedded within the dynamics of the body defined within a symbolically structured environment. An important corollary to this is the fact that ritualization is a particularly ‘mute’ form of activity. It is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking.’ (Bell 1992, p.93)
When we try to articulate this circular production of the ritual body and the ritual itself we tend to use words such as intuition, subconscious and muscle memory because like Bell says, we are unaware of the this mute element of the ritual process. It is not common practice to look for and articulate ritual; many of us don’t know how to either recognise it or indeed appreciate the significance of what it does as it binds our bodily knowledge to the environment through ritual practice. Narrator 3 was unaware how infused to his body ritual would be in that ritually structured environment.

In writing about place, Professor of Geography Tim Cresswell uses Seamon's notion of ‘body-ballet’ to consider place relations. He states, ‘places exhibit a kind of unchoreographed yet ordered practice that makes the place just as much as the place's more static and bounded qualities do […] that places come processually to have meaning via such bodily knowing and movement, both of which are individual and social’ (Cresswell 2009, p.175). I would argue one couldn’t read into a place what one does not know. If someone didn’t know fly fishing existed, how could that place exhibit the practice preemptively? I do however agree that through various practices, namely ritual practices/actions, an embodied way of knowing is formed; in turn a place can potentially become meaningful both for the individual enacting and for those individuals observing – but the meaning would likely be different between participant and observer. This idea that through ritual one can embody movements and in turn give place meaning in a preconscious way is encapsulated in Bourdieu’s definition of ritual as: ‘a logic embodied in the physical movements of the body and thereby lodged beyond the grasp of consciousness and articulation’ (Bourdieu 1977, 116-117 in Bell 1992, p.99). Logic implies the sense of discipline, or tradition referred to in ritual, or the right way of doing things. This logic informs how we physically practice and move through the choreographed sequence, embodying and reacting to the space around us. Through disciplined invariance, these
movements can become a central sensibility (or body-ballet), an attuned way of experiencing and knowing.

4.2.4 Ritual Attributes: Rule Governance

Rule-governance in ritual, includes the explicit rules imposed upon and meant to restrict human action or interaction, Bell states: ‘[r]ule-governance, as either a feature of many diverse activities or a strategy of ritualization itself, also suggests that we tend to think of ritual in terms of formulated norms imposed on the chaos of human action and interaction’ (Bell 1997, p.155). Aspects of formalism and tradition mentioned earlier, inform the ways fly anglers’ fish and are sometimes imposed by oneself, or the cultural group based on moral values and beliefs. Today, these moral beliefs are most often associated with conservation or preservation of tradition. I would argue rule governance manifests more clearly in the management of the lands and rivers we fly fish. The kinds of restrictions imposed upon fly anglers varies on every watercourse. These may include: the kinds of fishing one can do (sometimes it is fly fishing only), the types of hooks, or the number of anglers at any one time – these rules are imposed by whichever owner or club is granting fly anglers access. Human action is more commonly restricted through rights of access through the landscape within which the rivers run. This is managed according to the laws/rules of the particular country; in the UK for example anglers must buy an Environment Agency fishing permit, then buy individual licences to the different rivers, beats or lakes that allow fly fishing.

One of the few stories that arose relating to this form of rule governance, in particular relating to owning and accessing water, was from Narrator 4 who mentioned owning various stretches of water himself. When we were stood side by side taking it in turns to
cast upstream he said, ‘I actually used to own this one, but I sold it to a friend of mine when we bought the other fishing’ (Narrator 4, p.14), ‘we rented for two or three years the fishing down by Riverford bridge’ (Narrator 4, p.3). In questioning Narrator 4 about why he chooses to own his stretches of river, or beats as fly anglers call them, and how it affects his fishing, he stated,

‘I wanted somewhere I could enjoy fishing with friends, family and could also take my dog too [many beats don’t allow dogs]. It lets me have a firm finger on the pulse of the mood it is in and can plan my fishing as a result of it. Often, my partner and I will fish for just a few hours and know if the river is on form or not when it comes to salmon and feel we have covered the likely pools for the conditions and then head home if it is quiet. When it comes to trout, I find I don’t need to fish the water to find a fish but I can wait for a fish to rise and cover it. If it is a nice fish that will often be enough and I’ll nip the fly off and head home. I guess I am saying that I can be more relaxed with my approach and don’t need to put long hours in but just enjoy being there and fishing is a small part of the whole experience.’ (Narrator 4)

By owning his own stretch of river, Narrator 4 can make his own rules, such as being able to take his dog and he can fish more often for shorter periods of time. If he didn’t own his own river he would have to pay each time he visits or become a member of a club with annual membership fees, at which point you would want to make the most of each day you have paid. Fishing on his own beats, Narrator 4 does not have to abide by access related rule governance.

In a different instance on rule governance, Narrator 6 has had ongoing contact with a local river association to request access to the river during his annual fishing trips. Over time, as he developed this relationship, he has managed to change the rights and access to the river for other anglers. He described the process:

‘There is a local club who have got the rights to the fishing and we sort of helped get other anglers’ access. We used to come down here and we’d fish everywhere else but couldn’t fish this bit of river. We then asked why we can’t we fish in the river and ended up speaking to a guy who was able to get onto the association, to explain he had guests who would like to get onto the water, and by a long sort of
It is unusual for anglers to be able to change restrictions imposed on access and permits, but what I am beginning to see is traditionally imposed restrictions being reconsidered and eased slightly, due to the decreasing population of fly anglers and sadly, of fish. This is forcing clubs to open up to more people, to try and find new ways of getting different kinds of people involved and beginning to see a greater range of people able to access different kinds of rivers. This shift is also evidenced in the club of which I am a member. In recent years, they have increased the number of permits for brown trout only anglers; historically, the club predominantly fished for sea trout and salmon, but with decreasing populations of those species more people are fishing for the brown trout. The club has also agreed to open some stretches of the river to non-members that can book through an online passport system, making it more accessible to travelling anglers and those who don’t wish to subscribe to the membership.

4.2.5 Ritual Attributes: Symbolism

‘The closer you get to real matter, rock, air, firewood, boy, the more spiritual the world is.’ (Kerouac 2000)

Sacred or secular symbolism in ritual can relate to activities that ‘evoke experiences of a greater, higher, of more universalized reality’ (Bell 1997, p.159). Symbolism is often evidenced through the ritual behaviour of religion. In this same vein, Theodor Weinberger in Religion and Fly Fishing (1997) refers to the work of writers Norman Maclean, Izaak Walton and naturalist Henry David Thoreau to explore the line between religion and fly fishing. In Maclean’s A River Runs Through It the first sentence of the book states ‘in our family there is not distinction between religion and fly fishing’ (1976, p.1). In Walton’s The
Compleat Angler fly fishing is spoken of as an honourable form of recreation (1653). And writing on the natural environment Thoreau often spoke of religion and the spiritual life; taking note of a specific angler he said, ‘[h]is fishing was not a sport, nor solely a means of subsistence, but a sort of solemn sacrament and withdrawal from the world, just as the aged read their Bibles’ (2004, p.41). Weinberger argues this association with religion and fly fishing lies in the comparable creation of existence on a different plane – outside of ordinary experience (Weinberger 1997, p.281). Sociologist and religious studies scholar James Wallace suggests in the course of solitary rituals (such as fly fishing) various parts of the psyche may be brought in touch with each other, and that maybe without ritual, would not be accessed (1966, p.237). Other authors have also referred to semireligious or spiritualist ideas when describing experiences of fly fishing (Babb 1999, Checchio 2001).

Whether fly fishing is or isn’t a religion will likely be forever up for debate, with some fly anglers suggesting it’s just a sport with no deeper meaning, while others such as Snyder considering, ‘the lives of anglers as equally valid loci of religious practice’ (2007, p.898). Snyder argues that through fly fishing, there exists a spiritual component between man and nature, noting fly anglers often describe their experiences of fishing through words such as religious, spiritual, sacred, divine, ritual, meditation, and referring to rivers as their church and to nature as sacred. In addition to that, there is general consensus among fly anglers of fly fishing’s cathartic and spiritual effects, a sense of feeling good and connected to something larger than oneself.

In relation to narrator’s stories, Narrator 4 said when we were on the river together, ‘this is my spiritual home’ making reference to his local river in which he fly fishes regularly. In calling this place his spiritual home, it is imbued with his meaning and is a place he feels most himself, or most comfortable. Through fly fishing, the ‘ritual-like action effectively creates the sacred by explicitly differentiating such a realm from a profane one’ (Bell 1997, p.157); this aligns with Weinberger’s idea of accessing of planes outside of the everyday.
Although he does not recognise ritual as the tool or medium for accessing this ‘other’ realm specifically. Snyder suggests the creation of these other worldly constructs spoken and written about by fly anglers could be considered a religious practice in itself, relating it to the expanded fields of lived religion, religion and ecology, and religion and nature, all fields trying to make sense of human-nature relationships through everyday practices. This study would posit the creation of the other realm or spiritual home is a by-product of fly angler’s ritualized way of making meaningful places. Although this is not something anglers set out to do at the outset, the ritual-like actions create a more sacred realm. Within the field of lived religion, the lives of anglers would be considered ‘equally valid loci of religious practice’ (Snyder 2007, p.898), and scholars within that field have moved their gaze from formal religious structures to ‘places where humans make something of the worlds they have found themselves thrown into (Orsi 1997, p.6). Orsi argues ‘religion arises where humans act in ‘subtle, intimate, and quotidian’ ways that make meaning, ‘known and verified,’ for both individuals and groups (Snyder 2007, p.6). In other words, religion is quite simply (like ritual) a ‘meaning making activity’ (Orsi 1997, p.6 referenced in Snyder 2007, p.899). The correlation between the two is likely due to ritual being used as a behaviour of religion.

Religious undertones arose when I was on the river with Narrator 4. During the day I managed to raise and hook a fantastic wild brown trout. It was the biggest wild brown trout I have caught in in Devon, possibly the UK. After releasing the trout, I said, ‘I didn’t expect that to happen today.’ to which Narrator 4 replied ‘always have faith’ (Narrator 4, p.24). Fly fishing is admittedly his life, and over time it has rippled over into all facets of his being; it has become the way he chooses to navigate the world. For some anglers, to which I would add Narrator 4, ‘fishing appeals most deeply as an approach to a web of relations that give shape and coherence to the natural world’ (Leeson 1994, p.3). His conception of
the environment as known through fly fishing is extended to wider communities to form this heightened sense of faith, connection and belonging. As summarised by Leeson, the good feeling anglers come away from a day on the river with is rooted in that connection to nature that refreshes the soul. It is what drives us to get back in the river time and time again, with hope of, or a faith in, finding ‘sources of hidden significance’ in moments of making meaning, and world orientation in somewhat religious and spiritual ways (Leeson 1994, p.2 in Snyder 2007).

Religion or religious practices are considered a meaning-making activity that creates a chance for people to orientate themselves in the world (Long 1999). Based on my days sharing stories with narrators, from listening to what they have to say and how they say it, I believe that fly anglers use the rituals of fly fishing to situate and orientate themselves. The use of religious connotations a way of articulating the meaning they experience and feel – with access and knowledge of religious terms close to hand. Anthropologist Sherry Ortner believes the use of religious terms in this sense are symbols that ‘summarize or condense a wealth of human experiences, while other symbols elaborate these associations by helping to sort out experience, locate it in cultural categories, and enable people to understand ‘how it all hangs together’ (Ortner 1973, p.1340). How anglers seek to add emphasis to meanings they take from fishing and rely on religious language could begin to explain how associations between fly fishing and religious symbolism become interchangeable in fly fishing stories.

Once a fly angler has differentiated a place as a ‘spiritual home’, meaningful or sacred in some way they often develop a sense of duty and care for its preservation. Restoration ecologist and bioregionalist Robert Thayer relates this to a form of religious ritual, suggesting activities of restoration have the power to lead to ‘social cooperation in place’ (Thayer 2003, p.55 in Snyder 2007). Similarly, these restoration practices are rooted in
environmental experience and connection that resonate with Durkheimian\textsuperscript{30} notions of ‘collective effervescence’ through ‘classic rituals of initiation, communion, and world renewal, providing a new context for accomplishing the ritual work of community making and world building’ (Jordan 2003, p.7). Although many of us fish alone, we often come together for voluntary river clean ups or working parties as we call it. These are days when we are granted access to rivers to clear flood damage, debris, or fallen trees to name a few. More recently with the hot summer, river levels have become so low we have been granted unprecedented access to parts of rivers so that we can now clean away riverbed debris and check weir conditions\textsuperscript{31}.

Ritual-like action is activity that gives form to the specialness of a site, distinguishing it from other places in a way that evokes highly symbolic meanings; ‘[t]rivial actions that are not everyday actions symbolise something other, whether religious encounters or something else’ (Kawano 2013, p.53). Bell adds, ‘Such activities differentiate a possible sacred world—however minute or magnificent—in the midst of a profane one, thus affording experiences of this sacrality that transcend the profane reality of day-to-day life’ (Bell 1997, p.159). In a story told by Narrator 4, he equates a spiritual connection with nature to the moment he feels a physical connection (through the line) with a salmon, which he knows to have travelled incomprehensibly far, and the chance of this encounter happening being very slim. He relayed, ‘[f]or that moment when you swing the fly and it goes tight, and you’re connected with a fish that has gone past Greenland and come home again, is quite – I don’t know if spiritual is the right word, but that connection…’ (Narrator 4, p.6). In the telling the of the story, I could see Narrator 4 seeking out the words and language to do his story justice, looking for a way to express the meaning he feels in relation to his connection to that fish and that moment. Connection is the key word here,

\textsuperscript{30} French philosopher and sociologist Emile Durkheim’s ideas on religion and society remain foundational theoretical materials.

\textsuperscript{31} I explore notions of restoration and stewardship further in relation to place connectedness in Chapter 6.
as it seems the feeling anglers are trying to articulate further through religious or spiritual connotations. Embodiment philosopher, Mark Johnson argues the experience of meaning is ‘not linguistic in nature’ but it employs ‘meaning of our bodily interactions with environments, [t]his level of meaning exists prior to and beneath linguistic resources’ (Johnson 2018, p.255). Johnson’s notions of meaning making asserts the role of making meaning to the individual who constructs the world through experiences.

Narrator 6 is quite overt and aware of his relation with religion and fly fishing. He draws direct parallels between being in nature and fly fishing to his sense of spirituality and a pre-existing relationship with God. He believes his experience of spirituality is at its best when fly fishing. The term spirituality is used here to make reference to something that moves him most deeply (Taylor 2012). He stated,

‘I am pretty spiritual; I believe in God. I don’t go to church. If he made all this [gesturing out to the river and landscape] then out there’s where I’ll worship. I don’t get anything from a church, I love the architecture, the carvings are nice and it’s quiet. But I go out there. That’s… where it’s best. And fishing is a big part of that.’ (Narrator 6, p.13)

Narrator 6’s understanding of spirituality embraces both sacred and secular ideas and practices. His own religious values and ideals are present, or most present when he is in nature. Anna King, Professor of Religious Studies and Social Anthropology, states notions of spirituality can be ambiguous and flexible, offering ‘a richness and texture which allows traditional religious maps to be redrawn’ (King 1996, p.346). The way Narrator 6 outlines his relationship with fly fishing demonstrates it as an important factor in his spiritual orientation, with direct comparisons of belief, church and spirituality, an increased sense of connection with nature and improved mental well-being. This supports the notion that an experience of spirituality is an existential component, and part of the ‘meaning making’ process implied through a spiritual orientation – owing back to Taylor’s belief that the term spirituality is used when describing something that is felt deeply. Professor of Religion,
Peter van Ness argues spirituality is associated to one’s deepest moral values and relates this to personal growth and an understanding of one’s own sense of place:

‘The spiritual aspect of human existence [has both] an outer and inner complexion. Facing outward, human existence is spiritual insofar as it intentionally engages reality as a maximally inclusive whole and makes the cosmos an international object of thought and feeling. Facing inward, life has a spiritual dimension to the extent that it is experienced as the project of one’s most vital and enduring self, and it is structured by experiences of sudden transformation and subsequent slow development. An integration of these inner and outer characteristics is achieved by equating the spiritual dimension with the existential task of discovering one’s truest self in the context of reality and cosmic totality.’ (van Ness 1992, pp.13 - 14)

This is of particular importance when considered alongside Clifford Geertz’s ritual structuring, through which successful ritual integrates action and belief, ethos and worldview (1973). In this structuring, ethos is designated as one’s moral views and ‘underlying attitude towards themselves and the world’ and worldview the ‘cognitive and existential’ sense of one’s lived reality (Geertz 1973, pp.89-95). Ness suggests for something to feel spiritual, or deep in meaning, it is comprised of two similar components or alignments as per Geertz’s ritual structuring, although for Ness these are categorised as outward and inward, or the confluence of the spiritual and existential. Important here is that fly fishing acts as the threshold between the anglers’ inner self and the external world. The fusion of the two, the alignment of an anglers’ world as lived and world as imaged, is the space in which Geertz argues cultural meaning is made.

Roderick Haig-Brown, angler, writer and conservationist identifies fly fishing in itself a ‘meaning-making activity’ (1975, p.222) as opposed to an inference from religious connotation, or as a ritual or ritualized way of being. Fly fishing, when practiced in a certain way, when it affords the angler some kind of experience of a greater, higher, or a more connected reality, is an example of a meaning-making activity, evidenced through the stories shared. These shared stories of fly fishing and meaningful places, become a shared
symbol of meaningful experience. Bell suggests, these ‘activities create communal symbols that induce and justify ritual-like responses’ (Bell 1997, p.157). Summarising, fly fishing and stories relating to its places and meaning, when shared, become cyclical, each reinforcing the other – the ritual site tied to the meaning imbued upon it through the act. The meaning-making potentials of fly fishing will continue to be explored in the ensuing chapters, arising through the various ways we make our own meaning.

4.2.6 Ritual Attributes: Performance

Bell positions performance in ritual as deliberate, self-conscious and sometimes symbolic. Performance in ritual can provide multi-sensory experiences that are memorable. These notions of performance, although largely spoken of in terms of literal dramatic performances can relate closely to the rituals of fly fishing when broken down into their constituent parts as outlined by Bell (1997). The performative dimension of ritual has increasingly been considered central for more current theories of ritual (Bell 1992). Rappaport suggests, while ritual is characterised by its formalism, disciplined nature or symbolism, the performance element of ritual is key ‘for if there is no performance, there is no ritual’ (Rappaport 1974, p.8). Feminist theorist Judith Butler’s delineation of performative considers it an everyday action and/or behaviour which is simultaneously expressed through the body and socially constructed. In relating performative ideas to ritual, she suggests the performative is something which serves to generate and reinforce one’s identity i.e., we are what we do; she states ‘the performative is not only a ritual practice: it is one of the influential rituals by which subjects are formed and reformulated’ (Butler 1999, 125). This would suggest by looking into performative dimensions of ritual we can begin to understand how performance is embodied and how it reinforces our identities.
Performative Embodiment

Bell posits performance as made up of overlapping features, those of communication on multiple sensory levels and framing. Performative embodiment is an act distinguished from other acts through intention, meaning making, and symbolism. Social anthropologist, Stanley Tambiah suggests performance is a symbolic form of expression that concurrently enacts assumptions about the way things really are, creating a sense of reality, and way of acting upon the real world as it is culturally experienced (1979). This is counter to what philosopher, Fritz Staal believes, when he returns to the idea that ritual is ‘pure’ performance with no meaning (1979, 1989). Performative embodiment demonstrates the importance of the body and its way of moving in space and time. The body acts within an environment that appears to require it to respond in certain ways, but this environment is actually created and organized precisely by means of how people move around it. (Bell 1997, p.139). Bell uses the example of marching in a crowd to describe the complex multisensory experience of performance in ritual;

‘the power of performance lies in great part in the effect of the heightened multisensory experience it affords: one is not being told or shown something so much as one is led to experience something. And according to the anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff (1977), in ritual-like behaviour ‘not only is seeing believing, doing is believing’ (Bell 1997, p.160).

Bell’s conception of performance pays equal attention to what the performance feature does to the participant over the actual performance itself.

I find that fly fishing is always deliberate and through the acting out of the rituals, there emerges a level sensorial awareness that over time becomes an unconscious way of knowing through engagement of the senses – through embodiment. The key ritual actions necessary for fly fishing (reading water, casting, setting a hook, netting) arguably bring ‘saying and doing together in a process of embodiment’ (Kawano 2013, p.47). The term
performance evokes images more relating to those of a stage, theatrics and an audience, in contrast, whereas fly fishing is usually conducted in the solitude of the wilderness, with very few other people around. This is not necessarily a problem, as Rappaport argues ‘the most important reason for considering the performativeness of rituals is, paradoxically, that certain rituals are not themselves obviously performative but may make performatives possible’ (Rappaport 1974, p.29). Therefore considering Bell’s performatives of embodiment and framing may reveal something of the existence of conventions that are accepted and simultaneously and inextricably performed (ibid, p.33).

Considering that space of solitude, and the performativeness of the ritual of fly fishing, the environment around the angler is loud, the rituals of fly fishing making us see, hear and feel the place differently. Narrator 3 describes some of the more sensorial aspects of fly fishing, specifically the process of nymph fishing (different to sight fishing on the surface, weighted flies are fished lower in the water column). He suggests, this form of fly fishing, ‘you can actually do it blindfolded. You feel every take and you can decide which take you want as well, [gesturing setting the hook by raising his arm as if holding a rod] you can feel what fish are too small’ (Narrator 3, p.5). The enactment of a specific set of gestures (disciplined invariance) with specific equipment (formalism/ traditionalism) in specific places (rule governance), leads one to experience these things, like a choreographed performance that has the ability to channel your senses into a heightened experience.

Writer for *The Guardian*, Rob Schoenbaum visited Sweden to write about the mindfulness of fly fishing, the guide he interviewed stated, ‘You’re doing only one thing. You’re here and nowhere else,’ Schoenbaum went on to describe the experience and his observations:

‘the angler is acutely attuned to every sight, sound and smell. The stream is still or moving. Fish can sense your presence. A fast current generates sound that can hide you. Insects are flitting about on the surface. Small birds are zooming about chasing the insects.’ (Schoenbaum 2021).
The sense of presence and focus are outcomes from the embodied processes of doing, reminding us that not only is seeing believing, doing is believing (Myerhoff 1977). Through the embodied performance of fly fishing rituals, the senses awaken to the place around us. Rappaport argues this subjective experience of rituals, could arguably be one of communication; whereby our interaction and understanding of place is embodied and tuned through the senses.

Narrator 3 describes what it feels like fly fishing at night when a different set of senses are put to use and for him, feel most heightened. He says it’s ‘like looking at the river from a different angle, it’s experiencing it from a different angle, the wildlife goes quiet, the winds usually die down a bit at night, so you hear the river and you can hear fish move 200 meters away’ (Narrator 3, p.7). The performative embodiment of fly fishing concentrates action on the immediate ways in which the body should respond to place. The more these responses are experienced, the more ritualized the body of the fly angler becomes via critical circularity. The process of performance, of doing things intentionally, in a specific place, begins to build a sensitivity to smaller, more detailed aspects of the experience and of the place. Continuing on from Narrator 3’s descriptions of the senses, when prompted to share his favourite fly fishing photograph, he said he couldn’t think of one. Instantly reflecting on this, Narrator 3 suggested this aversion ‘might say more about how I like rivers, I’d rather look at them than take pictures of them’. He went on to suggest:

‘I could comfortably look at a video of a very small section of a river going by with the sun glinting off and a couple of flies going above it and enjoy that more than the vast majority of photos of rivers. I do quite like photos of literally looking through to the gravel’ (Narrator 3, p.6).

As we discussed the different ways of sensing the river, Narrator 3 challenged me as to why I hadn’t asked what his favourite smelling river was? He felt asking for a photograph was limiting but also went on to say he would not know his favourite smelling river.
Narrator 3 broadened the critique to wider media that represents fly fishing and fly fishing environments, wishing they were more related to this act of what he described as *looking differently*, more so from the perspective of the experience of the fly angler. In his opinion, representations of fly fishing in news and media outlets are driven by what equipment can give us new ways of filming, such as gimbals and drones. Critical of this, Narrator 3 wishes for a representation of what anglers do as ‘[a]ctually *looking* from somewhere else, which is more important. Looking under the water up. Looking down is just as good as looking along, looking through the water to the gravel, looking from under the water up too’ (Narrator 3, 6 emphasis added by Narrator). Narrator 3 highly values the performative embodiment of fly fishing, enjoying the different perspective of experience and feelings it offers him.

Performance creates the ritual body, which through experience engages a heightened sensibility. Anthropologist Tala Asad takes an approach to ritual that aims to move ritual discourse from ‘reading symbols’ to ‘analyzing practices’, recognising ‘cultural values and meanings exist only insofar as they are embodied in what people do’ (Asad 1993, pp.55-79). In this respect, looking to the embodied features found in the performance of ritual is...
looking at a gauge of the cultural values of fly anglers, and indicators of where meaning can be established.

**Performative Framing**

Bell’s second feature of performance is the idea of framing, when a ‘performance is credited with the ability to convey universal truths by means of an experience not readily accessible elsewhere’ (Bell 1997, p.160). Owing to the fact we don’t have the ability to experience or perceive the world as a ‘coherently ordered totality’, a performance can in essence act as a microcosm – providing an experience of a ‘mock totality’ or an ‘interpretive appropriation of some greater of elusive totality’. The performance of fly fishing frames and offers insight into wider understandings of the world and connections or relations within. I believe fly fishing becomes a culturally-specific way of seeing and thinking about the world that sets it apart from other ways of being. Bell describes how framing is an active part of ritualization,

‘As noted with regard to sacral symbols, distinctions between sacred and profane, the special and the routine, transcendent ideals and concrete realities can all be evoked by how some activities, places, or people are set off from others. Intrinsic to performance is the communication of a type of frame that says, ‘This is different, deliberate, and significant—pay attention!’ By virtue of this framing, performance is understood to be something other than routine reality; it is a specific type of demonstration.’ (Bell 1997, p.160)

The framing capacity of ritual offers a reduced and simplified reflection of the wider world, constructing ways of categorising life that is representative of ‘the full spectrum of human experience’ (ibid, p.161). When framing is used to successfully convey the chaos of human experience, to help us make sense of the world, it can help make that experience meaningful and act as a form of validation.
This framing of the performative aspect of fly fishing is described through an analogy by Narrator 1. He tells a story of once being interviewed as a fly fishing guide for a local news segment and was straightforwardly asked, ‘why do you fly fish?’ As one can begin to imagine by this point, answering that question is far from easy – a fly angler’s passion for fly fishing is multifaceted and often inexplicable in one sentence. That’s where the concept of framing becomes helpful. Narrator 1 framed his answer and experiences in the form of an analogy to try and represent this holistic totality of the experience of fly fishing. He recalled saying to the presenter;

‘It’s perhaps the most difficult question to answer and also my answer is of no use to your TV audience… There are many, many different reasons, I’ve thought about this question a lot and I thought what is it about fly fishing? I thought well, if you look at a tree, you know most people are concentrating on catching a fish, everyone wants to catch fish. … and then they discover that like a tree, if you look up, you’ll see there are lots of branches in fly fishing, and if you look down you’ll discover there’s a history to fly fishing, the roots. Then people get involved in all different aspects of it, and that’s why it can sustain their interest for so long. There’s other things that come with it like fly tying, entomology, river fly-life projects where you turn stones and count bugs, and the literature is just amazing’ (Narrator 1, p.20).

Like any form of ritualized practice, the amount of knowledge and experience needed to fly fish is exhaustive. Even if solely in the present motions of the act (not with past or future considerations). For instance, knowing how to navigate rivers in new landscapes, practicing how to set up your rod, reels, flies all so that they are suitable for water conditions, understanding fish behaviour, casting in changing winds and all of this coming together to successfully catch fish? This essential web of relations, or the tree with its roots and canopy that Narrator 1 describes, gives shape to fly fishing and simultaneously offers coherence to the natural world. This is similarly articulated through a different frame by Leeson, in The Habit of Rivers: Reflections on Trout Streams And Fly Fishing (2006). He writes:

‘Fly fishing in particular embraces the kind of minutiae that weave themselves into ever enlarging contexts. A trout stream points backward to geology and atmospherics, to history and evolution; it leads forward to insects and fish, to hydrology and botany, to literature and philosophy. Connections branch and
rebranch in overlapping associations until finally, from the pattern of venation in a mayfly wing, you can reconstruct an entire watershed.’ (Leeson 2006, p.3).

Building on from this notion of framing of ritual practices, Rudolf Steiner and Friedrich Benesch (philosopher and writer respectively) in their book *Reverse Ritual: Spiritual knowledge is True Communion*; state ‘knowledge, as ritual, is a whole-human knowledge. Its content is spirit, idea and being. Its method is art’, they go on to say ‘[f]or this reason, human knowledge also has no limits’ (Steiner & Benesch 2001). This notion resonates with Narrator 1’s tree analogy and Leeson’s mayfly wing. Firstly, in the wholeness of fly fishing, one can’t fly fish half-heartedly, one has to engage all aspects of their mind and body to participate. Secondly, the idea that this wholeness of human knowledge through experience (and ritual) is developed and this embodied sense of knowing has no limits as we experience it anew each time we practice. In essence we see more, we understand the world more fully each time. In these instances, the ritualized performances of fly fishing frame experience, for the angler themselves, providing a perspective of the world. Not just frame, I would add construct and orientate. This propensity of framing makes you pay attention and set it apart from the other ways of being, it makes you consider or look at things differently – a new more whole perspective.

The performative aspect of ritual lies in the conjunction of the multifaceted sensory experience and the framing that encapsulates some form of totality and shaping or ordering of experience. Ritual performance is about differentiation or the ritualization process, in which ‘rituals involve bodily and place-related practices that are confined to-and therefore symbolize- ritual occasions (Kawano 2013, p.116). Through an examination of fly fishing both forms of performance in ritual (embodiment and framing) appear to create a special context – a place of differentiation from the surrounding world.
4.2.7 Summary of Ritual Attributes

Examining fly fishing through the framework of Bell’s ritual attributes and drawing upon other relative work has provided a good baseline platform to explore and identify interesting aspects of the ways in which narrators within the subculture of fly fishing think and act, revealing how we experience and interpret the world. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, these ritual attribute categories are neither exclusive nor definitive, and I would add they are not entirely distinct from one another. There are instances where ritual attributes inform one another. For example, disciplined invariance is informed by tradition and formalism, what we do in some ways dictated by what has been done in the past, and past ways of thinking. These past ways of doing, particularly concerning land management and access restrict our actions through rule governance and is directly correlated to tradition. The experience of heightened senses and embodiment of the landscape during ritual performance is particularly honed through practiced and prescribed acts of disciplined invariance.

Summarising what has been revealed about fly fishing by looking at narrators’ stories in relation to ritual attributes - formalism relates to the way each of us anglers go about our day, what processes and routines we chose to ritualize. Traditionalism is revealed in the ways we refer back to past ways of doing things, and in the creation of our own traditions. Disciplined invariance is the practice and control of repetitive actions such as tying a fly or casting the fly line. Rule governance in fly fishing can be thought of in terms of land management and access. Sacred symbolism appears through our constant use of religious language to convey meaning and depth to emotions. Performative embodiment is well conveyed in our heightened way of sensing the riparian environment, what we feel, hear, and sense around us. Performative framing is the quality of fly fishing that allows us to grasp our place within the world, fly fishing representing a mock totality to frame, construct and orient ourselves through.
Upon closer examination of ritual attributes through the lens of fly fishing it has revealed each attribute relates to distinct features of ritual such as the ritual body, ritualization and ritual as a meaning making process. For instance, referring to the ritual attributes diagram in figure 4.8 on the following page, even though disciplined invariance is positioned within an understanding of the ritual body, disciplined invariance can help form a sense of embodied meaning. In fly fishing, this was exemplified in the stories of casting. Once fly anglers learn the repetitive, and controlled way of casting, when doing it in the river, we learn, or our bodies learn how to respond to the environment around us in a preconscious way. We learn to know the space through our bodies and this way of being in place can feel meaningful to us. Also, sacred symbolism is positioned under ritualization for the conscious shift to outside of the everyday and the accessing of other ‘planes’ of existence and experience yet is closely linked to meaning making as it is a process of aligning one’s worldview and ethos which is argued by Geertz as the way in which meaning is made.
Figure 4.8. Ritual attributes diagram
While these ritual categories have been useful to make sense of what we as fly anglers do, arguably, ‘categorization puts in place narrow, fixed definitions and rigid, inflexible boundaries which are limiting and cannot deal with ambiguities that defy easy explanation or organization’ (Brown & Maudlin 2012, p.343). Examining narrator’s stories for ritual attributes has allowed me to define what we do through our own experience. It has revealed cultural structures that frame our ways of acting in the landscape. Ritual theory takes ideas beyond the phenomenological study of self and world and recognises our inhabitation and meaning making manifests in a culturally constructed world. Each story although pertinent to the ritual qualities, is equally contextualised within constructed worlds, not extracted from all meaning or reduced to any essence or indistinct phenomena. Throughout the remaining chapters these constructed worlds are explored further, growing an understanding of contexts and relations around the act of fly fishing.

### 4.3 Summary

This chapter has examined the rituals and processes of ritualization of fly fishing that make fly fishing what it is through the eyes and stories of narrators. The chapter has examined ritual attributes, those of formalism, tradition, disciplined invariance, rule governance, symbolism and performance. Looking at fly fishing through Bell’s thematics reveals the ritualistic nature of fly fishing, and how variations and overlaps of the aforementioned attributes are pervasive within what we as fly anglers do on the riverbanks. By examining each of the attributes individually, this chapter has revealed a wide range of interrelated dimensions of the experience I wouldn’t have otherwise considered. The attributes of disciplined invariance, symbolism and performance (embodiment/ framing) each provide insight into how fly anglers begin to make what we do meaningful. Through disciplined invariance we connect to our bodies and to the places around us, in a process of critical circularity that becomes meaningful. In sacred symbolism we fuse our internal and external
selves – aligning our worlds as lived and imagined in a process of finding meaning.

Through performance we sense the world around more fully and learn to frame our relationship to the world – making sense of our place and finding meaning in that emplacement.

The examination of ritual attributes and ways of ritualizing fly fishing reveals the multitude of features of ritual that make it a unique way of being in place and paying attention to it. Interestingly, ‘[n]o single feature of ritual is particular to ritual it is the conjunction of its features that it is unique’ (Rappaport 1974, p.6); each one of these attributes could be tied to other ways of being in the landscape but it is how these specific attributes come together, how they overlap, and form a unique lens through which to experience and perceive the world.

Exploring the ritualization that emerges through narrators’ stories demonstrates more nuanced dimensions of the ritual like qualities of fly fishing. Emergent are the subtle distinctions from other forms of fishing – as experienced by narrators, the informal and unspoken stages of a fly angler’s progression, and the conscious, purposeful shift to a ritual context and place outside of the everyday.

When these features all come in to play, we fly anglers begin to feel different, we feel good, connected, and even healed in some instances. The following chapter explores these dimensions of the experience of ritual.
5. Ritual Connection to Place

The previous chapter explored the rituals and processes of ritualization that begin to define what fly fishing is in contrast or preference to other ways of being and how the through ritualization and the ritual body, meaning can begin to manifest within the culturally constructed world created by fly anglers. This chapter examines what those fly fishing rituals and processes of ritualization outlined in the preceding chapter do for us fly anglers. Asking how these ritually structured ways of being facilitate our embodiment of places, and how ritual allows us to situate ourselves in new landscapes.

Beginning this research, I was sure there was something more to this idea of ‘feeling good in nature’. I found myself asking what is happening when I fly fish? How and why do I feel good fly fishing and furthermore, do others feel this way too? This chapter looks more closely at how anglers describe the ways in which fly fishing makes them feel different, feel better and more connected.

5.1 Embodiment

Through analysing stories, embodiment surfaces as a central way through which ritual and processes of ritualization connect us to places. Fly fishing offers us a ritualized way of being, an embodied way of being. Fly fishing rituals and processes of ritualization teach us to know through the body, and form long lasting memories of how things felt at a particular point in time, they allow us to transform our state of mind and heal our bodies.
5.1.1 Embodied Knowing

In the rare instance that I see a trout before I enter the water, it becomes almost impossible to tie a fly onto my line. It’s what I call the fish-jitters. Excitement, anticipation and knowing you have every chance in the world collides with memories of all those missed fish. This is when I have to rely on what my body already knows from experience. My muscle memory, or kinaesthetic familiarity as Tuan would call it - the habitual ability to move unthinkingly (Tuan 1977). I have to let go of all the details of what has been learned, and just do it. This practice is not simply something of the mind but based in a knowing that ‘is embedded in embodied practices’; something social scientist Sarah Pink recognises as ‘hard to express in spoken words’ (Pink 2011, p.345). This is the feeling of knowing how to enact something, without being able to articulate how you know what you’re doing. These instinctive ways of acting rely on previous learning and the practice of angling movements carried out hundreds if not thousands of times before. When talking about the ritual attribute of disciplined invariance in the previous chapter, it was noted that casting is one of the most explicitly ritualized parts of fly fishing. It’s timeless choreography and rhythm, a manifestation of physical control and situated action.

I distinctly remember learning to cast a fly rod during a fly fishing lesson out of the back of a New Jersey tackle shop. I had never fly fished before, so it all felt particularly unknown. I was handed a tuft of wool attached to the end of a seemingly enormous rod and length of line. Stood on a rectangle of lawn, I was asked to motion the rod as though I was flicking a meatball off the end of a fork. As I did (apparently an experienced meatball flinger) the piece of tufty neon orange wool went flying through the air and landed on the grass in a straight line in front of us. After practicing a few casts of this particular style, I was reminded to pivot at the elbow and to lock my wrist, gesturing a motion between ten and two o clock, referencing an imaginary perpendicular clock face running through the centre of my body. I tested out this weird new way of making my body move, and I was told to look for a straight cast that presented the wool lightly on the ground in front of me.
in a straight line. With each practice, the tutor relayed more information about what kinds of things I should be thinking about, relating the kit (rod, reel, line and hookless fluffy fly) with my movements and how it should feel. He described things such as loading the line. A loaded line is what happens in the casting motion when the rod tip, aligned with a straight forearm and wrist is at the two o clock position. The weight and drag of the line as it comes from the 10 o clock position makes the rod flex slightly, and the rod becomes taught, or loaded as we would call it, ready to catapult forward with minimal physical effort – once learnt, this is just good technique. If I find myself with an aching wrist or arm, it’s because I have forgotten these foundational lessons. This is just one of many casting variations, and each type of cast requires a fluidity of motion whereby, through practice, you don’t come to think of the rod as a separate, alien object; it is an extension of yourself, a way of reaching out and connecting to that place. Figure 5.1 depicts a traceform of the various repetitive gestures and movements enacted throughout a cast.

Putting this casting into practice back on the riverbank, I rely upon this kinaesthetic familiarity, the ritualized cast encoded into my body. I take cover behind a boulder, so the trout don’t sense my approach and I make a first cast across the water. I see that straight line unfurl over the water and the fly land six feet beyond the line, the leader connecting the line and fly, invisible. I have presented the fly along the edge of the riffle; this is the shallow part of the river where water tumbles over rocks and the fast flow meets the slow and still eddy. The fly moves around in the white bubbles that carry the oxygenated water and trout food from upstream. To an outside observer this moment might appear calm and quiet, but my anticipation and embodied readiness, so intent on the water, is screaming. As my line moves into the downstream flow of water, my fingers act as spokes weaving and retrieving wet line, but my index finger maintains a constant tension between my line and the surface of the water. Now an experienced angler, I try to always be ready, I know there is a trout here. When one is fooled by my homemade fly, it explodes through the surface. These trout are competitive due to scarcity of food. When all of this comes together, and I
am able to raise a trout it’s often like a bolt out of the blue. Heart thumping, hands and netting clumsy. These strong feelings of excitement and anticipation can lead to shaking hands and a general feeling of wobbliness. This is triggered by a surge of adrenaline in the body.

Figure 5.1 Stills from autoethnographic film looking at the repeating motions of my cast.
This embodied knowing transforms what once felt like a laboured affair of learning the rituals of fly fishing to and instinctive way of being, making this way of embodying the landscape feel like second nature. The embodied knowingness of the set of actions enables me to perform the cast unconsciously, leaving me free to respond to the minutiae of being present in this most sacred of places.

This process is ‘a ritualized and/or symbolic movement from one space to another’ whereby multiple processes of knowingness in relation to the environment are underway (Pink 2011, p.348). This reflects the idea of a place as a ‘constellation of processes’ (Massey 2005, p.141) woven together through embodied acts. In Mark Harris’s *Ways of Knowing* (2007); this form of embodied knowing is posited as a practical and continual activity. This resonates with the ways in which we develop as anglers, whereby recurrent processes of contemplation and informed action are requisite for the art of angling (Hewitt, 1966). Harris notes the continuous and symbiotic way in which we come to know; he states ‘knowing is always bound up in one way or other with the world. A person does not leave their environment to know . . . neither does she stop in order to know: she continues’ (Harris 2007, p.1). This embodied and embedded way of knowing is connected with Ingold’s notions of *movement* in place, through which movement is seen as a tool to know a place. He further suggests ‘we *know as we go*, from place to place’ (2002, p.229 emphasis original). He extends this, stating;

‘. . . knowing, like the perception of the environment in general, proceeds along paths of observation. One can no more know in places than travel in them. Rather, knowledge is regional: it is to be cultivated by moving along paths that lead around, towards or away from place, from or to places elsewhere’ (ibid)

When it all comes together, these ritualized ways of moving and acting, it’s as though I’m not thinking much at all. I feel it instinctively, and it feels like the world is both ‘reduced and grows’ (Barbieri 2018). My connection, body-mind totally immersed and in the present,
requiring a continual reflection on time and nature and an awareness of one’s own body in a process of embodiment (Eden & Bear 2011). This feeling is so different to the way I embody space in my day to day, exemplifying the ritualization experienced; as it is ‘a way of acting that is designated and orchestrated to distinguish [...] what is being done in comparison to the other, usually more quotidian, activities’ (Bell 1990, p.74). When I am fly fishing, the feeling I have being in and surrounded by water is like nothing else. In almost every sense, what I experience when fly fishing is not my normal way of feeling and perceiving the world around me, it feels different to walking along a street or being at work. The significance of this attitude lies in stepping outside of the everyday, constituting itself as different and contrasting to other ways of doing things. Figure 5.2 features stills from my autoethnographic film, moments of particular embodied engagement, a walked journey, the act of tying on a fly to my fly line and turning stones to reveal fly life from below the surface.

This experience is furthered by testing our abilities through application of embodied knowledge to new, unknown landscapes. It is not often in today’s world that we have any excuse to sidestep our usual, partial human perspective and become something else in a place. Writer and angler John Knight describes this notion,

‘For all our prodigious technology and equipment, the necessary humility of a day spent fishing finds the angler reckoning with a world in which he has few answers and very little control. If these also happen to be the very circumstances of our lives, the measure of success lies not in dominance but in finding a place within what we don’t fully understand’ (Knight 2017).

Knight describes the connectedness we feel, immersive way of being in the landscape. Fly fishing comprised of many ways of moving, thinking and responding to the environment, the embodiment we experience as fly anglers therefore has an effect on our positionality.
5.1.2 Embodied Mnemonics

This form of embodied knowing embeds itself not only in our bodies but also in our memories – sometimes for significant lengths of time. For instance, Narrator 1 recalls hooking his first sea trout over sixty years ago. He remembers, even as a very young, newly
introduced fly angler, that sense of knowing where a fish would be, this place a chance to apply his newfound knowledge of rivers and skills to the discovery of a new place for fishing. He remembered, ‘I knew where there would be a fish. It was at the top of a pool, the neck of the pool, but it was undercut. I popped it in there [the fly], and sea trout hooked. I mean, it was a magnificent fish’ (Narrator 1, p.4). The ability to recall a memory from over sixty years is impressive but is not uncommon in fly fishing stories. Narrator 4 also shared a story about the feeling of the first time hooking a fish in a different but particular place, he says, ‘I remember the first time I fished there I was shaking with excitement. And I still do. I still do that. That big trout I had recently, I was shaking, my partner was shaking too.’ (Narrator 4, p.3). These memories of fly fishing firsts are retained and recalled in remarkable embodied detail. The feeling of knowing for Narrator 1 is strong and reaffirmed through the physical hooking and catching of a sea trout. The excitement and anticipation experienced through Narrator 4’s shaking sensation is a recurring embodied feeling. Both narrators experience an ‘existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience’ but in different ways (Csordas 1999, p.143). The rituals and process of ritualization of fly fishing engage with an individual’s way of understanding and experiencing the world. Embodiment is one of necessary parts of ritual, and is informed through the culture of fly fishing’s way of doing things. These forms of ritualized embodiment are about culture and experience within which there is a bodily being-in-the-world\(^\text{32}\). Something that once experienced can only be accessed via memory.

These embodied memories are considered significant events for the narrators, tied to emotions of joy, magnificence and excitement. The emotion experienced and the embodied mnemonics have the ability to make a thing, an act or a place important. Professor of Philosophy Robert McCauley believes ‘[e]xtreme emotions signal to human

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\(^{32}\) Anthropologist Thomas Csordas refers to this as a cultural phenomenology, which looks at embodied experience within the multiplicity of cultural meaning within which it exists.
beings that the current objects of their attention are particularly significant personally’ (McCauley 2001, p.132). The experience of emotional responses during ritualized actions are one way in which the ritual becomes meaningful to the angler.

Considering the impact of embodied memory further reveals there are two different forms of memory: ‘episodic memory’, which is of particular personal experiences, and ‘semantic memory’, which is of the generalized knowledge (practical or theoretical) that people acquire as members of a community (Bayley et al. 2004, p.13). James Laidlaw in Ritual and Memory: Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Religion suggests episodic long-term memory is associated with unique and notable events (Whitehouse & Laidlaw 2004) a characteristic of episodic memory that closely aligns with the first fish stories of Narrators 1 and 4. The milestone stories and the details of these experiences and feelings suggests these moments notable to the narrators, and remain so for long periods of time. As such, the experience of fly fishing milestones offers unique, episodic embodied memories that remain significant for the fly angler.

Both Narrators 1 and 4 recall the place in which they were fly fishing during these specific memories; this is possibly tied to the environmentally responsive nature of the rituals of fly fishing – the need to pay attention to the particular place in all it’s details. Narrator 1 describes features of the river when he says ‘the top of a pool, the neck of the pool, it was undercut’. This undercut is distinctive of riverbank erosion, whereby the soil at water level is eroded away forming an overhanging edge condition that provides great, protective trout habitat. Although these physical features will have transformed over the course of sixty years, the ways in which he responded to them in the past, continue to inform the ways in which he acts today, and will go on to inform how he acts in the next place (another example of the creative act of fly fishing). Relatedly, psychologist Arthur Glenberg
proposes ‘that memory evolved in service of perception and action in a three-dimensional environment, and that memory is embodied to facilitate interaction with the environment.’ (Glenberg 1997, p.1). This understanding of memory feels entwined with the ritual body, environmentally attuned, simultaneously creating and being created by the environment, forming embodied memories that inform future ritual practice. The ritual body is informed by memories, developed in service of environmental perception during ritualized processes. Remembering and revisiting a place through the body infused with a sense of ritual (Bell 1990, p.98-100) makes it retraceable and information of place usable and accessible by embodied memories. The ritual body is encoded with memories that are called upon to interpret and navigate new sensations, new places. When I visit a new river, my body interprets the environment; it’s the source of classification of these particular conditions with the particular intention of fly fishing (Turner 1967, p.90). The measures to which these classifications fall against are memories of past experiences. As I approach the riverbank, I first become conscious of my presence in this place; scarpering wildlife, reverberations on the ground – perceived by trout, who will likely scarper upstream. I get flashbacks to rock-hopping downstream along the west bank of the East Dart. There is a bouldery section with deep pools, as I landed I caught a glimpse of the biggest sea trout I had seen on Dartmoor. My jump had sent it swimming downstream out of sight. Not this time, I have learnt. I feel the wind on my face, and know to look for overhanging trees, where the wind will carry my stray casts. I read the water features, the eddy, some riffles, a drift – I know how they all feel, how they fish. Our mind is in a constant process of using our bodies and memories as a reference to organise our perceptions and experiences of the world as we live; ‘[c]onsciously or otherwise, the places we inhabit and pass through come back to us in the present, sometimes affording a sense of familiarity in the midst of uncertainty’ (Trigg 2012, p.xv). Our embodied memories and memory of place, accessed through ritual, have the capacity to offer some level of control and resilience during time of change. This embodied memory helps us make decisions about the way we move through
and engage with places, the way we have preferences towards places. We are endlessly calling upon our experienced ritual body to make sense of the world. Important to note here is that this isn’t necessarily taking place in any kind of grandiose or monumental fashion, these embodied acts and personal orientations are how we live our everyday, ritualized lives, how we place ourselves. Merleau-Ponty states, ‘[m]y body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my ‘comprehension’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p.235). As such, our ritual bodies can also be understood as lived bodies; bodies thought of in terms of practical, experiential engagement with the world, the places we inhabit. Phenomenologists (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Casey 2009, Malpas 2018, Seamon 2021) contend the role of the lived body and environmental embodiment is integral to place and place experience. What the ritual body achieves, is a tuning or honing of the lived body through the specificity of the ritual sensibility that brings certain perceived connections and knowledge into focus.

Enacting rituals can give rise to strong sets of emotions. Emotions subsequently become tied to memories making them episodic, significant, and long lasting. These memories and emotions are equally embodied. Motions, gestures and feelings tied to a way of being in place. As such, this ritualized and embodied way of being, and embodied memories link our bodies to places and types of places – our ritual bodies integral to our place experience. As we develop skills and an ability to perform actionable aspects of ritual we develop a way of knowing that crafts our own understanding of the world around us. Over time, this way of knowing becomes an embodied sensibility, that informs how we behave, something Bourdieu would refer to as habitus (1977). This notion of habitus refers to the physical embodiment of cultural ideals; our deep-rooted habits, skills, and dispositions we possess owing to our lived experience. Our perceptions and ways of embodying space dissolving
any separation once considered between our sensuous experiencing bodies and rational minds, our mind and body indistinguishable.

5.1.3 Embodied Transformation

In my experience, the journey to and from the river is a ‘transitional experience’ (Shields 2013), changing my mind-set from whatever was going on before to a state of focus and awareness of what is around me. As I get nearer the river, I slow down almost to a complete stop and my eyes don’t leave the surface of the water. For a short time, the water becomes the focus of all my attention: currents, eddies, riffles and flow. I contemplate my first cast – recalling it’s the best chance to bring a fish to the surface. The landscape now feels two-fold, in the first instance I am embodying the river and in the second instance I feel connected to the wider landscape that goes beyond that which I can see and feel, the complete environment is now a world of which I am a part. Johanas Granö, a Finnish geographer, made the distinction between an immediate landscape or ‘nahsicht’ and the visual landscape or ‘landschaft’ (Grano 1929), exploring this dichotomy of landscapes. ‘Nahsicht’ can be translated as ‘proximity’, defining surroundings that can be experienced by all senses, while ‘landschaft’ is the landscape perceived visually, the landscape over there” (Howard, Thompson & Waterton 2013, p.14). This understanding of landscape contrasts with Jackson (1986) and Corner (1999) who discuss landschaft as working landscape and landskip as landscene or visual landscape. The landscape once experienced in an embodied way is far beyond a mere view, it’s an extension of our bodies.

When I go home from a day’s fishing, it feels like I am emerging out of some kind of stupor. The encounters remain vivid in my mind years later, as do the places. I would compare it to the feeling you have after a long warm day on the beach. Rested, relaxed, refreshed and healed. Which is hard to imagine when in actuality I have been wading miles,
scrambling and slipping over rocks and casting upstream for hours. But I do. I feel a sense of wholeness, connection and getting back to myself. Like others, I find this is so hard to explain and do justice. It makes me understand why other anglers often think of fly fishing as a form of nature related religion.

Writing about fly fishing, in particular this immersion within the river – between ourselves and the landscape Maclean describes fly fishing as a mechanism through which ‘all existence fades to a being with my soul and memories and the sounds of the Big Blackfoot River and a four-count rhythm and the hope that a fish will rise. Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it.’ (A River Runs Through It 1992, Maclean 1976, p.161). The four-count rhythm is another way of thinking about the casting technique I described earlier.

![Figure 5.3 Autoethnographic film still, transformation of mental state into a flow state](image)

That merging of the self and nature is similarly, articulated by writer and scholar Verlyn Klinkenbourg, when he says ‘[fly-fishing offers a fullness of being; a mindfulness that brings dormant places to life. In the process of fly fishing ‘all that is inessential about you
drifts away’ (Klinkenbourg in Sautner 2007, p.xx). Both descriptions attempt to evoke a
wholeness or spirituality and sense that the ritualized experience of fly fishing offers a
greater or higher reality. The way the term ritual is used by writers and anglers provides a
glimpse into something of the significance bestowed upon fly fishing, with ritual implying it
is somehow meaningful and purposeful.

The experience of the transformative capacities of ritual is described by cultural
anthropologist Victor Turner and Professor of Religion and Culture Ronald Grimes, as a
‘transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of
cultural processes’ (Turner 1977, p.77). This suggests through observing or practicing
ritual(s) one can better understand and disentangle cultural processes through some form
of cognitive associative process. Cognitive anthropologists look at how people
conceptualise the world around them through categorization; stating, ‘all of our categories
consist of ways we behave differently toward different kinds of things’ (Cohen & Lefebvre
2005, p.20). To understand this further, psychologist, Professor Eleanor Rosch, explains,
‘one purpose of categorization is to reduce the infinite differences among stimuli to
behaviourally and cognitively usable proportions’ (1978, p.4). To me this is a clear example
of ritual performative framing. Although ritual is not a categorising activity, by enacting
ritual there is a clear intention and focus to the act itself. This focus informs what stimuli to
interrogate and understand. Fly fishing needs fly anglers to understand trout habitat,
vegetation along the riverbanks, fly life and climactic impact on the water. These
categories are representative of larger patterns, and by understanding them we transform our
understanding of how we relate to the world around us.

Turner considers transformative features of ritual a form of human play that
enables flow states and the crossing of thresholds. Turner draws upon psychologist Mihaly
Csikszentmihalyi’s idea of flow who clarifies ‘controlled and focused attention produces a
range of positive subjective states, collectively referred to as flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).
This idea and feeling of being in a flow state aligns with both mine and others’ experience of fly fishing which we all seek to understand and articulate – most commonly through phrases such as, ‘feeling part of something larger than oneself’, ‘a fullness of being’ and ‘in the process of fly fishing ‘all that is inessential about you drifts away’. These are subjectively positive emotions that relate closely to the landscape and place within which these rituals are occurring. This flow state and situatedness is further illuminated by Csikszentmihaly and Professor in the Social Sciences John MacAloon in writing about *Deep play and the flow experience in rock climbing* (1983). They believe, ‘[w]e experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, …in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future (Csikszentmihalyi and MacAloon cited in Turner 2001, pp.55 - 56). Identifying ritual as a form of play that enables access to a flow state exemplifies Bourdieu’s argument that the role of ritual itself is to effect *change*. He considers the aim of ritual to ‘facilitate and authorize passages or encounters between opposed orders, presumably the orders of nature and culture or, equally reified, the old order and the new order’ (1977, p.120). The change or transformation in fly fishing is the change in the state of mind, feeling of knowingness and greater sense being in relation to the things around. Anthropologists Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw theory of ritual suggests ritual is an ‘account of the transformation of action by ritualization’ (1994, p.3) something Turner would elaborate on, consider ritual a means to achieve transformation of the soul.

A transformative understanding of ritual recognises ritual as a cognitive process that allows us to understand experience differently. Transformative ritual has the ability to change how we feel, to take us into a state of play, and flow. It can change how we experience, perceive or understand the relationality of our place in the world. As learnt through our stories, to fly fish is to look at the landscape and the place around us a deeper way, a focused way that offers insight into broader notions of place. Through fly fishing,
we are taught to hone-in on specific parts of the world around us, to understand how we’re interconnected and where we fit within that wider ecosystem.

5.1.4 Embodied Healing

Narrators often described the feeling of healing through fly fishing. As mentioned in the previous section, I consider my experience more of a transformation of mental state whereas other fly anglers describe something more meditative, or a bodily sense of healing. In particular in natural environments and through the actions and gestures of fly fishing itself.

During our day sharing fly fishing stories Narrator 3 ascribed what they understood to be Zen like qualities, indicating a meditative state of fly fishing in relation to the physical release of endorphins experienced through various moments or acts relating to fly fishing:

‘it’s the techniques, the line mending and casting, all those things make it… I like fly-tying, I also sew and do leatherwork, all sorts of stuff. They’re all the same thing; they’re all about a level of precision, skill and forethought – all the stuff that just good meditative practice. Sometimes catching a fish breaks that kind of zen moment and it’s a little bit arresting’ (Narrator 3, p.2).

Many of the processes Narrator 3 mentions here are examples of the disciplined invariance, each action having a common, repetitive pattern or continuous rhythm to them. When fishing, the angler makes many false casts before the final cast is ready to land on the water in a manner that presents the fly to an upstream trout that doesn’t splash the water, or show the line, and make the fly sit correctly on the tension of the water surface. Each back and forth of the false cast can dry the fly, to make sure it’s not sodden and sinking when on the water surface. False casts also help with orientation and access to water pockets, as we false cast, we vary fly line length in order to test out direction and distance and the length

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33 Hormones one’s body naturally releases when it feels pain or stress, or during pleasurable activities and which help to relieve pain or stress or enhance a sense of well-being.
of line required to reach the chosen area of water we wish to cover with the fly – this
testing often risks the loss of a fly to overhanging branches. The cast is an extension of the
body, reaching into river spaces the body cannot go. The better a fly caster we can become
the better control over our entire medium of catching fish. Although many embodied
micro-adjustments are being made while in the air, the cast appears continuous, smooth
and relaxed. Figure 5.4 illustrates a narrator focusing on casting to an eddy under some
overhanging brambles - highlighted. Each back and forth of the rod and line he uses micro
adjustments. Amending line length and reach, angle of rod and line in relation to expected
tROUT, force of cast and fly impact on water.

Historian of religion, Jonathan Z. Smith explores anthropologist and ethnologist, Claude
Levi-Strauss’s idea of processes of ‘microadjustment’; something Strauss argues is a central

Figure 5.4 Narrator 4 casting to an eddy under overhanging trees.
For Strauss, a micro-adjustment is a procedure of parcelling out, an activity which Smith describes as:

‘Within classes of objects and types of gesture, ritual makes infinite distinctions and ascribes discriminatory values to the slightest shade of difference. It has no concern for the general, but on the contrary goes into great detail about the varieties and sub-varieties in all the taxonomic categories’ (Smith 1992, p.112).

I consider these micro-adjustments a signifier of the ritualized relationships between angler and environment, they demonstrate that level of connection, detailed place-specific knowledge and application that begins to blur the understanding of experience from that of very deliberate and conscious to something more unthinking and embodied. Micro-adjustments reveal the attunement to the fly fishing equipment, the rod an extension of the arm, and an attunement to the place, tiny cues from the climate and river informing those micro movements and gestures. In these moments, our brain feels like it has turned off. Our body’s muscles relax and the cast becomes effortless and we don’t feel our body working in any kind of laboured way. Rather we feel a flow through our body as if our central nervous system and muscles and mental focus are all perfectly in harmony and the cast just happens and of course the fly goes exactly where you want it to. For s split second, it is as if our body, the rod, line, fly, brain and target are all one. To get to this sensation, we must be aware of, be sensitive to and enact the micro-adjustments needed.

The rhythmic movement of this ritualized casting practice is particularly significant, and likely what narrators are referring to when they speak of meditative feelings. Various studies signify the rhythmic movement itself as the fundamental and the profound thing that ‘creates both belonging and effervescence’ (McNeill 1995). These rhythmic stimuli are found to ‘significantly impact brain functioning and to produce these very effects’ (Marshall 2002, p.364). I will speak more about this slightly later with stories of anglers who speak of the healing and meditative aspects of fly fishing. This form of physical activity is a
means of ‘producing endogenous opioids’\textsuperscript{34} which further induce effervescence’ (Lex 1976 p.109). Fly anglers make several considerations each time the line goes behind and in front of them. Likewise, with tying flies, the motion of wrapping material around a hook involves continuously, repeating motions and applied tensions and techniques to mimic the segmented bodies of fly life.

Narrator 3 describes the level of attentiveness he exerts when fly fishing, and how this is a multi-layered state of anticipation and focus coming together, stating how he senses:

‘both a rush from catching fish, or missing fish. It increases your heart rate. Even if you don’t catch fish you’re going to get some level of exhaustion as if you’d caught it. Then there’s the meditative process. I think those things together are pretty powerful in terms of putting you in a nice, happy place’ (Narrator 3, p.8).

Narrator 3 is noting the level of focus and purposefulness the act of fly fishing requires, one of the key defining ritual attributes that unifies ritual theories and definitions. It is essential for ritual practices to exercise some a level of control, and a focusing of attention a primary and in order to yield ritual effects (Goffman 1967, Collins 1988). This is because the control exerted in order to focus the mind and body purely on the act itself has a positive effect on one’s subjective state, clearing the mind of our usual thoughts and worries – dwelling on things we would sooner forget (Wegner 1989). Schoenbaum argues, the ‘intense focus fills your senses. You emerge from the river like you’ve had the best-ever meditation’ (Schoenbaum 2021). Angling writer and scholar Snyder relates this capacity of fly fishing as an orienting device:

‘Anglers repetitively speak of fly fishing as the ways by which they find orientation or meaning in their lives. On a recent internet forum, "Fred51" described how fly fishing keeps him "oriented in a world disorienting," and how fly fishing connects him with "what is really essential"’ (Snyder 2007, p.899).

\textsuperscript{34} These are made up of endorphins and enkephalins (fight or flight responses) that are primarily produced in the brain and work with the body’s internal systems (Zagon et al. 2017).
Looking more closely at what the act of focusing alone, philosopher Eugene Gendlin believes it to be a way of accessing embodied knowledge and enabling change, he suggests focusing ‘will enable you to find and change where your life is stuck, cramped, hemmed in, slowed down. And it will enable you to change- to live from a deeper place than just thoughts and feelings’ (Gendlin 2003). I relate this back to my own auto-ethnographic writing about a day’s fishing, when I make note that it usually begins with an urge to get away, to change something up, to go and do something that will make me feel myself again.

Gendlin suggests the act of focusing is an inward process, that is sensed obscurely at first but that begins to change you in a bodily way. Narrator 3 makes us aware of various feelings and cognitive states he experiences that foster that feeling of ‘putting you in a nice happy place’. For him, there is a feeling produced in the body when fly fishing that allows him to feel good even without catching a fish, but there is also a sense of elation when he can rise a fish. Interestingly, focus can be considered a large part of this; focusing can change the way you feel emotionally and bodily, making you feel a sense of ‘relief and a coming alive’ (ibid, 8). Focusing engages an awareness in the body, something Gendlin calls the felt sense. This focus is a physical, embodied experience whereby:

‘An internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about the given subject as a given time-encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail […]. Since a felt sense doesn’t communicate itself in words, it isn’t easy to describe in words. It is an unfamiliar, deep-down level of awareness’ (Gendlin 2003, p.32).

This exemplifies the transformative elements of ritual that emerge through ritual symbolism and performance, that were introduced in earlier research. Narrator 3 describes an awareness of a threshold between mental states – going from controlled, intense and focused attention to a positive sense of meditation and relaxation. This unclear and almost fuzzy sensation, although hard to articulate, is a central aspect of fly fishing, and one of the main reasons anglers engage with it for a lifetime. Mark Browning, in *Haunted by Waters: Fly Fishing in North American Literature* argues:
‘the negotiation of the boundaries between ordinary and extraordinary experience through the practices of fly casting, by which the angler aims to reach, or cast, into unseen, extraordinary worlds of nature’ (Browning 1998, p.12).

This negotiation of shift between boundaries is what psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi refers to as a flow state. The flow state a result of ritual. The ritualized practices of fly fishing make this particularly accessible to those who gain a certain level of skill.

Sociologist, Douglas Marshall argues ritual practices induce altered subjective states and ‘effortful’ and/or unusual behaviours, he goes on to say ‘[t]he extent to which common means of escaping self-awareness and achieving flow converge with typical ritual practices is striking’ (2002, p.363). The flow state is what Gendlin would think of as the felt sense and resultant physical shifts - the body shift (Gendlin 2003, p.39).

We have limited words to describe this deeply felt sensation. This depth of experiences was something I had hoped to explore in more detail through micro-phenomenological methods, which exist for this very exploration; to understand those experiences that are the most intimate to us that escape our awareness. Micro-phenomenologists believe with the right guidance we can access a more subtle dimension ‘where our ideas originate and which gives meaning to our words and acts. Being cut off from this vibrant dimension depresses and exhausts us, being connected with it makes us joyful and reanimates our lives’ (Petitmengin & Zischka 2021). Something of this description resonates with my Narrator 3’s transformative state of getting to a nice happy place and my auto-ethnographic reflection of seeking out something, outside of the pressure of everyday, to feel differently – something we both discover through fly fishing.

In trying to make sense of his own good feeling, Narrator 3, reflected on his knowledge of the ‘proven benefits for blue and green spaces being beneficial for mental health’, and regularly going fly fishing to actively and specifically sort out his mental issues (Narrator 3,
The importance of blue and green spaces for better mental health is popularly recognised (Bowler et al. 2010, Wheeler et al. 2012 & Volker & Kistemann 2014) enough so that it has been widely disseminated to the public and made aware to people like Narrator 3. The benefits attributed to the positive mental health impact of being in green and blue space are summarised by Gascon et al. (2015) through four mechanisms:

‘(a) intrinsic qualities of green and blue spaces that enhance health or well-being (restoration theory) and that have an effect through simple viewing or observing green or blue spaces; (b) the healthy environment associated with green spaces (less temperature, air pollutants and noise have been observed in greener areas) and (c) the opportunity to perform physical activity and (d) to enhance social interactions.’ (Gascon et al. 2015, p.4367)

Of most relevance to what Narrator 3 divulges is the performance of physical activity, the fishing itself. Although not openly spoken about by Narrator 3, there is no doubt the qualities and characteristics of the fly fishing contexts have an impact on both the desire to go these kinds of places to fish and consequential enjoyment, and good feeling.

Narrator 3 felt a particular call to the river to begin fly fishing when he broke his leg and was in a cast, ‘I dreamt of spending my recovery walking around the rivers, the idea of having my foot in cold water and using these flies I’ve tied was occupying my mind a lot – I quickly became obsessed with the idea of fly fishing’ (Narrator 3, p.1). This motivation to get back in nature is driven by Narrator 3’s past experiences of what it feels like to be in water. The memory of the restorative feeling associated with being in the cold river, the relief he imagines feeling, in this sense, ‘the regenerative power of nature cannot be overstated’ (Robinson 2021, p.232). I would suggest this is even more so with water, being in and on the water.

35 “The term green spaces refers to vegetation (trees, grass, forests, parks, etc.), whereas blue spaces are all the visible surface waters in space (lakes, rivers, coastal water)” (Gascon et al. 2015, p.4355)
Unintended rituals as ‘natural’ rituals (Collins 1988) can be discernible by the ritual outcomes that follow and their palliative effects, ‘accomplished by endowing the participants with socially functional belief and belonging is sociologically significant, but incidental—and probably invisible—to the participants themselves’ (Marshall 2002, p.369). Although the rituals of fly fishing primarily serve as a mode of hunting they concurrently offer a way of knowing and connecting to nature that ‘mediates’ and ‘facilitates a transition between the social and biological sets of rhythms’ (Chapple 1970 in Scheff 1979, p.112). A transition that takes us back to nature, in what feels a natural and innately human way.

Narrator 6 describes what he believes to be this innate connection with nature and the good feeling it can offer, he suggests; ‘[w]hat is important is just being out there, whether it’s the ions in the water or whatever, but you just feel better and connected’ (Narrator 6, p.1). Corresponding with Narrator 6, Narrator 3 suggests fly fishing engages ‘a balance of endorphins and Zen’, a term used colloquially to describe a feeling he proposed could be the same for ‘any kind of natural experience’. His accounts suggest all of the components are there to make fly fishing an act which makes us feel good or different. Narrator 3’s description of the experience, and the things that are going on. Aligning with his sentiment, Robinson states,

‘The phytochemicals secreted by plants and trees have beneficial effects on the immune and central nervous system. The higher level of negative ions settings with rich vegetation has been shown to be beneficially treat depression. Touching a genuine versus synthetic leaf produced cerebral blood flow changes indicative of relaxation’ (Robinson 2021, p.234).

Going back to the notion of innate human connection, it is widely accepted that being out in nature generally makes us feel good. This could be due to the reengaging of our natural instincts. In our everyday lives we don’t rely on these natural instincts but by practicing something like fly fishing these instincts become useful and significant again. Ingold describes this shifting from an instinctual to rational mind set through the words of Charles Darwin;
‘As creatures advance along the scale of nature, the proportion of rational intelligence to natural instinct very gradually increases, but only with the emergence of humanity does the balance tip decisively towards the former (Darwin 1874: 98). For Darwin, then, the descent of man in nature was also an ascent out of it, in so far as it progressively released the powers of intellect from their bodily bearings in the material world. Human evolution was portrayed as the rise, and eventual triumph, of head over heels.’ (Ingold 2011a, p.35)

As humans, as we evolved into bipedal creatures, we became physically less grounded - our hands no longer a part of our support and movement in and through the environment.

Ingold suggests our hands now ‘answerable to the call of reason’ (ibid). This division, half in nature, half out makes for an intrinsically divided creature. Fly fishing arguably reengages both halves, the upper and lower parts of the body responsive to the environment, allowing instinct to give rise over rationale. The ‘natural’ rituals of fly fishing, discernible by how they make us feel after the act, transform our bodies back into instinctive, grounded versions of ourselves with bodily bearings in the environment.

As we shall see below, there are numerous studies on the therapeutic benefits of fly fishing. Where fly fishing is a form of nature-based recreation that ‘can assist with both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping by using the natural environment to help individuals overcome sources of anxiety, reduce stress, and reinstate feelings of reward and pleasure’ (Tidball & Krasny 2007). Two specific groups who use fly fishing as a form of therapeutic recreation come to mind that I know of through my engagement with the fly fishing community. First, are women in recovery from breast cancer who receive physical, psychological, social, and spiritual support from Casting for Recovery (Henry 2017); a group that provides healing retreats for women through fly fishing as a means;

‘[for] women who have had surgery or radiation as part of their breast cancer treatment, the gentle motion of fly casting can be good physical therapy for increasing mobility in the arm and upper body. Couple that with the emotional benefits of connecting with nature, and you’ve got powerful medicine’ (Casting for Recovery 2021).
The second group is Veterans, a group whose engagement with recreational forms of therapy has been widely studied (Bennett et al. 2014, 2017, Craig et al. 2020, Poff et al. 2019) through groups such as Project Healing Waters Fly fishing. Participants have been noted as saying:

‘Fly fishing is a solace… the opposite of war… a gentle and healing occupation. This can be true when it comes to what fly fishing can do to people with mental and physical disabilities such as veterans’ (Marden 2016).

The ritualized practices of fly fishing, notably the one’s highlighted by participants in the above therapies - casting, fly tying and being in nature - allow people to feel a sense of restored normality through reconnection, the need for focus leaving no space for anxieties and fears, a sense of hope and renewed, more positive perspective on life (Bennett et al. 2014). Research on these therapies makes reference to attributes that closely relates the ritual attributes of fly fishing to some of these benefits, stating; ‘[f]ocused recreation, or ‘present moment, mind-body activities,’ may help strengthen concentration, improve positive thinking (Poff 2019, p.32). The wording ‘focused’ and ‘present moment, mind-body’ could be thought of simply as skilled practice, whereby notions of focus and felt sense are outcomes of embodied experience and grown sense of knowing through the body. But processes of ritual identify the transformational capacity of these repetitive, embodied actions. The embodied performance of ritual leads not only to increased sensorial awareness but also frames that experience as a mock totality – a place to orientate ourselves from and make sense of the action, the place our bodies can make sense of our place within that environment. It is this performative framing capacity of ritual that instils the deeper sense of reconnection, restoration, and positive perspective. Ritual exists beyond skilled practice, it’s in the obscure, multi-layered manifestation of meaning that arises from performance in place.

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36 Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing is ‘dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans through fly fishing’ (Project Healing Waters 2020).
Writing more specifically on the healing role of ritual, Bell recognises this as an increasingly common shift in ritual paradigms; whereby ritual expressions of internal dimensions unleash a ‘healing power for the self and others’ (Bell 1997, p.241). These notions are representative of the shift in ritual discourse from solely religious connotations to the more inclusive and insightful ideas of what ritual does. She goes on to explain this shift from religious practises of ritual towards notions of self-healing:

“This is not ritual as a time-honored or heavenly ordained worship by which the transcendent collapses the gulf between the human and the divine, […] The new paradigm is directed more inward than outward, apt to define community and society in terms of the self rather than the self in terms of the community. Metaphors of wholeness and attainment replace older ones of transcendence and deliverance’ (Bell 1997, p.241).

Within fly fishing, particular communities have arisen such as Casting for Recovery and Project Healing Waters as a result of fly fishing’s proven health benefits. The inward looking capacity of ritual, sees people who engage with it feeling better connected with themselves, the environment and others. I consider being actively focused on nature, creatively appropriating spaces with a cast and performing other ritually defined physical movements – fly fishing offers several dimensions to a feeling of healing. The physical benefits of moving the body in gentle and repetitive ways. The intensity of focus required, alleviating personal mental anguish, stresses or grief from the mind. The grounding experience of the body, particularly the hands, back in touch with the environment. The relaxing benefits of nature’s phytochemicals and ions flow through the body. A sense of wholeness arises through ritualized engagement of the body within the environment.

5.2 Situatedness

The following sections on sensibility, attending to the landscape and situatedness draw upon the stories of anglers that reveal something of the outward relationship fly anglers have with the places we fish. Dewey observed, ‘the gravest mistake of philosophy is to
remove things from their context in order to understand them’ (Dewey 1931 referenced in McGilchrist 2017, p.102). By considering rituals and processes of ritualization in relation to the place of our practice, experiences of place connectivity can be revealed in relation to the rituals. We discover how we use our ritual bodies, imbued with embodied knowing, to observe and imitate the environment through our heightened way of being in place. When we attend to the landscape through our own fly fishing attuned practice we find that ritual not only helps make an embodied connection to place but also situates us in place in such a way we almost become inseparable.

5.2.1 Sensibility to Place

Place is a location or environment we as humans are inextricably and subjectively bound to, our experience of it is irreducible\(^{37}\). Extending this understanding, a place can be thought of as the environmental convergence of human experience, meanings and actions that occur spatially and temporally (Seamon 2018, Malpas 2018). Our relations to place can be examined through our ritual engagement with place because rituals are often a medium through which we have meaningful experiences in place. Now with further understanding of ritual we have greater insight into the places of ritual and the relationship between the enactment of ritual and our places. In particular, cognitive, embodied and experiential relations to that place.

Rituals are no longer confined to the types of spaces they were once considered to be confined to. Grimes in his text *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* has previously challenged the ‘presumed proper place of ritual—in temples, synagogues, and churches’ (Grimes 2006, p.xi). Likewise, through the examination of fly fishing, this study expands

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\(^{37}\) Place here informed by phenomenological approaches to place adopted by human and cultural geographers.
what we know of ritual’s ‘out-of-place appearances’ specifically ‘ritual in the wilds’ as Grimes calls it. The rituals of fly fishing are enacted in the certain types of places, nature writer Christopher Camuto describes these places in relation to the pursuit of trout:

‘I think of trout as an affair of landscape — not something in it, but something of it. In Chinese, the term for landscape, shan shui [山水画], literally means “mountains and water.” Roughly speaking, if you rub a mountain with cold, flowing water, you get a trout. This is to take a compressed view of geology and evolution, but mythic and scientific ways of thinking about things converge in extraordinary expressions of being, like trout.’ (Christopher Camuto’s Caught by the Way in Lyons 1998)

This way of thinking about our fly fishing places encapsulates many of the natural elements and features we form a sensibility towards, things we take note of as fly anglers. During our day on the river, Narrator 2 demonstrated a real interest in and knowledge of the local environment and wildlife. Throughout our time together, he made several remarks about fly fishing being something that fosters that interest. Throughout the interview Narrator 2 told stories, and relayed facts about all kinds of animals, vegetation, insects and fish – many of which I had never heard of or seen let alone known to be a part of our local ecosystems. Narrator 2 started one story with, ‘[i]f you see a kingfisher… they normally fly around you as they come up the river, and you normally hear beep! beep! Then you see the kingfisher, it’s their warning signal that they’re around you’ (Narrator 2, p.1). He was right, I had been fortunate enough to see two kingfishers before, both times whilst fishing on the River Dart tributaries. Both times when I noticed the vibrant flash of orange and blue strike past, I didn’t hear any specific sound or take in any other details, I didn’t know to listen for them like Narrator 2. However, I have come to associate the kingfisher with a good day on the water. Narrator 2 had similarly detailed observational stories for otters, snakes, dragonflies, caddis larvae (trout food), cuckoos, peregrine and osprey. The gold-ringed dragonfly featured in his favourite fly fishing photograph (figure 5.5). His days on the river brimming with observations of life on, around and in the river. His knowledge of the environment has grown with years of living, fly fishing and guiding others along these
rivers, a curiosity driven by his sensibility towards the landscapes and wildlife around him. Ingold refers to this way of perceiving the environment as *observation* and *imitation*, grounded in a practitioner’s own active, perceptual engagement with their surroundings (2002, p.353). Through repeated practical trials, Narrator 2 is guided by his own observations, he can begin to get the ‘feel’ for fine-tuning his own actions or rhythmic fluency, as Ingold suggests, *with* the environment. For instance now, having spent time learning how Narrator 2 gets a feel for the river, I know to listen for the kingfisher before I see it, I know to look into the river vegetation for caddis larvae, I have learnt to observe more, differently. Ingold’s assertion of observation and imitation is akin to a description of ritual. His use of words such as repetition and rhythmic fluency speak to both the ritual attributes of formalism and disciplined in variance – prescribed and repetitive ways of acting that overtime become unthinking, embodied and intuitive or fluent as he calls it. The ritual acts themselves inform and hone a way of acting in place. Alongside this, he talks about getting a *feeling* for and fine-tuning actions, reminding us of the role our ritual body plays in the way we react to and engage with the environment – an embodied knowing often overlooked. Although Ingold does not specifically refer to this way of being in the environment as ritualized, this understanding of observation and imitation helps elaborate my own discussion of ritual and its significance in environmental experience. Ingold’s writing on environmental experience and place relations is rooted in phenomenology whereas this studies inclusion of ritual adds to that discussion a consideration of cultural structures (practices and ways of thinking) that frame our experience too. Something we could further describe as a sensibility.
Figure 5.5 Narrator 2’s favourite fly fishing photograph with photos/observations from our day on the river.

Narrator 2’s way of seeing the environment and paying attention to what is around him through the lens of wildlife, causes him to constantly ask himself what these creatures are,
why they are here, and how do they live within the environment. Not dissimilar from Ingold’s ideas around observation and imitation, psychologist, James Gibson in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* refers to as an *education of attention*; whereby attention is a form of consciousness that is focused, and a skill that can be educated (1979). Drawing upon the philosophies of Immanuel Kant (1996), Merleau-Ponty (1962) and others, Professor of Architecture, Robert Brown (2012) has argued Gibson’s idea of attention can better be thought of as the cultivation of sensibilities, recognising our experience and understanding of the environment sits *alongside* what we bring to it ourselves, informing how we experience and understand the environment (Canter 1977). What we bring to an environment is culturally constructed, in this instance; through the subculture of fly fishing, and an existing interest in wildlife informs how Narrator 2 experiences and understands the riparian environment and ecologies. Kant continues, ‘human cognition has two stems, viz., *sensibility* and *understanding*, which perhaps spring from a common root’ (Kant 1996, p.67). Kant furthers this understanding stating,

’the capacity (a receptivity) to acquire presentations as a result of the way in which we are affected by objects is called *sensibility*. Hence by means of sensibility objects are given to us... Through understanding, on the other hand, objects are *thought*... But all thought must, by means of certain characteristics, refer ultimately to sensibility, because no object can be given to us in any other manner than through sensibility... although the matter of all appearance is given to us only *a posteriori*, the form of all appearance must together lie ready for the sensation *a priori* in the mind’ (ibid, pp.72 –73).

This relationship between sensibility and understanding suggests that our spatial knowing and relationship to the environment is framed by what we bring to it, through what Brown would identify as a heightened way of knowing; ‘[t]his knowing arises from both unconscious feeling and conscious, reasoned apprehension’ (Brown 2012, p.5). By developing our embodied ways of fly fishing, we develop a particular sensibility towards the river and its ecologies. In addition to that, Narrator 2’s stories have revealed a second sensibility that always existed, a sensibility towards wildlife from a scientific interest and
understanding. He has always had an affinity to wildlife, but fly fishing is a way he expands upon and this sensibility.

Sensibility is a culturally attentive way of knowing; this idea has become increasingly pertinent in this study as a way to think about the role of ritual in cultivating a particular way of connecting to place. Rituals inform sensibility in that they are practices that cultivate who we are and what we believe in and value (Parkes 1995). Rituals reaffirming our own understanding of the world (Plutschow 1999). I would add that rituals have the capacity to cultivate cultural sensibilities through ritual action, which tells us how to act. We then interpret and make sense of that ritual act, how we feel and think about the place of the ritual act through our sensibilities. What emerges through this is a process of ritualization, the potential for a formation of meaning through the prioritisation and contrasting of ritual experience from other ways of being that offer an understanding of self and place, and alignment with enduring sensibilities.

Although Narrator 2 has had a lifelong interest and sensibility towards wildlife and the environment, the particular ways in which he fly fishes and guides others is about educating a sensibility towards promoting and nurturing the environment; the ecologies of the river, as seen and experienced through his own sensibilities. Downs and Stea (1973) argue, we engage with and interpret the world in a way that benefits us to see it that way, within the context of our culturally constructed sensibilities. As such, Paul Guyer, philosopher and scholar of Kant proposes ‘[o]ur particular experiences of objects...(originate) in the structure of our own sensibility, not anything derived from the independent properties of objects as they are in themselves’ (Guyer 1992, p.13). We determine our sensibilities, whether subconsciously or through explicit cognition or ritual practice.
As we got nearer to the river, Narrator 2 described how he had learnt to navigate upstream on the Dartmoor rivers, ‘You’ve got to keep moving with these Devon places, or with brown trout. Cast, pace, cast, pace, cast, pace, all the way. If you stand still like you can do at places like Kennick Reservoir [a local stillwater fishery] you’re not going to catch.’ (Narrator 2, p.7). This constant movement allows the Narrator 2 to approach new runs or eddies with every cast. He has learnt to navigate and move through the environment through a particular set of synchronised ritual actions. Due to minimal footfall (human and animal) Dartmoor trout are very nervous. Walking along the bank, hopping a boulder or any sudden movement will send trout scarpering under the banks, up or down stream. Trout, with their conical vision, also face upstream to feed, so fly fishing from behind, casting upstream gives us greater chance of a stealthy approach. Another observation of Narrator 2 reveals what a nexus the river is, where water, vegetation, sunlight and insect life converge and relate to one another;

‘I’ll tell you what I’ve found, how critical sunlight is, you have really dark spots on Dartmoor, really dark tree cover over the water and the fishing’s not very good. But a little bit of sun, it’d change the fishing dramatically in seconds… I’ve got a feeling, I think sun improves insect life straight away. The insects react to heat and light very quickly.’ (Narrator 2, pp.9-10).

This kind of knowledge occurs through prolonged time spent and observations made in this kind of place. The places we fly fish converge around the water, the water a place Professor of Social Anthropology Veronia Strange argues has the added potential to reveal ‘relationships between things and persons and between material properties and meanings’ (Strang 2014, p.133). Referencing Mircea Eliade, architect Christian Norberg-Schulz describes, a primitive draw to places of natural convergence (stones, water and trees) as ‘places that serve as objects of orientation and identification’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979, p.28). In How to Read Water, author and explorer Tristan Gooley spends a day on the river with a fly angler. They observe a similar phenomenon as Narrator 2; ‘when the sun slips behind a cloud, insects will cool slightly, and some lose the ability to fly and drop out of the air onto
the river, where trout will be expecting them. It is this sensitivity that makes the angler’
(Gooley 2016, page 87). Although Narrator 2 has always had a disposition towards the
environment and wildlife, ritualization and the ritual attributes of fly fishing have brought
more nuanced details of these places into focus. For instance, Narrator 2 has ritualized an
approach to being in the river and approaching river, as he described earlier - cast pace,
cast pace. This is a specific and ritualized way Narrator 2 responds to the Devon rivers he
makes reference to. This is fast paced way of fly fishing, and different to how he would fly
fish in other places. This is different to how I fly fish, often remaining at a fishing spot for
more than twenty casts. This resonates with the formal attribute of ritual discussed earlier
in this research, each angler has their own way of doing things, foregrounding and
differentiating diverse preferences and ways of being in and responding to place.

Grimes progresses discourse around these aspects of ritual theory in relation to the
environment, recognising ‘an environmentally attuned ritual sensibility’ is characteristic of
some small-scale rituals (Grimes 2003, p.32). I would posit fly fishing as small in scale, or
arguably a phenomena that exists at multiple scales – i.e., landscape, bend in river, body to
water, hand. This capacity of ritual, both in being small scale and existing at multiple scales
is significant to the study considering how ritual discourse predominantly examines rituals
at the scale of religious and cultural events - festivals, ceremonies, marches, and
pilgrimages. Considering the aptitude of these small-scale rituals, Grimes states ‘ritual
participants believe ritual activity enables them to cultivate a bond with animals and plants,
even rocks, mountains, bodies of water, and specific places’ he also believes it is common
practice to affirm ritual performance as a ‘way of becoming attuned to the planet and that,
attuned, people behave more responsively, thus more responsibly’ (ibid, p.33).

As we walked from the river back towards our cars, Narrator 2 paused, pointed and asked
‘You see that on that tree? (gesturing towards a tree almost dripping in fuzziness) … you
don’t get that anywhere else! It’s a form of moss, or ‘Old man’s beard’ would be something it’s called. It doesn’t grow unless the air is clean’ (Narrator 2, p.2). For myself, and many others, this moss does not even register. To me it looked like sheep wool, although a bit high to have been used as a scratching post. For Narrator 2 it is a reminder or symbol as to why he chooses to do what he does here on the moor. This living organism, a signifier of difference, and a reminder as to what this place offers him. This form of place attachment and sensitivity or attention to place is not uncommon; other research undertaken in the context of different recreational settings (Moore & Graefe 1994, Stokols and Shumaker 1981) has shown that users of specific types of resources can become attached to and dependent upon them because of their unique ability to facilitate desired experiences (Kyle et al. 2005, p.155).

This attention ripples out into Narrator 2’s wider understanding of the place and how the environment is managed, citing shifting socio-economic patterns and their possible environmental impact on the places he fishes. This interest could be in part due to a background in business management. Narrator 2 spoke about the arrival of manufacturing factories around the peripheries of Dartmoor, their relocating as a way to minimise the amount of air scrubbing processes they need to undertake – apparently a very expensive process. What is significant here is Narrator 2’s cultivated, vested interest in place and his aptitude to make these wider connections, from the initial observation of an air quality indicator species to an awareness of changing socio-economic activity in relation to the environment. The immediacy of his relation to place informs his wider outlook and dispositions to the environment, and others in that environment.

Akin to the Narrator 2’s detailed observations, Narrator 6, was introduced to the fly tying branch of the fly fishing experience (the branch just one aspect of Narrator 1’s earlier
metaphor framing fly fishing as a tree of many sub-categories). Fly angler and author, Bob Wyatt writes, ‘[t]he single most overriding problem the fly fisherman must deal with is processing an artificial fly that will gull the trout into thinking the fly it is a natural insect’ (Wyatt 2013, p.11).

The introduction to this craft has been quite transformative for Narrator 6, changing his whole approach to fly fishing. Learning fly tying has required additional entomological38 observations and ways of paying attention to the river and the life there. Not only has his need to mimic fly-life given him a newfound passion for fly fishing, but the all-encompassing attentiveness and observational skills needed to become a proficient fly tyer has become very important to him; he stated, fly tying is ‘the single most important thing that’s improved every aspect of fishing for me. I’d almost say I prefer tying my flies than just going out fishing’ (Narrator 6, p.5). He continues, ‘fly tying has improved my fishing and added to it, I’m always looking’ (ibid 6). Narrator 6 will have developed a slightly different approach to fly fishing compared to others, with greater attention paid to fly-life.

Figure 5.6 Narrator 6’s hand-crafted flies.

38 Entomology is the study of insects. A fly angler’s study of insects, when out in the water, is hardly an exact science; identification is often not possible or even expected (Hellekson 2005, p.xvii). A general speculation as to the fly life is followed by a simulation or mimicking of observations. A fly angler will typically have a range of flies in a box that mimic local and season types of insects. In some more extreme cases fly anglers take a portable fly tying vice and mimic what they observe on the spot. A simulation of a fly will take into account more than how it looks, but how it moves, and what stage in it’s lifecycle the insect is.
This increased notion of looking is one of the ways we become more aware of a place, a sensibility particular to Narrator 6. His focus being on the little things that make up the whole. We become attached to places through this form of interaction, specifically ‘the interplay of our affect and emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and behaviors and actions’ (Kyle et al. 2005, p.155). This way of conceptualising place stresses the role of interaction between humans and places. Early in the literature review the idea of ‘places are spaces where life occurs’ was introduced (Tuan 1977). Writing on the dimensionality of place attachment, Professors Gerard Kyle, Alan Graefe and Robert Manning add to this understanding of place by stating, ‘physical space becomes the object of place attachment through our interactions with the setting’ (ibid). In parallel within this idea, they draw upon recreation and tourism scholars Roger Moore and Alan Graffe (1994) who recognise the multiple ways in which people can experience the same kind of relation attachment but for different reasons. Using the example of a hiker, they state:

‘a hiker in the White Mountains of New England might be attached to the setting because it provides the steep, rugged trails he or she prefers, whereas another person might be equally attached to the same area because of nostalgic memories of early trips with his or her family’ (ibid).

In this respect, where Narrator 2 brings something of his own sensibility towards wildlife to his way of interacting with fly fishing and the river (observing wildlife, identifying species) Narrator 6 brings his own sensibility relating to fly tying, as a way of informing how he interacts (looking, observing, imitating). Both narrators share their ways of seeing with others, Narrator 2 guides new fly-anglers and Narrator 6 shares his perfectly mimicked fly tied creations. After our day on the river and continued dialogue Narrator 6 featured my name in one of his newest hand tied creations - the ‘ZLB Real Emerger fly’ as seen in figure 5.7. This fly is perfect for wild streams at the beginning and end of season on Dartmoor - echoing early season ritual tradition.
Figure 5.7 Narrator 6’s insect and fly imitation illustrations.
5.2.2 Attending to Place

Landscapes were arguably the first human texts, read, navigated and understood before the invention of other signs and symbols. Through fly fishing rituals and processes of ritualization we learn to attend to the landscape through our fly angling attuned sensibility. This necessary sensibility offers a way to read, navigate and understand the landscapes.

Landscape architect, photographer and writer Anne Whinston Spirn, posits, just like the meanings of words, ‘the meanings of landscape elements [water for example] can be read as a record of life, cultivated, constructed and carriers of meaning’ (1998, p.15). Ingold raises a similar notion that meaning is present in the landscape, there to be discovered, if only we know how to attend to it (Ingold 2021). Over time, an angler knows how to attend and discover what things mean, how things in the landscape relate to one another. We read a river in our own way, as fly anglers. This is a different way to how others attend to landscape such as a kayaker. In the eyes of an angler, a protruding rock from the riverbed is seen for it’s potential, as a likely back eddy for trout to take refuge in. Alternatively, for a kayaker, the same protruding rock is an anticipated hazard with the eddy a possible entrance or exit point into the river current. This evidences the idea that ‘[r]eality is not the world as it is perceived directly by the senses; reality is the world as it is perceived by the mind through the medium of the senses. This reality in nature is not just what we see but what we have learned to see’ (Nelson 1983, p.230 in Ingold 2002, p.55). As fly anglers, we have a very particular, very ritualized way of attending to the landscape that forges a very particular kind of experience and memory of it.

This way of embodying a landscape has been talked about by Ingold, who recognises the subjective experience of embodying the landscape as one that has the capacity to inspire us;

The landscape should not be understood as ‘a totality that you or anyone else can simply look at, it is rather the world in which we stand… And it is in the context of
this attentive involvement in the landscape that the human imagination gets to work in fashioning ideas about it’ (Ingold 2002, p.207)

When Ingold talks about landscapes he asks us to see that they are more than something over there, away and apart from ourselves. Rather, they are extensions of the kinds of people we are or aspire to be. This extends to built landscapes; as architect Sarah Robinson states, ‘buildings structure, choreograph and sediment our actions to materialise our collective cultural values and social practices’ (Robinson 2021, p.2). As we engage with, build and inhabit these spaces, we embody our values and practices, with these places in turn offering us a place in which to orient ourselves. Geographer John Wylie suggests in order to study the way in which we embody these spaces, we must attend ‘to myriad everyday embodied practices of interaction’, that also ‘involves ongoing reflection on more abstract and first-order questions regarding the nature of subjectivity, and human relationships with the world’ (Wylie 2013, p.59). Wylie’s notion of embodied practices refers to processes of fostering a relationship with landscape, an embodied practice situating one as ‘in’ and ‘of’ the world (Dewsbury et al. 2002, Thrift 2008).

Such ideas relating to being in and of landscape (rural or urban) and phenomenology are inherently linked (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Wylie 2013), with active embodied practices in the land being reciprocal and mutually entwined (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 104). Borrowing from philosopher Martin Heidegger, geographer Edward Relph suggests a phenomenological objective to understand the experience of immersion is grounded in such wonder ‘a compassionate intelligence that seeks to see things in themselves […] wonder is often at the heart of genuine phenomenological seeing’ (Relph in Seamon & Mugerauer 2012, p.4). I experience an innate draw to the landscape, rooted in my own sense of ‘wonder and immersion’ that fly fishing offers me (Heidegger 2006, Relph 1976, Seamon & Mugerauer 2012). It is also important to note I am not idiosyncratic in these feelings, many anglers share the same feelings, there is something common about this experience among fly anglers.
When undertaking the cognitive mapping exercise about a day fly fishing on the river Narrator 3 described incredible details of the river. He noted where the land, rocks, vegetation and water all converge to form his favourite fly fishing place (see figure 5.8 p.174). His cognitive map (echoing the word of Downs and Stea 1973) represents a process of recollection, cognition and perceiving – revealing his attitude towards place, giving away clues as to his spatial behaviour when fly fishing. His memory of this place is rich with details that reveal the degree of attention paid to the environment, comparable to the wildlife tales of Narrator 2, although more closely tied to landscape features, plant life and river elements. Through ritualized actions, specifically the performative embodiment of ritual, his senses are receptive to all that is around. This receptiveness is what forms an attitude and approach to place, revealed in this instance through Narrator 3’s cognitive mapping. Throughout the mapping process, he recounted the shape, the twists and turns, the movement and journey of the river. He noted where deep pools lay asleep, holding previously spotted fish, where the river is cut by impressive rock formations and shingly beaches. He remembered looking at the water differently here, he paused to peer through the surface at the gold-bronze riverbed. Land outcrops allow him sporadic fishing access points, places he jumps across to access the difficult to get to treasure troves. He recalls rough locations of beech trees, hemlock and underwater ranunculi beds… the patterned shady areas, beaches, inlets, rough locations of downed trees, stunted trees, lichens, bryophytes, and the feeling of immersion within a vibrant green canopy. He remembered the specific rock where a big fish is tucked right up close to, hiding. It has never been caught. These markers are all positioned on Narrator 3’s a cognitive map as though he relives the experience right in front of my eyes. This meandering recollection, gesturing and sketching reveals sequential place characteristics perceived by Narrator 3 as though he was reliving the experience of wading upstream. Relph suggests these forms of cognitive conceptions of space can be understood through mapping to form perceptual knowledge (1976). He goes on to argue that this perceptual knowledge has an impact on everyday
spatial encounters in other places, echoing Bloomer and Moore when they suggest we understand and interpret the environment through embodiment via interaction (1977). As we do this, we construct a cognitive map of these places, a map of the world as our embodied selves perceive it in our minds. As noted earlier, our embodied selves develop dispositions (through ritual among other practices), and these sensibilities become the lens through which we see and interpret the world. The cognitive mapping process acts as a form of storytelling or re-storying in itself, interspersed with memories of previous visits to this water.

Narrator 3’s detailed recollections of the place are proven to be long lasting, residing in his embodied performance of ritual. Researcher of phenomenology Dylan Trigg, writes about these forms of episodic memories, which exist in our experience of place:

‘The memory of a place forces us to return to the immediacy of our environment and to all that is absorbed, both familiar and strange, within that environment. In doing so, not only do we feel the measure of time pass through our bodies, but through attending to the phenomenon of place, we catch sight of how memory forms an undulating core at the heart of our being.’ (Trigg 2012, p.xvi)

Each part of Narrator 3’s map is constructed around a way of being in place, ritualized acts of fly fishing forcing him to attend to the place, to become aware of all the features that make up that place. His reconstruction of place is formed through memories, his memory of place a particular mode of remembering, shaped from within the realm of lived experience and ritual. His map is an example of the sentiment, ‘the way in which we attend to the world governs what we find in that world’ (McGilchrist 2017, p.100).

Through his narration, Narrator 3 conveys his reading and navigation of that place, the characteristics of it, the general make up of it, how it comes together, what kinds of flora and fauna he has encountered there. This process signifies something both Tuan (1974) and Relph (1976) refer to - the ability to catch the sense of a place through enhanced awareness. This is crucial in what ritual does. Enacting rituals forms a sensibility that allows
us to form an awareness, a way of being that attends to place. This awareness is inherent to ritual action specifically in the application of skills and embodied knowledge to the ritual context. This effect of ritual is crucial in our ability to connect to place. Our sense of place comprised of these kinds of embodied and cognitive interactions that lead to 'spatial perceptions of environmental elements' that we then use to understand, read, navigate and orientate ourselves towards a place (Hashemnszhad et al. 2013).

Figure 5.8 Narrator 3’s mental map overlaid with an image of his that looks through the water.

Narrator 3’s description of this stretch of river (figure 5.8) reveals the legibility of this kind of landscape that anglers perceive – the way we attend to it. Legibility here referring to Kevin Lynch’s notions of visibility in a heightened sense, like place ‘that invites the eye and ear to greater attention and participation’, that offers a ‘sensuous grasp’ on our surroundings that is ‘extended and deepened’ (Lynch 1964, p.10). Legibility in this sense makes us highly aware of our environment, a vital part of our ability to perceive a place and to orientate ourselves within that place. The physical features of a place play an important role in influencing a sense of place (Ujang 2012). Without being able to understand and get a firm grasp on the characteristics of the place itself, I feel that we cannot even begin to engage, read into or connect with it, remaining external to ourselves.
Relph identifies two modes of human spatial experience as a lived indivisible whole (Seamon & Sowers 2008). One that is instinctive, bodily, and immediate, the other that is more cerebral, ideal, and intangible. Through experience, our lived indivisible whole becomes the ‘centre of our immediate experience of the world’ (Relph 1976, p.141). When experienced, there is a feeling of insideness, of being with a place. In its deepest manifestation, Relph refers to it as existential insideness. Stories of embodiment and attending to place speak to the instinctive, bodily and immediate dimension of place that Relph describes. Chapters 6 and 7 will further examine the cerebral, ideal and intangible dimensions of place required to experience this existential insideness.

Narrator 5 shared a desire to explore many new rivers; by the time of our interview, he had fished over one hundred rivers. Although each river is different, for it to a be suitable ritual context for fly fishing there fundamentally needs to be a convergence between land, rocks, vegetation and water. Therefore, although Narrator 5 reflects on fishing different rivers, they are similar kinds of places – but in each new place, he can build a broader, slightly different, understanding of place, and his sense of place within that. Figure 5.9 illustrates the types of landscapes Narrator 5 prefers to fish overlaid with a map depicting the sheer amount of water ways in our local area.

*Figure 5.9 Narrator 5's fly fishing photograph overlaid with river map of the southwest of England.*
Pink draws upon Massey (2005) and Ingold’s (2002) ideas of open and unbounded places, places like this seen as a nexus of entanglements; of geology, weather, socialites, objects, buildings animals and more (Pink 2011, p.348). The convergence of these things at multiple places puts emphasis on place as an *event*, an idea reminding us of the temporality of place, where no two exact experiences the same. Geographer Andy Merrifield explains this as, ‘knowledge is always embedded in a particular time and space; it doesn’t see everything from nowhere but sees something from somewhere (1995, p.51). Narrator 5’s exploration of a vast range of rivers tests his embodied knowledge in many places, forming a larger understanding of the experience at this nexus. McGilchrist suggests,

‘[w]hen we say we understand something, what we mean is that it resembles something else in our particular model of the world, which we think we already understand. Our knowledge is the result of this recursive process that confirms and reconfirms itself’ (McGilchrist 2017, p.100).

When talking about his relationship to these rivers, Narrator 5 referred to his own thinking process as meandering, his constant comparing and linking of places to places beyond. McGilchrist suggests, this is a process of building knowledge and understanding of the world in a *particular* way, through a particular take\(^\text{39}\) – or I would suggest through our own unique sensibility. Having constructed a big, interconnected web of similar riparian places, Narrator 5 recognises within it, unique moments or experiences. He told one particular fly fishing story whereby he was able to fish a complete river system from source to sea in a day;

‘There’s a river there, they are really interesting because they’re short, like a mile and a half from source to sea. That’s a really unusual sort of ecosystem, it means they’re [trout] interesting and really unique, there aren’t many places that have them and they can be really good fishing.’ (Narrator 5, p.5).

\(^{39}\) McGilchrist suggests whatever our attention is drawn to primarily and repeatedly is becomes our *take on* the world, something in which we all have (McGilchrist 2017, p.100).
I have heard other fly anglers and scientists talk of these local, isolated ecosystems; they describe rare species of trout that only exist in solitary watersheds (Durrent et al. 2011, Osmond et al 2022). For some anglers, the uniqueness of river and / or the trout can become a real draw interest in their fishing practice; place researchers have argued this sense of uniqueness can be the basis for forming a greater sense of ‘placeness’ (Mohammad 2013, p.512).

Ritualized behaviours become increasingly ritualized the more they are enacted, and the more the embodied knowledge is applied to new places the more attuned we become, learning to attend to the landscape through a specific sensibility. In turn, we become embedded in a particular way of operating, our ways of thinking and doing offering a depth to the experience of place. This sensibility becomes one of the factors to consider in identifying our places, places we become situated in, places we identify with and become meaningful to us.

5.2.3 Becoming Situated in Place

The stories in this chapter share our ways of embodying our fly fishing landscapes and explain how we learn to attend to a place through these rituals and processes of ritualization. These ritual actions offer a different way of looking, listening to, touching, feeling and thinking about a place. This sensibility requires a high degree of embodiment and attention to be paid to the immediate landscape. Landscapes like these, whether real or imagined, have the capacity to become one of the mediums and languages through which we make sense of the world around us, understanding the world as we experience it (Brace 2003). Ingold describes the ways in which we come to understand the world/ landscape around us;
‘Apprehending the world is not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view of the world but of taking up a view in it’ (Ingold 1996, p.117).

Through these notions of engagement, dwelling and taking up a view, anglers become situated. Human geographer Andrea Nightingale undertook a study into the embodiment of nature through fishing (sea fishing) and revealed anglers understanding reaches both above and below the water. Their embodied knowledge and rituals reaching deep into the depths of the sea, far beyond the immediate of the environment. Much of their understanding was said to not even be conscious, but rather something they have learnt to see, feel and perceive over time (Nightingale 2012). Just like Relph’s ideas of insideness, Nightingale argues; ‘how people conceptualise the boundary between themselves, and their environment is central to how they form notions of a realm ‘outside’ of themselves, which has implications for how they develop values towards and treat those environments’ (ibid, p.145). Geographers Sally Eden and Christopher Bear take this a step further, suggesting anglers almost become different sorts of humans from others, and call them ‘water subjects’. They emphasise the role the river plays and the ongoing, long-term interactional knowledge practices (Bear & Eden 2011, p.298). Similarly, Ingold discusses broader understandings of hunter gatherer perceptions of the environment, stating ‘they do not see themselves as mindful subjects having to contend with an alien world of physical objects; indeed the separation of mind and nature has no place in their world of thought.’ (Ingold 2002, p.42). I think this is mildly true for anglers, when experiencing existential insideness or a feeling of situatedness, we feel fully connected, a part of the larger whole.

In order to examine ways of embodying and attending to place, both the person and the place need to be considered relationally. Robinson and Pallasmaa state any ‘notion of a separate self that operates in isolation from its environment is thus tossed into the wreckage of an outworn paradigm’ (Robinson & Pallasmaa 2015, p.3). There is little to be
gained from a forced separation between something that is completely intertwined. Not only is my body physically situated in a place, but my thoughts also when fly fishing are totally intertwined with feelings of being in place; being a part of the landscape. It is important to note, I don’t get this feeling all the time, possibly because other activities I engage with in the landscape – camping, walking or swimming, could be considered more passive. I can walk along a river or I can swim out to a buoy and not experience a sense of connection to place, but within half an hour of fly fishing there is a good chance I will. Therefore, I don’t think about fly fishing in any kind of abstracted sense, but as a recollection of moments where I am fully situated in one of my places.

This situatedness resonates with philosopher Dewey’s notion of the mind being located in the situation; employing ‘the verb situate rooted in the words ‘to settle, to dwell to be at home’ (Dewey cited in Robinson 2021, p.1). Situatedness can be considered a specific situation in which actions take place, ‘an action is situated because it always takes place in a specific situation’, whereby a situation is embedded in a certain context (Rehm et. al 2003). Robinson adds, ‘[a]ll of our actions are interactions. Our actions do not take place in isolation but are influenced and modulated by our situation’ (Robinson 2021, p.1).

Philosopher David Simpson writes about situatedness, believing that situatedness is to do with ‘being in the world, in place and time’ (Simpson 2002, p.20). He suggests when thinking about our own situatedness, it refers to ‘being in place and knowing one’s place’ and to speculate about situatedness is to ‘think about everything that is around one’ (ibid). Fly fishing is an interaction, our bodies are interacting with many dimensions of the environment around us, getting to know the place we place ourselves in. Ritual is the framing device of this situation, giving us a way to think about the things around us. It gives us intention, method and focus. Ritual in this sense is a particular mode of modulating a situation that fosters interaction.
5.3 Summary

Fly anglers’ stories reveal the varying ways we embody and form a bodily way of knowing the landscapes we fish. Not only do we get know a place through embodied, ritualized practices – this interrelation offers a sense of healing and transformation that infuses our memories. Over time, we develop a sensibility that informs the ways we construct, navigate and orient ourselves in our places. Stories highlight the way we observe and imitate riparian ecologies, the way we attend to the landscape, developing culturally defined ways of reading and sensing it. Through this embodiment, sensibility, and attending to place, we become situated within it. We become connected to place and impossible to conceive in separation.

This chapter has revealed how ritual can enable an enhanced connection to place through the following processes:

- Learning to embody a place through ritual practice. Developing a ritualized way of understanding place, how to read, navigate and conceptualise how environmental features and ecosystems relate to one another (including ourselves)
- Sensibilities are established and performed as a culturally structured, embodied way of knowing (in this instance through fly fishing)
- Attending to place is informed by multiple sensibilities. We attend to a place through interaction, observation, attention

These stories and derived processes reveal that ritual is more than just performing an activity. Ritual is a way to develop a sense of embodied knowing, a way to form a sensibility towards place that frames how we attend to place. Through these practices we become situated, an embedded way of being in the world that is relational and connective. In addition to ritual itself being a meaning making process, this study recognises embodiment, the cultivation of sensibility and situatedness as key characteristics of ritual enabling an enhanced connection to place (see diagram 5.10 below illustrating this point in relation to
place and ritual theories). These ritual characteristics come to the fore with this study’s particular interest in place connectedness.

Figure 5.10 Ritualized modes of enabling an enhanced connection to place diagram.
6. Place, Ritual and Meaning Making

It was posited early in this study that ritual is a meaning making process, and that places can be the centres of this meaning. So far, this study has revealed that meaning is experienced by fly anglers through the ritual attributes of disciplined invariance, symbolism and performative embodiment and framing. The previous chapter demonstrated how rituals are embodied and that this embodied experience allows us to forge a sensibility towards place and subsequently situate us in a place of which we come to feel a part. Once this phenomenon of embodiment and situatedness is experienced, there is a capacity for these places to become meaningful. This chapter will examine how meaning can be explicit, with fly anglers, straightforwardly proclaiming ‘this is meaningful to me’, or it can be implicit – revealed through notions of feeling at home, a sense of belonging and the level of care and attention paid to these places that offer meaningful experiences. In many instances, experiencing meaningful situatedness has the capacity to change how we view the world and our role in it, with fly anglers becoming conservators and stewards of the natural environment.

6.1 Emplacement, the Embodiment of Meaning

Interactions with place make it meaningful (Roe & Taylor 2014), Wylie describes these interactions as ‘practices of landscape’ (2007). In fly fishing, each interaction is a practice of the landscape, embodying and responding to one or many of the layers of information making up the immediate riparian landscape. When these interactions become meaningful, Kawano would describe the process as *emplacement* (2005). The term emplacing puts emphasis on the act of performing or acting out an idea in a specific environment, highlighting the situatedness of the act. Grimes is explicit in arguing ritual is a form of ‘emplacement’ (Grimes 2006, p.102), whereby emplacement is the performing or acting out
of an idea in a specific environment. In this instance, fly anglers act out rituals that are comprised of ideas and embodied knowledge. The situatedness of this process makes places become a part of people and people become part of places (Kawano 2013). Kawano argues the concept of emplacement is significant as it highlights;

‘qualitative, concrete and subjectively anchored environments of which people are part and with which they interact. The environment not only constitutes an active force that guides people’s actions, it also develops as people develop.’ (Kawano 2005, p.55).

The acting out of ideas into a particular place is highly ritualized. Not only does emplacement mean the privileging of acts and places (ritualization), but these places become significant due to culturally specific relationalness – for instance a fly angler’s sensibility to the river and process of critical circularity (cycles of body/environment informing of one another). Place is therefore an integral part of the structuring of ritual, as Kawano suggests, people and place are inseparable, ritual and place are too. The river is the culturally defined place of the fly angler, a place we embody, and in turn are situated and emplaced within. This reaffirms Bell’s notions of critical circularity - the meaningful and symbiotic process of forming a ritual body in relation to the environment.

Emplacement makes places special due to the enactment of embodied performances and situatedness, bringing with it new perspectives of the world and our place within it (ritual performative framing). A ritually attuned sense of place can be memorable and a likely reason for us to consider our places meaningful and worth looking after. We learn to know them, observe them and feel a part of them. An example of this manifested when I asked to Narrator 3 to undertake the mental mapping exercise. As he drew the river from memory and described his experiences of this particular river, his sense of this place was
revealed and with it an instinctive desire to look after it. Looking at his hand drawn map, he recalled,

‘There’s also a sort of island, somewhere around there, a bridge. I fish up through there, I go that side of the island, no idea why. This is a much larger pool which has these amazing steppingstones, but the last couple of times I’ve been there it has been choked with Hemlock and I need to go and sort that out. But that’s one of my favourite bits because you can fish from stone to stone, and catch fish in all the different places, and then jump to the next stone and move up through this bizarre pool and fish through there, so that quite nice.’ (Narrator 3, pp. 11-12)

The account describes the river as if he is reliving his experiences, his movements and way of thinking in place, but also reveals the subtle meaning this place holds for him through his interest in caring and maintaining it. It has been challenging to uncover what it is about fly fishing that has made it meaningful to me. Manzo, writing on place relations, proposes that because ‘we are all embodied and embedded in a physical context we are compelled to understand the nature of our emotional relationships to places’ (Manzo 2003, p.56).

Therefore, the memories and stories tied to feelings and places become a fundamental part of our lives; seeking out ways to understand them. When I situate myself on the river, I unlock a part of my being that transforms how I feel in place and how I begin to make it meaningful. Primarily, meaning lies in the way fly fishing makes me feel afterwards, a feeling rooted in the transformative capacities of inciting that playful flow state (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). The feeling after a day fly fishing is more notable for me because during the actual experience in the moment, my mind is not in a reflective state, it’s present, active, focused and engaged. I only gain a sense of meaning after the fact, whether that be walking away from the river to the car, on the drive home or days later when sharing a story with a fellow angler or friend. The transformation I feel through the performance and application of fly fishing embodied knowledge generates an emotional response in the form of a sense of that place. Norberg-Schulz argued the lived basis of a sense of place is not as a ‘mere flux of phenomenon’, but full of ‘structure and embodies
meaning’ (Norberg-Schulz 1979). I would now agree, that at this point in the study this assertion considering ritual as a form of structuring of experience, especially in relation to embodiment and meaning making. Echoing the words of fly anglers Maclean and Klinkenbourg, I experience a heightened sense of mindfulness that merges me with place and afterwards makes me feel different, connected and somehow at peace. Reflecting on this capacity of fly fishing, Palz suggests, ‘these fly fishing rituals have a worth and dignity that perhaps we need to be more mindful of’ (Palz 2016). Like me, he recognises the efficacy of ritual and fly fishing in creating a changed state of mind.

Meaningful experiences like the one I described above convey a ‘sense of the cerebral and other human processes’ through which an individual is situated within environments (Malone 2017, p.64). This quote from Malone recognises the significance of situatedness and the formation of meaning; also that it is an individual process. He goes on to suggest that ‘different forms of meaning come together in the mind and body’ (ibid, p.79).

Although this mind body dichotomy is common, I have consciously avoided it throughout the study, as it diminishes the connectedness of our body as the main mediator of experience in the environment. That being said, I do agree that different forms of meaning exist for each fly angler that are gained through various means. The ensuing stories reveal the emotional dimensions of the rituals of fly fishing in which fly anglers hold certain places dear for the affective memories they bring. These sentiments are sometimes from a lifelong association, for others, this bond can be fixed in time by a single event – such as a first catch.

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40 Seamon notes Norberg-Schulz’s identified types of genius loci (romantic, cosmic, classical, and complex) is Western centric negating many of the diverse landscapes experienced across the world (Seamon 2021, p.3).
Fly angler’s stories reveal rituals and processes of ritualization that can affect them in a ‘deeply emotional manner’, especially experiences relating to key milestones (Kawano 2013, p.48). Emotions such as sense of joy, of sheer excitement, of shock and surprise or relief and accomplishment, the feelings enduring – encoded into vivid embodied memories. Our situatedness and positive emotions towards a place are sometimes ‘related to experience and time spent in natural environments’ (Raymond et al. 2010, p.425). Our particular way of connecting to a place through ritual and the experience of ‘affect, emotion and feeling’, ‘are central to the formation of our meaningful places (Low & Altman 1992, p.4). The more experiences, knowledge and memories we have in a place, the more inextricable from that place we come to feel.

The way fly-anglers experience place through ritual is particularly conducive to the elicitation of good feelings and emotions towards that place. Fly fishing rituals and processes of ritualization give rise to something Catherine Degnen, socio-cultural anthropologist, refers to as ‘deep emotional connections that people come to have for and with place’ (Degnen 2016, p.1655). The following stories are examples of these kinds of experiences and memories that for narrators are embodied, situated and highly emotive. Each narrator’s memories are central components to their personal narratives. Emotions conveyed in stories tied to memories that encode them into something that lasts forever, evidenced by the stories fly anglers share of their first fish, first cast and how they remember feeling at the time.

Narrator 3 described ‘falling for’ Dartmoor in relation to fly-fishing in the landscape. He described a particular stretch of river using used a range of positive emotive place descriptors such as – ‘lovely, amazing, favourite, fascinating, amazingly healthy bit of river’. His relationship with place is rooted in the ways he can situate himself in these places, where environmental features are experienced and embodied alongside a recognition of the
functional meanings these places have catering to his fly fishing and wilderness pursuits. It is unsurprising that the quality of the water is something that prompts a positive emotional response to place aligning with Narrator 3’s own sensibilities towards the environment, adding to his sense of feeling good in nature. In Chapter 5, Narrator 3 spoke of looking at and through the water of the river and valuing the different perspective it offered him.

Other narrators used similarly emotive place descriptors, stating ‘we love small streams’ (Narrator 6, p.6), and ‘[t]hat’s what I love, that there’s not just one river, I can explore and that’s what I love about this. And the feisty trout!’ (Narrator 4, p.3). These sentiments reveal the scale of a river, the number of rivers and types of trout the river holds can all be key to a narrator’s valuing of a place. As mentioned in defining the subculture of fly-anglers, we tend towards the more wild and remote rivers, seeking out the challenge of native, difficult to catch fish. Narrator 4 described this challenge as something he loved about the river; ‘[i]t just doesn’t give the fish up easily this river, so you have to earn them, which I love’ (Narrator 4, p.19). These emotive reflections demonstrate the depth of knowledge and legibility fly anglers develop. The sentiments are completely situated, they are rooted in experience and embodiment of place.

Manzo has suggested one of the ways our emotions towards a place can also be revealed is through the use of anthropomorphic terms (the personification of places) (Manzo 2005), something I observed during interviews with narrators. Interestingly, English scholar James Paxon notes Aristotle’s definition of personification is the ‘common practice of giving metaphorical life to lifeless things’ (cited in Paxson 2009, p.12). This personification can also be seen as using metaphor to convey our emotions, metaphors a ‘device of the poetic imagination’, of ‘extraordinary rather than ordinary language’ (Lakoff & Johnson 2008, p.3). According to scholars George Lakoff and Mark Johnson41 this is typical of emotional concepts, such as ‘love’ which are harder to delineate within our

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41 George Lakoff is a professor of linguistics and Mark Johnson Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Together they co-authored *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999).
experiences, arguably more coherent via metaphor (ibid, p.85). One example of this was in
Narrator 5’s description of a river, ‘The Usk is a bit of a moody river, or it can be. If you
get it good it can be amazing, but you’d also swear there is not a lot of fish in there
sometimes’ (Narrator 5, p.2). The personification of a place is often driven by the need to
transcend or extend the existing cognitive boundaries of language to describe it in a way
not typical to that kind of a thing, where we may be lacking in words (Nishimura 2014).

Narrator 4’s personal reflection as to why fly-fishing means so much to him was repeatedly
encapsulated in a gesture towards a book he brought with him to our interview. He recalled
a detailed memory of unwrapping the book entitled Pursuit of Wild Trout by Mike Weaver.
He showed me two photographs in the book (figure 6.1) that had made him say to his wife
‘that’s where I want to be’ (Narrator 4, p.1). The images are of the author, fly fishing along
the Cherrybrook River on Dartmoor, a rocky section of river with moorland behind and a
small stand-alone cottage.

![Figure 6.1 Photographs from the book 'Pursuit of Wild Trout' authored by Mike Weaver.](image)

Since having that aspiration that day, Narrator 4 has spent over twenty years fishing, living
and working on the rivers of Dartmoor and Exmoor. During that time, he started earning
money by catching fish and photographing them for the author of that instrumental book. Narrator 4 started going fishing with that author regularly and on one of those trips they stopped by a local hotel whereby Narrator 4 introduced Mike as a notable angler from the Westcountry and they were given access to fish the hotel rivers. That day, by chance, via their introductions to the hotel and impromptu angling of the river, Narrator 4 was offered a job to establish a fishery and guiding service with the hotel owner. At the end of that fruitful day, Narrator 4 invited Mike to his house for a cup of tea and Narrator 4’s wife said to Mike ‘you know it’s all your fault don’t you?’ and recounted the book purchase, the significance of the images featuring Mike himself, and their consequential move to Devon for fishing. In the words of Narrator 4, ‘that was life-changing, those pictures there changed my life’ (Narrator 4, p.2). Incidentally, he was soon after invited to help guiding on a river and completed his basic guiding qualifications. Since this day, Narrator 4 has built a successful career as a fly-fishing instructor, guide, fly-fishing blogger, publisher and writer. Narrator 4 has forged a strong sense of purpose and meaning through an interconnected web of stories and memories about a book, a photograph, a feeling, experiences, and social exchanges. Over time, he has found deeply fulfilling work, which is symbolised by a carefully selected book and photograph.

Through fly fishing many of us form a strong affective (emotion/ belonging) relation to places that become encoded in our memories. As the places we fish start to become meaningful, we often speak of beginning to feel ‘at home’, something Norberg-Schulz argues is central component of our sense of place and meaningful relations to place (Norberg-Schulz 1979, p.23). This is where the meaning we experience begins to become a more obscure, encapsulated in metaphors of feeling at home and a sense of belonging.
6.2 Home, Belonging and Dwelling

Relationships to places are a fundamental aspect of human existence. Sense of place can refer to positive bonds of comfort, safety, and well-being engendered by feelings related to place, home and dwelling (Azaryahu & Foote 2009). Often, when we experience our strongest sense of place, or a strong feeling towards a place we say we feel at home there. Manzo in her paper, Beyond house and haven: Toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places, states ‘home’ is a spatial metaphor for relationships to a variety of places as well as a way of being in the world (Manzo 2003, p.56). Bourdieu and Wacquant contend that we feel ‘at home’ in the places where our habitus has developed (1992, p.128 in Friedman 2002, 315); where we developed our deep-rooted habits, skills, and dispositions. Similarly, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard argues that ‘our home is our corner of the world … it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word’ (1969, p.4). I would argue Bachelard’s understanding of home, aligns with Bourdieu and Wacquant – home being something that feels like something we already know. When we feel at home, it is as though we have a grasp of how and why things are as they are, they make sense to us. Seamon adds, the elements that make up this rich place connectedness, and sense of feeling at home are ‘rootedness, appropriation, or the sense of possession and control over a space, regeneration, at-easeness, and warmth’ (1979). Sociologist and human geographer Professor Hazel Easthope, examines theories of place and home, she summarises home as:

‘A person’s home is usually understood to be situated in space (and time). However, it is not the physical structure of a house, nor is it the natural and built environment of a neighbourhood or region that is understood to make a home. Rather, it is when such spaces are inscribed with meaning that they also become homes. Hence, homes are ‘places’ that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups. In understanding a person’s connection with their home, then, we go some way towards understanding their social relations, their psychology and their emotions and we can begin to understand their ‘lived experiences.’ (Easthope 2004, p.135).

Within this positioning of home, Easthope suggests ‘home’ is a particularly significant type of place (ibid). This conceptualisation of home is as a particularly meaningful type of place.
Similarly, Heidegger considers dwelling a process whereby the place(s) we exist become a personal world or landscape and a home. Notions of dwelling not only encompass our inhabited environments and places they equally extend beyond them. According to Seamon, this signifies our inescapable immersion in the present world as well as the possibility of reaching beyond to new places, experiences and ideas (Seamon & Mugerauer 2012). This is helpful in understanding narrators’ stories and the depth of their meaning when discussing their places as feeling like home.

Narrators repeatedly used the term home whether comparing the river to a ‘spiritual home’, referring to the river as ‘home water’ or comparing going to river to the feeling of going home. Narrator 4 made reference to feeling at home in many stories of the river and fly-fishing. His first mention of home was during a house-hunting visit to Devon from London, the riverside hotel happened to have a rod room, waders and reels but no leader or flies. Narrator 4 recalls, ‘we were in our bedroom I saw a guy fishing on the bank, I went down with my daughter and chatted to him as he was swinging flies. I asked how it was going, he asked ‘do you fish?’; I said yeah, but ‘it was torture!’, he said, ‘what do you mean its torture?’ I said, ‘they’ve got all the kit but there’s no leader no flies – I don’t know what to do, I’m so close yet so far’. We went down for dinner that night and somebody said someone has left this for you and the guy had left me some tippet and flies!’ (Narrator 4, p.4). In this encounter, Narrator 4 felt a sense of connection to place not only through the shared interest but to the place itself in stating, ‘it felt like home’. Professor of urban and regional planning, John Tomaney suggests this kind of feeling can be linked to narratives of identity and expressions of a local belonging, linking (individual or collective) behaviour with the realisation of attachments (Tomaney 2015). For Narrator 4, that feeling of home was prompted by a series of interactions; being physically situated in a place surrounded by family, then having an impromptu kind, positive social interaction with a like-minded person, who wanted to help him engage with something he is passionate about. Through
this interaction multiple components that create a sense of place were achieved. These are
the cognitive, affective and practice components that make up a feeling of place attachment
(Altman and Low 2012), and sense of place (Shamai 1991). Narrator 4’s thoughts and
knowledge (cognitive attributes) of fly-fishing were shared with another, this interaction
allowed him to act out or perform his actions of fly-fishing (practices) resulting in an
emotive response and sense of belonging (affective). These multiple dimensions of
experience when come together are meaningful for Narrator 4.

Although Narrator 4 is not physically at home in the literal sense of it being his
house or shelter, something about this encounter and experience at the hotel made him feel
at home, comfortable, familiar - a feeling of existential insideness. Home is another
example of an emotive metaphor ‘an abstract signifier of a wide set of associations and
meanings’ (Moore 2000, p.208). Home is therefore representative of the deep emotional
connections that people come to have for and with place (Degnen 2016).

Extending the idea of home as a form of meaningful place, it should also be recognised as
an intersection between contexts where multiple dimensions of place come together.
Geographer Ann Buttimer suggests we should think about our connection to places two-
fold, as two reciprocal movements which she argues can be seen among most living forms:

‘like breathing in and out most of life forms need a home and horizons of reach
outward from that home. The lived reciprocity of rest and movement, of territory
and range, of security and adventure, of housekeeping and husbandry, of
community building and social organization – these experiences may be universal
among the inhabitants of Planet Earth.’ (Buttimer 1980, p.8)

Buttimer suggests home is not only something experienced as a meaningful place, but it is
situated within a wider, more outwardly ‘reaching’ connections. Our sense of feeling at
home, in place is situated, and connected – a safe or known place from which to consider
movement, range, adventure. It has also been suggested, socio-territorial belonging comes
from mutually constitutive relationships of attachment, loyalty, solidarity and sense of
affinity which frame the processes by which a person becomes included in a socio-
territorial collective and identified with it (Pollini 2007). In this story, Narrator 4
experiences a strong sense of belonging – arguably feeling a part of a membership to and
of a particular environment (Mesch & Manor 1998). Relph argues, ‘an authentic sense of
place is above all that of being inside and belonging to your place both as an individual and
as a member of a community, and to know this without reflecting upon it’ (1976, p.65).
The intersectional context where multiple dimensions of place come together in a simple
gesture of solidarity and understanding from a fellow fly-angler makes Narrator 4 feel
welcome and belonging there. Buttimer suggests, when multiple things such as home, reach
and social affiliations come together and are harmonised then one could experience a
‘centeredness’. I would suggest this is the same sensation or feeling of situatedness. She
hypothesises, one’s sense of place is a function of how well it provides a centre for one’s
life interests – clearly something Narrator 4 can foresee (Buttimer 1980, p.8).

Many years after this encounter Narrator 4 developed such strong feelings about
this place, this river, that he wants his ashes scattered here. Geographer, Noga Collins-
Kreiner states, ‘no place is intrinsically sacred’ (2010, p.444), yet over the years we tend to
make subjective or personal ascriptions of meaning to places. Narrator 4 stated, gesturing
to the river, this is ‘where I’ll end up when I’m not around anymore – and it is, a wonderful
little stream. I always say I hope my wife has me cremated there, push the coffin down the
river […] But it means that much to me, I judge every river by my home river and it this
one, it has everything for me’ (Narrator 4, p.3). Narrator 4 has formed a fundamental sense
of connection with this river, a sacred affinity to it. This is a reflection of how strongly he
feels about place within the broader conception or reach of life, recognising it as coherent,
significant, directed, and experiencing a sense of belonging (Schnell & Pali 2013).
Narrator 4, identifies fly-fishing and river ecologies as a source of meaning for him; these sources of meaning can be defined as ‘basic orientations underlying human cognition, behaviour, and emotion’ (Schnell & Pali 2013, p.892). As a result of this, many other aspects of his life have become informed by and evolve around this meaningful connection. Sources of meaning have the capacity to ‘motivate commitment to and direction of action in different areas of life’ (ibid) – such as Narrator 4’s relocation to be by the river. This process fosters a meaningful way of structuring life without an explicit drive for meaningfulness – it is largely a subconscious phenomenon that can offer a direction for ‘invested, committed living’ (Ryff & Singer 1998, p.8). Admittedly, Narrator 4 is totally immersed and committed to fly-fishing.

The idea of feeling at home has been examined through the notions of dwelling, which seeks to explain relationships to places and landscapes, in particular drawing on Heidegger’s work (Casey 1993, Malpas 1998, Thrift 1999, Seamon and Mugerauer 1985). Dwelling describes ways of being in the world that are active and mobile – the experience of feeling at home is unbounded, connected to relationships, physical, social and psychological spaces around them (Saegert 1985, p.287). Dwelling is an individual's primary anchor in the environment, an ecological approach to dwelling focuses on an individual’s relationship with ‘meaningful features of the environment; it emphasizes the intentionality of individual actions’ (Coolen 2006, p.186). Geographer, David Harvey (1996) values dwelling as a set of complex ‘repeated encounters with places’, that over time allow us to form memories and affection for those places, ‘thereby rendering the places themselves deepened by time and qualified by memory’ (Cloke & Jones 2001, p.651).

The idea of dwelling, like ritual and place is always contextualised, experienced and created through our embodiment of it. The landscapes within which fly-anglers dwell are not external, separate objects or entity, they are themselves ‘the homeland[s] of our
thoughts’ (Ingold 1995, p.76 citing Merleau-Ponty 1962, p.24). Ingold suggests, landscapes such as these are the world as known to those who have dwelt there. It is where the past and present merge through processes of embodiment, attending, situating, emplacing, the recollecting of memories and imaginations. When thinking about fly anglers ritualized way of being in the landscape it is helpful to look to Norberg Schulz’s positing of the structure of dwelling as comprised of identification and orientation. He says, ‘We have to know where we are and how we are, to experience existence as meaningful’ (Norberg-Schulz 1985, p.15). I would argue that through the rituals and process of ritualization of fly fishing, that is exactly what fly anglers experience. The sense of situatedness fly anglers gain can similarly be thought of through the dwelling perspective as identification and orientation. Norberg-Schulz clarifies identification as the experience of the total environment, the world of interrelated things and the interpretation of meanings. Within that experience of totality some things emerge as more significant (things that stand out to us based on our habitus/ lifeworld) than others and we use these things to orientate ourselves. As such dwelling can be considered an equivalent feeling of situatedness.

Narrator 6’s feeling of situatedness and dwelling is anchored in the river. He compares feeling at home in one river to other’s that he doesn’t, through stories of his experiences of fishing a familiar river compared to fishing new rivers. In both instances, the river is the anchor for his sense of understanding, orientation and connection. The river that he has returned to year after year for fly-fishing, has become familiar and offers him that feeling of being at home. He says, this river ‘is such a huge thing, especially because we come back here. We know exactly what to expect, it’s more like coming home than actually going home’ (Narrator 6, p.12). In contrast, he explains ‘if I go to a new river, I rarely catch a fish, it takes me ages to read a place and get used to it’ (Narrator 6, p.10). Narrator 6 is touching upon dimensions of place attachment that form through interaction between
humans and places; whereby ‘place attachment often emerges as individuals get to know the setting and endow it with value’ (Kyle et al 2005, p.155). Similarly, this can be thought of as the process of embodying and becoming situated/ learning to dwell. Place attachment is less likely to form overnight unless something particularly remarkable and unexpected happens there, typically, it is something that develops over time through embodied interactions with it, and likely to become stronger if it makes you feel something and/ or aligns with what you believe.

Narrator 4’s interaction with a fellow fly-angler, and Narrator 6’s annual trip to the same river are both meaningful interactions with places and people that give them a sense of belonging and feeling at home.

Discussions have revealed that in order to feel at home and to dwell we don’t been to be in a house as such, the two are not synonymous with one another; home ‘connotes a more active and mobile relationship of individuals to the physical, social, and psychological spaces around them’ (Saegart 1985, p.287). There are some instances where the two come closer together, where we choose to locate a house in or near a place we feel at home. Most narrators seek out their local waters to fish particularly when they are learning and first starting out. Then as time goes by, they venture further afield to explore new waters in order to try to catch different fish and test their skills in different types of landscapes. Sometimes, if a fly-angler develops a strong connection with a place they will look for a place to live near there, allowing them easier access, a closeness to their house. Narrator 4 and 5 have done just that, with Narrator 5 cementing that connection recently through the purchase of a house, ‘last year I did actually buy a house up there that’s a bit of a shed, it was cheap enough, a bit of a project. I go up there a lot working, so we’ve been going up there for years with friends up there’ (Narrator 5, p.2). Over the years, Narrator 5 has formed a community around a particular area having shifted his work and angling from the
southwest and Dartmoor to southeast Wales. Leeson describes how an angler may be able to form a sense of place around a new home through fly-fishing,

‘To locate yourself in new territory and lay some claim more consequential than a mailing address, I believe you must seek out what could be called its ‘sense of place’, that particular weave of relationships among plants, animals, people, landscape, ideas, and history that flourishes more or less uniquely under local circumstance. I know of only one way to go about the search – take up a single thread of the fabric, follow it, and just let one thing led to another. If you fish, you already have the advantage of a starting point.’ (Leeson 2006, p.21)

Leeson’s conception of getting to know a place and relocating to a place is reminiscent of Massey’s understanding of place as unbounded, woven and malleable. To which, I would add rituals and process of ritualization of fly-fishing could be considered the thread that starts to connect things (plants, animals, people, landscape, ideas, history and Lesson suggests), to allow us to be situated, to identify and orientate ourselves. Before a place is imbued with layers of meaning, one has to get to know it as a physical space. Back (2009) writes, ‘places are more than social constructions or imaginaries and more than a context for social relations; places are also material and engage with all the senses and with physical bodies’ (Back in Bennett 2014, p.660). As we embody a place, we gain a sense of knowing and in turn belonging. Degnen suggests stories of rich embodied knowledge is also a way of ‘staking a claim’, a way to convey a sense of belonging to this particular place by an ability to recount such details – this ability directly linked to embodied knowledge (Degnen 2016, p.1663). This idea of staking a claim reflects the projection of ourselves, of what and how we do and think, onto that place. In order to stake a claim, we must get to know the place physically first, learn to embody it and situate ourselves within it to form that belonging perspective. In addition to this, the way we interact with a place is informed by our \textit{a priori}, habitus and/ or sensibilities. An example of this claim and sense of belonging was expressed during one of the days on the river with Narrator 4. I had not fished this river before, and he was introducing me to stretches of the river he had now coined as his home waters. We had fished for a good while, failing to rise any trout. Eventually, I was
fortunate enough to catch a fantastic wild brown trout. Having released it safely back to the water, Narrator 4 remarked ‘you are no longer a stranger to the ways of the Taw!’ (Narrator 4, p. 19). To no longer be a stranger infers a sense of familiarity, to be of the place. In his eyes, and mine upon reflection, I had staked my claim to this place through the successful application of knowledge – reading the water, casting, setting the hook and netting the fish, all embodied practices.

My personal experience of fly fishing resonates closely with what Leeson and Degnen are suggesting with regards taking up a thread or staking a claim, with fly fishing the facilitator of both. For me I have learned to cast a line to place. The fly line is my thread, the place is the watery piece of landscape I claim for myself – making my own place.

When I started learning to fly-fish in New York state, a new territory I did not know, fly-fishing became a way for me to stake a claim to know it, to understand the place and learn to love it for how it made me feel. I embodied the rivers of the Catskills and in turn they became the important lines on my cognitive map. I knew where they connected and what lay in between. After two years of returning to these rivers, I felt like I had found a place that would remain mine for ever, the memories of which are foundational to all future fly fishing pursuits. I wouldn’t claim this place as my home, or that I fully belonged, but I certainly learnt how to dwell within this landscape, I was situated there.

6.3 Care and Conservation

Many fly anglers today truly believe their ritualized engagement with rivers serve as a form of ecological monitoring, with the employment of best practices, and through the collation of empirical observations serving the environment just as much as the fly angler. Not only do fly anglers observe change, but they also have the capacity to inform how fisheries are managed often falling into the role of informal, unrecognised river stewards themselves.
Further examination of this intertwining between person and place reveals how through ritual, fly anglers become frontline observers of environmental change and stewards who care deeply for their places and more widely, these kinds of places. Rappaport posits ritual within the context of an ecological worldview. In doing so, he claims ritual serves as some kind of ecological function, but he notes this is culture-specific, rooted in empirical observation (Rappaport 1984). He also recognises this is not a generalizable assertion of all ritual. In line with the world’s population becoming increasingly aware of the damaging impact we have had on the climate and environment; fly anglers witness the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on the river ecologies. Concurring with Rappaport’s suggestion of rituals as a culturally-specific means for observing ecological change, the subculture of fly fishing continues to adapt and prioritise, through ritualization, rituals that afford best practices – *best* referring to correct, more sustainable and preferred ways of doing things that put animals and the environment which we know and love at the fore. I would argue, over the past two generations, climate change and environmental degradation has fundamentally transformed the way fly anglers experience and think about and act in the environment.

Over time I, have developed a sense of appreciation for the places that offer me these meaningful encounters, and I seek out ways to give back to the environment, to share my love of fly fishing and protect the places I do it in. I have become a member of a local angling club, which petitions to our MPs to stand for better water quality assessments, we report any sewage spills into the rivers that we see. I am also a mentor in the Mayfly Project⁴² and volunteer for Westcountry Rivers Trust. I hadn’t realised the significance of this sense of care and duty until speaking with the narrators who took on similar roles and

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⁴² The Mayfly Project is a charity that uses fly fishing as a catalyst to mentor children in foster care; introducing them to their local water ecosystems, with a hope that connecting to the river through a new hobby will provide an opportunity for foster children to have fun, feel supported, and develop a meaningful connection with the outdoors. More information available online: https://themayflyproject.com/about/
had a similar mentality. Like me, many anglers develop a sense of stewardship, whether informal or more professional and scientific, non-for-profit collaborations with conservation practices.

An outcome of anglers’ ritualized observations and attentiveness to the landscape is an ability to observe environmental change. Notions of ritual aren’t often discussed in relation to environmental issues; as Grimes points out, ‘[t]heoretically speaking, it is not at all obvious that one should speak of ritual, arts, and performance in the same breath, much less bring ritualistic, artistic, and performative sensibilities to bear on environmental problems.’ (Grimes 2006, p.135). But now, having developed a deeper understanding of ritual’s capacity to make us pay greater attention to place through embodiment and situating ourselves within it, it seems inevitable that our evolved sensibilities make us bear witness to environmental changes.

Every time we return to the river, our minds dart back and forth between past experiences and the present situation, the memories often remembered in great embodied detail. The disciplined and invariable nature of the rituals of fly fishing making them timeless, therefore direct comparison between now and then can be stark. When I return to the river, I will often revisit the parts of the river where I had previously spotted or hooked a trout. These return visits could be days, weeks or even years apart. But without a doubt, I will be reliving the experience of my past encounter – how I moved, where I navigated through, what worked, what didn’t, where felt like a good place to be, where didn’t. With that in mind, I can immediately notice if things aren’t as they were. I didn’t anticipate this part of the discussion being so pervasive but almost all narrators shared their observations of environmental change, many witnessing a greater degree of change in these landscapes and loss of fish numbers if they had been fishing for much longer than me. One of the unarticulated and unexpected consequences of experience, and the levelling up through the
stages of fly fishing lives, is the development of a deep sense of care and ‘humility’. A word used by Knight that I think begins to reveal something about the nature of the shift from say someone who engages with the landscape to someone who cares for and sees themselves as a steward of landscape (Knight 2017). As our fly angling goals progress from catching any fish to protecting fish and fishing landscapes, our experience becomes less about ourselves and more about the places that we have come to situate ourselves within, the places we consider meaningful for what they offer us.

The significance of this is revealed through narrators’ stories. Narrator 6 says, ‘[t]o know a place and to get to know it, you can appreciate the difference’ (Narrator 6, p.6). The more time in a place, the more likely we are to notice these kinds of changes. In his experience of returning to the river annually he says;

‘You can feel it change down there. We’ve gone there sometimes and said this feels fishy today. Mysterious how it ‘feels fishy’ you can feel it when it turns. You can smell it because there’s a tidal change that’s still quite brackish. You get a whiff of salt occasionally. It can happen and you think here we go. It’s magical. […] Even this morning, I stuck my head out of the upstairs window; and we knew it was going to be really windy, but suddenly the sound coming up the valley was really loud. You don’t really hear the water here but it’s almost suggestive, suggestively being carried on the wind. You think it’s louder, you’re sort of really listening. (Narrator 6, pp.17-18)

Knowing the feel of the river, one of Narrator 6’s places, is to experience it through all the senses. To understand a place in this kind of a way, to feel and sense a change, has the capacity for Narrator 6 to feel magical - an intuitive way of knowing a place inexplicably. Even before he has seen the river itself, his embodied knowing means he can sense changes to the river conditions.

As Narrator 6’s increased his engagement with fly tying, he learned to pay closer attention to the entomology of the river and began to notice the changes to the rivers. In discussion, he recalls how last year the form of the river he returns to was comprised of
spits of land, pools and pockets of water. This year the river has changed to a torrent, with previously identifiable forms of the river’s edge eroded away; concurrently fly-life has been washed away. With calmer and more steady rivers, insects have the chance to hatch from the riverbed and dap (tap lightly on the water) their eggs on the river surface. With faster waters these insects are simply flushed away downstream. Bank erosion is sometimes a natural process but is most often caused by the mismanagement of riparian land. Agricultural ways of managing land cause more than natural levels of water run-off, the upper levels of soil are too heavily compacted under the feet of livestock and heavy machinery – the ground losing porosity and necessary sponginess to absorb and hold rainfall before it runs to the rivers. I have learnt about this through informal and continued discussions with narrators, who work for local organisations such as the West Country Rivers Trust (WRT) on something they have termed ‘Upstream Thinking’43. The charity educates and advises people about the interconnected nature of our landscapes and rivers. The amount and quality of water that runs off the land into the river systems is heavily impacted by how that land is managed. Trees, grasses and vegetation hold onto water within the landscape, but often these are removed in favour of grazing. The grazing often tramples the ground to impenetrable levels. Where soil was once full of air pockets and space to absorb water among root systems, it is now mud, dense wet and unable to absorb rainfall. Grazing often leads to the erosion of riverbanks, heavy animals trampling along banks to gain access to rivers, these banks don’t reform naturally, the river widens and becomes faster, washing away vegetation and wildlife. When water runs over these muddy landscapes and over the banks the rivers run higher and faster, with contaminated muds and animal waste. Rivers that were flowing clear are now brown, inaccessible channels. WRT projects work with local farmers, offering funding, river monitoring skills and asking them to minimise the impacts on riparian land from grazing, trampling and erosion.

43 To read more about the term and their projects related Upstream Thinking visit their webpage: https://wrt.org.uk/project/upstream-thinking-3/
Moving downstream, Narrator 4 explains how his observations of change, admittedly a result of an admission that his ‘whole life is fishing’. Fishing has progressed from being a hobby to encompassing many dimensions of his life, he has highly cultivated sensibility to place through his is persistent fly fishing. In his own words, it permeates all his waking thoughts on work, leisure, travel, friendships – everything;

‘all I think about are river levels, when I was guiding and I would hear rain and think to myself, can I fish salmon? can I do this can I do that? I wake up and look at fishing stuff, fishing magazine stuff.’ (Narrator 4, p.8).

This level of insight, observation and knowledge was directly translated into practice and shared with me when Narrator 4 and I went to the river fishing together. We hadn’t been in the river long before he pointed out ‘the flow has changed a little bit, it usually runs right against there but it’s so painfully low I wonder if it has changed dramatically’ (Narrator 4, p.15). Narrator 4 observes patterns of change on both the Dartmoor and Exmoor landscapes, knowing them so personally he recognises the slightest change in an instant, he is also able to predict water level changes based on climatic conditions. The ritualized practices of fly fishing, the observations and knowledge of place needed to be able to practice successfully, is now bound to the way he thinks about the land.

Narrator 7 observes decreasing fish numbers, tracking the cause of problems to the mouth of the river where it meets the sea. Together with fishing for brown trout, many fly anglers also target salmon and sea trout44, both of which are migratory fish that retrace their journey from the sea back upstream to the gravelly riverbeds for spawning and laying their eggs in naturally forming troughs or redds (the spawning bed of trout). She notes,

‘everything deteriorated quite badly, fish disappeared and that was partly because of the fishing at the estuary at sea. The netting and everything. That was actually banned, or there was an exclusion zone for the ships to not come into. It has since really improved it. The resulting fish [numbers] now, over four or five years, have got better and increased’ (Narrator 7, p.7).

44 Sea trout are just brown trout that choose to migrate when given access to saltwater.
This commentary tracks the relationality of the river to the wider landscapes, the quality of the river representative of wider ecologies from source to sea. Along this journey, all facets of nature have learned to grow and support one another. Her experience of fly fishing in one particular stretch of river evidences broader issues, the fly fishing rituals framing a broader picture of the environment and recording of change.

In contrast to the frequently observed environment degradation, Narrator 5 was able to recall witnessing an improved change to the Tamar River, seeing the positive impact changes to the way the environment has been treated, he notes;

‘All you really have to do is stop putting crap in them, and they sort themselves out’ [...] People are starting to fish them again, but for a long time they were just polluted ditches basically. Now there’s the Tamar that used to be terrible up at the top, now they’re getting mayfly hatches, not big hatches but enough’ (Narrator 5, p.6).

It is likely that this good news story is due to the positive works of WRT, who manage and seek to protect the Tamar River. This story is evidence of correlation between improved rivers and increased insect life. When this is able to happen and the rivers are cleaner, the flies return, trout will soon follow.

Earlier, I mentioned how I hadn’t expected to collect so many stories about the observation of change, yet after greater reflection, the rituals of fly fishing so clearly position the environmentally attuned fly angler at the heart or front line of environmental and ecological change. Grimes writes on this oversight in *Ritual theory and the environment* (2003), he speculates;

‘ask the ordinary person, ‘Should we expect anything of environmental significance from ritual or performance?’ and the reply will probably be, ‘No’. Why would anyone even raise such a question?’ Yet we are witnessing the emergence of groups of individuals who consider it obvious that ritual is one, if not the, answer to the environmental conundrum. They consider it urgent that humans learn, or re-learn, ritual ways of becoming attuned to their environments’ (Grimes 2003, p.31)
Grimes recognises ritual as a way of cultivating a bond to all kinds of places, bodies of water, mountains, even smaller scale natural elements such as rocks, plants and animals. In turn, ritual is increasingly appreciated as a primary means in of becoming ‘attuned to the environment’ (Grimes 2003, p.32). These rituals are most evident where ritual is explicitly performed in order to become attuned to the place (ibid, p.33). I would suggest, from findings emerging within this study, that ritual is about orienting oneself to the world; the rituals of fly fishing offering a symbolic framing of wider phenomena. A fly angler doesn’t necessarily set out to become attuned to place. The desire to fly fish is often rooted in something else. For Narrator 3 his fly fishing practice is driven by ‘the care and conservation’, he suggests ‘that’s the only reason I do it really’ (Narrator 3, p.3). For Narrators 1, 6 and 7 and myself, fly fishing was introduced to us by other people, family, and friends. An eagerness to share experiences with these people and a general curiosity and appreciation for the outdoors was enough for us to begin fly fishing. The unexpected but welcome attunement to place is a result of the ritualization of the act, and what keeps many of us returning to it over the course of our lives. Although some anglers and outside observers would focus on the ritual of fly fishing in and of itself, this study is interested in the outward projection of ritual onto and into place that allows us to situate ourselves within a place and orientate ourselves in relation to the changing world around us.

One of the impacts of this orientation and framing towards wider relations is a change or a more informed view on the way places are managed from the perspective of caring for the environment. In some instances, fly fishing and fishery management impact the physical landscape through economically driven stocking and unnatural beautification of rivers and riverbanks. These practices counter many of the environmentally conscious views of narrators. Sadly, some fly fishing landscapes are managed in an unsustainable manner, relating to how certain aspects of fly fishing are perceived, understood and enjoyed. One of
the most damaging ways fisheries are managed is through the stocking of rivers with farm-reared, non-native species, or native fish of a bigger size and different, unnatural habits that have a negative impact on native species. This is driven by the economic gain some fisheries prioritise over the betterment of the environment. Some fly anglers will pay extortionate amounts of money to fish for big fish in beautiful places, one example being upwards of £350 for a day, during peak mayfly season along the River Test, a famous fly fishing chalk stream in Hampshire, UK. Fly anglers who pursue this kind of experience, are very different to myself and the narrators in this study who tend towards wild fish and wild places. The stocking of rivers is very contentious within the fly fishing subculture and is widely known to affect native river ecologies. Stocking has increased as an intentional response to falls in native fish numbers owing to river pollution and overfishing in recent history; it has been deemed necessary by fisheries to do this in order to maintain interest for some anglers as opposed to sustaining healthy river environments for future generations of anglers.

The stocking of rivers is topic beyond the scope of this study, nonetheless several narrators raised it as a concern of theirs. Narrator 3 notes ‘people stock the Test with huge, great big, stocked rainbows because people are putting so much money into it you need to guarantee something’, he shared his view that ‘that’s not what it’s about’ (Narrator 3, p.10). Narrator 4 also raised concerns over the introduction of stocking closer to home, in his local rivers

‘I don’t like to fish rivers they stock, and that broke my heart when they started stocking the Teign [...] for me stocking is a really interesting worm hole to go down. If you’re stocking a river, you shouldn’t really be fishing it, or you know it’s been stocked for the anglers and not the river. I’m snobbish about nothing but trout, they have to be wild. I live here because of them’ (Narrator 4, p.3).

With his main reason for moving near Dartmoor being the rivers and fish, understandably Narrator 4 is invested in their conservation. Through his experiences and knowledge of
fishery management, Narrator 4 believes stocking is not the appropriate and sensitive action for the river ecologies. Narrator 6 raises similar concerns;

‘We don’t fish the big Hampshire rivers even though they’re the closest to us. I can’t fish just a straight river with no features. Anything, a little bump in the bank, I’ll fish to that, I’ll do anything. It drives me mad that’s what people expect, […] We’re just going to rubbish up all of that for the people who want to pay £1000 for a day fishing! Those who want to catch fish and it doesn’t matter to them if they’re stocked - the damage that’s being done there is incredible and is wrong. I don’t get on my high horse about many things but that’s wrong.’ (Narrator 6, p.2)

The way some catchments and fisheries are managed does not align with the restorative sets of practices and belief many fly anglers live by today around ecological and environmental well-being. Some examples of these are the catch and release of trout for maturation and natural repopulation and the rewilding of riverbanks for improved trout habitat. For instance, a good trout habitat will have overgrown, wild river borders, overhanging trees and vegetation that insects thrive in, potholes in rivers formed by downed trees and rocks for trout to rest from the current in and cover from predatory birds. These natural features are often cleaned away in favour of human access to the river and ease of fly fishing. Conditions that are good for native trout populations to thrive make fly fishing trickier – covered rivers make casting tight and small and native wild trout are nervous and harder to catch than stocked varieties. Narrator 3 reflects on feeling invested in the river, taking great enjoyment from seeing features of a good trout habitat as he observes wild salmon, ‘walking the banks and looking for salmon hiding in the banks, you can put your head two feet above a salmon. Eventually it’ll see you and tuck away somewhere a little bit, but the fact an amazing fish is sitting right there is as good as chucking fly out’ (narrator 3, p. 7).

Narrator 1’s life has increasingly been involved in fly fishing and on the rivers. Shifting from a career in academia he became a chairman for a local fishing association, taking an interest in the management of fishing and later he qualified as a fly fishing guide.
He recalled during his time as chairman, ‘a lot of people would say oh well we’ve got to clear that [gesturing to trees] because we can’t cast a fly underneath it, over it, through it or around it. I used to be chairman of an association and we did a lot of sea trout fishing, and there was an awful lot of this clearing the banks so we can cast’ (Narrator 1, p. 12). As we discussed his increased engagement in conservation I asked if he had noticed other fly anglers following the same interest, he replied ‘Yeah, most of them are. Some are involved in destruction, some in conservation.’ (ibid). He believes some groups make environmental decisions such as clearing banks for ease of access are based on their own desire for easier casting space, prioritising their wants over environmental and wildlife conservation.

Many fly anglers hope their engagement with fly fishing and aligning conservation work benefits the environment more than it takes from it (putting human and economic needs after those of the environment) but the modifications of riparian landscapes are completely entangled with larger economic, often agrarian, forces and less so socio-environmental groups. There is a push and pull to the banks of the rivers. The edges of the rivers are defined by landownership and access rights, the flow of water driven by the entirety of the upstream run-off, overspill, and discharge. The wild trout are the survivors and indicators of habitable waters, themselves taking on the colour of the riverbeds and the peaty moorlands, their eyes and patterns adjusting to the landscape.

Understanding a subculture’s take or differentiating characteristics is not just about looking to see what that they value it’s also about what they proclaim to not be about. Narrators’ views on river management reveal differences within a culture that can be very nuanced – after all, we’re all anglers fishing in rivers for trout. But for those fly anglers who may align with something of a ‘trout culture’, or ‘fly-culture’ that foregrounds the care and conservation of natural resources and wildlife would likely disagree with the fly angler who will pay top dollar to fish for non-native trout in a river. In order to examine these
differences, we could look how each group ritualizes what they do. The previous chapter outlined processes of embodiment, formation of sensibility and attending to place as a way to become situated in a place as a way to experience an enhanced connection to that place, I could hypothesise other subcultures’ rituals are different, inherently forming a different sensibility.

Fly anglers’ sensibilities to place are the result of our ritualized practices that fuse our way of thinking about and way of acting in the landscape; our ‘attitudes’ towards a place and ‘worldviews’ are closely related. Grimes argues, ‘each conditions the other’, ‘determining how we act, what we perform, and therefore how we behave’ (Grimes 2006, p.152). These behaviours, when collectively performed impact the places where we perform them.

The rituals of fly fishing reframe our understanding of the world and our place within, it reminds us of how we are all deeply connected to the world around us. If we spend time attending to place, we come to see the impact human actions have on the environment. Recognising the significance of the role ritual plays in a fly angler’s observation of environmental change can impact their views towards land and fishery management, and encourage their engagement as stewards of the environment. Narrator 7, suggests ‘so much money comes in from people buying their fishing licenses. It’s important to have that income to look after the rivers and as fishermen we are monitoring the rivers and fish continually’ (Narrator 7, p.12). Having observed transformations of fish populations and the replenishing of fish numbers through active attention on the river, she posits the role of the fly angler in funding, monitoring and reporting environmental concerns.
Our attachment to the places that afford us such overwhelmingly positive experiences become very important to us, our attachments become involvements which then become a commitment to and even possible sacrifice for that place. Shamai’s sense of place scale that was introduced in the literature review\(^4\), posits sacrifice for place as the ‘ultimate and highest stage of sense of place’, ‘at this level there is a readiness to give up personal and/or collective interests for the sake of the larger interest of the place’ (1991, p.350). I would consider place here inclusive of environmental and ecological factors. Narrators have spoken of putting the environment and trout before themselves, hoping their stewardship of the places trout inhabit more beneficial than extractive or destructive. Grimes argues, in societies where people are ritually attuned to the environment ‘people are expected to behave with humility and receptivity. They realize that they are not more powerful than other creatures, so the human task is not only to use creatures but also to be receptive to their teachings’ (Grimes 2003, p.32). I would say this rings true for the subculture of fly fishing, the ritualized acts affording fly anglers a new perspective on place, one of respect and care. Eco psychologist Elizabeth Bragg conducts research investigating the psychological benefits of experiences in nature, she believes ‘people will act morally and politically on the planet’s behalf if they experience the depth of their own planetary despair and cultivate a felt connection with the earth and its creatures’ (Bragg 1998). This being said, when asked whether ritual is good for the environment, Grimes said;

‘I am inclined to say yes, but for attitudes to become definitive, they must be cultivated by practice, and the name for sustained, value-laden attitude practice is ritual. In ritualizing, human beings discover, then embody and cultivate their worldviews, attitudes, and ethics.’ (Grimes 2006, p.135)

Ritual practices not only confirm and act out the views of people enacting them, but they are also a method of adapting to changing circumstances. The changing circumstance in

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\(^4\) Shamai developed a sense of place scale based on literature around place. The initial categorisation is based on three phases: belonging to a place, attachment to place, and commitment to place. He suggests, ‘each phase embraces and can be broken down’ into the following set of scales between 0-6: (0) no sense of place, (1) knowledge of being located in a place, (2) belonging to a place, (3) attachment to a place, (4) identifying with the place goals, (5) involvement in a place and (6) sacrifice for a place (1991, p.349).
this study being the increased awareness of the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Seeing this change, as we stand in the river looking to the surface of the water, at how the flow has changed and for our natural indicators (insects and trout), our rituals and process of ritualization of fly fishing have adapted, we have learnt to take less, have a quieter impact on the landscape, and try to give back more than the little we do take. The culture has shifted to be more sensitive to these environmental changes.

This passion for fly fishing almost always permeates into our wider ways of being away from the river. Andrea J Nightingale scholar of urban and rural development, articulates the relationship between the embodied experiences of anglers and the potential impact this has on the cultural landscape through political change, ‘as fishermen move from their boats to the pier, to the meeting room, embodied, emotional and importantly, political transformations in what it means to fish occur’ (Nightingale 2012, p.1). Nightingale correlates embodiment and emotion as directly related to anglers’ motivations to be involved in wider discussions (i.e., regulation/conservation) beyond the individual. This demonstrates a direct correlation between the felt, emotional and phenomenal landscape, with the physical landscape impacted upon as a political space. She goes on to ask,

‘how do we make sense of this link between emotion, values and action? I’d like to suggest that there is a particular sense of self and sets of relationships that allow one to fish, and these are then relevant for how the same people come to see themselves and their actions in relation to environments. In other words, it is the embodied act of being on the sea and fishing that is important in producing strong emotional ties that then translate into political relationships. What I feel is under-theorised here, is the link between embodied action and emotion.’ (Nightingale 2012, p.8).

Although Nightingale is talking about sea fishermen as opposed to fly anglers, what she is raising is pertinent to the embodiment and emotion experienced by myself and the other narrators, and what is emerging through this discussion on care conservation. Nightingale
goes on to employ feminist theory around subject, self and other in order to examine her line of questioning around embodiment and emotion whereas this study uses place and ritual theory to grapple with this interrelation. Nightingale refers to ‘sense of self’ and ‘sets of relationships, relevant for how the people come to see themselves and their actions in relation to environments’, in this study the sense of self can be understood as the understanding we form of ourselves in relation to the world through ritual (performative embodiment and framing), and our sets of relationships (rituals and processes of ritualization), become relevant for the way they help us form a sensibility for attending to place and becoming situated. Adding to this understanding of embodied action and emotion, Bachelard suggests the filtering of experienced and embodied worlds into our wider world, happens ‘through their ‘immensity’ that two kinds of space (the space of intimacy and world space) blend. When human solitude deepens, then the two immensities touch and become identical’ (Bachelard 1964, p.203). Through our engagement with fly fishing, parts of our lives away from the river have been impacted, according to Nightingale the same can be said for sea anglers. Our space of intimacy, or embodied experience, informs our affective views of the world, or the world space using Bachelard’s terminology. Relating this back more explicitly to ritual, Kawano suggests, ‘ritual actions, therefore, orient participants toward experiences beyond the immediate ritual context and link them to meanings in everyday life. In other words, acting bodies embody ideas and values that everyday practices evoke’ (Kawano 2005, p.7).

By examining the rituals and processes of ritualization of fly fishing, we can clearly see correlations between embodiment, sensibilities (or habitus), situatedness (or dwelling), emotional place relations and the sense of care and conservation towards the places that afford these meaningful experiences. Ritual has the ability to create deeply meaningful connections to place – helping us frame and orient ourselves in the world, changing our perspective from ourselves to ourselves in relation to everything around us. This conception of ritual also extends to our relations with other people. The following writing
shares narrators’ stories that reveal meaning though social interactions, beyond the physical place itself.

**6.4 Places to People**

Emerging through our collective stories is an additional layer of meaning relating to the social dimensions of our ritualized experiences of place (Brown & Perkins 1992, Gerson et al. 1977, Hummon, 1992, Lalli 1992, Taylor et al. 1985). At first, we often consider our connection to a place based on environmental features. Over time as we engage with a place longer, we can tend to view our connection more so in terms of the social relations the place has afforded or is related to. It has been argued that the more time spent in a place the more important interpersonal relations become (Cantrill & Senecah 2000).

Exploring this social meaningfulness of place, scholars Gerard Kyle and Garry Chick suggest social interactions with place can elicit meanings that are independent of the physical attribute, they suggest; ‘most significant were specific place experiences shared with family and close friends. The importance attached to these relationships and experiences embedded in the spatial contexts that encapsulated informants’ fair experience’ (Kyle & Chick 2007, p.209). This aligns with Tuan (1977) and Lynch’s propositions that the social and the spatial experiences are inseparable, Lynch writes in *What Time is This Place;*

> ‘Memories, expectations, and present consciousness are not just personal possessions. These temporal organizations, and thus the sense of self, are socially supported. The most direct and simple case is the small group that have actually experienced certain events together and, by constant communication and reinforcement, creates a group past and a group future, selecting, explaining, retaining, modifying.’ (Lynch 1976, p.125)

Fly-anglers’ attest to this, our tales of catching fish are often synonymous with places and people. In some unique instances, social dimensions of place can become the primary source of meaning. In these instances, place is significant due to its presence in memories of experiences shared with significant others throughout life (Hay 1998). That being said,
this meaningful social dimension relies on us becoming situated first, as it is central to our ability to connect to a place. An example of this surfaced in my own autoethnography.

As I journey across the moor ahead of a day’s fishing, I can’t help but take note of landmarks tied to a lifetime of shared memories; my relationship with this place tied to more than my immediate experience of place and memories, how I experience other places and also the social relations that occurred there (Low & Altman 1992). Although I choose to fly fish alone, I often find myself thinking of others and their relations to these places. Most of these memories and what I know about Dartmoor is tied to family and growing up venturing out here at weekends. Dartmoor has always been one of my Dad’s places, mine only by proxy for a long time. As a child, I was (usually) begrudgingly stomping along behind him as we went for a ‘short’ walk. Conversely, the first time I fished on Dartmoor I was the excited one leading the march, relaying endless information about river ecologies to my Dad. This day was extra memorable, as it was the first time I caught a trout on home waters (figure 6.2). The feeling of being able to successfully apply all of my ritualized ways of fly fishing, and sharing it with Dad felt great.
Fishing here feels different to other places I’ve fished… and strangely important. In these moments I find meaning in connecting with place and with my Dad, I am able to better relate to his sensibility towards Dartmoor and his sense of place too. Fly fishing rituals and processes of ritualization have allowed me to cultivate a sensibility towards this place, my ritualized way of connecting to this place has given me a way to understand it and share it with others. Not only do the rituals of fly fishing help me make sense of place, but they can
also connect me to others. Even though in the story above, my Dad is not a fly angler, he experiences similar phenomena through climbing and hillwalking. We have constructed different cultural worlds for ourselves, but they overlap in this place. I consider this multiplicity of meanings even more significant.

Narrator 1 shared a similar story in which he has forged a particularly meaningful ritual context that is meaningful to him and his family. During our day on the river he took me to fish a ‘special pool’ – he called it ‘Finn’s Pool’ (see figure 6.3). As we walked towards the treeline of the riverbank, he told me about a significant life event that had taken place here, it was a phone call announcing the birth of his first grandson. As we approach, he indicates; ‘This is Finn’s pool, an important pool. I was stood there with a client, I normally don’t usually carry a mobile phone, but I was expecting my first grandchild and that’s where I was told Finn had been born’ (Narrator 1, p.8).

The meaningfulness of this place was first felt during that phone call. Over time, Narrator 1’s Grandson has visited this special place that was named upon his birth. Now, having had his own first casts across the pool Narrator 1 teaches him to see the river as he does, searching out signs and evidence of long awaiting early season seatrout. As time and memories here have amounted, Narrator 1’s attachment to that place has become even
stronger – signifying the role of time in developing place meanings (Smaldone et al. 2008). Although this place was initially meaningful to Narrator 1 as his ritual context, it now has an added layer of meaningfulness. He now experiences this place with the added memories of key life events, the coming and goings of people or things part of the experience over a long period of time. As he undertook his mental mapping Narrator 1 reflected on this passing of time, specifically the precious early years with his Grandson. Narrator 1’s mental mapping was a website that included a twenty-six minute film compilation and written stories that captured some of these precious moments in Finn’s pool with Finn. As he described the film to me, he stated, ‘Finn is wearing waders given to me by a client whose son I taught about ten years ago when he was Finn's age. Now he’s doing National Service in Thailand - a reminder of how quickly children grow up - enjoy the precious early years’. Narrator 1’s stories reveal how over time, this place has become marked with layers of meaningful experiences and personal relationships – all rooted in his ritualized way of being in this place – and sharing that with family. The film revisits Finn’s first cast, a later event that happened on the same river.

In addition to his family, Narrator 1 spoke of a fly-fishing buddy, a fellow fly-fishing guide. Between them they invented a birthday tradition where on either of their birthdays they go to the river together and fish under Ghillie’s46 rules. This is another example of our inventing of tradition within ritual, a noted method of ritualization (Bell 1992, p.89). Narrator 1 and his friend create their own ritualized way of practicing fly-fishing that fosters a more social and playful experience with emphasis on sharing and equitable time fishing. I can say this as I experienced this alongside Narrator 1 during our interview. Narrator 1 explained, ‘we invented Ghillie’s rules, only one person casting at a time… raise a fish and miss it, the other person fishes! If you catch a fish … (laughs) which is extremely

46 A Ghillie is term for an attendant or guide on a fly-fishing expedition, normally associated with fishing Highlands.
unusual while playing Ghillie’s rules, of course the other person fishes! If the other person gets hacked off, sorry… move over!’ (Narrator 1, p.14). This different, more cooperative approach inspires a different way of ritualizing their fly fishing that prioritises the sharing of an experience. The meaning Narrator 1 experiences in relation to this particular place is evolving both through his own individual engagement and through his interactions with others. This implies, ‘meaning is never fixed or certain but always in a state of flux’ and these meanings change ‘through a constant process of making that deals with everyday realities (Brown 2011, p.17). Making in this instance being the making of our own place through ritual and the restructuring of our sense of place. Meanings can be added to, they’re malleable and inclusive of multiple concepts – embodiment, situatedness, emplacement, a feeling of being at home and through sharing it with others.

Like me, Narrator 4 did not come to fly-fishing through a familial association, which he stated was usually the case for fly-anglers. He stated, ‘[h]aving spoken to friends, they all had this family ethic that took you fishing, and it grew from there. [name redacted] had his Grandfather, [name redacted] has an old guy he knew. I didn’t have that, it doesn’t sound like you did, but there is something special in there’ (Narrator 4, p.8). In contemplating how he got into fly-fishing, Narrator 4 suggested, ‘I don’t know if there is a deep-rooted gene or something- be it the hunter gatherer, be it whatever it is, I don’t come from a family of fishermen but fishing was always there in the background’ (Narrator 4, p.4). Narrator 4 is correct, like him, I don’t have an inherited fishing bone in my body, but I did grow up influenced by my family’s love for the outdoors and being out in the local landscapes. Fly-fishing offers me a new and deep way of experiencing these places; like ‘a set of threads woven through one’s life’ (Riley 1992, p.18). I now have a new way to experience my familiar, childhood landscapes making it my own place, and even if not present in that place, I feel a sense of connection to my family and what they’re about.
Over time, and through his obsession, Narrator 4’s own family have become engaged in fly-fishing but in a self-proclaimed, less obsessive way. His wife said ‘she could never match my passion for trout, but she got into salmon, streaming and spey casting [unique forms of fly fishing associated with salmon – generally using larger flies and rod]’ (Narrator 4, p.6). His daughter grew up fishing with him but got less interested in it as she grew up. Then on a recent trip to Montana she asked her Dad to pick her up a permit so she could fish with him, this clearly meant a lot to Narrator 4 as he joked ‘I’m not crying, I’m not crying!’ (Narrator 4, p.7). For Narrator 4, his loved ones sharing an interest in fly fishing adds to the meaning he takes form it. He was the first participant to explicitly talk about the meaning he emplaces on the experience of fly-fishing. Narrator 4 stated, he had ‘always been really into rivers’, growing up in the UK’s fly-fishing Mecca of Essex, he went on to say that through fly-fishing guiding he loved being able to get other people passionate about ‘what means so much to him’ (Narrator 4, p.2). The aforementioned stories reveal his family are included in this sentiment. Although his comments on meaningfulness are initially rooted around the places and place features in those places – the rivers, streams and trout meaning a lot to him, he then expands this to the social dimensions of place in the process of getting others interested in and hopefully passionate about the same places or types of places through the act of fly-fishing.

He also recalled a story that for him encapsulated what fly fishing was about for him, which also related to a social interaction and mutual understanding. Narrator 4 had to go into hospital, he remembered, ‘I went in for a serious operation, but the [fishery owner] opened up and 5 ‘o’ clock in the morning, to let me fish on my own before I went into hospital. He was really good to me’ (Narrator 4, p.4). This act of kindness, similar to the sharing of flies at the hotel when he spoke of a feeling a sense of belonging – continues to inform the meaning Narrator 4 associates with fly fishing. Many of his stories were reflective of the social dimensions of fly-fishing, his relationships forged in these places.
memorable, and forged through shared experience and/or an understanding of the meaning of fly-fishing and the places they care for.

Narrator 7 declared the social parts of a day’s fishing are just as important as the fishing, she said ‘The whole evening we’d talk about the one, two or three hours we’d been on the river or lake. It’s just as important as the fishing itself’ (Narrator 7, p.4). It was in fact, her involvement in these discussions that got her interested in the first place, hearing others share their stories of the river seemed so interesting to her she had to give it a go. She has since met other anglers who fish the same rivers via social media; she describes it,

‘I met him through Twitter and Instagram. I think I had posted something and he just picked up on it. I don’t know if it was about the river, and at the time he was living in North Devon and he said oh my God I know that river and we just started going back and forth. We discussed it further and had a connection and understanding. It was the visual, the feeling. It wasn’t the river itself or the fishing itself but that’s completely what linked us at the time.’ (Narrator 7, p.1).

The sharing of a post and an image captured the imagination of another angler who not only recognised the place but felt an immediate connection towards Narrator 7’s sense of this place. Since this virtual exchange, they have become long term and long distance friends. Connected through the river where they get to meet up and fish on occasion. Dialogue can reaffirm one’s own understanding of a place. Degnen suggests this shared connection and meaningfulness of place ‘is not reducible to an individual’s experience but instead comes to be made and remade in animated, active forms of social memory and contemporary exchange and debate amongst friends, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances’ (Degnen 2016, 1663). I would argue, instead of meaning being made via these forms of dialogue, it is initially formed through the physical experience of a place first and foremost, without the feeling of situatedness and belonging – people would not be to share their meaningful memories of it.
Fly anglers also have strong ties to local fly-shops and the communities in and around them, they are a source of important information and knowledge. When I first learnt to fly fish, in America, the people who worked at my local shop shared so many insights into fly-fishing, they invited us to fly-tying evenings at the shop and we then met other anglers. My husband and I mapped out our weekend destinations, and pursuits around these threads of information and the connections they offered. A large part of us being able to forge our sense of place was through this sharing and weaving of people and places, through stories and accounts of where to go and who to speak to. Fly-shop workers became friends and still feature in my life today, casting their lines across the Atlantic, interested to hear about our latest fishing ventures here in the UK. This weaving of people and places has allowed me to build an international community of fly-anglers – like-minded people and travellers. Throughout this research I have made new connections, most notably with the narrators - seven other fly-anglers who fish in the same place as me, but who also have their own threads. During this time, we have woven some full circle moments. One of the most memorable, and meaningful to me has been making a connection to a fly-angler who was influential in my early years of fly-fishing and in the writing of this research. As I learned to fly-fish in New York I read the work of Stephen Sautner, New York Times ‘outdoors contributor’ and author of *A Cast in the Woods* (2018), and *Fish On, Fish Off* (2016), and editor of *Upriver and Downstream* (2007). His writing about fly-fishing was situated in the places I was learning to fish and his way of writing was resonant to my approach. This year (2022), one of the narrators connected with Stephen and posted him a wonderful selection of flies, like the ones I was fortunate to receive (in figure 5.6 and 5.7), within those was the ZLB fly (that’s me - Zoë Latham-Bean), my very own Dartmoor-esque fly. Narrator 6 spoke to Stephen about his involvement as a participant in my research and recounted to him some of the discussions we had shared. This connection paved the way for me to connect with this fellow New York, Catskills fly-angler. We opened conversations sharing our interconnected life experiences of similar places, sharing stories of rivers and trout in
New York and Dartmoor, revealing further our shared conceptions of place and sense of belonging.

6.5 Summary

Crucial to our understanding of ritual connecting us to place is the recognition of ritual as a meaning making activity itself. The embodied significance of ritual and in turn the making of meaning cannot be reduced or abstracted in order to be understood. This ritual meaning is evidenced through emplacement which is the process of embodying meaning that highlights the situatedness of the act. These embodied relations to place can be deeply emotional for anglers and easy to identify as meaningful through their words and associated feelings. Meaning is not solely found in the ritual process it is also found in more obscure ways of thinking about our places that recognise ‘the overlay and interplay of multiple realities operating at the same time, on the same place’ (Burns & Kahn 2005, p.286).

Meaning is evidenced through fly anglers’ feeling of being at home in the river. Conceptions of home and belonging relating to the act of dwelling (to identify and orientate ourselves within place). These feelings of belonging to a place can be tied to our habitus, our sense of knowing how and why things are as they are, as though our way of being was developed here, in this place. This feeling of dwelling has equivalencies with previous descriptions of becoming situated – both are rooted in the ritualization of a place and a way of being in that place informed by either ritual sensibilities or habitus. As suggested by Nightingale but evidenced in this study, when fly anglers form an emotional and embodied connection to place they become motivated to become a part of wider discussions relating to the place. When a deep-rooted, meaningful relationship to place is felt, fly anglers unwaveringly begin to care for that place, attending to its conservation and asserting themselves as stewards of said place. In addition to these layers of meaning is the relatority this meaning has to other people. A meaningful experience of place can be
shared with others and can even be heightened through this interrelation in significant life experiences. These multiple meanings are mapped out in figure 6.4 on the following page in relation to early alignments of ritual and place theories – building up connections between the two approaches.
Figure 6.4 Multiple modes of meaning making diagram.
7. Ritualization, Sensibilities and Sense of Self

The previous chapter examined the multiple ways in which fly anglers experience meaningfulness in relation to fly fishing. This chapter delves deeper into how these meanings relate to who we are as individuals. Reflecting on the processes of sharing stories and examining forms of ritual co-presencing will uncover how fly anglers come to define their culture and sense of belonging. These collective understandings of cultural phenomena and meanings will then be explored in relation to our individual sensibilities that existed before our engagement with fly fishing. These processes of sharing and reflecting on collective and individual stories will then be considered from the point of the individual – asking what does ritual do for us? Does it relate to our identities? And do we need rituals?

7.1 Ritual Co-presencing, Seeing More Together

Throughout this study, the fly anglers and I have shared stories with one another, something that can be considered a form of ritual co-presencing, a mechanism of Durkheim’s theory of ritual (1965). This is the seeking out of others with similar experiences, illuminating various forms of meaning and making sense of it together. Sociologist and scholar of ritual, Douglas Marshall writing on Behavior, Belonging, and Belief: A Theory of Ritual Practice suggests;

‘In a world that chronically provides only incomplete or ambiguous information, individuals regularly look to others to provide definition of, validation of, and reassurance regarding their understanding of the situation’ (Marshall 2002, p.362).

Co-presence is an impulse to assemble (not in itself a ritual) and considered part of a larger ritual process (Marshall 2002). The significance of ritual co-presence is the effect it has on one’s sense of belief and sense of belonging. Marshall quotes Durkheim who suggests, ‘in
times of uncertainty we seek the company of those who feel and think as we do’ (Durkheim 1984, p.48). The main aim of ritual co-presencing is to reduce doubt and preserve, even escalate, belief one’s own belief now strengthened through sharing with others (Schachter 1959). The coming together of individuals through ritual co-presence has a profound effect on belonging, such a simple way of making connection and contact between people affords a powerful source of cohesion (Baumeister & Leary 1995). Ritual co-presence brings together those who think and feel similar things; one beneficial side effect of this confluence is an influence on each other’s affective states in which certain moods and affects can become shared (Kerckhoff & Back 1968). With this, a sense of bonding and belonging is fostered (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson 1994).

This is particularly pertinent for fly anglers when trying to make sense of their own meaningful relations to fly fishing. When asked why he fly fishes, Narrator 2 reflected back on a fear of visiting other countries, thinking he would not be welcome. Recounting past visits to Scotland, Wales and later South Africa he said ‘I would never have gone if it hadn’t been for fly fishing and the people that one meets’ (Narrator 2, p.8). Narrator 2 felt that fly fishing was a way to connect to others through identifying as a fly angler over other aspects of his identity. There has long been evidence of the use of ritual as a form of social bonding; Marshall suggests ‘[t]he role of rituals in the creation of belonging is suggested by the fact that social integration and a sense of unity are among the most noted outcomes and functions of ritual’ (Marshall 2002, p.360). In this sense, Narrator 2 posits fly fishing as way to connect with others, a common language or way of acting, or a shared sense of experience of fly fishing that can supplant any other confictions. Bell argues this is a result of ritualization;

‘The strategies of ritualization clearly generate forms of practice and empowerment capable of articulating an understanding of the personal self vis-a-vis community, however these might be understood. The results might well be seen in terms of the
continuity between self and community, or in terms of an autonomous identity.’ (Bell 2009, p.217)

Narrator 2 employs this strategy of ritualization through which he aligns himself as a fly angler instead of the Englishman, in order to feel more comfortable and more able to connect with wider fly fishing communities and groups of people. As Marshall proposes this social aspect of ritual leads to a sense of unity and possible sense of belonging.

Counter to what one might think of notions of co-presence, many anglers chose to fish alone on the river, or maybe fish downstream from a fishing buddy at an acceptable distance, as to not deter trout from their area. Narrator’s stories have revealed that I am probably one of the least social fly anglers, finding particular joy in being alone in the space of the river, and having a preference for being at a distance from others. I would contend that ritual co-presence for most anglers takes place after the act of fly angling, via the storytelling, coming together (physically or through collections of writings) to exchange trout tales. This is something many narrators have said is an integral part of their enjoyment of fly fishing.

Interestingly, Narrator 4 founded and publishes a magazine called Fly Culture, which evolved from of a long-standing blog called Eat Sleep Fish. Fly Culture aims to capture the essence of what fly fishing means to fly anglers, stating ‘when it comes to fly fishing, we speak your language’\(^47\). The magazine typically features stories, art and photo essays of significant and memorable stories on the river, an example being a pre-PhD piece of writing about my own experience of fly fishing on Dartmoor (see figure 7.1 on the following page).

\(^{47}\) Expressions from the Fly Culture webpage, https://flyculturemag.com/ [Accessed 18\textsuperscript{th} January 2023]
The magazine ethos and many of the featured stories make reference to rituals of fly fishing, in which these rituals or processes of ritualization are discussed seriously from the point of view of the people it means something to and who get something from it (Bell 1990). From my experience as a contributor to the magazine, writing about my experience of fly fishing has been the first time I sought to understand what it means to me and why. A helpful process for understanding what I do, what I feel and why I do it. As noted in discussing the use of narratological methodologies for this research, narrative is also a way to structure and add meaning to our lives, appealing to our emotions and ability to create worlds. Authors of Ritual and Narrative (2013), Vera Nunning and Jan Rupp explain an overlap between ritual and narrative:

‘…narrative structures and the telling of stories play an important role in rituals and ritual practice, just as ritual can be an important dimension of narrative […] We indulge in telling and listening to stories to derive a tried-and-tested sense of meaning and aesthetic pleasure, similar to that which we glean from participating in a ritual.” (Nunning & Rupp 2013, p.2)

Figure 7.1 My writing on Dartmoor fly fishing, with imagery from Tom Roland, Fly Culture 2018.
In Nunning and Rupp’s text, it is argued, ritual and narrative are forms of self-knowledge and cultural self-interpretation. Accepting that ritual is forming a sensibility and becoming situated in a place, I would suggest narrative as employed by fly anglers in their founding, writing and contributing to *Fly Culture* is also a way to really pay attention to and acknowledge personal forms of interpretation. Other than through conversation with other fly anglers, writing about fly fishing is the primary way meaning is articulated and shared, as a result cultural interpretation unfolds through stories and the sharing of stories. Narrative creation and processes of sharing stories enables fly anglers to make themselves self-aware and are concurrently inspired and encouraged by one another to delve deeper in what fly fishing means, with assurance and comfort afforded by others who share these beliefs, reflections and suppositions. I would consider the magazine itself, over its four years of quarterly publications, as a manifestation of a pursuit of cultural self-interpretation. Each publication hone in on individual and shared understandings of what it means to be a fly angler; over time this collective of people, stories and representations has helped to define what it means to be a fly angler. But these collections of stories, when viewed together articulate something of the culture of fly fishing, each narrative amplifying the other but simultaneously bringing a nuance and backstory that that is unique, supplementing the breadth of experiences.
7.2 Individual Sensibilities and Ritualization

‘for me, all it is, is fishing’ (Narrator 5, p.8)
‘there’s more to fishing than catching fish’ (Narrator 2, p.1)
‘none of this is about fishing or catching fish is it’ (Narrator 6, p.21)

Analysing fly anglers’ narratives, paying particular attention to the poignant quotes extracted above, reveals that fly fishing is different for each fly angler. It’s fishing, it’s something more, it’s not about fishing at all. So which is it? Although this study has evidenced clear experiential intersections and similarities in the way we do things and think about them, there is no all-encompassing, one size fits all reason for a fly angler to feel the way they do about fishing. This is due to our individual lifeworld, our own situatedness of being in the world, informing our dispositions towards things. We see the world how we are.

The work of symbolism ritual theorists (Turner & Geertz) is said to lead the way in defining ritual structure, as a way of making apparent the true meaning of cultural phenomena for individuals (Bell 1992). Geertz suggests through ritual activity a person’s ‘conceptions and dispositions are fused’ consequently ‘yielding meaning’ (Geertz cited in Bell 1992, p.28). This is what Geertz believes to be the union of the world as lived and the world as imagined – the place whereby one’s worldview and ethos come together (Geertz 1973, pp.95-97). When this fusion happens, we find meaning in the coming together of what we are thinking or saying and doing. We discover an enactment of practices that align with the type of person we are, who we aspire to be and what we’re about. Kawano similarly highlights how rituals bring values into action (Kawano 2013, p.4). What Kawano is saying relies on the assumption and recognition we have our own values prior to any ritual itself. Based on this, ritual is understood to be able to transform what people believe into
what they do and how they do it. Narrator 3 considers fly fishing a way of monitoring the riparian ecosystem, he states ‘what we’re doing is a survey or exploration of a thing you can’t see’. He argues, if ‘we haven’t got enough of a surplus [of trout] to be harvested without destroying them so we should not fish for them. But if you don’t fish for them, who is looking at the river?’ (Narrator 3, p. 3). His actions of fishing an enactment of this belief, Geertz goes on to suggest, although meaning is yielded by the person themselves as the insider of the experience, from an outside perspective for the theorists, this consideration of ritual structure can be used to better understand cultural phenomenon. These ritual structure understandings relate back to earlier comments on Weinberger’s notion of accessing planes of experience outside of the everyday. In particular the fusion of internal and external planes of existence. Wallace similarly suggested through ritual (primarily solitary ritual) different parts of the psyche could reconnect and that ritual was central to that reconnection of worlds, planes or psyches. Different disciplines and theorists have used different words and conceptions when discussing cultural phenomena and meaning. In alignment with Bell’s acclaim of Geertz’s ritual structure as a structure through which we can understand the formation of meaning, the following narratives of myself and narrators can begin to attest to these theories. Through the fusion of worldview and ethos, conceptions and dispositions of the world as lived and the world as imagined – ritual ideas can be understood beyond the formal, tangible descriptors of ritual and look outside of the immediacy of ritual, through time and place to other dimensions of life. This idea becomes particularly relevant to Snyder’s assertion of this fusion in its relation to the ritual practices of fly fishing and an environmental belief system (2007). He suggests when the two come together an angler’s experiences are deeply meaningful. This relationality of ritual is recognised as relevant to individual meaning making. Comparing individual narratives reveals similar patterns of fly fishing’s role in orienting and forming a sensibility for each angler, significant for here is how it is different for each us – owing to our unique pre-existing sensibilities.
For me, as reflected upon in the preface, I have always been drawn to the outdoors, to landscapes. Fly fishing is simply one of my more recent pursuits that offers me a chance to connect with the landscape in a new and deeply felt way, and to connect to others, in particular my family with their own love for the outdoors. The ritualization of fly fishing allows me to act out or expresses my unique conceptual orientations, furthering and adding to my pre-existing sensibilities. The rituals and processes of ritualization of fly fishing become increasingly meaningful through their alignment with my own sets of values and beliefs, offering me a way to be and connect that gives depth to my experience of place. This is why that envelope of photos handed to me by my Mum and Grandmother holds some insight into this study. Maybe it didn’t quite ‘solve my PhD’ but there was something about looking at those pictures of Grandpa and me in the river (at the centre of figure 7.2) that enables many of the themes and ideas raised in this study to make greater sense to me. What I thought was a way of seeing the world rooted in an architectural and fly angling sensibility towards the landscape in fact goes back a lot further to something of a lifelong relationship to being in the landscape with family. Being guided to make sense of the world through my own hands and feet, picking up stones and exploring the places around with intense curiosity and admiration of the landscape.

Analogous to my lifeworld and conception of fly fishing, Narrator 7 has had a lifelong affinity for the outdoors. She recognises a sense of connection to the outdoors through fly fishing but also that she feels the same or a similar sense of connection when gardening (Narrator 7, p.12). In both cases she recognises she is spending time in the environment, working with the land, applying knowledge of being a fly angler and or a landscape designer and gardener. Both are acts that call back to preferred ways of being in the landscape. For me and possibly for Narrator 7, there is a sense of getting to know the land through our practices of both fly fishing and gardening, and in turn, that is getting to know ourselves.
Neither of us see the landscape as an ‘opaque surface of literalness’ (Ho 1991), in the words of Tim Ingold we experience it as having ‘transparency and depth. Transparency because one can see into it; depth, because the more one looks, the further one sees’ (Ingold 2002, p.56). Fly fishing offers us a new way of getting into the water, into the landscape and forces us to take a new perspective on ecologies.
Narrator 7 signalled her mental map and photograph when discussing what fly fishing meant to her (combined in figure 7.3). Her mental mapping took the form of a stream of consciousness, she recalls a day on the river through words; ‘Cork in the palm of the hand. The wick of the line as you lift it off the water’s surface to cast. Casting. Poetry in motion. Balletic movement. No thoughts, no interruptions, zone out. Be in the moment. Silence. Trickling, bubbly water. Present. Give thanks to the river god.’

The photo depicts a view across the river where sheep are taking a drink from the river unbeknown to her husband who is casting to the opposite side of the river, across the river. This mapping offers a rich, sumptuous reading of a day fly fishing on the river. The stream of words reveals observations of the environment interspersed with reflections, embodied feelings and emotions. Together, the image and writing represent the interaction of worlds, the fusion of Narrator 7’s way of being in the world with her disposition towards things and what she values. When describing the photographs, she said,

‘That’s my picture of what fishing means to me. It’s actually the environment, watching my husband [name redacted], seeing sheep. […] That’s what fishing means to me. I always relate fishing to sheep as they’ve always been around. When I first learnt to fly fish I used to have really flopping wrists, they used to get me in

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splints, I think I took them off and put them on the ground, and the sheep started nibble on them. So I’ve always had sheep around me eating the end of my bag, splint or rod or whatever! I’ve always had sheep around – it’s lovely.’ (Narrator 7, p.18).

Within the photograph and mapping exercise, Narrator 7 reveals how the structure of performing ritual in a particular place can frame a single moment. Her ethos informing how she acts in the landscape, and her worldview, existential disposition and sensibilities to place formed through experience – past and present. In this instance her two worlds of conceptions and dispositions are fused, cultural life is formed - yielding meaning through fly fishing’s ritual activity (Bell 1992, pp.26-8).

Interestingly in her descriptions of the invariable rituals themselves, interspersed with the experience of the immediate place transcend time. Past memories resurface, stimulated by things observed in the present. These processes of fusion and past references evidence what Bell suggests are one of the ways ritual can make things meaningful, saying, ‘[a] meaningful action is an action whose importance goes beyond its relevance to its initial situation’ (Bell 1992, p.51). This is likely also facilitated by returning to the same place multiple times. Narrator 7’s formation of meaning articulates many of the strategies of ritualization such as her embodied way of being in place, specifically, the interaction with environment and others - to her husband and animals, and the situatedness within a symbolically constituted spatial and temporal environment which echoes notions of a higher more spiritual realm with reference to the river god (Bell 1992, p.93). Narrator 7 was not the only person to find her relationships to others a characteristic of her meaningful connection to place, and to bring to light the dynamic, temporal dimension of place meaning.
For Narrator 2 fly fishing has always been about the environment and wildlife, opportunities to travel and the people he meets along the way. One particular story encapsulates Narrator 2’s disposition towards the environment and wildlife;

‘About six or seven years ago at Prince Hall, you know the bend up from the bridge? There’s a pool, a big pool, when you get to the tree where the sea trout lie under it, then there’s a bend, then another bend. I was having an angle in there, and a cuckoo came to land on me, it only realised at the last minute I wasn’t a tree stump but I was a human being’ (Narrator 2, p.1).

Narrator 2 delights in the idea that he can become a part of the environment and that nature has come back to him; he has solidified his being a part of something larger through a ritual that fosters a light touch on the landscape. In this moment, the body is more than an object; it is the condition and context which warrants one a relationship with the entities of the world (Crossley 1995, Merleau-Ponty 1962). Narrator 2’s way of fly fishing is calm and still; you can see from figure 7.4, he creates little to no ripples in the water, and allows the environment to engulf him. He is not somewhere he doesn’t belong.

![Figure 7.4 During our interview, Narrator 2 waded deep into the river.](image)

Small moments and stories like this are like key nexus events that represent that intangible, good feeling of connection and meaningfulness. Further reflecting on these moments as rooted in individual sensibilities, if I were to experience a cuckoo landing on me while in
the river, I would likely react very differently and have a different set of feelings associated with it. Firstly, I wouldn’t even recognise a cuckoo from another species of bird; secondly, I probably am not still enough during my time in the river for this to ever happen to me. This rare experience that Narrator 2 deems significant to him, says something about a sensitive and gentle approach to the place, an attunement through ritualization that embeds him within the environment.

In contrast, Narrator 6 ritualizes the tying and distribution of flies; this is a highly social and generous act that references back to the way he got into fly fishing through learning to tie flies in the upstairs of a pub. He recalls learning to fly tie as ‘[t]he best thing I ever did, although I was very late to it’ (Narrator 6, p.5). Referring to a fellow angler, Narrator 6 recalls;

‘[h]e did a fly-tying class in the upstairs room in a pub in the middle of London. […] I remember stopping at half time, going downstairs to the pub and all of us couldn’t deal with this, let’s go back up to this little room because our focus had just been like that [gesturing downwards towards an imaginary fly tying vice]’ (Narrator 6, p.5).

This passion for fly tying has remained, and Narrator 6’s personal interest has led to a ritualized way of observing and mimicking fly life on the river itself – admittedly becoming the most encompassing dimension of his fly fishing.

When asked what fly fishing might mean to him, Narrator 5 said ‘for me, all it is, is fishing’. In other interviews, either people shared the meanings they had previously spent time reflecting upon, or they struggled to verbalise what they wanted to say. And so, for this quick, almost anticipated response, I was taken aback. He was the first participant to deny any deeper meaning or experience of fly fishing. Although this opinion contradicts what narrators have said and many of the other things this research has suggested, further
unravelling of Narrator 5’s stories and delving deeper into literature around the capacity of ritual some interesting thoughts and findings emerge.

There is no doubt among fly anglers the primary goal of fly fishing is to catch a fish, over time, some of us understand our experiences to be about more than just catching fish. Nevertheless, if we weren’t there to catch a fish why would we be at the river, or holding a rod and casting on a river at all? Arguably, everything beyond trying to catch a fish is a by-product. Interestingly, this separation or misrecognition of what is being done or happening in itself is another ritual practice attribute. Bell references Louis Althusser’s ideas of practice when he suggests ‘[p]ractice does not see itself do what it actually does’; in fact, ritual ‘practice sees what it intends to accomplish, but it does not see the strategies it uses to produce what it actually does accomplish, a new situation’ (Bell 1992, p.87). The rituals of fly fishing ‘involve many layers of embodied and emplaced meaning’ (Kawano 2013, p.114) and although Narrator 5 recognises some of these, he chooses not to think of the process as such. Narrator 5 comprehends the goal as to catch a fish; he does not in the first instance see the other processes or resulting feelings, associations or meanings.

Narrator 5’s initial assertion that it is ‘only about the fishing’ reminds us of the practice itself, yet his ensuing remarks reveal something more, even though it is not the focus for him, something more is present:

‘I think, for me all it is, is fishing. It’s so easy to start putting layers on... oh it’s this and it’s this, but all I do is fishing. All I do is go fishing, if I see kingfishers its really nice, if you see something amazing, this time of year the trees start to change, yeah that’s really nice. But I’m not going to see kingfishers and trees, I’m going to go fishing. All the other things are things that happen along the way, fishing is really cool, that’s why I do it. […] For me, I want as few layers on it as possible. All I want to do is fishing and then you get all the other things. […] If I’m fishing for other things I’m not going fishing. And fishing is amazing so it’s sort of trying to keep it as simple as possible and that’s when it’s at its most interesting. It doesn’t matter how you look at it, we are hunter gatherers, we’ve been that for an awful lot longer than we’ve been anything else. It’s so deep within. You see it in kids, especially when they’re playing and they see something crawling in the ground, without thinking too much they’ll be inquisitive about it, it’s part of our nature, human nature and this [him fishing] is part of that really.’ (Narrator 5, p.8)
Narrator 5 tries to describe the whole experience of what is going on when he is fly fishing, recognising it ‘is such a subtle thing’ (Narrator 5, p.8). Narrator 5 recognises it isn’t just about catching a fish, ‘you get all the other things’ (ibid). The way he describes the experience is an example of that vague impression of deeper meaning that is hard to verbalise, something discussed earlier in purpose of ritual co-presence. I learnt to recognise this occurrence through my micro-phenomenology training, which identifies some phenomena as existing on the fringe of our consciousness, and in fact these things and feelings are far from being conceptual or abstract and they are instead concrete and embodied. Claire Petitmengin explains, ‘this dimension, [is] pre-conceptual, pre-discursive, and prior to the separation into distinct sensorial modalities, seems to be situated at the source of our thoughts’ (Petitmengin 2007, p.55). Petitmengin suggests it is in these moments, when we cannot find the words, that we are most aware of a felt meaning, an embodied meaning. This is when meaning is tied just as much to our bodies as it is our thoughts, if not more so. It is often because we know a feeling or experience a feeling in a particular way, but not in a way we can verbalise or with words that encapsulate the feeling in a whole or in a satisfactory sense. The felt dimension is often concealed by more accessible ‘discursive, sensorial and emotional’ levels (ibid, p.61).

Grimes argues, ‘Ritually, people do not dance merely to exercise limbs or to impress ticket-buyers with their skills or even to illustrate sacredly held beliefs. Ritualists dance, rather, to discover ways of inhabiting a place.’ (Grimes 2003, p.44). This sentiment is in stark contrast to the emphasis Narrator 5 chooses to put on the ritual practice of fishing to fish. Although for him all it is, is fishing, if he didn’t get something from it why would he do it? One idea of ritual that accepts both instances is by Schnell, who believes ‘[a] ritual is not instrumental in the sense of targeting an immediate goal. It has a surplus of meaning, tapping and evoking a reality beyond’ (Schnell 2009). As an angler himself, Leeson suggests, ‘There is
always more to fishing than meets the eye, and often enough the invisible parts are the most compelling’ (Leeson 2006, p.4). Arguably, although Narrator 5 didn’t explicitly say fly fishing means a lot to him, a sense of purpose and meaning can be seen in the stories he chose to tell, through his various ways of orienting how he lives and works, alluding to the invisible threads connecting him, in many layered ways, to the simple act of fishing.

Ritual allows us to enact our sensibilities and solidifies them in action, it makes our previously invisible dispositions and attitudes tangible and visible – not merely a cognitive process too complex to trace but a whole phenomenon with layers of knowledge, emotion and practice manifesting at any one time. This multi-dimensional phenomenon often has great meaning associated with it for the person enacting it, and the subculture of which they are a part. Writing on the nature of meaning in relation to experience, Malone posits;

‘There is also a problem of how to isolate human-environmental relationships from the general traffic that constitutes life or experience as a whole, or how to sift through a complex mass of energy in search of relevant relationships, many of which may not be evidenced through behaviour. […] The problem is how to expose the precise nature of any event, and the status of an environment within a complex mix of factors that involve the physical, mental, emotional, and behavioural state of the individual within a split second of time and space.’ (Malone 2018, p.63)

What Malone fails to see is that ‘experience as a whole’ or ‘the general traffic that constitutes life’ is all relevant to a greater understanding of experience and meaning, nothing is meaningful in and of itself, or when it’s isolated or taken out of context. It is all connected. The connectedness itself is the process that yields the meaning. Investigating the ritualization of places has proven to be helpful in examining human-environmental relationships, as it is the conscious move outside of the general traffic as Malone refers to it as. This act of ritualization reveals an individual’s disposition or lifeworld through a

48 Cognitive (thoughts, knowledge and beliefs), affective (emotions) and practice (actions and behaviours) are commonly believed categorising attributes of a sense of place and place attachment (Proshansky et al. 1983, Kyle et al. 2004, Altman & Low 2012, Shamai 1991).
culturally specific way of being (only to be interpreted from within that culture), that way of being when enacted is a fusion of one’s ethos and worldview in relation to the place. The connection to place is hard to explain and see but the stories we choose to share begin to mark out the grounds for these connections.

When our relationships to places are conceptualised as woven constellations as Massey (2008) would want us to believe, we can imagine and visualise these woven fabrics folding, stretching or wrapping to adapt to changing needs, situations and contours of space and time. In this analogy, ritual is the act of weaving, threading, making these spatialised connections. I believe our sense of place is a moment or moments of felt linkages, connections that are simultaneously revealing of a larger conception of those relations. Ritualization, ritual performative framing and the formation of a ritual sensibility helps us understand wider conceptualisation of our place in the world. The alignment of ways of being in place with our sensibilities offer us a unique and meaningful way of conceiving our places.

What each narrator’s stories reveal about their fusion of conceptions and dispositions is that ritual can empower a sense of ‘what feels good and right’ not only during the ritual itself but it can ripple out to impact one’s broader perspective on everyday life (Kawano 2013, p.72). This ‘what feels good and right’ feeling is rooted in long standing sensibilities and lifelong ways of being. The rippling effect is more likely if the ritual resonates with our moral views and values. This has been consistently evidenced throughout previous chapters as one of the foremost ways fly anglers consider what they do as meaningful. When the things we believe, and live by, align with what we are doing, and we are contributing to something positively. The variations in individual’s stories also expose how meaning builds
up from our lifeworlds and sensibilities. The meaning does not emerge from nowhere, it is closely tied to what we already know.

7.3 Sense of Self and Identity

Our stories and memories reflect our individual identities and the places we identify with (Hunt & McHale 2007). Philosopher Dylan Trigg suggests, ‘[a]s bodily subjects, we necessarily have a relationship with the places that surround us. At any given moment, we are located within a place. […] Over time, those places define and structure our sense of self’ (Trigg 2012, p.1). As we embody these places, they change us. Situating us in a world that changes around us. The places we choose to situate ourselves in and the way we choose to act in that place informs how we understand the place and ourselves - how we feel the place and how we feel in the place. We seek out our own meaning via patterns, images, concepts, qualities, emotions, and feelings that constitute the basis of our experience, thought and language (Johnson 2018). We share those patterns, our making sense of the world, through stories, images and words. Narrators and I have been in a process of choosing what to reveal about ourselves and to one another, what places need mentioning and what stories we tell identify us, those that we think might identify with them too; a back and forth of dialogue, working out what resonates with oneself and others. Our identity can become tied to our places, our relationships to places influencing our sense of self and meaning imbued onto or from it (Manzo 2003). According to Manzo, ideas from deep ecology assert the experiences people have in nature as integral to one’s self concept. This is something that really resonated with Narrator 7’s stories. She was very reflective of her own connection to various types of landscapes, which became increasingly clear to her through dialogue with me and other fly-anglers. Through this process, she understood more about herself in relationship to with others.
She identified similarities and differences in how fly-anglers interact with and value fly-fishing. She observed, ‘it’s such a personal thing to do fishing’ (Narrator 7, p.4). She raised that she particularly appreciates comparatively smaller things around her during a day on the river. She said, ‘I’m micro, there’s so much in it, it’s like the world in a drop of water or grain of sand’ (Narrator 7, p.19). She clarifies what she means by these ideas by recounting a story of seeing lamprey in the river, something another angler said he would never notice or even think to look out for. Lamprey are long scaleless, eel like fish with round sucker mouths; a rare species to find nowadays but are also a marker of good river quality. She explained, ‘[y]ou know its good water if you’ve got lampreys around. River quality, I love just seeing all the babies everywhere, all the little fry⁴⁹. All of the rivers we fish at, there’s loads of different life – I always have great pleasure seeing that’ (Narrator 7, p.19). The idea of understanding something of the landscape and it’s wider connections in one small encounter is encapsulated in the moment of spotting a lamprey or trout fry; their presence is a marker of environmental health.

In a similar way, she reflects upon her changing relationships with different landscapes, how this has changed in relation to her life experiences, fly-fishing and living surrounded by different types of spaces, forested, coastal and urban. Interestingly the places within which we fly fish are ever-changing and begin to merge with our own malleable identities, these ‘liminal places offering a fluid conception of identity and sense of place’ (Cresswell & Dixon 2002, p.187). Our engagements with the water are often quite intensive, and of a reciprocal arrangement. Over time, the waters in which we fly fish have become intimately tied to our identities – not uncommon for anglers (Eden & Bear 2011). Some scholars suggest the river is a particular kind of place that has the potential to become a space ‘overloaded with potential meanings’ (Turner 1987, cited by Azaryahu 2005, p.120). These meaningful experiences with rivers reaffirm our identities.

⁴⁹ Fry are newly hatched fish that emerge from among the gravel beds of rivers. They tend to inhabit the edges of the river, in shallow water and seek protection from other larger fish and predators.
Howard suggests our relationships to the outside world are a reflection of our inside world and that as we grow and gather experiences, ‘the external world is enriched by the inner potential of the individual, and the psyche\(^50\) is enriched by what is outside’ (Howard 1993 in Manzo 2003, p.52). This establishes identity as a process that is considerate of the reality of diverse and ever-changing social experience (Hall 1992). Writing on identity in relation to place, Proshansky suggests there are ‘dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideals, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals, and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment’ (1978, p.155). In this sense, our places offer us the opportunity to express and affirm our identity, I would add through ritual and processes of ritualization. These views on place identity relations are reciprocal, allowing for fluid notions of identity in relation to our places or the changing landscapes we chose to dwell. Narrator 7 describes this process for her:

‘I grew up with the forest and farmland; I was kicked out and ran feral around the forest. But then I remember by the time I moved to Cornwall, I was so sick and tired of being surrounded by green I almost hated the colour green because I was so saturated in it. Then living in Cornwall and just by the sea, I really started miss the trees. Then I moved the city, London, and I rediscovered my love for green again and now I just can’t get enough of it with the blue of the river going through it.’ (Narrator 7, p.2).

Narrator 7’s experiences in different types of landscapes, throughout her life, inform the kind of places she is drawn to and identifies with today and through fly-fishing; her experiences are bound up with past feelings, ideas and behaviours. The way we identify ourselves and our places is an organic process in which ‘place is inextricably linked with the development and maintenance of continuity of self’ (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996, p.208).

\(^50\) Psychologists use the term psyche instead of mind, as they consider psyche inclusive of both conscious and unconscious processes. Jung suggests the psyche is a self-regulating system (like the body) (Jung 1955, 2014).
Taking note of once particular description of Narrator 7’s, the idea of being saturated by green, it’s an evocative portrayal of place, a feeling of smothering and wanting something else. Relph (1985) reminds us that relationships to places are not always positive; sometimes affection for particular places may be experienced alongside a dislike for other places that feel oppressive and restrictive. Relph argues, ‘any exploration of place as a phenomenon of direct experience… must be concerned with the entire range of experiences through which we all know and make places’ (Relph 1976, p.6). Our relationships to place are open to change and are in fact likely to change over time depending on our experiences there. As noted, identity is a process rooted in experience. For Narrator 7, what was once perceived as an overwhelming and overbearing sense of saturation in one type of place, (and particular experiences) is now seen as more nostalgic – a place she would choose to experience again given the choice and freedom to do so.

Emerging in this reminiscence is an indication of Narrator 7’s career in graphic and landscape design and through her frames of reference regarding colour theory of blue and green spaces. This knowledge is used as a frame of reference for how she experienced past places and categorises them as types of spaces with associated feelings. This indicates how our work life, experiences and identities can also inform our sensibilities towards places and vice versa, our places and how we act in these places can inform how and what we do in wider capacities. What was also evidenced by Nightingale, was that our embodied and emotional relations to places, have the capacity to become embedded in wider aspects of life, they can relate to ‘political economic processes and social relations that extend far beyond the individual’ (Nightingale 2012, p.143). These are all facets of life that in turn become a part of our identities.
Narrators and I have shared our stories attempting to describe what the rituals and processes of ritualization of fly fishing are, how they situate us and make us feel different; how fly fishing gives us a sense of connection, and make us feel ‘good’, and how we share these feelings with one another through stories to discover these meanings for ourselves. This ritualized way of being grounds us, helps us identify our places, and orientate us towards other, relational dimensions of life. These processes reveal the multiple ways we connect to place through embodiment, sensibilities and situatedness, and the layers of meanings we build for ourselves in addition to our pre-existing sensibilities.

Arguably, many of us need this ritualized way of being in the world. It offers us a medium or language to form a connection, an embodied and cognitive orientation within the world, a particular way of seeing and experiencing something that resonates with us deeply. A ritual connection offers us an understanding of our place in that world, revealing the interconnected web of relations within which we act. Ritual offers us a different way of expressing ourselves and communicating:

‘Tambiah shares with many other ritual theorists a concern to show how ritual communication is not just an alternative way of expressing something but the expression of things that cannot be expressed in another way. […] For Tambiah, situations modelled in ritual; act either like ‘signals’, which evoke certain responses, or like ‘signs’, which can explain other activities in the same way that a blueprint can explain a house of the building of a house’ (Tambiah in Bell 1992, pp.111-112).

While ritual enables an experience of transformation and flow state which is somewhat incommunicable, the theories of ritual seek to help examine that experience. Yet, other than the ritual enactment itself, the language and tools we have or the stories we tell, inevitably fall short in representing the full experience. Tambiah’s notion of situational signals and signs is in essence a different way of describing Bell’s understanding of performative framing. The ‘situation’ within which a ritual takes place is descriptive of
wider phenomena – the simple act of casting a line, like ritually waving a wand, encompasses something about our relationship to the world, how we think of it, how we experience and understand it, what it means for me, what it means for other anglers and what our presence there means for others and the land itself.

This capacity of ritual is what makes ritual so important, so necessary in our lives. Anthropologists have long posited, across various cultures across the world, people have a tendency to perform more rituals in times of uncertainty (Xygalatas 2020, Sosis & Handwerker 2011, Malinowski 1954). One of the earliest descriptions of this association between uncertainty and ritual is Bronislaw Malinowski’s observation of angler’s behaviour in Melanesia in the early 1900s (1954);

‘Malinowski noticed that these islanders performed elaborate magical rituals when traveling in unpredictable and dangerous ocean waters but not when fishing in the safe waters of the lagoon, and concluded that they used these rituals in an effort to exercise some control over the otherwise uncertain conditions of open-sea fishing.’ (Hobson et al. 2018, p.5).

This is an example of the controlled mode of ritual offering comfort in times of uncertainty. Psychologists also argue, ‘[r]itualized behaviors seem particularly likely to emerge under circumstances characterized by negative emotions such as high anxiety, uncertainty, and stress’ (ibid). The characteristic sense of embodied control that is enacted through disciplined invariance and repetitive, choreographed practices of ritual have demonstrated the power of ritual performance to influence social and environmental conditions (Rappaport 1999). The highly structured features of ritual add a sense of control, which is essential to psychological wellbeing as it can lead to increased optimism and confidence (Bandura 1997). Whether this feels like meditation, healing or some physiological, embodied sensation that we associate with being in nature, the rituals and processes of ritualization in fly fishing force us to focus and take control of our immediate
situation. Psychologists Cristine Legare and Andre Souza argue ‘[t]he perception of a connection also increases the evaluation of ritual efficacy’ (Legare & Souza 2014, p.154). Therefore, the reflective fly angler who engages with the rituals of fly fishing, and gains a positive experience from it, is more likely to re-enact this ritualized way of being. Even though these ritual practises often have no direct effect on the physical world and stay encoded and bound up informing the ritual body, they offer sense of control and order over the chaos of everyday life.

The rituals of fly fishing offer us a sense of good well-being through situated activity. The formal and invariable sets of gestures and practices the rituals of fly fishing require, allow us to embody a place, to form a sensibility to place and situate ourselves within it. This fosters a sense of control and understanding of the complex relations we have with the environment and others. This study posits the body as central to the meaning making processes revealed and although there has been some academic interest in the body in the field of ritual studies, Bell indicates, there are few studies on the ‘body and ritual’ (Bell 2006, p.533). However, she recognises there is no doubt a general increase in studies of the body in cultural theory has nurtured ritual studies. This significance of the body has arisen through the desire to understand relation to places (ritual context). This situatedness in place is also under-examined in ritual studies. Evidenced through the stories of fly anglers, our bodies can be seen as culturally attuned and forming sensibilities to places – these processes are all cultivated through our embodied enactment of ritual.

This study contributes to the growing body of research that posits ‘one of the functions rituals serve is to make the world seem more comprehensible, certain, and predictable’ (Legare & Souza 2014, p.158). Through ritual we develop an improved understanding of the world and our place in it. Through stories we process the connections and relations
that expand beyond the ritual context to other places, people, that in turn become meaningful. These ritualized acts offer a structure to regain a sense of control and belonging, therefore become tools for building in personal resilience to change.

7.5 Summary

Our individual sense of self and sense of place is grounded in how we experience the world around us, informed by our ritualized ways of embodying place, cultivating sensibilities and becoming situated. More often than not, we don’t question why we think about and interact with the world in a certain way, it requires a level of reflexivity we don’t usually need in day to day life. Through storytelling, narrators and I have made sense of the rituals we perform and find meaningful. Equally significant is what we as individuals gain from the experience and how it relates to ourselves and ultimately our individual identities. A number of important findings have emerged from this chapter:

- Narrative is a way to make sense of meaning. Storying our experience helps us make connections and discover the relationality of deep-rooted meaning
- Sharing stories with people who have similar meaningful experiences reinforces belief and sense of belonging
- Ritualization is rooted in individual sensibility. Stories can reveal origins and interconnectedness of these sensibilities
- Ritualization, ritual performative framing and the formation of a ritual sensibility helps us understand wider connections of our place in the world
- Meaning builds off of these sensibilities. It doesn’t come from somewhere abstract
- Ritual gives us a grounding that helps us manage social and environmental change
- Identities are a process, ever changing and aligning with our experiences
8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore how we connect to place. It examined place and ritual theories, recognising a potential for new insights to be found between these two ways of thinking about human experience. Weaving together place and ritual theory has addressed a previously undertheorised realm of meaningful human experience in relation to place. This study has developed an understanding of wider dimensions of place experience; in particular, the embodied, cognitive and affective aspects of place relations. Ritual theory has been the foundation from which these understandings of place build upon, offering a way to reveal and articulate meaning within our lived experience. This theoretical inquiry has been realised through an examination of the experience of fly fishing, a phenomenon, identified in a range of discourse, through which a strong connection to place is experienced.

Architects have traditionally relied on cognitive tools, such as drawing, for engaging with and making sense of the world. They allow us to explore and navigate places, designs, and ideas, to map experiences, and to actively participate in the ongoing creation of our surroundings. These tools become a way of ‘bringing forth’ the world through the act of tracing lines and patterns (Ingold 2011b). This study has asked, what if we use our whole body? Our whole being?

As Ingold suggested, to understand the world is to engage with it and to take up a view within it (1996). Casting my line affords a way of knowing place that resonates as both a way of philosophising about the world and as an expression of the human condition (Pallasmaa 2009). This may appear as simply a line, carving out a space in the air and across water, but it resonates deeply as a way of apprehending and of being connected beyond just
myself. The act, the place, the feeling chimes with childhood days exploring the outdoors with family. The immediacy of the embodied interactions with the land test my perceptions and knowledge of the river, of trout, of water movement. When I am casting my line, my whole body feels like the pricked ears of an animal. Listening and attending to the environment in its entirety. My line travels up through the loops of my rod to my fingers. At the same time, my feet are navigating the crevices of the riverbed. My shins gauge the flow, depth, current and temperature of the water. My eyes are fixed to the end of my line where my fly lies half above and half below the water surface. Waiting. In this moment, any prior distinction between mind and body, body and place has flowed into one another. We’ve become inseparable. If only for a fleeting moment. The feelings we get from fly fishing are transient, but they remain in the fibres of our being indefinitely. This study has revealed our connection to place surpasses intellectual musings and delves deep into the sensorial and experiential dimensions. It is through an understanding of our individual embodied practices, our rituals, our stories, that we grasp the essence of place.

This study offers valuable insights for the architectural discipline into how individuals connect with places by presenting a comprehensive understanding of the multiple experiential and philosophical dimensions of place connectivity and meaning. This study has proven the efficacy of ritual theories for analysing experience and notions of identity in relation to place. The employment of ritual to study place has led to greater recognition of the role of embodied engagement in the formation of places.

This study has shown that ritual sensibilities foster an embodiment and situatedness that enables an enhanced and meaningful connection to place. Examined through the practice of fly fishing, it has revealed these dimensions of place emerge as feelings of emplacement, dwelling and the sense of feeling at home, through actions of care and stewardship of place and the sharing of these meanings with others.
By adopting ritual as a means of analysing experience, it has uncovered the multiple ways we can form places through the embodied enactment of ritual, how we develop a sense of knowing infused in our bodies and the constant critical circulation of our ritual bodies in place that forms an inseparable way of looking at situatedness in place. These conceptualisations of ritual illustrate the dynamic, temporal, and changing nature of place relations. By incorporating ritualization and the ritual body into this discussion it has significantly expanded the ways these concepts can be understood and implemented in architecture and how place can be thought of as is not the only holder of meaning, the body and its performances are a site of meaning.

As a result, this research demonstrates how architects can develop a more holistic understanding of place and create spaces that resonate deeply with people's lived experiences and sense of self and belonging. The implication of this research also extends to the realm of teaching, as it prompts reflection on how to incorporate situated and embodied knowledge into architectural education. I have had the incredible opportunity to apply these theoretical ideas in teaching alongside Professor Robert Brown. We introduced the study of ritual as a form of critical inquiry into embodied and situated modes of designing and interrogating context. This has resulted in students developing rich and layered architectures that nourish forms of inhabitation centred around the body, making, movement, journeys, transitions, and interactive experiences. These theoretical ideas will continue to be explored through collaboration with students, and further articulated through research publications.

In this chapter I return to the research questions to summarise key insights in relation to the overall aim and methods employed.
8.2 Research Questions

Research findings discussed in Chapters 4 – 7 were rooted in the fly fishing stories of myself and other fly anglers; these various forms of narrative have offered rich, insightful contexts around the experience of fly fishing that have contributed to the construction of knowledge on how ritualized ways of being can connect us to places and make those places meaningful.

8.2.1 RQ1: What enables an enhanced connection to place?

The first research question was primarily addressed in Chapter 5, although Chapter 4 conceptualised fly fishing through the theory of ritual, describing the context of the rituals and processes of ritualization fly anglers engage with. By examining fly fishing, although a very particular activity, this chapter revealed something about place at a wider scale, taking an understanding of place and ritual beyond the immediate act to wider dimensions of connectivity. This chapter drew upon academic understandings of embodiment, sensibility, and situatedness in order to examine the role of ritual in relation to mine and narrators’ sense of connection to place. In doing so, findings showed that ritual practice teaches us a culturally structured way of embodying a place, through which we learn to interpret and understand that place. Once this ritualized way of knowing is established, we can perceive the relationality between our ritual activity, the place, our bodies and how they interact. This embodied process cultivates a ritualized and cultural sensibility. As we attend to a place through this sensibility, we become situated - an embedded way of being in the world that is relational and connective. The places in which we become situated become strongly intertwined with our embodied and emotional conceptions of ritual and place.

Significant in these findings is the recognition of ritual as a way of orienting us towards place beyond the immediate site of ritual itself at a broader scale. Processes of
ritual (embodiment, sensibility and situatedness) have emerged as central to understanding how ritual enables an enhanced connection to place.

### 8.2.2 RQ2: Understanding ritual and processes of ritualization can foster a connection to place, what meanings of place are generated through ritual and processes of ritualization?

The second research question is centred on the meaningfulness experienced through ritual. First and foremost, it is important to recognise that ritual is a meaning making activity itself; engagement with ritual can offer meaningful experiences. As outlined in Chapter 4, the ritual attributes of disciplined invariance, symbolism and performance (embodiment/framing) each offer different ways of making meaning. Disciplined invariance connects us to our bodies and to the places around us, in a process of critical circularity (body – place reciprocity) that becomes meaningful. Sacred symbolism is the fusion that can sometimes be experienced between the internal and external selves – aligning our worlds as lived and imagined in a process of meaningful alignment. Through ritual performance we learn to feel the world around and find a new way to frame our understanding – making sense of our place and finding meaning within that process.

A second key finding is the multiplicity of meanings found. Chapter 6 has revealed through ritual we can experience emplacement, the process of projecting meaning on to a place that highlights the situatedness of the act. More obscure and unexpected meanings are evidenced through feelings of being at home and belonging. These conceptions relate to the act of dwelling; to identify and orientate ourselves within place. Dwelling in this sense has equivalencies with the feeling of situatedness - both rooted in the ritualization of a place and a way of being in place informed by ritual sensibilities. This study has further demonstrated the importance of emotional and embodied connections that foster a sense of care and conservation for place. Alongside these multiple forms of meaning is the
formation of shared meanings and life experiences or events that can heighten meaning for all involved. These multiple meanings are mapped out in figure 6.4 in section 6.5.

A central finding in this chapter is that ritual is a form of meaning making in and of itself, but in addition to that there are a multiple layers of meanings that relate to the experience of ritual. Meanings can grow from a better understanding of ourselves and our bodies in relation to places and our connections to other people.

8.2.3 RQ3: What role do narratologies of ritual and process of ritualization play in revealing connectivity to and meanings of place?

Narratological methods have provided rich qualitative data that has helped build big picture stories around a particular activity and individual experiences of that activity. Methods of autoethnography and storytelling have revealed multiple meanings of ritual and place connectedness; but the storytelling itself has also been an important part of the process of making meaning. Through storying our experiences, we have made connections and discovered the relationality of deep-rooted meanings. The sharing of stories has sometimes felt like an epiphany moment. When pushed to articulate and recall memories of experiences we have had to be more reflective than we usually are in our everyday lives. When sharing stories with people who have similar meaningful experiences the process can reinforce both what we believe and create a sense of belonging. Big picture narratologies, comprised of sequences of stories throughout our lives (Appendix A), reveal an interplay of individual sensibilities with ritual. Meaning is therefore shown to build off of this sensibility - it doesn’t come from somewhere abstract or from something imposed, it is rooted in who we already are and resonates with us. Our identities as such are a process that aligns with our unfolding life experiences. Rituals gives us a grounding, an existential foothold, and a way to understand ourselves in relation to the world that helps us manage social and environmental change.
What has been notable in this methodological application of narrative is the role it has played in revealing the connection between individual sensibilities, ritual sensibilities and subsequent meanings found. Narratological methods have offered subjective insight into experience – revealing points of collective intersection and individual divergence. Sharing stories has revealed common ways of thinking, feeling and doing – in essence building more of an understanding of experience together. Of course, meanings of experiences don’t resonate with individuals in the same way. And while no storey can fully articulate first-hand experience, shared, constructed narratologies have proven instrumental for developing an even richer understanding of experiencing meaning and connection to place.

8.3 Future Directions

This study has focused on the relationality between ritual and place. During the journey, a number of notable insights have led to recommendations for possible future research proposals and potential applications of knowledge gained.

8.3.1 Place and Ritual

The findings have shown significant insight and potential in the merging of place and ritual theories, specifically the situatedness of ritual and how ritual binds us to a place. Moving forward, I would be interested to explore how this understanding of embodied rituals and processes of ritualization can expand architectural discourse on place. It remains an undertheorised area that has potential for application in architectural understandings of place connection, placemaking practices, embodied experience, and the formation of meaning. Additionally, I would be interested to examine further ritual’s capacity for fostering resilience in the face of social and environmental change. I am interested to
translate this study’s findings into the making of architecture which responds to rituals within the brief and/or which enable, encourage, or elicit ritualized behaviour to prompt a binding to place.

**8.3.2 Narratologies for Architectural Design Processes**

Having identified narrative as a useful method for understanding experience and deep-rooted meaning making processes, a future direction could be to employ narrative to a wider scale, or more specifically within architectural praxis and modes of placemaking. Narratologies bring subjective experience to the fore, allowing for greater understanding of experience whether that be as the architect or as a user, Pallasmaa suggests;

> ‘[a] wise architect works with his/ her entire body and sense of self. While working on a building or an object, the architect is simultaneously engaged in a reverse perspective, his / her self-image – or more precisely, existential experience’ (Pallasmaa 2005, p.12).

As such, to design well we should be more explicit about our own experience, and how that translates into making, forming and building. Robinson takes this further, as she asks us to think of architecture as a verb, challenging us to not think of a ‘what a building is in an object sense, but what it does in the sense of an ongoing dynamic process’ (Robinson 2021, p.9). Narratologies can potentially become a tool for the creation of inward and outward perspectives, that help us understand our bodies and sense of selves. At the same time, stories are reflective of interconnected interactions and the dynamic nature of experience. A potential future research project could look at how we can create new forms of narrative-informed architectural praxis.

**8.3.3 Meaning, Place Relations and Stewardship**

As noted in section 6.3, I was surprised to see such a strong correlation between fly anglers’ meaningful experience of place through ritual and the trend towards conservation and
stewardship. The sense of humility, new perspective and care gained through ritual connection to place seems undeniable. Future research could further explore this phenomenon. One way through which to approach this could be through developing an understanding of nature not as something one has to look after as in stewardship – i.e., still a form of human power over nature – but rather a sense of our sense of being existing within / as part of nature; human and nature mutually constitute each other. Such thinking is reflected in traditional Asian philosophies (Tu 1989), in which the environment is understood ‘as an immediate dimension of ourselves’ (Ames 1989, p.142).

8.4 Final Remarks

This study contributes to discourse in the fields of place, ritual and fly fishing as well. Building on existing literature, I have developed a dialogue between place and ritual theory and concurrently fly fishing, that draws upon relevant themes from each field to elucidate dimensions of place connectedness, ritual experience and meaning making. The sharing of experiences, the crafting of stories and the formation of evocative, compelling and overarching narratives have revealed something of what it feels like and means to be a situated fly angler; such narratives evidence the role of ritual in the formation of meaningful place relations. What has been revealed, is the capacity for ritual to be considered more than just an activity, and rather as a way to situate ourselves in the world.

By using fly fishing as the lens through which to examine place and ritual, this study has added to the limited academic accounts of angling. In particular, how fly fishing is ritualised, what fly fishing means to fly anglers and how this meaning fosters a sense of care and stewardship for riparian landscapes. By examining ritualized ways of being in place this study adds to limited architectural discourse on ritual that has tended to negate developments in ritual studies that, as this study has proven, categorically expand its relevance for potential application in the examination of human experience of place and
architecture. This study has simultaneously added to ritual discourse not only through the application of ideas to a new phenomena (fly fishing), but through the detailed examination of situatedness and the efficacy of ritual in connecting us to places.

This thesis is not about fly fishing. It’s about a curiosity to understand what it really means to be connected. It’s about exploring our places in order to find ways to know those places and ourselves, as though it’s the first time.

‘We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place [and ourselves] for the first time.’

(T. S. Eliot 1943)
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Figure 10.1 Narrator 1’s narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
Figure 10.2 Narrator 2’s narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
Figure 10.3 Narrator 3’s narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
Figure 10.4 Narrator 4’s narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
Figure 10.5 Narrator 5’s narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
Figure 10.6 Narrator 6’s narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
Figure 10.7 Narrator 7's narratology depicting the various forms of narrative data collated.
11. Appendix B: Participant Informed Consent Form

Project Title:
Casting a line to place: embodied rituals, cultural landscapes and their potential to (re)connect

Project contact details:
Name of researcher/student: Zoe Latham
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Name of Supervisor: Professor Robert Brown

What is this project about?
I am interested in how we, as a group of fly-anglers, have a unique and meaningful way of connecting to and thinking about the act of fly-fishing, often resulting in us writing stories, poetry, creating art and film to convey what it means for us to fly-fish. My research attempts to understand why we do it, what we get from it and whether or not the meaningful connection to fly fishing has any grounding in a connection to landscape. I will later attempt to tease out whether these findings have any relevance to the practice of architecture in terms of both what people do in space, and how a building relates to the space it is in.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?
This research requires speaking to other anglers, who like myself have fly-fished in and around Dartmoor. I am speaking to 12-15 anglers and simply asking for them to tell me stories about fly-fishing. I will conduct a series of individual interviews with each participant in the field – we will be discussing fly-fishing in the place we love to do it, along the rivers of Dartmoor. Alongside this I will ask each participant to bring their favourite fly-fishing picture, this will act as a prompt for making a mental map. This process will be filmed as a form of participant observation – to capture anything I may have missed in the field.

Time commitments
The above activities will take a few of hours on the river and a possible follow up for further discussions at a later date suitable for you (4/5 hours maximum).

Informed consent
Your participation is voluntary and it is up to you whether you wish to participate.

Right to withdraw
We hope that you feel able to help us with this study. If decide that you do not want to continue to take part in the study, you are free to withdraw any time up until the end of the data collection period (September 2019).
What are the advantages or disadvantages of taking part?  
You may find the project interesting and enjoy answering questions about the research. Once the study is finished it could provide information about fly-anglers connection with fly-fishing, which is useful to understand some of the more complex, un-talked about aspects of the sport and what it offers. You may not want to take part in this study if you are not comfortable talking about your experiences of fly-fishing.

Debriefing  
There will be an opportunity to learn about the outcomes of the research by January 2020 upon successful completion of next PhD milestone. You may obtain information on my progress and request copies of outputs at any time by contacting the researcher through the above contact details.

Confidentiality51  
All collected data will be kept anonymous and only used for the purposes identified above. Your responses will be anonymised; no names of participants will be included at any point. Where you might be identifiable in research outcomes (e.g. quote, photograph or film) researcher will seek explicit consent.

Please see research privacy notice:  
https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-participant-privacy-notice

Planned Outputs  
The results of the study will be a written thesis, supported by mental maps, narrative inquiry results and participant observation film.

Feedback  
Please feel free to contact Zoe at any time if you have questions this research study.

51 In accordance with Plymouth University Ethics Policy
Participant Informed Consent Form

Project Title:
Casting a line to place: embodied rituals, cultural landscapes and their potential to (re)connect

I, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.
- I understand I can withdraw up until one month after the interview without giving reasons. I will not be questioned on why I have withdrawn.
- The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me.
- If applicable, consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.
- The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.

Select only one of the following:

| I would like my name used or audio recordings and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. |
| I would not like my name or audio or video recordings of myself to be used in this project. |

I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.

Participant:

__________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant Signature Date

Researcher:

__________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________________
Name of Researcher Signature Date