All these phenomena; UFOs, Crop circles, even the cattle mutilation in the states, are all artifice in one form or another. All this stuff, these are fluctuations in the syntactical machinery of reality. The main thing to understand is that we are imprisoned in some kind of work of art. (Terence McKenna)²

Jung suggested that he would risk his reputation as an empiricist by investigating the phenomenon of UFOs. In his 1958 publication *Flying Saucers,*³ Jung begged the reader to indulge him foray into this controversial phenomenon: ‘But I must take this risk, even if it means putting my hard-won reputation for truthfulness, reliability, and capacity for scientific judgment in jeopardy’. Indeed, he laments to his reader ‘that I do not do this with a light heart’ (312). Is this the case for critically evaluating the phenomenon of crop formations? Certainly not. A sociologist or art historian would think nothing of evaluating the graffiti of Banksy, whilst the spectacular artwork of the crop formations is considered off-limits. Would the formations be considered fertile ground for investigation if it were revealed that they were, themselves, original Banksys?

At first glance, I could save myself the (enjoyable) labour of writing this article by simply reproducing Jung’s text replacing ‘UFO’ for ‘crop formation.’ However, we must observe one fundamental distinction. We are not presented with the same initial question that Jung identifies: ‘are they real or are they mere fantasy products?’ (309). This is because crop formations are real. Of that there is no dispute. Whilst one may concur with Jung in the simple conclusion: ‘something is seen, but one doesn’t know what’ (312 original italics), it is important to note that with the UFO, something is seen by someone, whilst for the crop formations, something is or can be seen by anyone. Just drive down the A303 in August. Regardless of supposition of authorship, crop formations are not rumours or hearsay. This is a profoundly important basis, as whilst Jung begins his investigation with an analysis of ‘collective visions’, such as those of the troops at Mons in the First World War, the faithful followers of the pope at Fatima, Portugal, etc.’ (314), these visions are seen only by those present, who share the particular vicissitudes of their historical moment. Indeed he qualifies this by citing cases ‘where one or more persons see something that physically is not there’ (314). Crop formations, however, are not visions. One can walk in them. They exist empirically. Our question, therefore, would naturally seem to be a different one: not ‘are they real or fantasy,’ but ‘are they all made by man?’ This question, I would hope, would only seem peculiar to those who have never seen a crop formation close up, those who have never seen the profusion of images spanning nearly three decades,⁴ those who are unaware of the heated and inconclusive debate between researchers who claim non-human agency and crop circle makers who claim authorship, or those who resolutely fail to appreciate any of the many unknowns concerning the phenomenon and who, like the good Dr. Dryden cited by Jung,⁵ are firm in the knowledge that speculation otherwise constitutes ‘an offence to human dignity.’

This article is the product of a group discussion of the Centre for the Study of Myth at the University of Kent whose objective was to imagine how Jung would have appraised the modern phenomenon of crop formations. How would he approach this most fundamental of differences in that the UFO is rumour – albeit widespread and persistent – whilst the crop formation is apparent and physically verifiable? How would he assess their myriad designs, their location, their relationship to the individual and the collective, the peculiar debate between those who claim non-human agency and those who do not, the reports of paraphenomena from both sides of the debate, and their ultimately mysterious nature? Despite the dissimilarities between UFOs and crop formations at a phenomenological level, I feel nevertheless that one can fruitfully uncover much of the phenomenon that is the crop formation by employing the method and the language of depth psychology in the fashion that Jung investigates the UFO: the archetype, the symbolic attitude, the mandala, psychoid manifestation, synchronicity, the
interrelation of *physik* and *psyche*, modernity’s loss of the sacred, and the numinosity of the symbol.

**What are they? The anatomy of a mystery**

The use of the word ‘circle’ can be misleading, as whilst most of the patterns that appear in crop observe concentric designs, there are many other geometric forms, such as triangles, squares, planes, pentagrams, etc. There are depictions in 3D, such as cubes, rhomboids, spherical knots, pyramids polyhedra and overlapping planes. There are digital coded texts, humanoid faces, animal designs such as the serpent and the butterfly, glyphs, fractal models, forms of the golden ratio, crosses, cones, stars, waves, and spirals. Most people in Britain are familiar with the phenomenon, as stories have occasionally reached headline news; patterns have been reproduced in artwork and have been employed and parodied in advertising. They predominantly appear in wheat, but formations regularly appear in oil seed rape, barley, maize (seldom), and grass. They mostly appear in the UK, and mostly in Wiltshire.

There is a debate that has spanned over two decades between researchers – such as Busty Taylor, Colin Andrews, Pat Delgado, Roy Dutton, David Caytons, Robert Hulsey, Lucy Pringle, and Peter Sørensen; and ‘makers’ – such as Jon Lundberg, Rod Dickinson, Rob Irving, Wil Russell, and Matthew Williams. The essential argument pits those who believe in the non-human agency behind (some of) the circles against those who maintain that they are man-made. However, this is a poor generalisation; neither side is a united camp and the debates are complex. I am keen not to be drawn into this debate owing to the long history of mudslinging across the divide; what is important, however, is that the debate does not lead to the expected conclusion that if they are made by man, then there is no mystery. On the contrary, the relationship between circle makers and mystery runs very deep. This needs elaboration.

Grant Wakefield’s 1998 documentary film *Croppies* presents this oppositional discussion between researchers and makers. It reveals, however, that many researchers are under no illusion that many – if not the vast majority – of circles are man-made, and that many makers: a) also consider non-human agency behind some circles, b) suggest that there may be some deeper level of consciousness motivating their circle-making activities, c) report many instances of parapsychological phenomena in connection with the circles. This perspective is best summed up by researcher-cum-maker Peter Sørensen:

Some people ask me, ‘If you believe the circles are made by humans, why do you still come here and video them?’ Well, two reasons: Surprisingly there is still a lot of mystery – strange lights in the fields at night, telepathy in the creation of the designs, circle visitors affected profoundly mentally and physically, and much more. Just because humans are flattening the crop doesn’t mean that there’s no magic involved! In fact, in a way this is just as wonderful – I mean, *WE are the ETs! But* deeper than that, I’m convinced that some esoteric Muse is whispering in the ears of many of the artists, guiding their work at night. Throughout history many great artists, poets and even military generals credit the Muse for their inspiration. I think She is an Intelligence that has been looking out for humanity over the millennia, giving us gentle nudges to keep us on the path towards our Destiny. That’s why the designs are so powerful that many millions of people have had their lives uplifted by these ‘spiritual machines.’ They function similarly to Tibetan mandalas – which are also made by humans under the guidance of something higher, and transport the viewer to spiritual realms. Whether on oriental silk or in a field of wheat, simply gazing at mandalas changes you for the better."

Sørensen’s language here is striking for its kinship with Jung’s investigations into the psychoid dimension of UFOs and other paranormal phenomena. He also is one of the few researchers to specify the *mandala*, which we will investigate later. The full unedited interviews of Wakefield’s documentary were collected and shown as a 3-hour film by Matthew Williams called *Circlimators*. A remarkable aspect of these talking heads is that not one of the circle makers feels that there is not something mysterious about the circles. Doug Bower, for example, one of the pioneer circle-maker pair Doug and Dave, points at a deeper stratum of consciousness that may have motivated him and continues to motivate other circle makers:

Well this is a little bit of a mystery attached. Although we’ve had a lot of fun making the circles over the years, when we started reading reports that some of our designs and patterns that we were creating had a connection with the Hopi Indians in America, Mongolia,
Aborigine tribes, cave paintings, etc. And what mystifies me most of all is – where is the connection of this? Why is it that I could sit down and in half an hour create a pattern on a piece of paper? It was just as if my hand was being forced round with the pen to do this pattern. I don’t know where it came from. But then you read afterwards in the newspapers and magazines that it seems that there’s a connection between what I drew that evening and what we were going to create in the fields with the Hopi Indians and Aborigine people; and it seems to me that it could be a connection between languages. That mystifies me very much, because it makes me feel as if that there is something unknown to us that we’ve no knowledge of at all.  

The interviewee named Danny, meanwhile, pursues a remarkable angle into the phenomenon. To begin with he describes how his life was at a low ebb and he decided on a whim to sell up and camp out in the Avebury landscape. The transformative aspect of this bold move is immediately apparent, regardless of the association or not with crop circles. He soon becomes a circle maker. His description of his activities is ecstatic; he felt great interconnection between people and reality, he felt surrounded by magic, he observed the synchronistic relationship between dreams, drawings and doodlings and the appearance of crop formations, he witnessed mysterious balls of light and felt strange energy forces. ‘It all gave the increasing idea that all gaps and divides were illusory. That everybody and everything was connected in some way or shape. You know?’ He appears fully conversant with the deeper spiritual levels involved in being a crop circle maker.

I think the real motivation to go to so much effort is the idea of being able to do something for somebody you don’t know, that you’ve never met, and you’re maybe never even likely to meet – something that hopefully will be positive in their life, will help them, maybe heal them, take them onto a new level, help them meditate, just give them a calm moment away from everything; just to do something positive, completely selflessly for someone else, is just the most wonderful gift in the world. […] I don’t see it as a joke and I don’t see it as shamming people. It’s a wonderful, beautiful, special, magical, land, place and experience to interact with these things. It’s not a joke, it’s bigger than a joke. This is something quite divine, something special, subtle and magical. You know? It’s not a joke. […] It’s like painting a picture and then saying that the image is false. No image is false.

Danny, like the more prosaic Bower, even suggests that he and the other makers are compelled by a transcendental consciousness:

I think circle makers could be unconscious channellers. I can only really speak for myself, in that I’ve had quite a few experiences where we diverted from the planned course and it seems to have been relevant at a later date. […] When we weren’t necessarily going with our plan special things seemed to happen that were relevant later. Or you might do a drawing and then someone else will do that design before you’ve even had a chance to do it. So I certainly think there’s a lot of telepathy or even channelling, or there may be some interaction at some level with this other consciousness. There does seem to be this other consciousness interacting with the circle makers and the believers at some level. It seems to kind of have a giggle with people, you know, have a little laugh with people, the coincidences are too often and too prevalent for it to be telepathy, ’cos I don’t believe I’m telepathic, but things happen, you know, that shouldn’t happen, but they do.

He also talks of doing invocations before creating the circles, asking for protection and guidance. And so it continues; all the interviewees bar one report having witnessed dancing balls of light; all report synchronous appearances of circles that they had imagined or drawn but not made in the field. Like Danny, Rod Dickinson, for example, reports experiencing paranormal phenomena whilst creating or visiting crop circles, experiences that for him heighten the art. He suggests that it is precisely the magical dimension to the circles that draws researchers and makers alike. ‘Mr. G’ discusses making circles from the early 1990s, and then adds:

We felt at the time that quite possibly something else was involved, and what that something else is we don’t really know, but we’re saying that there seems to be some kind
of intelligent response to what we’re doing, and some intelligent interaction. And that’s what has really interested us. [...] Even the man-made formations, they seem to carry something with them sometimes, something spiritual, I think. [...] We know we’re interacting with something. We don’t know how much we’re being used or manipulated by this something. Whether this something is entirely benign I don’t know.

Wil Russell opines that 'You don’t know what role you play in the phenomenon,' and that ‘I consider myself an architect of temporary sacred sites.’ Paul Randles, another circle maker, demonstrates a degree of spiritual relationship with the crop circles akin to the most ardent believer. He feels that a) paraphenomena occur in their score around the formations, b) not all are made by man, c) man and this Other are interacting in the creation of the crop circles.

It must be stated, of course, that all the interviewees quoted above are sharply criticised by many of the researchers as being hoaxers, debunkers, cynics and deceivers. And yet it is striking how open they all are for the possibility of magic and paranormal. In this respect they share far more with the researchers than many of the researchers would care to acknowledge. Lucy Pringle, for example, has observed psychological and physiological effects upon visitors to crop formations, from anxiety and foreboding coupled with quickening pulse or severe lethargy, to euphoria and excitement, coupled with a sense of peace, a sense of optimism and a lighter step. She even – rather Alarmingly – warns pregnant women or those wishing to be pregnant not to enter a crop formation. Nancy Talbott, co-founder of the BLT Research Team, documents some curious physical reactions:

A wide range of anecdotal reports exists of the effects on people. [...] It seems clear that many people experience unusual physical effects in some crop formations – and, again, most often when the crop circles are relatively new. These effects range from the unpleasant (“splitting”) headaches, dizziness, disorientation, heart palpitations, a sense of “dread”) to the euphoric (a strong sense of “peace,” a feeling of joy, a sense of “oneness,” and a feeling of love) and, in the 1996 “Julia Set” formation near Stonehenge, to the really bizarre. After visiting the “Julia Set,” a lovely 915 ft. long fractal spiral made up of 149 circles of varying diameters, more than a dozen women reported menstrual abnormalities, the most unusual of which was the reoccurrence in several post-menopausal women of their previous normal menstrual cycles.9

Talbott’s webpage, in fact, is full of further details about, for example, plant abnormalities (such as wilted stems), long-term growth effects of the crop, light phenomena, equipment failure, and animal and human reactions. Many others have reported equipment failure, from erased film rolls to faulty computers and measuring devices. Others have reported abnormal weather conditions, strange dancing lights such as those of ufology, and even sinister military aircraft haunting a particular valley.

Some researchers, also, wittingly or unwittingly, evoke a further level of mystery integrally associated with the world of ufology: the government conspiracy. I am keen not to be drawn into this murky debate, which Patrick Harpur recognises as essentially ‘daemonic,’ with its sinister Men in Black, intelligence spooks, cover-ups and psy-ops. Richard D. Hall’s alarmist documentary film, Crop Circles: The Hidden Truth10 digs into the background and identity of crop circle maker Jon Lundberg and asserts that the MI5 have been behind the circle makers, their activities and their website, as part of a secret operation of disinformation. Colin Andrews, also, published in 2009 Government Circles a book that digs deeper into this shadowy world of conspiracy and intelligence agencies. Without exploring further, it is important to note that such conspiracy theories add deeper layers of mystery and intrigue to the already mysterious and intriguing world of the crop formations.

Symbiosis and paradox
Rob Irving, a circle maker who has angered many researchers with his outspoken critique of their credulity, conversely emphasises the paranormal and magical aspect of the formations, describing, along with other makers, the balls of light, and noting that there is something essentially mysterious about the fact that humans are making them.

If you assume for a moment that they’re all manmade – all of them – the fact that people are experiencing things and being healed and feeling good. That to me is very, very interesting, and needs investigation. Science
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doesn't look at that. So even at its basest level, if you stripped the phenomenon down to nothing, to complete non-ness, no paranormal reasons, the fact that people are interacting with them in the way that they do is, I think, very interesting. [...] And that as it stands is sufficiently paranormal.

Irving, like other circle makers, is thus fully aware of the need both researchers and makers have for each other. Both are drawn into the same mercurial world of the circles, perfectly encapsulated by Wakefield's conclusion to his documentary: ‘Year after year believers and circle makers continue to dance around each other in a phenomenon that’s become so much more than the sum of its parts.’ Matthew Williams describes how he started making circles in order to test the researchers, but promptly started to notice the sheer oddity of the phenomena. He describes making a circle that was later visited by researchers unaware that it was man-made. Williams comments that these folk underwent an experience of healing that seemed to him utterly genuine. His initial ‘testing’ of the research was thus problematized.

Firstly you have to understand that circles are having an effect and that people are experiencing strange things [...] once you realise that crop circles are real, no matter whether I make them or a UFO makes them or maybe an alien makes them — they all attract paranormal phenomena [...] it’s a very large magical symbol, like a talisman. It has a power and an energy that goes beyond the simple form and shape.

Williams' comments here are particularly important, as, in tune with all the other interviewees, he refutes the title of 'hoaxer' with which the circle makers are branded, emphasising that the researchers and makers are both responding to the same magic, and that a circle is a circle regardless of its authorship. Thus they are all real.

Dickinson, similarly, stresses that the researchers ought to pay respect to the makers as the two are locked in a strange symbiosis. ‘What people believe is fundamental to the practice of making circles. But not in the sense of mocking the belief. In fact, you’re actually interacting and engaging with the belief. There is a totally symbiotic relationship with the circle makers and the people that research them.’ Dickinson comments on the strange situation whereby researchers are so keen to believe in non-human agency that they disregard the circles that they know to be man-made, however impressive they may be. This leads to the peculiar paradox whereby the greater the art form the less visible the artists — indeed the better the circle the less possible that a (human) artist can exist. ‘There is a curious paradox where circles researchers love the creations that we artists make but on the other hand hate the idea that they are made by artists and not by some form of paranormal entity. As a consequence they’re stuck somewhere in between those two things’. Lundberg also acknowledges this symbiosis.

Part of the reason you go to so much trouble is to take to something which is seemingly beyond human endeavour. So that people go out to the fields, or they see it in the press, and they say, ‘my god this is amazing, it could not be done by people. But the motivation of the circle makers is to push it as far as possible so that people think that it can’t be made by people. [...] The whole power of our work lies in the fact that they are authorless. As soon as you claim a formation, you kill it.

What other art form in history displays this astonishing paradox whereby the art is most active when it least resembles art and most evokes the supernatural? Irving, again, points to the heart of this bizarre artistic phenomenon.

People have got completely the wrong idea of art, I think. They view it in terms of objects, but it should be viewed in terms of experience. If you look at a painting it’s not the painting that needs to be valued, it’s the experience you get from it, which is the art, the value in the meaning. [...] And there’s nothing greater than a great crop formation that has a symbolism. [...] It’s going to be like this temporary sacred site. And you’re going to get more buzz than if you visit Canterbury Cathedral. Because you understand that people built that, but mystery is important.

But why have people ‘got completely the wrong idea of art’ in relation to the crop formations? Here, I feel that despite acknowledging paranormal aspects of the phenomenon, neither Lundberg, Irving nor Dickinson offer plausible explanations for the man-made provenance of some of the more spectacular
formations; nor do they satisfactorily discuss the sheer improbability that some are feasible. Whilst many formations have been claimed by artists as their creations, many have not. This is not necessarily simple anonymity, though, as there are many patterns that push the bounds of human capacity to such an alarming degree that they slip off the scale and into the unknown. It seems improbable that these most challenging circles are made in situ, by individuals or teams with ropes, planks and marker posts. There are many reasons for this assertion: they appear for the most part overnight, sometimes near well-inhabited locations, often beside major roads such as the M4, M5, A4 (especially past Avebury), A30, A303, A360 (Stonehenge-Devizes), A361 (Devizes-Avebury), A345 (Pewsey), and along the Kennet & Avon Canal. Some are so vast that the artists would require many hours, which, during the short night hours of June, would bring their incomplete formation fully into the dawn. There are reports of fields in which a formation appears whilst the observer is absent for only an hour or so. Researchers Busty Taylor, Colin Andrews, Roy Dutton, David Cayton, Robert Hulles and others have scrutinised the lay of the crop in certain formations. Of some, they are convinced that the intricate weaving, the swirling lay, the undamaged stalks, the isolated circles away from the tram-lines, lead to the conclusion that these formations cannot be made by people with planks. They also analyse formations which demonstrate no signs of human activity in their formation, such as trampling, post marks, sweep-marks of the rope, discarded detritus, miscalculations, signs of haste, etc. Following the particularly huge and elaborate 409-circle formation in wheat at Milk Hill on the Wansdyke, Wiltshire on 12th August 2001, often known as the ‘Jaw Dropper’,12 Lucy Pringle received a message from a team of hoaxers called the Circle Makers’, which one would assume to be the same group of the eponymous website, in particular Irving and Lundberg:

“If this formation were man-made, allowing for time to get into and out of the field under cover of darkness, the construction time left should be around four hours. Given that there are over 400 circles, some of which span approximately 70 feet in diameter, that would mean that one of those circles would need to be created every 30 seconds – and that’s not even allowing any time for the surveying, purely flattening. This formation pushes the envelope and that’s a MASSIVE understatement.” (Pringle 2004: 8)

The reports of crop circle makers, therefore, appear insufficient to dispel the mystery of the provenance of many of the circles. Now, of course, and referring back to the symbiotic relationship between makers and researchers, all the interviewees quoted above, especially Irving and Lundberg, may be bluffing in order to maintain the air of numinosity, claiming paranormal experiences and feeding Pringle’s credulity by disclaiming the Milk Hill formation. This is possible, given their trickster qualities inherent in being circle makers, yet were the bluffing revealed, then it would only remove their experiences of paraphenomena, not those of the researchers. Furthermore, were they to claim authorship of the Milk Hill formation, there would be no a priori necessity to believe them, especially if the researcher maintains that the formation is, indeed, beyond human capability. They could claim authorship of Stonehenge. It would not mean that they built it. Yes, many circle maker teams have been filmed creating highly complex and ambitious formations, even with the striking lattice-work lay of crop in the flattened areas. Nevertheless, even to the most hardened sceptic, there remain formations that do defy plausible explanation.

Thus our present position constitutes an absence of knowledge, a mystery. If they are all man-made, they are still mysterious as they appear at the limits of human capability. If some are not man-made, then who or what is behind them? Jung examines how absence of knowledge of the UFO leads to a vast range of speculation: ‘All these reports have naturally resulted in a clamorous demand for explanation’ (321). Jung lists some of the many options that ‘human fantasy’ evoked: secret Soviet weapons, Martians or Venusians concerned about the recent nuclear activity on Earth, other galactic civilizations seeking to colonise a new habitat after their own is devastated, etc. Similar conjectures are offered to explain the authors of the crop formations. From this position, where scientific investigation is yet to determine the causal nature of the phenomenon, and metaphysical speculation is commonly ridiculed by the naysayers, what avenue of enquiry could be deemed fruitful? Here, I believe, Jung has blazed the trail with his investigation into the UFOs. As a psychologist, I am not qualified to contribute anything useful to the question of the physical reality of Ufos. I can concern myself only with their
undoubted psychic aspect’ (313). Specifically choosing to avoid speculations about the ontological dimension, Jung concentrates on the psychic effect, and uncovers much about the relationship between the UFO, the witness, and the readers of the witness reports.

We are, therefore, in the mercurial world of the daimonic as examined by Patrick Harpur (1994), where the mysterious and the numinous can be at once blissful and dreadful, welcoming and terrifying, enlightening and deceptive, helpful and mischievous... It is also significant to analyse how the multiple layers of the phenomenon and the many practical and theoretical approaches to it evoke the language of Jung. We can see how Sørensen and the circle makers interviewed by Wakefield conjure a sense of prima mobile that motivates the activities of researcher and maker alike. As we shall now see, Jung, in his investigations of the UFO, appraises the psychic cause out of which the visions arise, acknowledging the force of the collective unconscious in motivating people towards particular unknown goals. Most of the interviewees also describe instances of synchronicity or ‘strange coincidences’. Again, in analysing the enigmatic matters of the crop circles, Jung’s inquiry into the UFO phenomenon provides many helpful avenues. In particular, we must keep in abeyance the question of artist and, as Irving suggests, pay closer attention to the art itself.

**Projections and Mandalas**

Jung works from Aimé Michel’s premise that ‘Ufos are mostly seen by people who do not believe in them or who regard the whole problem with indifference’ (320 #4). From this standpoint he argues that the UFOs appear precisely to those ‘who would never have thought that a religious problem could be a serious matter’ who are consequently now ‘beginning to ask themselves fundamental questions’ (320). This is to say that the UFOs are preaching to the unconverted, whose scepticism grants them reliability. ‘Eye-witnesses of unimpeachable honesty announce the “signs in the heavens” which they have seen “with their own eyes,” and the marvellous things they have experienced which pass human understanding’ (321). This conversely builds a bridge to the crop formations, aligning the phenomena rather than differentiating them. Jung is suggesting that the greater the scepticism, the more real the phenomenon. Here I am reminded of Jez and Midnyte, two circle makers interviewed on Matthew Williams’ film. Both are self-confessed sceptics whose initial circle designs were accomplished not in order to prove that all circles are human-made, but that all circles could be human made. They both soon are transformed by anomalous and ‘magical’ experiences.

Jung clarifies his assertion later in the work during the interpretation of UFO dreams: ‘A psychic content can only appear as a projection when its connection with the ego personality is not recognized. For this reason the wish hypothesis must be discarded’ (341). Jung therefore suggests that the UFO is an eruption of the sacred upon the psyche of those who have suppressed the capacity for the sacred. The UFOs can, in this sense, be deemed on one level dream symbols, on another, compensation projections.

Is this argument helpful for the crop formations? Can crop formations be a ‘psychological projection’ (318)? Firstly, Jung identifies the socio-historical context in which the vision of the UFO occurs. ‘But if it is a case of psychological projection,’ Jung argues, ‘there must be a psychic cause for it. One can hardly suppose that anything of such worldwide incidence as the Ufo legend is purely fortuitous and of no importance whatsoever’ (319). Jung outlines the collective ‘emotional tension’ commensurate with post-war industrial society, the Cold War and the threat of nuclear warfare. He also outlines individual ‘psychic dissociation’ which leads to ‘abnormal convictions, visions, illusions, etc. [...] when there is a split between the conscious attitude and the unconscious contents opposed to it’ (319). This is familiar territory for any reader of Jung – something he had addressed over twenty years previously in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933). His analysis points at a collective psyche that is imbalanced, in which key elements are suppressed which resurface as neurotic or psychotic behaviour, as mass hysteria, or, in the case of UFOs, as multiple visions. ‘Projections have what we might call different ranges, according to whether they stem from merely personal conditions or from deeper collective ones’ (320). This is a promising lead for us and would chime with the crop formations were they illusions; but of course, Jung outlines how these repressions manifest themselves in human behaviour, such as ‘religious, philosophical, political and social conflicts’ (320) and in visions; not in manifest physical phenomena. Where projection equates to an unwitting distortion of perception, a vision of ‘something that physically is not there’ (314), then it cannot serve as an adequate origin of the crop formation. However, as I examine later in this article, if we scrutinise Jung’s theory of synchronicity, in
which psyche and matter interact, the concept of projection becomes more apposite.

From his evaluation of collective psychic imbalance, and thus having considered the context out of which the UFO arises, Jung assesses the form of the vision. Some are cigar-like; the majority are circular. Naturally for Jung this round form immediately is associated with the mandala. The mandala is of central importance for Jung, as ‘in the products of the unconscious we discover mandala symbols, that is, circular and quaternary figures which express wholeness’ (MDR: 324). Where a mandala may be dreamt, drawn, described and discussed, across time and lands, so, Jung argues, are they a symbol of the ‘whole’ Self. This evaluation of the UFO as mandala is of such importance for our present discussion as to warrant being cited in its near entirety:

The round bodies in particular are figures such as the unconscious produces in dreams, visions, etc. In this case they are to be regarded as symbols representing in visual form, some thought that was not thought consciously, but is merely potentially present in the unconscious in invisible form and attains visibility only through the process of becoming conscious. The visible form, however, expresses the meaning of the unconscious content only approximately. In practice the meaning has to be completed by amplificatory interpretation. [...] If we apply them to the round object – whether it be a disk or a sphere – we at once get an analogy with the symbol of totality well known to all students of depth psychology, namely the mandala (Sanskrit for circle) This is not by any means a new invention, for it can be found in all epochs and in all places, always with the same meaning, and it reappears time and again, independently of tradition, in modern individuals as the “protective” or apotropaic circle, whether in the form of the pre-historic “sun wheel,” or the magic circle, or the alchemical microcosm, or a modern symbol of order, which organizes and embraces the psychic totality. As I have shown elsewhere, in the course of the centuries the mandala has developed into a definitely psychological totality symbol, as the history of alchemy proves. [...] 

In so far as the mandala encompasses, protects, and defends the psychic totality against outside influences and seeks to unite the inner opposites, it is at the same time a distinct individuation symbol and was known as such even to medieval alchemy. The soul was supposed to have the form of a sphere, on the analogy of Plato’s world-soul, and we meet the same symbol in modern dreams. This symbol, by reason of its antiquity, leads us to the heavenly spheres, to Plato’s “supra-celestial place” where the “Ideas” of all things are stored up. Hence there would be nothing against the naïve interpretation of Ufos as “souls.” Naturally they do not represent our modern conception of the psyche, but give an involuntary archetypal or mythological picture of an unconscious content, a rotundum, as the alchemists called it, that expresses the totality of the individual. I have defined this spontaneous image as a symbolical representation of the self, by which I mean not the ego but the totality composed of the conscious and the unconscious. (325-7)

No further explanation of Jung’s mandala is needed here. Of importance, however, is the translocation of the mandala image from the UFO to the crop formation. Firstly, like Jung, we must appraise the socio-historical context out of which the crop formations have arisen. Jung, writing about UFOs over fifty years ago, runs through the evils that aggrieved society of his time which we are fully conversant with today: the peril of nuclear warfare, geopolitical tension, pollution, overpopulation, famine, to which today we would add viral epidemics, climate change, terrorism (in all its guises) and natural catastrophes. The root of these dangers, for Jung, is overpopulation, which will inevitably train people’s eyes and minds on the heavens: “Congestion creates fear, which looks for help from extraterrestrial sources since it cannot be found on earth” (323). There are numerous bridges spanning the half-century to the present. Fears and anxieties breed hope for redemption. This is the language that we are now immersed in, where we are daily fed news of environmental and ecological impoverishment, wars and famines, social tensions, disease, and natural disasters whose origins likely lie in the human impact upon the planet. This, one could argue, is a narrative that saturates our conscious and unconscious psyche, as it did, with variations, in Jung’s day. And out of
this chaos, Jung would argue, emerges the need for order, manifest in the mandala, a symbol of wholeness, of the numinous, of salvation. ‘The present world situation is calculated as never before to arouse expectations of a redeeming, supernatural event’ (328). And eyes are still trained on the heavens, observable in the varied eschatological narratives circulating the biogosphere, from the failed Rapture in North Carolina of May 21st 2011, to the predicted era-shift of the winter solstice of 2012. Hope of redemption from the heavens has not waned.

Crop formations are more commonly known as crop circles. To browse the images in books, calendars or webpages, to gaze at a particular formation from a hilltop, or to wander through its labyrinthine lines, is to be immediately struck by the predominance of concentric patterns with which they are formed. They, like Jung’s UFOs, are mandalas, appearing in profusion at the final decade of the old millennium and the beginning of the new – a period of social and environmental upheaval and its attendant psychic disorder. They also fall into the precessional equinoctial shift and can thus be seen alongside UFOs as ‘manifestations of psychic changes which always appear at the end of one Platonic month and at the beginning of another’ (311). In this respect, the contemplation of the crop formation, the interpretation of the possible meaning and the evaluation of the geometric and aesthetic design, all constitute the contemplation of the mandala, the search for wholeness. Jung explains how the mandala is meaningful in modernity:

The mandala is an archetypal image whose occurrence is attested throughout the ages. It signifies the wholeness of the self. This circular image represents the wholeness of the psychic ground or, to put it in mythic terms, the divinity incarnate in man. In contrast to Boehme’s mandala, the modern ones strive for unity; they represent a compensation of the psychic cleavage, or an anticipation that the cleavage will be surmounted. Since this process takes place in the collective unconscious, it manifests itself everywhere. The worldwide stories of the UFOs are evidence of that; they are the symptom of a universally present psychic disposition. (MDR: 334-5)

Here we can forge some close links between the social context in which the formations appear and the psychic state of the observers: the vision of wholeness that our fragmented society and religions fail to offer. This is further qualified with a reflexion on the meticulous and complex geometry that are employed in the formations’ construction. Jung observes that the mandala is not only concentric, but generally reproduces mathematical order. ‘Psychologically, the rotundum or mandala is a symbol of the self. The self is the archetype of order par excellence. The structure of the mandala is arithmetical, for “whole” numbers are likewise archetypes of order’ (424).

The arithmetical dimension of the mandala is strikingly visible. Whilst there is much to be speculated here on the nature of authorship of the formations, let us keep the focus on the mandala image; and again I urge readers to take the time to contemplate the images of crop formations available online, concentrating especially on the spectacular formations between around 1998 and 2003. The crop formations, with the exception perhaps of the uncanny Chilbolton Radio Telescope formations of 14th August 2001 are indisputably awe-inspiring examples of the mandala aesthetic, of a grandeur only seen elsewhere in religious-inspired art and architecture, stone circles, or in the mysterious Nazca Lines in Peru. As Jung suggests, the mandala is many-levelled: it speaks from the unconscious and yet it also speaks to the unconscious. We can draw a mandala, whose origin lies in our unconscious, and yet we also contemplate the mandala, and thus find solace in its archetypal and numinous quality.

They are impressive manifestations of totality whose simple, round form portrays the archetype of the self, which we know from experience plays the chief role in uniting apparently irreconcilable opposites and is therefore best suited to compensate the split-mindedness of our age. It has a particularly important role to play among the other archetypes in that it is primarily the regulator and orderer of chaotic states, giving the personality the greatest possible unity and wholeness. (326-7)

It is in this sense that the crop formations – as an aesthetic creation and thus keeping in abeyance speculation of the identity of the artist – are archetypal symbols of transformation. And yet there is a deeper significance to the geometric power of the crop circle mandala, and that is the conjunction between the circle and the square, another archetypal motif of the unconscious.
Squares and circles

Jung, as we have seen, placed great emphasis upon the mandala as a symbol representing the archetype of the individuated self. The essential quality of the mandala, however, is not simply the concentric forms, but the relationship between circle and square. This an elementary motif in the architecture of dreams, visions and sacred art from east to west across the millennia. Jung first intuited this essential quaternary pattern imposed upon the circle in the conjunction of dream analysis and alchemical texts, studying his analysands’ mandala drawings alongside reading, for example, the alchemist Michael Maier’s description of an oroboric circle that “has related the four qualities to one another and drawn, as it were, an equilateral square, since contraries are bound together by contraries, and enemies by enemies, with the same everlasting bonds” (Aion CW 9 part 2: 264).

The square-circle conjunction symbolises the interrelationship between order and chaos, the structure upon the structure-less, the solid ground of ego-consciousness within the sea of the unconscious, a position of security from which the self can work towards achieving wholeness. ‘Mandala means “circle.” There are innumerable variants of the motif [...] but they are all based on the squaring of the circle’ (Concerning mandala symbolism’ CW 9 part 1: 357).

The power of symbol runs deeper yet. Whilst crop formations can be observed from nearby hillsides and from aircraft, many of them also invite visitors to walk through their enmeshing pathways. Some are thus labyrinths, mandalas whose twisting uni- or multicursal patterns lead circuitously towards the centre, symbols of the archetype of the self. ‘The mandala’ writes Schlamms, ‘expresses the path to the centre of psychic totality, the goal of individuation, realized through the circumambulation of the self’ (2009: 2). Thus one can walk the labyrinth of the crop formation, physically enacting the symbolic path towards the self, the journey of individuation.

‘The mandala,’ writes Jung, ‘is the center. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the center, to individuation’ (MDR: 196). Photographs and accounts are legion in the various archives of people walking these concentric paths, spiralling towards or away from the centre, meditating alone or in groups, holding hands and forming a ring either around the outside of a smaller formation or in the centre of a larger one. Likewise there are numerous accounts of the energising and healing power of such circumambulation.

But what is the significance of this complex geometry and labyrinthine pattern within the mandala? How does the motif of the square and the circle affect us, the witnesses to the crop formations? I feel that we can fruitfully concur with Jung that the ‘psychic cause’ can be the suppression of the capacity for the sacred within society: ‘Physical hunger needs a real mean and spiritual hunger needs a numinous content’ (343). As such, what is the ‘psychic effect’?

Numinosity of the Archetype

There are many approaches to an analysis of the psychic effect of the crop formations. Indifference, obviously, could be one. Yet many people are not indifferent to them, and examine the impact the formations have upon them. Firstly, there is the immediate and powerful visual impression; they are large beautiful figures in impressive megalithic landscape, and thus they embody the aesthetic splendour inherent in the hill forts, barrows, cairns, cursus, standing stones and stone circles whose habitat they share. Secondly, their particular circular and geometric design is the mandala. Thirdly they are mysterious, for whilst many have been claimed by artists as their creations, many have not, and many seem to defy human capability. Lastly they appear to produce or accompany paranormal activities, from the ubiquitous dancing balls of light, to telepathic transmission of designs, precognitive dreams and ghostly apparitions. Four powerful features, therefore, inevitably convey a strong sense of the numinous, of the sacred. They are profoundly ‘religious’ sites, and, as Jung repeatedly suggests: ‘in religious experience man comes face to face with a psychically overwhelming Other’; and, in tune with all his work, the question is not of the ontological status of the Other, but of its psychic impact: ‘As to the existence of this power we have only assertions to go on, but no physical or logical proofs’ (345 original italics).

Thus we can bring the argument back to that of the historical context out of which Jung described the emergence of the UFO. To fail to be struck by the aesthetic mandala beauty of the crop formations; to fail to contemplate the possible labyrinthine pattern; to fail to appreciate the relationship between the circles and the landscape, the barrows, burial chambers and standing stones; to fail to be baffled by the mystery of the circle makers; to fail to consider the curious anomalous phenomena that accompany a visit to the circles – one would have to fail on every
one of these counts in order not to be struck by some sense of numinosity. Thus, I would argue that unlike the matter of UFOs, which the sceptic can disregard as hallucination or delusion, one can only fail to be struck by something numinous, something Other, with the crop formations by consciously, defiantly, stubbornly, ignoring the whole phenomenon.\textsuperscript{19} This willful position of defiance, Jung would argue, would demonstrate a psychic imbalance, a suppression of a fundamental aspect of the psyche. This decries a 'spiritual hunger [which] needs a numinous content' (343).

One of the drives of depth psychology is to orientate people towards psychic wholeness, to confront the repressed aspects of the psyche by recognising their compensatory manifestation in dreams and shadow desires, to reintegrate these dimensions before they engulf ego-consciousness. Jung examines the repression of the numinous:

Besides its formal mode of manifestation the archetype possesses a numinous quality, a feeling-value that is highly effective in practice. One can be unconscious of this value, since it can be repressed artificially, but a repression has neurotic consequences, because the repressed affect still exists and simply makes an outlet for itself elsewhere, in some unsuitable place. (340 emphasis added)

UFOs, Jung argued, appear to those most resistant to an experience of the transcendental. They thus constitute a manifestation of the numinous such as with dream symbols. Could we argue that the crop formation constitutes a similar mode of psychic representation, originating precisely from the collective suppression of the numinous? Clearly this hypothesis would only apply in proposing a drive arising in the collective unconscious and manifesting through the circle makers. But what of the circles that are assumed to be beyond man's capabilities? This question is only fruitless if we observe a rigid distinction between psyche and matter – a predominant scientific principle aside from at the quantum level and there only within certain parameters. However, once again Jung provides a fruitful avenue of enquiry here with his radical theory of synchronicity, wherein matter and psyche are observed to interconnect.

It is at this stage that a radical hypothesis can be presented: crop formations are the psychoid manifestation in matter of unconscious psychic content, perhaps manifesting through the medium of these many artist circle makers. We need not concern ourselves unduly whether they are all man-made or not. Our suppression of the numinous, of what Jung called the symbolic or religious attitude, constitutes a collective neurosis, causing the crop formations to erupt as reified compensatory content upon the landscape. Crop formations are thus a dream manifest in matter.

\textit{Synchronicity}

Symbols, I must point out, do not occur solely in dreams. They appear in all kinds of psychic manifestations. There are symbolic thoughts and feelings, symbolic acts and situations. It often seems that even inanimate objects cooperate with the unconscious in the arrangements of symbolic patterns. There are numerous well-authenticated stories of clocks stopping at the moment of their owner's death. (\textit{Man & His Symbols}: 41)

Jung, always defending his position as psychologist, can sidestep the questions of the physicality of the UFOs just as he avoided metaphysical speculation about the ontological nature of, for example, Swedenborg's angels. He makes this abundantly clear: 'Psychologists who are conscious of their responsibilities should not be dissuaded from critically examining a mass phenomenon like the Ufos, since the apparent impossibility of the Ufo reports suggest to common sense that the most likely explanation lies in a psychic disturbance' (324-5). When, for example, the scarab beetle flew into Jung's office at the precise instant that a woman was recounting her dream of the scarab beetle, Jung understood the significance of the wholly improbable occurrence without losing himself in speculation of authorship. He did not question the causal pathways that led to that precise combination of events. On the contrary, he felt that laws of causality were not in operation, but \textit{a-causality}. This principle, familiar even to those unfamiliar with Jung, is the principle that is operational beneath all meaningful coincidences, divinatory acts, clairvoyance, telekinesis, precognitive dreams, odd physical actions such as the stopped clocks cited above, and the well-known Pauli Effect.\textsuperscript{20} Jung experienced many forms of synchronicity years before he had developed the explanatory theory, from the spontaneous shattering of the bread knife and the sudden splitting of the round walnut table at his
house in his youth (MDR: 105), to the banging bookcase in Freud’s study that he explained to Freud as ‘an example of a so-called catalytic exteriorisation phenomenon!’ (MDR: 153). Whilst much can be discussed concerning synchronicity, what is important for our present study is that Jung, exhibiting the essential religiosity that motivated his entire life’s work, considered matter and psyche as interconnected when influenced by archetypal energy; indeed psyche flows into matter and vice versa.

In his investigation of these synchronistic phenomena, Jung proposed that archetypes act as the mediating principle that accounts for the meaningfulness of the coincidental psychic and physical events. In the 1952 essay “Synchronicity: an Acausal Connecting Principle” Jung explains the presence of the archetype: ‘By far the greatest number of spontaneous synchronistic phenomena that I have had occasion to observe and analyse can easily be shown to have a direct connection with an archetype’ (CW 8: 481). In particular, motivated (but not caused) by the archetype, matter and spirit vibrate together: ‘In archetypal conceptions and instinctual perceptions, spirit and matter confront one another on the psychic plane. Matter and spirit both appear in the psychic realm as distinctive qualities of conscious contents’ (CW 8: 216). In this sense, the psychoid nature of archetypes is seen to extend beyond a neurophysiological basis into the general dynamical matrix of all matter and energy.

Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another and ultimately rest on irrepresentable, transcendental factors, it is not only possible but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing. The synchronicity phenomena point, it seems to me, in this direction, for they show that the nonpsychic can behave like the psychic, and vice versa, without there being any causal connection between them. (CW 8: 215)

With this doorway opened, our analysis can now move to a tentative explanation of the crop formations. They are synchronicity at its most spectacular and dazzling: dream mandalas, stopped clocks, scarab beetles, fish and kingfishers on an epic scale. This is a tremendous cognitive leap unless we view Jung’s matter-spirit interrelationship as examined in his theory of synchronicity. However, we can take this hypothesis further. The argument has hitherto pointed at material manifestation as compensation. ‘Experience has amply confirmed that, in the psyche as in nature, a tension of opposites creates a potential which may express itself at any time in a manifestation of energy’ (414). I will also argue that they manifest the conscious desires and wishes of those for whom the numinous is nurtured. This is particularly evident in the spiritual responses that visitors to circles display when they do not know that the circle is man-made.

The UFO’s shape and size suggest little of the psychic state of the observers, save for the circular form (mandala), the cigar-shaped form (phallus – a line of enquiry Jung chose not to pursue, perhaps owing to its association with Freud), and its technological attributes. The crop formations, however, depict glyphs of all manner of images that appear to correlate uncannily with the conversations, dreams and visions of both the researchers and makers alike. Perhaps more uncannily, they also reflect, sometimes in almost mocking form, particular hot topics – memes buzzing through the blogosphere. Of the first variety, Nancy Talbott recounts the multiple cases of formations appearing in the dreams of Dutchman Robbert Van Den Broeke prior to their advent in the crop. Lucy Pringle documents a crop formation appearing that she had dreamt some nights earlier: ‘she saw the dream formation, new and unreported, lying below her in a yellow oilseed rape field! Correct in every detail, it was stretched out like a string of pearls over a distance in excess of 200 metres. Imagine the excitement!’ (27). Pringle then proposes that the formation itself represented the forthcoming 1999 solar eclipse. Many other testimonials report formations appearing after, for example, a group has discussed a particular pattern that they would like to see.

Of the many examples, one can immediately point to the eerie ‘Grey’ alien face in Sparsholt, Hampshire on 15th August 2002, alongside the haunting binary digital message, which correlates to popular discussions of alien authorship of the crop formations, the use of the alien face as a design on clothing and the on-going discussion of UFOs. An image of an eye atop a pyramid in Highdere, Hampshire on 21st July 2002 correlates to popular theories of the global conspiracy, elite cabals and the Illuminati, as articulated subtly by Robert Anton Wilson, or belligerently by radio host Alex Jones.
Numerous fractal designs, including a representation of the Mandelbrot Set, reflect the resurgence of interest in psychedelic plants as expressed by Terence McKenna, who closely associated psychedelic vision with the knowledge that ‘nature is self-similar across scale.’ A remarkable corridor with doors leading off that emerged in wheat at the West Kennett Longbarrow, Wiltshire on 28th June 2007 firstly points to the subterranean mystery of the barrow itself, and secondly evokes the corridor into which Alice plunges at the bottom of the rabbit hole, wherein she finds the physio-active bottle – a reflection of the sheer oddity of the crop formation phenomenon itself.

“Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice. A perfect Yin Yang appeared on Stantonbury Hill, Somerset 7th July 2007, a symbol of changing harmony that is today popular (and perhaps bereft of meaning) in all manner of marketing strategies. Two wavy (Celtic?) crosses appeared in Wiltshire in 2008, which commentators described as an allusion to the mythic Celtic pagano-Christian past. Sidereal animal forms appeared in 2009: jellyfish, starfish, and small crustaceans, which may reflect current rates of extinction amongst planetary fauna. The jellyfish was also seen to resemble the pattern of solar radiation deflected by the earth’s magnetic field, correlated with NASA predictions of increased solar flare activity. Other patterns of 2009 were seen in connection with forecasts of solar induced geomagnetic storms. An elaborate design known as the ‘Aztec headdress’ appeared by Silbury Hill on 5th July 2009, which was immediately absorbed into the narrative of the Maya calendric end of the ‘long count’ and the ‘new era’ following the winter solstice of 2012, as popularised by Daniel Pinchbeck. Lastly, a cartoon-like figure of a ‘Grey’ smoking a pipe, complete with a wavy plume of smoke, took all observers by surprise near the Cherhill White Horse, Wiltshire on 27th July 2011. Whilst some commentators see the image as too ribald to be taken seriously, others have suggested that the Grey may be smoking DMT, which connects the image to the provocative research into the entities encountered whilst under the brief influence of DMT (see Strassman 2001 and Luke 2011).

The list is as endless and varied as dream analysis, but what I am keen to indicate is that the observers are somehow participating in the crop circle manifestations, whether through discussions about the formations themselves, or whether researching other phenomena (para or otherwise). In this sense, as understood by Jung, the act of observation constitutes participation, further interweaving the trajectories of psyche and matter, further developing the mercurial daemonic quality, and further creating a sense of the numinous. It also develops a curiously conscious, and perhaps teleological dimension to the formations, reflected in many of the commentaries as a form of guide towards a new state of consciousness perhaps associated with the new Platonic month of Aquarius. ‘As a numinous factor,’ Jung writes, ‘the archetype determines the nature of the configurational process and the course it will follow, with seeming foreknowledge, or as though it were already in possession of the goal to be circumscribed by the centering process’ (CW 8: 209).

**Ontology**

We need to look closely at how Jung describes the material manifestation of psychic content. It is clear that in his investigation of UFOs, he refrains from allowing the projection to be materially independent, *despite its objective appearance.* It is because of our incompleteness, the fact that ‘our present-day consciousness possesses no conceptual categories by means of which it could apprehend the nature of psychic totality,’ we are unable to recognise the psychically generated structure of the UFOs. We consequently must perceive them ‘not as forms inherent in the psyche but as existing somewhere in extra-psychic, metaphysical space’ (335). However, Jung admitted later the possibility for independently existing psychoid matter: ‘I have, therefore, even hazarded the postulate that the phenomenon of archetypal configurations which are psychic events par excellence may be founded upon a psychoid base, that is, upon an only partially psychic and possibly altogether different form of being’ (*MDR:* 331).

And yet, how can we avoid considering the physical forces? Was not Jung himself torn between his desire to be a scientist and his inclination towards philosophy, theology and metaphysics? This is evident not least in his strident riposte as footnote in his work on UFOs: ‘It is a common and totally unjustified misunderstanding on the part of scientifically trained people to say that I regard the psychic background as something “metaphysical,” while on the other hand the theologians accuse me of “psychologizing” metaphysics. Both are wide of the mark: I am an empiricist [i.e. he is Kantian, as he declares elsewhere], who keeps within the boundaries set for him by the theory of knowledge’ (328). There is so much to be elucidated from this, especially given the arbitrary nature of the terms.
employed, such as ‘empiricist’ and ‘theory of knowledge.’ Jung is obviously torn between intuition and education, as, perhaps, we all are. Even when he does consider the ontological possibility of the UFO (in the final chapter of his investigation), he concentrates not on the phenomenon itself, but on the psychic response to it, the projection of psychic energy upon it. ‘Should something extraordinary or impressive then occur in the outside world the unconscious content can project itself upon it, thereby investing the projection carrier with numinous and mythical powers’ (414). His theory of synchronicity would allow for the interrelationship of psyche and matter to the extent that the alchemist and his chemical brew undergo the same transformations in synergy, but it will not allow for the physical manifestation of matter. The first can conform, however radically, to certain patterns of quantum theory involving the manipulation of matter; the second flies in the face of all scientific theory. Hence Jung robustly maintains that, despite being detected by radar, UFOs are projections. ‘The psyche can move the body,’ he argues, ‘but only inside the living organism. That something psychic, possessing material qualities and with a high charge of energy, could appear by itself high in the air at a great distance from any human medium – this surpasses our comprehension’ (416). It would appear that Jung could incorporate radar blips into the theory of synchronistic material influence without straying into science fiction or metaphysics. I see no epistemological difficulty with pursuing Harpur’s daemonic angle, and considering an order of existence that is both material and psychic; an ontological dimension proposed by Henry Corbin as the mundus imaginalis, or “imaginal” world filled with intermediary beings and possessing its own geography’ (Schlammm 2007: 76). This, I would propose, is the dancing space of the crop formations.

It is striking also how Jung dedicates thousands of words to the analysis of dreams of UFOs, and not witness reports. This is problematic as he has sidestepped the numerous reports of abduction where many abductees show physiological trauma such as bruising and scars, and psychological trauma manifest in tension, nightmares and insomnia. I feel that we cannot overlook the distinction in this matter between waking experience (which may nevertheless be psychoid) and a dream of something which, in some cases, scarcely even resembles the general literature of ufology. I could dream of a crop circle made of butter the size of Belgium, but that may not further our research into the phenomenon itself. One may argue that choosing to analyse dreams rather than witness reports demonstrates Jung’s reluctance to approach the matter head-on and reflect more openly on the phenomenological and ontological questions. It is clear why many people are unsatisfied with his appraisal of UFOs, as they will be tawling the pages of Jung’s essay seeking an answer to the question: ‘But are they real? Stop evading the question, Herr Professor.’

We can be spared this frustration when considering crop formations, despite observing their archetypal content, simply because we know that they are real. The question that will not go away for us, though, is, ‘But are they all made by people?’ In this respect, despite their manifest materiality, they actually belong to the same sphere as the Harpur’s daemons and Jung’s UFOs, as whilst, as Jung acknowledges, the UFOs are made more real through their appearing to sceptics rather than a priori believers, nevertheless this body of documentation will never constitute empirical evidence to naysayers.27 The same is true of the crop formation, not of the phenomenon itself, but of its provenance. As such, following Jung’s desire for ‘empirical’ research within the parameters of the ‘theory of knowledge’ – i.e. following a Kantian model of the limits of the epistemology of philosophy, where knowledge dissipates into opinion – all we can accordingly conclude with any degree of critical certainty, is that the many mysterious aspects of them, plus the labyrinth-mandala geometry, imbue them with numinosity. And yet how do we position ourselves against the backdrop of the ‘crass undervaluation of the psyche in our predominantly materialistic and statistical age’ between the conflicting polar refuges of ‘unbelief or credulity’ (346)? With regards the provenance of the crop formations, ‘Either there are hard-and-fast facts, or else it is nothing but illusion’ (346), which may be translated as – all are man-made or none is man-made. Neither position has been answered satisfactorily, and as such one can hold fast with Jung in his assertion: ‘As against this I have urged that the psyche be recognized as having its own peculiar reality’ (346). They thus correspond to the liminal psychic-material dimension of the daemonic.

Concentrating on the psychic cause and effect of the UFOs, however, Jung very subtly does not rule out the possibility of the phenomenon as possibly real, extrinsic to human agency.
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Should it be that an unknown physical phenomenon is the outward cause of the myth, this would detract nothing from the myth, for many myths have meteorological and other natural phenomena as accompanying causes which by no means explain them. A myth is essentially a product of the unconscious archetype and is therefore a symbol which requires psychological interpretation. (329)

Again, one may argue exactly the same for the crop formation. Regardless of authorship, these phenomena are mythic. If all the circle makers are people with planks; if it is the military; or if the authors are techno-geeks with some secret hardware that enables them to create patterns in the landscape at a distance, then they are unwittingly not manifesting dazzling archetypal forms of unconscious content. Therefore, in one fundamental respect, it is irrelevant who is creating them. This is a position emphasised by crop circle artist Rod Dickinson.

It would seem that Jung’s psychological explanation of the UFO is something of a smokescreen unless, and only unless, we pay greater heed to his intuition that the archetypes influence physis as much as psyche. Be that as it may, such a perspective still gives, in his words, only a 1% chance for the UFOs to be empirically distinct from human agency. But here, of course, we are in the very metaphysical territory that Jung was keen to avoid. In brief, if UFOs and the authors of crop formations are, indeed, ontologically independent life-forms, then this is the most ground-breaking discovery of modern history. It is metaphysics made physics. If, as is possible with UFOs, they are illusions or hallucinations, then we are dealing with a collective hallucination of unprecedented proportions! If, however, they are psychoid manifestations, then we are in the realm that has been kept at bay since the Enlightenment and the concomitant demise of hermeticism, neoplatonic magic, alchemy, and divination: the physis-psyche conjunction that Jung labelled synchronicity.

We return, therefore, to our initial point of departure. Having read Jung closely for a number of years, I feel confident to suggest that no psychoid manifestation in his analysis has appeared in the same concrete material form that the crop formations have. Neuroses and psychoses, the surfacing of complexes into ego-consciousness, biblical exegesis, the painting of mandalas, dream analysis, the strange boiling and bubbling of the alchemists’ retorts, alembics and flasks and the mercurial fumes arising thereof; apparitions of the Virgin, Swedenborg’s visions of the fire in Stockholm, mass uprisings such as that instigated by the Third Reich, mediumship, religious symbols, astrology, I Ching and other divinatory practices, daemonic forms, UFOs… None of these multiple facets of human experience demonstrates the unequivocal physical, material, empirically verifiable solidity as the crop formation. All these phenomena above are matters of human behaviour, fleeting visions of the few, subtle languages easily ignored. Even synchronicity, Jung’s most visionary of psycho-physical principles, can and is readily denied and refuted. Yet one cannot refute a crop formation, one can only question its provenance. Whilst mysteries are legion in our relationship with the universe, such as infinity, death and time, it is rare to witness an empirical phenomenon for which there is no consensual explanation. Presented with this absence of knowledge, we would expect two essential epistemological avenues to emerge: firstly scientific analysis into the phenomenon, and secondly the wealth of spirited explanations of their provenance, leading from the mundane to the cosmic. At the present moment both avenues lack the verifiability that Jung would have sought. Thus the most fruitful means of investigating the phenomenon, I would argue, is to appraise their psychic effect – as Jung surely have done – as dreams, as symbols of the archetypes arising from the unconscious. This constitutes a middle way, in some respects forming a semiological appraisal in its concentration on the utterance and not the utterer, or as Rob Irving suggests, concentrating on the art not the artist. But it also provides a respite either from the urgency to fix a scientific certainty or the desire to cogitate metaphysical abstractions. In this sense we, like Jung, can maintain a degree of Kantian empiricism (albeit reluctantly). This is important vis-à-vis authorship. If we pursue the line of psychic-matter interrelationship, we can evaluate the phenomenon through the lens of acausality without losing ourselves in the murky world of authorship or agency. I can reiterate a point made earlier; when Jung observed the scarab beetle he appraised its significance, not the infinite pathways of causality that led the beetle to fly in the window coincidental with the woman’s dream account. As with the signifying aspect of astrology, Tarot or the I Ching, the connection is through correspondence not causality. Yes, this is a leap of faith, but reality in my experience exhibits this quality.
To conclude, therefore, I would suggest that makers and researchers alike are motivated by the groundswell of desire for numinosity that Jung described as motivating the UFO phenomenon. I concur with Patrick Harpur that the daimonic is the liminal matter-spirit boundary governed by trickster Mercurius, and that the crop formation is a strikingly mercurial phenomenon. Artists who make the formations are subject to unconscious urges and witness bedevilling anomalous occurrences. Researchers become so keen to propose non-human authorship that they at times dogmatically ignore self-evident man-made formations. Some circles appear to mystify even the circle makers, who are nevertheless trickster enough characters as to be perhaps bluffing in their mystification in order to perpetuate the marvel. People experience empowerment and healing in circles that are revealed to be man-made, whilst circle makers report circles appearing that they had drawn but not created. Some circle makers may be in the employ of secret government agencies; some researchers have witnessed mysterious Men in Black. However, as Borges in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea in The Illuminatus! Trilogy, and Eco in Foucault’s Pendulum have acknowledged, conspiracies and secret organisations exist in the liminal space between fact and fiction, fantasy and reality. In this respect, and demonstrating the trickster nature of the crop circle makers, Lundberg et. al. may well covertly encourage such investigation in order to intensify the mystery. Nobody is in control. Nobody has the last word. Mercurial mysteries abound. Jung suggests that ‘The cause must strike at the roots of our existence if it is to explain such an extraordinary phenomenon as the Ufos’ (324). I would argue that roots of our existence are expressed in the crop formations. They are our dreams.

Bibliography


Jung, C.G. (1953), Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (CW 7).


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2 www.circlemakers.org/mckenna.html

3 CW 10: Civilisation in Transition, 307-437 (all undated references here are to this edition).
Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal


5 ‘The other article, entitled “No Flying Saucers, U.S. Expert Says,” concerns the categorical statement made by Dr. Hugh L. Dryden, director of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, that UFOs do not exist. One cannot but respect the unflinching scepticism of Dr. Dryden; it gives stout-hearted expression to the feeling that such preposterous rumours are an offence to human dignity’ (318).

6 Some of whom are associated with the www.circlemakers.org group. See also Schnabel 1993, and Irving & Lundberg 2006.

7 www.cropcircleconnector.com/Sorensen/PeterSorensen99.html

8 www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNdqNrdHzc&feature=related The following quotes are all transcribed from these interviews.

9 www.bltresearch.com/otherfacts.php

10 Available for view on Colin Andrews’ website: www.colinandrews.net/HiddenTruthDVD.html

11 www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAs7wZw3M&feature=related

12 See www.lucypringle.co.uk/photos/2001/uk2001df.shtml, also www.tabletemples.co.uk/imageslibrary/2001.html, also www.youtube.com/watch?v=1upFfc7FDh8

13 In this sense they are like Thor Heyerdahl and his reed boats or Tim Severin and the Brendan Voyage – not to prove that people crossed the Atlantic before Columbus, but to prove that it is possible in such ancient craft, thereby substantiating claims of pre-Columbian oceanic crossing.

14 Again, readers of Jung would be familiar with his evaluation of the myth of Wotan becoming a projection of the German people leading to the rise of the Third Reich. See ‘Wotan’, and ‘After the Catastrophe’.

15 For detailed analysis of the mandala, see Jung “Concerning mandala symbolism” CW 9 part 1: 355-385, and “Mandalas” CW 9 part 1: 385-391. See also Leon Schlamm’s entry on Individuation in The Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion, October 2009: ‘Jung also argued that the ultimate unity of the archetypes of the collective unconscious as well as of the multiplicity of the phenomenal world, equated by him with his concept of the unus mundus, is expressed with particular clarity by the symbol of the mandala. The mandala, an instrument of contemplation frequently used by Eastern and Western religious traditions to provide spiritual instruction, is a magic circle, square, flower, cross or wheel, divided into four or its multiples, which emphasizes a central point of orientation and an ordered unity of its many parts. While refusing to identify the individuation process with the soteriological perspectives and goals associated with these religious symbols, he recognized them to be numinous, archetypal images signifying the wholeness of the self, the microcosmic nature of the psyche, and the divinity incarnate in man. As early as 1916, Jung began to produce his own mandalas and to understand them as cryptograms of the development of the self and the psychic process of centring taking place within him. This practice, which he encouraged his analysands to emulate, led him to the conviction that the mandala expresses the path to the centre of psychic totality, the goal of individuation, realized through the circumambulation of the self’ (2).

16 My colleague Matthew Watkins has pointed out that the square-circle relationship visible in Jung’s mandalas is not to be confused with the ancient Greek mathematical question of the squaring of the circle.

17 See Aion: 219 & 224 for Jung’s appraisal of the ancient process of circumambulation towards the centre as present in Gnostic texts.
We should reiterate that the mandala is not an archetype, but the representation or image thereof. ‘I have often been asked where the archetype comes from and whether it is acquired or not. This question cannot be answered directly. Archetypes are ... factors and motifs that arrange the psychic elements into certain images, characterised as archetypal, but in a way that they can be recognized only from the effects they produce. They exist pre-consciously, and presumably they form the structural dominants of the psyche in general. They may be compared to the invisible presence of the crystal lattice in a saturated solution. ... Empirically considered, however, the archetype did not ever come into existence as a phenomenon of organic life, but entered into the picture with life itself’ (‘Two Essays on Analytical Psychology’ CW 7, par. 109). Elsewhere he writes: ‘The archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are very varied structures which all point back to one essentially “irrepresentable” basic form. The latter is characterized by certain formal elements and by certain fundamental meanings, although these can be grasped only approximately. The archetype as such is a psychoid factor that belongs, as it were, to the invisible, ultraviolet end of the psychic spectrum. It does not appear, in itself, to be capable of reaching consciousness’ (CW 8, 213).

Note that this is not a commonly-held feature of the debate: the question of Other would traditionally fall only on suppositions of alien authorship. Here I concur with the interviewees of Wakefield’s documentary: the mystery is alive with the crop circle makers as much as with the believers in non-human authorship.

Wolfgang Pauli, Austrian theoretical physicist and one of the pioneers of quantum physics and friend of Jung, was notorious for causing equipment failure and breakage simply by being present. This recurrent incidence of telekinesis, and the many conversations Jung had with Pauli, led Jung towards his definition of the theory of synchronicity.

In the summer of 2010, the Circlemakers team were employed by BBC quiz show QI to create a crop circle in oil seed rape of the show’s logo. Two Norwegian women visited it and were visibly moved by the formation, unaware that it was a corporate endeavor.

Sometimes a cigar-shaped UFO is just a cigar-shaped UFO.

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A number of commentators, not least Jung himself, have observed his vociferous appeal to the reader not to consider him anything other than a rational scientific empiricist. Note a later footnote to the text on UFOs: ‘Here I must beg the reader to eschew the popular misconception that this background is “metaphysical” [the inverted commas betray a certain disgust at the term]. This view is a piece of gross carelessness of which even professional people are guilty. It is far more of a question of instincts which influence not only our outward behaviour but also the psychic structure. The psyche is not an arbitrary fantasy; it is a biological fact subject to the laws of life’ (346). It is important to note that this footnote pertains to a paragraph in which he declares: ‘Since the discovery of the empirical unconscious the psyche and what goes on in it have become a natural fact and are no longer an arbitrary opinion’ (346). Some may suggest that in equating the unconscious to a natural law of physics, he is demonstrating a level of dogmatic faith in his discovery such as he observed in Freud’s defence of ‘pleasure and its frustration’ (348) being the sole roots of psychic illness.

Jung writes of Dream 1: ‘I shall cite two dreams dreamt by an educated lady. She had never seen a Ufo’ (330), and of Dream 5: ‘This dream comes from a woman with an academic education. It was dreamt several years ago without reference to Ufos’ (368 emphasis added on both).

Let us not forget, indeed, that Doug and Dave made their first formation a circle so as to make people believe that a UFO had landed.

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