



Baroque rurality in an English village



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A B S T R A C T

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The paper explores the concept of baroque rurality through employing concepts of affect and affordance within a study of an English village experiencing rural gentrification. The paper begins by outlining the concept of baroque rurality, contrasting it with so-called romantic approaches that have employed abstract notions of environmental or natural factors in accounts of rural in-migrational decision making. This paper then outlines conceptions of affect, affordance and more-than-representational perspectives before moving to an empirical examination of the relations that residents in a gentrifying village in the East Midlands of England have with the natures that surrounds them. The presence of positive and negative emotions with respect to a range of actants taken to be natural is highlighted, along with the significance of non-representation and pre- or semi-conscious relations with these actants. Attention is also drawn to the range of material affordances and ecologically embedded positionings and sensings described in accounts of rural living and rural in-migrational decision making. The paper concludes by considering the diversity of such positioning and the complexity associated with studies of baroque ruralities.

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1. Introduction

“The problem that writing on the countryside faces is that it still tends to work with a romantic version of complexity in which there is a basic wholeness ... that makes up a ‘natural world’ ... However, nowadays, there is a growing tendency to think of the countryside in terms of a baroque view of complexity in which the sensuous materiality of the ‘natural’ does not add up. Instead, it flows in many directions and can produce many novel combinations out of what might seem a rather limited set of elements, a set of world-in-themselves which may partially connect to each other but do not add up to a natural whole” (Thrift, 2003, p. 309).

“contemplative and mystical developments ... are widespread in modern societies, [and] constitute a background within which Nature is apprehended and which provides quite particular experiences of what Nature is. They form, if you like, an embodied ‘unconscious’, a set of basic exfoliations of the body through which Nature is constructed, planes of affect attuned to particular body parts (and senses) and corresponding

elements of Nature (from trees and grass, to river and sky)” (Thrift, 2003, p. 319).

This paper draws on and develops arguments in these two extracts. In the first, Thrift, drawing on the work of Kwa (2002), suggests that studies of the countryside need to move to a ‘baroque’ sense of rurality. Thrift is not using the term baroque in the sense of an aesthetic style or epochal social formation,¹ and hence the term

¹ The characteristics and associated historical/geographical identifiable presences of the baroque have long been subject to debate (e.g. see Mark, 1938; Wellek, 1946; Menashe, 1965; Deleuze, 2003). Whilst often used to refer to cultural forms with an elaborate style involving a plethora of detailed elements, this meaning is often conjoined with pejorative assessments such that detail becomes excess, as well as more circumscribed formal classification of style and temporal and spatial distribution as employed by studies such as Cosgrove (1984, p. 157), which identified baroque with a style of architecture constructed in sixteenth century cities such as Rome that employed “properties of grand perspective ...elevated to the level of fantasy by baffling elaborate decoration, *trompe-l’oeils* and the complexity of ground plans, curving colonades and serpentine facades”. Cosgrove notes how this style spread to cities such as Paris and influenced not only architects but also artists and landscape gardeners, it being argued that places such as Versailles and Hampton Court represent enactments of the ‘English’ and ‘French’ Baroque respectively (see Baridon, 1998). Cosgrove also highlights links between cultural style and social context, suggesting that the baroque was an expression of absolutism linked to reformulated feudalism. Such arguments reveal how the term baroque has been used to characterise historically specific socio-cultural formations as well as cultural style, an approach clearly enacted in notions of the Baroque as an epoch, such as Maravall’s (1986) characterisation of it as a dramatic reaction to economic crises and feudal seignorial responses in sixteenth century Italy involving feelings of threat and instability.

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baroque rurality here does not signal an investigation of rural spaces that might be viewed as potentially enacting such a style or formation, as undertaken, for instance, by Cosgrove (1984), Baridon (1998), Ridgway and Williams (2000), Conan (2005) or Puleo (2010). Instead Thrift is using the term baroque in a more ontological sense, suggesting that nature should be seen as a set of elements or actants that whilst often connected to one another do not constitute some all encompassing coherent whole. In the second extract, constructed in part through engagement with the work of Massumi (1996) and Lingis (1998), Thrift suggests that rurality is apprehended and constructed through ‘planes of affect’ attuned to parts of the body, its senses and particular elements of nature.

The latter set of arguments link closely to strands of Thrift’s work focused around ideas of affect and non-representational theory (see Thrift, 2008), which are coming to exert influence within rural studies (see Carolan, 2008; Wylie, 2002, 2003, 2005; Woods, 2010). Thrift’s arguments with respect to planes of affect also bear affinities to notions of affordance associated with the work of James Gibson (e.g. Gibson, 1979) and, to a lesser extent, Tim Ingold (e.g. Ingold, 1986, 1992, 2000, 2011). The work of the latter has been drawn into rural studies, notably in the work of Macnaghten and Urry (1998), Cloke and Jones (2001) and Jones and Cloke (2002), with notions of dwelling and taskscape given particular prominence, although as Howe and Morris (2009) note, both concepts have close resonances with the concept of affordance, a term that Gibson (1986, p. 127) made up to refer to the “complementarity” of a living agent and its surrounding environment.

This paper will explore how notions of affect and affordance can be employed to understand how residents of one English village, many of whom were in-migrants to the village, came to sense and make sense of the natures of their worlds. Recently Halfacree and Rivera (2012) have argued that attention should be paid to what happens to migrants’ lives subsequent to relocation to a new place of residence, suggesting that, in at least some cases, representational influences at the point of migration are “over-written and eclipsed” (p. 109) by other, more-than-representational experiences, including “affective and affordance-based dimensions of rural living” (p. 107). They add that such dimensions may well involve giving a strong emphasis to the rural environment and its “uneven, confusing and unruly forces”, such as “other animals ..., plants ..., inanimate objects and physical forces”, as well as to the social entanglements associated with becoming an inhabitant of a rural community.

This paper in a sense represents a response to Halfacree and Rivera’s call to develop accounts of affective and affordance-based aspects of rural living beyond the point of in-movement. Drawing on a research project entitled ‘Gentrifying nature’ conducted as part of the UK Research Councils’ *Rural economy and land use* (RELU) programme,² the paper focuses attention on the natural dimensions of rural space stressed by Halfacree and Rivera. It argues that many studies of rural nature within migrational and rural gentrification studies have implicitly adopted what Thrift identifies as a romantic conception, although Halfacree and Rivera’s discussion might be viewed as pointing to a more baroque notion of rurality. Building on this, the paper seeks to develop a more-than-representational account of residents’ relations with baroque nature as found within a gentrifying village in the English Midlands. The paper argues that affective relations might usefully be

differentiated into represented emotions, pre- or semi-cognitive feelings and unconscious affects, and that they emerge in association with the affordances of range of actants that co-inhabit village spaces, creating complex sensings of nature and rurality.

2. Romantic and baroque concepts of nature in the study of rural migration and gentrification

Halfacree and Rivera’s stress on the significance of the rural environment within rural-migration is far from unique, with studies over many years identifying nature as a strong ‘motivational pull’ leading people into rural living. Halfacree (1994, p. 168) himself argued that attention needed to be paid to the significance of ‘environmental reasons’ in understanding the “rural dimension” of counterurbanisation”. He claimed that a widespread, if at times ‘secondary’, motivation for rural migration was people’s perception of a countryside’s ‘social’ and ‘physical’ quality, with the latter being constituted by features such as open spatiality, peacefulness, cleanliness, aesthetic beauty and ‘naturalness’. More recently, Murdoch (2003, p. 276) argued that the “primary cause” of counterurbanisation was “the desire on the part of many households to live in the countryside, that is to be immersed in rurality” (original emphasis). He added that, “this ‘immersion’ has two aspects: firstly a social aspect ... [a] wish to reside in a rural community; secondly, a natural aspect as counter-urbanisers seek to live within a particular kind of *material* environment ... that includes traditional buildings, open space, green fields ... [and] proximity to nature” (Murdoch, 2003, p. 277).

A series of further studies can be identified as suggesting that physical/material/natural aspects of rurality constitute an important migrational attraction, with the precise terminology varying considerably. Walmsley et al. (1998), for example, argued that rural in-migration was motivated by a combination of employment and lifestyle considerations, with ‘physical environmental factors’ such as a ‘pleasant climate’ and an ‘attractive physical environment’ figuring highly with regard to the latter. Such factors also figured prominently within studies of amenity migration (e.g. Dahms and McComb, 1999; Deller et al., 2001; Hunter et al., 2005; Argent et al., 2007; Gosnell and Abrams, 2011). Other studies have focused on concepts such as scenery and landscape, with Halliday and Coombes (1995) identifying the former as a motivating factor for half the in-migrants to rural Devon, while Paquette and Domon (2003, pp. 434–435) suggested that ‘landscape character’ influences migrational flows, with particular landscapes acting to “sustain selective rural migration flows” (see also Paquette and Domon, 2001a,b; Hjort and Malmberg, 2006). This argument can be seen to exhibit connections with Smith and Phillips’ (2001, p. 467) discussion of ‘greenspace’ in rural gentrification, whereby in-migrant households are seen to hold “varying predilections for different representations of ‘green’ Pennine ruralities”.

These are only a small selection of studies pointing to the significance of nature in constituting rural in-migration and, indeed, rural gentrification.³ Many of these can be seen to exhibit the representational and relocational focus critiqued by Halfacree and Rivera (2012) given their focus on conceptions of rurality in the selection of migrant destination and their neglect of post-migrational experiences and relations. However, in the current context I wish to highlight a further aspect of these studies, namely that their discussions of ‘the pull of the rural’ in migrational decision-making enrolled rural natures through use of some generalized heading such as ‘environmental influences’ or ‘natural

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³ See Smith (2002), Darling (2005) and Phillips (2009) for discussions of the relationships between migration and gentrification.

amenity', despite the wide range of features actually being identified. Smith and Phillips' discussion of 'green space', for example, made reference to different forms of vegetated surfaces, most prominently 'open moorland' and 'green fields' of pastoral agriculture, in conjunction with a series of geological, architectural and practice based distinctions. Halfacre's comments on the physical qualities of rural space encompass material characteristics such as physical spatiality, chemical purity and sound. In the case of amenity migration, the physical properties of heat and light are often emphasised, along with the presence of water and also the visual appearance of landscapes, a feature also emphasised in the studies of Halliday and Coombes and Paquette and Doman.

Whilst a range of diverse materials, properties and actants are mentioned in these studies, the emphasis given to enrolling them into some generalised notion can be viewed as enacting romantic conceptions of nature as outlined by Thrift and Kwa.⁴ Kwa (2002, p. 25), for example, argues that a key feature of such conceptions is that "romantics look up", through processes of abstraction whereby heterogeneity at the "phenomenological level" is integrated to produce order at some "higher level of organization". Diverse forms of rural attraction hence become ingredients of a generalised 'environmental' or 'natural' migrational motivator.

The notion of baroque complexity suggests a rather different perspective. Kwa's characterisation of this approach is that it "looks down" to focus on "the mundane crawling and swarming of matter" (ibid, p. 26). He adds three further "characteristics of the historical baroque", by which he means the artistic, architectural and musical style performed across parts of seventeenth century Europe, are of relevance within contemporary understandings of complexity. First, is a focus on "a strong phenomenological realness, a sensuous materiality" (ibid): rather than seek to look at the phenomenological level just long enough to discern the contours of an emergent logic, as in the romantic approach, a baroque approach seeks to remain within, and make use of, both the complexity and sensuality of the phenomenological.⁵ It is striking that the studies of rural migration and gentrification mentioned previously, whilst stressing the significance of various materialities of the rural, actually provide little description of the operation of these materialities, which appear, as Neal (2009, p. 5) remarks, as "often uncommented on, taken as a given or seem like the hovering, slightly awkward, forgotten guest at the party". However, concepts such as affect and affordance focus attention onto phenomenological constituents of nature, and hence may be important constituents of a baroque approach to rurality.

Another aspect of the historical baroque identified by Kwa (2002, p. 26) as being of contemporary significance is a claim that the phenomenological is "not confined to, or locked within, a simple individual but flows out in many directions", an argument that clearly connects to Thrift's (2003, p. 309) claim that the "sensuous materiality of the 'natural' ... flows in many directions".

⁴ It is important to emphasise that the term romantic, as with baroque, is employed by Thrift and Kwa to reference ontological conceptions of complexity rather than to reference a historical period of style, although as Kwa (2002), and indeed Deleuze and Strauss (1991) and Deleuze (2003) note, there may be significant interconnections. The terms 'romantic' and 'nature' have clearly been quite explicitly conjoined in rural studies within discussions of eighteenth century romanticism (e.g. see Pepper, 1984; Short, 1991; Bunce, 1994), and whilst Kwa does suggest that 'romantic conceptions' of the complexity of nature emerged in the eighteenth century, these have a far from simple and direct connections with poetic constructions of nature, although they are by no means completely disconnected.

⁵ The significance of the material complexity in understandings of the baroque is clearly emphasised by Law (2004) who draws on the work of Kwa (2002) to call for a recognition of 'material heterogeneity'. The issue of sensual materiality is not raised by Law and it could be suggested that recognition of material heterogeneity and sensuous materiality raised by Kwa could be identified as distinct elements.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the consequences of an environmental or natural dimension to rural in-migration and gentrification beyond its role in stimulating acts of migration/gentrification, although it can be argued that these actions can have profound consequences on these very materialities. Thrift (1987) himself, for example, argued that service class migration to the countryside fosters the creation of a 'manicured' countryside, comments which find echoes in the claims of Hart (1998), Kaplan and Austin (2004) and Robbins (2007) about the growth and environmental impacts of lawn cultivation, as well as the rural gentrification studies of Hurley and Halfacre (2008, 2009). However, as discussed in Phillips (2008a,b, 2014), a wide range of 'actants taken to be natural' might be impacted by rural in-migration/gentrification beyond the presence of greenspaces and particular plant assemblages. These two set of actants are, conversely, still highly significant in the formation of NIMBY/NIABY rural politics and other forms of defensive response to change (Collins and Kearns, 2010; de Cock Buning et al., 2011; Robinson, 1999), although even in such cases, Wolsink's (2006, p. 87) conclusion that detailed study of the motivational dimensions of such activities remains "remarkably rare" still holds, a situation that suggests that there are many hitherto little understood lines of flow between people and the sensuous materialities of rural nature.

Kwa's final highlighted aspect of the historical baroque is the practice of creating highly elaborate forms through "lots of novel combinations out of a rather limited set of elements" (Kwa, 2002, 26), an argument that Thrift repeats in his claim that nature involves partially interconnected 'world-in-themselves' that emerge from novel combinations of rather limited sets of ingredients. In relation to studies of rural migration/gentrification, it is certainly evident that although a range of different features are identified many material elements figure repeatedly through these accounts. However, without lingering attention to the phenomenological, the extent to which these elements constitute a series of distinct if over-lapping worlds, or can reasonably be reduced to some abstracted notion as developed within a romantic approach, appears, at best, uncertain.

The following sections of the paper seek to develop an account of rural natures that addresses the four features of a baroque conception of nature identified by Kwa, namely a focus on the particular rather than the abstraction, on the sensuality as well as complexity of the phenomenological, a concern with the relational rather than the individual, and a concern with detailing how elaborate forms can emerge from combinations of relatively small number of elements. In doing this it will draw on the concepts of affect and affordance, which as noted in the introduction, have come to influence a growing number of rural studies. After discussing these two concepts and their links to ideas of a more-than-representational approach, attention will switch to the 'Gentrifying rural nature' project and its exploration of nature relations within a village in Leicestershire undergoing gentrification.

3. Affect, affordance and the more-than-representational

3.1. Modalities of affect and the more-than-representational

As noted in the introduction, the term affect has been widely employed in discussions of non-representational theories, although it has been described variously as a 'contested' (Anderson and Harrison, 2010, p. 16), 'relatively vague' (Kraftl and Adey, 2008, p. 215), 'distinctive' and 'elusive' (Pile, 2010, p. 8) and quite 'hard to grasp' (Lorimer, 2008, p. 551; Pile, 2010, p. 5) concept. The last comment is followed up by a characterisation of affect as "properties, competencies, modalities, energies, attunements, arrangements and intensities of differing texture, temporality, velocity and

spatiality, that act on bodies, are produced through bodies and transmitted by bodies" (Lorimer, 2008, p. 552). This quote both illustrates the complexity of the concept of affect and one of its key features, namely an emphasis on what acts on, are formed through, and emerge from bodies. As Anderson (2006, 736) puts it, affect is "pre- and postcontextual, pre- and postpersonal", emerging from "processual logic of *transitions* that take place during spatially and temporally distributed encounters" between human and non-human bodies. Furthermore, as Pile (2010, p. 8) emphasises, there is a widespread notion, at least within non-representational accounts of affect, that affect is not only "always interpersonal" but is also "a quality of life that is beyond cognition".⁶

This second aspect of affect, whereby "affects matter – but they cannot be grasped, made known or represented" (ibid., p. 9) has been seen as problematic by many commentators, not least because it appears to create severe methodological and epistemological challenges. Nash (2000, p. 662) questions, for example, how pre-cognitive or non-cognitive embodied practices can be studied given that ethnographic methods appear "as redundant as textual or visual sources, as they invite people to speak and therefore cannot be preverbal". Pile (2010, p. 9) further suggests that non-representational approaches appear to create a situation whereby the "object of study" – affect – cannot by its own account be shown or understood", a situation he argues leads to the 'performative contradiction' of repeatedly doing "what it says cannot be done" (p. 17), namely 're-presenting' and 'representing' affect in language. Carolan (2008, p. 412) also raises somewhat similar concerns, suggesting that non-representation approaches are problematic because they suggest that "what is of analytical concern dies the moment we try to talk (and write) about it". He prefers the term more-than-representational precisely because he considers it implies that the affectual can be represented, albeit only partially because there will always have been more than these representations implicated in the situations studied.

Proponents of non-representational influenced accounts of affect have sought to respond to these criticisms. It has been argued, for instance, that the term non-representational should not be viewed as a wholesale rejection of representation. Nash (2000, p. 661), for example, highlights that advocates such as Nigel Thrift explicitly argue that it involves "a sensitivity to the prediscursive and discursive, to the part-practical and the part representational" (original emphasis). Anderson and Harrison (2010, p. 25) provide a more recent example, claiming that "non-representational theory does not refuse representation *per se*, only representation as the repetition of the same or representation as a mediation", while Curti et al. (2011) criticise Pile (2010) for creating an unhelpful separation of representation and affect, claiming that affects and thoughts always exist in parallel or association with each other. Jones (2014, p.426) provides a rural illustration of such arguments, suggesting that a non-representational conception of affect does not imply a denial of 'cultural dynamics' but that recognition is needed that "affects and emotions will always be co-present forces, and are processes through which the other dynamics are channelled or practiced". Halfacree and Rivera (2012, p. 109) provide a further rural example, albeit with a migrational and temporal twist, arguing that representations are "a key starting point for understanding and interpreting pro-rural migration" but form only part

of the migrational story as over-time they may be "increasingly over-written and eclipsed", both through representational re-scriptings and also, crucially for their arguments, affective entanglements with the materialities of rural space. More generally, Cresswell (2006, p. 73) has argued that whilst "the movement of human bodies, whether self-propelled or transported, is never separate from consciousness and representation", it should also "be thought of in terms of both representation and the nonrepresentational".

In advancing their arguments, Halfacree and Rivera elect, like Carolan, to make use of the term 'more-than representational' as advanced by Lorimer (2005, p. 84). Lorimer argued that the 'non-' prefix had proved to be "an unfortunate hindrance", not least through being viewed as undermining the study of representations. As highlighted above there have been numerous protestations by advocates of non-representational theory that this is not the case, although it can be suggested that, as Castree and MacMillan (2004, p. 474) argue, there is some risk that the "ineluctability and resources of representation are ... being underestimated" in such work. The term more-than-representational, on the other hand, can be seen to imply that analysis can encompass more than that which is represented without necessarily implying that representations are without significance or impact. As Carolan (2008, p. 412) puts it, "[r]epresentations tell only part of the story, yet they still have a story to tell, however incomplete".

Such an account could be viewed as an untenable halfway house between the concerns of non-representation theory and those of a myriad of representational theories that are the focus of critique by advocates of non-representational theory. It might, for example, be argued that such a position is problematic because it implies that there are two distinct orders in the world, the affective and the representational. However, against such arguments it can be noted that even people explicitly wedded to notions of non-representational theories of affect have developed ways of allowing representation to occupy some role within their accounts. For some, such as Doel (2010, pp. 120), representations become subsumed within a seemingly non-representational ontology, such that "everything usually regarded as representational (e.g. words, concepts, ideas, images)" come to be viewed as "events in their own right". Others, however, seem willing to accord some degree of relative autonomy to representation: Woodward (2010, p. 335), for example, argues that "*non-representation theories require accounts of representation*" (original emphasis) not least because "non-representational thinking have implications that re-situate and reframe representationalism, ... asking for a new articulation of *each*" (added emphasis).

In relation to affect, an illustration of work that may be seen as recognising both representation and non-representation qualities is provided by Anderson (2006), who develops what Pile (2010, p. 9) has described as a "'layer cake' model of the mind-body", although it might be more usefully described as a theory of 'modalities of affect' (see Fig. 1).

The first layer, or modality, is what Anderson (2006) refers to as affect, although he also comments that there are "other modalities that speak to how the emergence and movement of affect is expressed" (p. 736) and that these modalities "slide into and out of one another" (p. 737). Hence they may all, in a sense, be described as modalities of affect, although there is also a specific modality, the non-representable, or as Pile (2010) suggests, the non-cognitive or even, with a psychoanalytic extension to the arguments of non-representational theory, the unconscious. This modality corresponds to the notion of affect outlined within accounts of non-representation theory, although as Pile notes, affect has been an object of study in other perspectives, some of which perhaps can be viewed as focussing on other modalities of affect. Notions of

⁶ It should be noted that not everyone endorses this argument. Curti et al. (2011), for example, criticise Pile for placing onto discussions of affectual geography a separation of cognition and affect that is not present in the literatures that have promoted this geography, most notably the writings of Spinoza and Deleuze, but which, they suggest, reflect his own lingering adoption of humanistic and Cartesian perspectives.

Modality	Character	Description
Affect	Non-represented/non-cognitive/unconscious	Embodied affects about which people remain cognitively unaware or unconscious of
Feeling	Pre-cognitive/semi-conscious	Affects that are not explicitly expressed or nameable, remaining tacit and intuitive, but about which there is some semi-consciousness
Emotion	Represented/ cognitive/ conscious	Affects that are represented as emotional states. Emerge from feelings and personal experiences but are "socially constructed, through language and other representational practices" (Pile, 2010, p. 9)

Fig. 1. Modalities of affect, derived from Anderson (2006) and Pile (2010).

feelings and experiences, for example, have long been the focus of humanistic studies drawing on phenomenological and existential perspectives, whilst recent years has seen an 'emotional turn' in many social science and humanities disciplines. In Anderson's account, feelings are affects that are not explicitly represented but are embodied states about which there may be some cognitive awareness, although this may be both partial – a semi-consciousness – and "a kind of post-hoc rumination" whereby embodied responses precede conscious response (i.e. are pre-cognitive), as in "the blush of a body shamed ..., the heat of a body angered ..., or the restless visceral tension of a body bored" (Anderson, 2006, p. 736). Feelings, as Brennan (2004, p. 3) puts it, emerge 'buried within' or 'rest on skin' of "an utterly corporeal body" although they have relational origins from 'without' via encounters and interaction with a range of other bodies, both human and non-human.

The third modality identified by Anderson is that of emotion, which might be described as affects that have come to have some representational or cognitive expression. Anderson, for example, draws on Massumi's (2002, p. 28) description of emotion as a "sociolinguistic fixing ... [or] qualification of affect" whereby they become linked in "semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action–reaction circuits, into function and meaning". Pile (2010, p. 9) similarly argues that "[a]lthough emotions emerge from feelings, and represent personal experience, they are socially constructed, through language and other representational practices".⁷

The notion of modalities of affect would appear to offer some rationale for recognizing both the non-representational and the representational, and hence be accordant with notions of the more-representational, both in a theoretical register and also methodologically in that it suggests that there may be flows and interconnections between the non-representational and

representational forms: that affects and feelings can, and indeed do, "trouble the mind" (Pile, 2010, p. 15), as well as operate with little or no conscious direction. Such arguments are significant in that they suggest that not only might unconscious and semi-conscious affects be amenable to study through a range of seemingly non-representation methodologies, such as detailed observation, ethnomethodology, performance, autoethnographic reflection, poetry and art (see Latham, 2003; Lorimer, 2010; McCormack, 2005; Wylie, 2002, 2003, 2005), but also that there may be scope to "harness and experiment with the mainstay of qualitative methods" (Cadman, 2009, p. 461), making use of interviews or ethnographic methods that 'invite people to speak'. These can be viewed as mediums of representation capable not only of conveying conscious emotions but also exhibit traces of pre- and non-cognitive modalities of affect, albeit in ways which may be far from mimetic.

Drawing upon the arguments presented in this section, it is proposed that a 'more-than-representational' perspective could reasonably encompass a study of representations but these would always be accompanied by a consideration of their non-representational dimensions, including the affectual, which itself can be seen to encompass modalities which encompass elements that are more and less representational in form. In addition such approaches might also incorporate consideration not only of embodied interactions but also how these bodies act in relation to the contexts in which they are situated, issues that form the subject of the concept of affordance.

3.2. Affordance

The concept of affordance has been bobbing around rural studies for some time, appearing frequently in studies of children's use of rural spaces and natures and the roles these might play in psychological development and social interaction (e.g. Kyttä, 1997, 2002; Roe and Aspinall, 2011), in research on the use of particular landscapes and environments (e.g. Gillings, 2009, 2012; Llobera, 1996, 2001; Macnaghten and Urry, 2000; Rantala, 2010; Woodcock, 1984), and in examinations of the value of particular forms of technology to rural development work (e.g. Frossard et al., 2010), as well as in the recent discussions of rural migration and representations of rurality and nature (Carolan, 2008; Halfacree and Rivera, 2012). Much work in the first three sets of studies takes a behavioural and cognitive focus – exploring people's perception of environmental affordances and their connections to observable actions – although some work makes use of more phenomenological perspectives, whilst others focus on delimiting the affordances of particular environments, objects or substances.⁸

The term affordance is, as mentioned in the introduction, traced back to Gibson's (1979) examination of an 'Ecological approach to visual perception', although as Jones (2003a) notes, the term appeared in an earlier study (Gibson, 1966) and had roots in a series of earlier studies by Gibson. Jones adds that the concept evolved through the course of subsequent work, with Hutchby (2001) highlighting that much of this became focused on technical aspects of the concept, particularly as they related to debates within the psychology of perception. It is also evident that particular aspects of his work have been subjects of further debate: Ingold (2011), for example has focused particular and critical attention

⁷ Pile (2010, pp. 9–10) goes on to suggest that Anderson (2006) posits two types of boundaries in his layered ontology of the body–mind, namely a one-way permeable layer between emotion/the cognitive and feelings/the pre-cognitive, whereby feelings can become represented via emotion, and an impermeable layer between feelings/the pre-cognitive and the affect/the non-cognitive, whereby "there is no way for non-cognitive affects ... to reach the cognitive layer ... nor ... can anything in the cognitive layer filter into other layers". Anderson himself, however, wrote: "the three modalities slide into and out of one another to disrupt their neat analytic distinction. Diverse feedforward and feedback loops take place to create such hybrids as 'affectively imbued thoughts' and 'thought imbued intensities'" (ibid, p. 737). Pile's discussion of affect and emotion has indeed been criticized for creating an overly 'striated' ontology (Curti et al., 2011), with Anderson's original article certainly being open to rather more positions than Pile recognises, although not necessarily implying the flat ontology advocated by this critique of Pile. Curti et al. (2011) also question the separation of affect from representation, and Anderson's comments do at least suggest that there are dynamic relations between the non-representational and the representational than is perhaps allowed in Pile's account of his work.

⁸ Roe and Aspinall (2011) provide a clear summary of the focus of this form of study: "An affordance typically refers to the functional properties an environment affords an individual for action ... The features of the environment, rather than being described by form, are described by the activities they afford an individual. A tree is 'climb-able', the branches 'swing-able', etc."

on Gibson's claim that environments would be better viewed "in terms of medium, substances, and the surfaces that separate them" (Gibson, 1986, p. 16) rather than as a space in which objects were situated; whilst work in psychology has continued to debate notions of direct and in-direct perception, as well as the relation between the presence and perception of affordance (e.g. see Michaels, 2003; Stoffregen, 2000a,b).

These changing perspectives and emerging areas of debate indicate that the concept of affordance is rather more complex and diverse than has hitherto been recognised in the majority of rural studies employing the concept. There is not scope to do full justice to the complexity of the concept and associated concerns, but instead this paper will focus on just one aspect, namely how conceptions of affordance frequently emphasise environmentally situated sensings. Michael (2000, p. 111), for instance, argues that the concept of affordance is "not orientated towards a passive, sedentary perceiver (as is common in cognitivist, Cartesian models of perception ...), but to an organism that actively and intentionally explores its environment". Gibson (1986, p. 1) sees vision, and indeed by extension other senses, as 'ambient', 'ambulatory' and 'embodied': that is, being mobile in what it views and where it views from, and being always corporeally situated, as "vision depends on the eyes in the head on a body supported by the ground, the brain being only the central organ of a complete visual system". In line with the claims of many non-/more-than-representational theorists, the body is viewed as central, as indeed is its context. For Gibson, vision was not only personally situated, as implied by notions of situated knowledges whereby observations and associated knowledges were always a "view from somewhere" (Haraway, 1988, p. 590), but also ecologically or environmentally situated. As such the 'point of observation' was not a geometrical position in abstract space but rather "a position in ecological space, a medium instead of in a void" (Gibson, 1986, p. 65). Vision, Gibson argues, is created through the materialities of the environment: "all of these various things: places, surfaces, layouts, motions, events, animals, people, and the artefacts that structure the light at points of observation" (ibid, p. 66). Moreover the things of the environment support the body that is doing the observing: the body is, as already noted, supported by the ground, but also the air in which it is situated "affords respiratory breathing; permits location, ... can be filled with illumination so as to permit vision, ... allows detection of vibrations and detection of diffusing emanations" (ibid, p. 17).

The materialities of the environment, which Gibson characterises as being composed of surfaces (which are the interfaces between states of matter), mediums (which have the characteristic of allowing different differential properties for movement) and substances (which have a rigidity that means that they are relatively resistant to deformation, relatively impenetrable by solid bodies and often opaque to light), are seen to provide a range of opportunities, or affordances, to action. They 'furnish', "like furnishings in a room" (ibid. p. 78), the conditions of living, and furthermore are, Ingold (2011, p. 116) argues, "'cluttered' with every kind of thing, from hills and mountains to animals and plants, objects and artefacts".

Ingold's notion of cluttered environments resonates strongly with notions of baroque nature as outlined by Thrift (2003), emphasising the particularities, complexities and sensualities of material environments. Ingold and Thrift enact a focus that addresses more than visual sensing: in the second introductory quote Thrift writes of 'planes of affect' that are attuned to both particular embodied senses and to specific elements of nature, whilst Ingold (2011, p. 87) argues for an understanding of life whereby people, and indeed other living bodies, are seen not only to be points of seeing but also, and often simultaneously, points of hearing, touch, smell and taste that occur through the "flows and counterflows of materials".

The significance of considering more-than-visual relations has been highlighted in rural studies by Carolan (2008, p. 413) who argues that sensory embodied relations figure strongly in people's representations of rurality, with these often being focused around "kinesthetic and somesthesia relations that came from their physical presence in that space". He claims, for instance, that many non-farming residents experience the countryside in largely visual or ocular registers, tending to describe rural space in "optical" terms such as involving "corn as far as the eye can see", occluding reference to "many of the smellscapes ..., soundscapes... and tactilescapes" enacted in the descriptions of farming residents and "past inhabitants" of this space (ibid, p. 416; see also Kaplan and Austin, 2004; O'Rourke, 1999; Ryan, 2002, 2006 on visual sensings of rurality). Carolan further argues that the visual emphasis of the non-farming residents is reflective of their embodied engagement with the spaces of rurality, such that it might be characterised as "the perspective of a body-in-a-car-on-a-road", which he suggests produces a "feeling" for the countryside that is "physically detached" as well as knowledge of the countryside that is largely visual. He contrasts this with the experiences of farmers who, even when engaging with the countryside "from the seat of a tractor in the field", have, he claims, a much more multi-sensory and physical relationship with rurality (ibid, p. 413).

Carolan's differentiation of non-farming and farming residents and their representations of rurality resonate clearly with a range of studies of rural in-migration and gentrification. He also, as discussed earlier, explicitly adopts a more-than-representational perspective that encompasses notions of affect as well as more-than-visual sensings of rurality enacted by corporeally situated bodies. There is, however, not much reflection in this study on how the complex composition of rural space might afford particular feelings and representations of rurality. In the sections that follow, this paper will explore this issue drawing upon the notions of baroque rurality and affordance, as well notions of modalities of affect, integrating these with material from a research project focused on nature within a gentrifying village.

4. Gentrifying nature: an exploration in a Leicestershire village

As discussed in Phillips et al. (2008), the 'Gentrifying nature' project sought to explore how rural gentrification may be both conditioned by and impact on rural natures. Use was initially made of Census data and high-resolution aerial photography to undertake a regional analysis of changing class composition of villages and the amount of greenspace contained within the 'built-environment' of villages. The analysis revealed considerable local variation in both social composition, with adjacent areas exhibiting quite different levels of middle class colonization and forms, and locations of greenspace in villages, even though the amount of greenspace within villages was quite consistent, at around 57% of the area contained within the 'built-environment' of these villages.

Following this analysis, one village, Old Dalby, was selected for more in-depth analysis. This village had a household population of 654 people in 2011, representing at least a 19 per cent increase over 1991 figures.⁹ Census data suggested that it had a large and expanding middle class population (calculated at 61.3 per cent of the classified population in 2011) and from the time of the study

⁹ It is not possible to be more precise because of boundary changes in the units of data collection in the 1991 and 2011 Census. If anything the figure is likely to be higher than that stated as the aerial unit used in the earlier census was actually more extensive than that used in 2011, although they were selected so as to be as congruent with each other as possible.

commenced until now, has clearly been experiencing ongoing and extensive property renovation and new-build construction (Fig. 2). Aerial photograph analysis also suggested that greenspace comprised around 56 per cent of the village envelop, close to the average for 7 villages that were analysed, with much of this greenspace being both publicly accessible and viewable, in contrast to some other villages where greenspace laid occluded from public view (ibid).

Biodiversity surveys, an interview survey with 113 householders and analysis of a range of photographic imagery,¹⁰ revealed that the village was experiencing considerable change not only in its buildings but also in the structure and composition of its greenspaces (see Fig. 3). The interviews also revealed that these greenspaces, along with those that lay beyond the village envelop, figured prominently in discussions of the rurality of the village and the role this rurality played in migrational decision making. These interviews also revealed that a wide range of materials, properties and actants were being associated with these greenspaces and the movement into rural space, a diversity that as discussed earlier, does not seem to be represented in existing accounts of rural in-migration that, it has been argued, implicitly enacted romantic construction of nature. These interviews also raised issues of affective relations and affordances, although they were not explicitly designed to address such issues. The emergence of these issues within a project that made use of questionnaire interviews can be seen to provide support for claims that ‘mainstay’ qualitative methods can be utilised within more-than-representational research (see earlier discussion of Cadman, 2009), although it should also be acknowledged that employment of these methods also undoubtedly placed limits on the exploration of some aspects of affect and affordance that could be undertaken and reported here.

4.1. Representations of rural nature in a gentrifying village

“One of the things that made me buy this house is the view from here up the garden. I like that ... you know the lines ... and the colours, I like that”.

“I like to see the fields, I like to see the green ... I like walking, round the footpaths ... I just like to see the fields really”.

“Upstairs in my house ... is the most beautiful view over to the church and it is lovely ... It is open, there aren’t any houses there, and there’s trees, and the church, and fields, it is rural”.

“You come down the hill and it is magical, it looks lovely ... when the lights are just going on it is just beautiful really, and in different seasons, you get different reflections and different lights, and it is just lovely”.

“I suppose it’s related to how it looks, its peace, sound, look, it’s not dominated by traffic and the sound of lots of people, you still get nature coming through if you like”.

Quotes such as these could be seen to support the contention of Smith and Phillips (2001, p. 457) that rural gentrification is stimulated by “the demand for, and perception of, ‘green’ residential space”, or indeed be equally interpreted as illustrating the significance of

physical/environmental/scenic factors in counterurban migration given references to physical quietness, openness, the diffusion of light and the presence of visually pleasing or scenic views. As such they could be seen as fully consonant with a range of the romantic constructions of nature identified earlier. However, it was also evident that the presence of specific flora, most notably trees, was of equal if not greater importance than a general sense of living in greenspace within many descriptions of the value of rural space:

“I like the country, I like the quiet. ... I think the view out of this window, those trees is fantastic ... There couldn’t be anybody else in the country to have such a fantastic view out of their window and say ‘that’s all mine’. I like that, I like the trees, I think trees are fantastic”.

“It was the prettiest village at the time. This land is particularly pleasant with the trees, particularly in the summer”.

“We like the space, we like the village community. I think you make friends easier in a village ... We didn’t want to be overlooked and we wanted to see trees”.

“I like all the trees you see, that’s why I came to live here. Because of the trees. I love trees”.

“[Moved here] specifically because it’s very attractive ... and this particular bungalow ... provided the kind of scope for developing a wildlife garden ... and the good walking environment”.

Fauna also figured strongly in many people’s accounts of rurality and their reasons for moving into the village of Old Dalby, with many of the modifications of gardens, and indeed movement into the village, seemingly done with fauna very much in mind. A particularly striking feature was the number of ‘rustic’ animals present in the village, with 3.6 per cent of households interviewed keeping livestock animals and 5 per cent chicken or other fowl, as well as horses and ponies (see quotes below).

“We cleared ‘the jungle’, established lawns [and a] paddock—we had horses, [and] livestock”.

“The lifestyle and the rural nature of this area of the county, that was important to us. Ideal requirement, if you want, was to try to buy that field in the back of us. That would be to keep goats and sheep. For various reasons that didn’t work out, but ... have pygmy goats at the bottom, and we are hoping to let some land so we can have one or two animals for the kids”.

“They are one Shetland and three Welsh Blackfaces ... We used to have horses ... but when my son left to go to the university it was no way I could keep on doing the horses and exercising them so, ... someone said well, if you are interested in spinning and winding, why don’t you have some sheep. And I said I would [have] one sheep but the Vet, on the corner, two of those sheep are really meant to be his but there are been here for eight years and they are mine now. ... Sheep is to keep the grass down and also to have the fleeces”.

“Oh I forgot about my chickens, yeah they mean a lot to me ... they come in the house ... They love to be around humans ... I’ll be in the kitchen a minute, and they’ll be up those flipping stairs, they’ll be round where you are ... I’ve always had chickens, all of my life ... I’ve always like them around, really as pets, and there’s the eggs ... There is some ducks ... I suppose I have them because I just like to have animals, pets, around”.

The significance of animals to the rural in both material and imaginative terms has been highlighted by Jones (2003b), with

¹⁰ The interviews conducted in the study of Old Dalby took one of three forms: structured interviews conducted through a questionnaire that included open and closed questions, which were recorded and the responses to open questions transcribed; semi-structured interviews that were recorded and transcribed; and informal interviews that were conducted as “a walk around the actual garden site” (Hitchings, 2003, p. 103; Power, 2005, p. 43), although in this study this work was also done in association with an ecological biodiversity survey of the garden.



Fig. 2. Property refurbishment and new-build in Old Dalby.

there being growing recognition of this within rural studies (e.g. Buller and Morris, 2003; Buller, 2004; Holloway, 2007; Milbourne, 2003; Skogen and Krange, 2003; Wilkie, 2005; Woods, 2000). There has, however, been little discussion of their significance to rural migration, although Freidberger (1996, 1999) has documented the significance of cattle and horses to rural gentrification while Jones (2003, p. 289, 2014, p. 425) suggests that, in the UK at least, there has been a rise in numbers and types of “companion and recreational animals” linked to “counter-urbanisation and urban middle class ‘capture’ of the rural dream” (see also Wood and Newbold, 2004).

The presence of agricultural animals was indeed clearly seen by some residents as a key element of what made their place of residence rural:

“Farms, working farms, on the outskirts, again not as much as used to be. I mean it used to be cows behind in the paddock. But I would say it’s reasonably rural, yes. ... You get a lot of horses up and down the lane”.

“It’s off the beaten track, it’s quiet ... just rural, agricultural, very horsey”.

“It’s surrounded by farmland, you see cows and horses, mud on the roads”.

Given this, it is likely that for some residents the ownership of animals was closely connected into the enactment of rural identities: a means to perform ‘countryist’ identities (see Bell, 1986;



Fig. 3. Varied and changing greenspaces in Old Dalby.

Phillips, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2011, for elaborations of this term and its relations with other identities widely performed in the countryside).

Similar arguments can be advanced in relation to flora, it being evident that not only were they significant elements in many people's understandings of rurality but also of performative significance in relation to demonstrations of identity and belonging. As illustrated by the quotes below, some residents clearly linked garden plants to representations of rurality, as in concepts of 'country' or 'cottage' style gardens, although there were also clear enactments of other styles, and indeed considerable commentary on various styles of gardening, at least some of it stimulated by the introduction of an 'open gardens' day within the village.

"The intention is to have as near as possible a very cottage-type of garden in front, where we have got mixed planting, both of flower and vegetables together. You know, very typical sort of cottage-type".

"Gardens are becoming less cottage-garden, more formal gardens because of all the changes in television gardening programmes etc."

"I think that in certain homes ... you would have always seen flowerbeds and lawns, gradually over the last, what, five, ten years, we've actually seen construction like the timber, gravel, masonry, not just plants".

"In Old Dalby 'Open Garden Day' our garden is described as a working garden ... There is quite a lot of competitive spirit between neighbours to have the nicest garden".

The enrolment of a range of flora and fauna into such representational styles can be seen as enactments of romantic conceptions of nature in both an aesthetic/historical sense and in the ontological sense implied by the work of Thrift, Kwa and Deleuze. In a historical sense, studies such as [Squire \(1994, 1996\)](#) and [Lamont \(2009\)](#) highlight how notions of the cottage-garden emerged in association with romantic valuations of nature, albeit often tempered by what [Short \(1991\)](#) identifies as more classical valuations of order and productivity. In an ontological sense, the styling of gardens and the propagation of animal breeds both involved practices of abstracting from phenomenological heterogeneity, as indeed would the enrolment of such actants into some generalised representation of the influence of nature or environment upon rural in-migration. By contrast, a baroque conception of rurality seeks to recognise and explore the significance of the varied constituents of rural attraction, many aspects of which exceed romantic forms of representation.

4.2. Emotions, feeling and affectual relations with baroque nature

In addition to suggesting a baroque focus on the diversity of constituents of rural space, the interviews also suggested that attention needed to be paid to the sensuous and indeed affectual dimensions of nature and rurality. Many of the interviews in the village of Old Dalby, for example, clearly generated expressions of positive emotions as well as evaluative content. Repeated reference was made, for instance, to features that were 'liked', with at times people expressing stronger emotional states such as beauty and love.¹¹ Expressions of these emotions, and other emotions, were indeed widely apparent in the interviews, as illustrated below:

"I love plants so much I want to get so much more into this middle space ... and I want a formal rose garden. I love roses ... just got the smell when you are walking around".

"the water, it's lovely. I think it's a calming sound ... Not that I need calming but it makes me feel tranquil, relaxed. The fish do as well, watch the fish, they come in and out, sometimes go to sleep, I love them".

"Can you see that sheep? It worries me ... She is not well at all ... it looks like her legs are the problem ... [Talks to sheep] 'Cristobel what's that? Stay there, keep on going around the corner'. Or look at that. I was standing talking to the neighbour over there and she standing, you know talking around the hedge and she said 'Turn around slowly and have a look at your sheep'. They were all round up behind me, all looking at [me]. They get very wary when more than a person comes in, because they think we are going to round them up ... 'Come on girls, come on, come on ... You're a gutsy thing, Cristobel! Look at those lovely funguses over here on the tree. Did you see them?'".

A wide range of actants was implicated in these emotional responses, including plants, water, fish, mammals, birds and open

space. These actants were caught up in, and indeed stimulated, emotional expressions, which included not only positive expressions such as feelings of love, tranquility, relaxation and care, but also, as in the last quote above and in the quotes below, less positive emotions such as worry, hate, loneliness, fear, sadness and guilt.

"I love trees but they've got to live with people ... I don't know if you've noticed that one and these across there? ... we actually live in fear ... it's quite scary. I had had one fall, a conifer fell in our garden and I was on my own and it fell down".

"I do like being in the countryside, yes, I love it ... [But] I like to be on a village street with people going by. I find this property, because we're on a gated road, a little bit remote for me. ... I don't like loneliness and I hate not seeing people. If I'm here on my own, I hate not being with people. So I've had to get used to it, but ... I wouldn't have chosen this house, no way".

"I think it's sad because, at the moment, my husband, we try and be as involved in the village as we can but, honestly, he's not a farmer, he works in Leicester, and your job, and your driving, and your stress, and it's hard sometimes trying to fit in a good village life as well, and I think there's a lot of families that are the same as us and you'd love to see more of them but we're all so stressed and busy trying to cope with everything we've got on that we don't get a lot of chance to see each other, which is sad because that causes loss of community spirit really".

"We loved ... [this village] because it was quiet and we've got the views, I mean it's just a big difference ... you can see across to the hills at the back and obviously in the winter you can see more when all the leaves are down. ... but is not a vast view ... Where those house were built ... used to see right away, because the houses were not there ... Ah, I am sad really. But then again someone built my house".

Negative emotions concerning rural space can be viewed as potential contributors to the rather unexamined group of migrants highlighted by [Halfacree and Rivera \(2012\)](#), namely the rural in-migrants who fail to stay in the rural, as well as the migrants who they suggest stay in the rural but do so through acts of "[p]erseverance, struggle and unwillingness to admit defeat" (*ibid.*, p. 104). In their view, much rural in-migration is stimulated by representations of rurality, but migrants can find their experiences of rural living failing to live up to these representations, a situation that can cause some residents to out-migrate whilst others remain, either simply hoping things improve, or actively working to construct their represented ruralities, or in a sense failing to recognise, even to themselves, that their move to the countryside is not living up to their intentions.

An unwillingness or inability to recognise situations to one's self is an argument that has some resonance with psychological conceptions of the unconscious/non-representational as discussed in [Pile \(2010\)](#). Halfacree and Rivera, however, focus most attention on the practices through which rural in-migrants seek to realise their imagined ruralities, suggesting that involvement in localised pressure groups and community events/groups might be interpreted as part of an attempt to mould the materialities of rurality to accord with its representation. They suggest that there are emotional dimensions to both sets of activities that need to be more fully recognised, a point made with respect to the former set of activities by [Carolan \(2008\)](#). As noted in Section 2, local pressure groups have been widely viewed as defensive reactions to change, focused in many instances around particular elements of nature, such as a parcel of greenspace or plant assemblages such as woods, perceived to be under threat from new constructions such as

¹¹ It might be objected that beauty is an aesthetic concept rather than an emotional notion. However, as [Tolia-Kelly \(2007\)](#) has demonstrated, notions of beauty are often imbued with emotional resonances. This can be seen quite directly in romantic notions of beauty that often embody emotions such as fear and awe as well as feelings of love and peace, although Tolia-Kelly also highlights the presence of emotions in other representations of landscape.

houses or roads. Carolan argues that the loss of such elements is “more real – more sensual, more physical” (ibid., p. 418) than often recognised, a point which highlights that very embodied relations, as well as vocally expressed emotions, might be significant in understanding such reactions, and indeed in understanding engagements in community activities (Phillips and Walkerdine, 2014).

As discussed previously, Carolan also argued that embodied relations figured strongly in people’s representations of rurality, with many non-farming residents both sensing and representing the countryside in ocular registers. Likewise many of the interview descriptions of rural space and nature quoted earlier made extensive use of ocular terms, such as view, seeing, looking and watching. However, it is also clear that a range of other senses and planes of affect were being employed. Descriptions of rurality and nature, hence, frequently made reference to sounds, such as bird song, and also the absence of sound, the quietness of the countryside, plus to senses of being around or with other people, creatures or things. It could clearly be that these senses of being with or alongside other bodies was sensed visually, and indeed audibly, but it may also connect to notions of embodied affective transmissions, which Anderson (2009) characterises as ‘affective atmospheres’. He defines these as “a class of experience”, or affect, that occurs “before and alongside the formation of subjectivity, across human and non-human materialities, and *in-between* subject/object distinction” and from which “subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge” (ibid, p. 78, original emphasis). Reading this alongside Anderson’s earlier discussions of modalities of affect, one could view atmospheres as non-represented embodied affects created through unconscious relations with human and non-human actants from which certain feelings and emotions emerge. Anderson argues that atmospheres form relationally between bodies and things, and as a consequence emerge to occupy spaces between and enveloping the constituent actants.

The visual plane of affect was clearly highly significant to many of the residents in the gentrified village of Old Dalby, and might indeed be viewed as, at least in part, a product of this gentrification, it having been argued that at least some middle-class in-migrants enact a ‘move-in for self and show’ lifestyle in which village space and its surrounding countryside become “an aesthetic background to dwellings and a vista to be gazed upon, often from the privacy of their own property” (Phillips, 2002: p. 97; see also Phillips, 2001). However, it was not the case that the lived experiences of rural residents in the gentrified village of Old Dalby were completely restricted to the visual sensory mode, with soundscapes being of very clear significance to many residents, and smell and touch also being important to some rural, non-farming, residents. These two senses were, for instance, very apparent in accounts of relations with animals and plants within village space, particularly where these were present inside domestic spaces within the village. As noted previously, noticeable features within Old Dalby included the number of residents keeping ‘rustic’ animals and the amount of change in the structure and composition of residential greenspace: the interview survey revealed that 72.4 per cent of households had ‘improved’ their properties, 75.9 per cent had changed the style of their gardens. It was further found that almost 69 per cent of households kept pets, with dogs and cats being by far the most widespread (35 per cent of households had one or more dogs, 26.5 per cent of households had one or more cats), whilst fish and birds were also popular (13.3 per cent and 12 per cent of households respectively, with around 5 per cent keeping chickens). Horses and ponies were kept by around 5 per cent of households, with 3.6 per cent keeping livestock such as sheep, pigs or goats.

As discussed earlier, many people had quite intimate and embodied connections with the animals they kept, relations that were also evident in relation to plants, wild animals and birds in

domestic gardens. As illustrated below, whilst these relations often included the visual, they also incorporated other senses as well:

“we are living in the countryside ... that’s part of living here, but it’s a different kind of peace because you can sit here and hear the birds, and get to know the wildlife”.

“I walk around in the evening. I like it. There is more to see in the evening some times ... This bush down there, is ever so funny, I call it ‘the flat’, because the sparrows, they all fly down and they all go there and they have a great big argument. And you can hear them, all the time. And then all get out and go away and go and do something and then they all fly back”.

“the girl down the road, she sort of rescues bats, and some girls rescue hedgehogs. I used to, but my husband objected because they sting so. They do smell awful, you know. You have them indoors ... and my husband said ‘that’s enough’”.

Bhatti and Church (2004, p. 49) argue that gardens are, at least for some people, sites “for developing sensual and embodied experiences and understandings of nature ... drawing on all the senses along with plants, pets, wildlife, the seasons, the elements, the landscape and the skyscape”. Such claims would seem to have clear resonance with some of the above interview quotations, although it was also clear that not everyone engaged gardens in such ways, with for some people gardens being places of leisure and, at most, only visual interaction with nature and the countryside.

“There were flower beds and now it’s all grass. ... [I]f there are edges you have to tidy them up when you cut the grass, so I let them all go to grass so I can just drag the lawnmower over it ... I don’t like gardening ... It’s extremely difficult to dig this soil, it’s either rock hard or like glue if it gets wet. And I’d already dug it twice and then not been able to convert it to grass. So I actually paid somebody to dig it and get it ready to take grass seed because I’d had enough, I couldn’t stand it any more”.

“I don’t like gardening. Cutting the grass, an hour and a quarter, when the weather is nice, yes, I can cope with that. But that’s all ... The main thing we do with the garden is look at it”.

Aspects of these interviews parallel Hitchings’ (2003) interviews with horticulturalist society members where there was a desire to deny the work needed to maintain a garden, although the residents quoted here were explicitly not gardening enthusiasts. Hitchings adds that this occlusion of work was repeatedly undermined by the agency of the plants, as indeed were the designs of gardeners (see also Hitchings, 2007; Power, 2005). Gardening was in a sense a co-production between people and plants, each exerting agency on the other such that plants could be seen to condition the gardener, and vice-versa, an argument that resonates clearly with some representations of gardening that emerged in interviews in Old Dalby. So, for example, one incoming gentrifier in Old Dalby explained that the present composition of the garden had developed as “a graduation over the years”, both as an accommodation to the agency of particular plants and associated actants of nature such as soil and water, but also because the garden has come to condition their behaviour:

“These two borders we have done this year. They were over grown woody shrubs that we have put in over the years and they have just taken over really ... We have done these borders twice now. There has also been a bit of change of design, going towards more drought resistant plants ... And also things that

won't take over. I think we've learnt with the garden over the years. The first time we put things in they got the better of us".

The comments of Old Dalby residents can be read as indicating that not only were there emotional, experiential and unconscious affective relations with a wide range of human and non-human bodies and other actants within the space of the village, but that these relations took a range of different forms and involved a range of senses or planes of affect, including but not only the visual. It has been argued that these affective relations emerge in association with the embodied and situated activities, but these relations may clearly also be impacted by changes in the materiality of space associated with the gentrification of Old Dalby, and indeed with other processes of change within the village. In the next section, the significance of the materialities of the rural will be further examined, drawing on the concept of affordance and additional analysis of the interview responses of Old Dalby residents.

4.3. Affordance

Reference has already been made to the diversity of elements drawn into representations of nature and rurality by residents of Old Dalby, which included not only comments relating to flora and fauna, and views of open greenspace, but also to reflective and shaped surfaces, sounds and silences, odours, flowing and still water, hard and glue like soils. These complex materialities of rurality and nature were clearly constitutive of both embodied actions and affective relations within the village of Old Dalby, which remote sensed analysis, field observations, biodiversity surveys and interviews had all shown encompassed a large, diverse and changing amount of vegetated greenspace. The village also had a conspicuous topography, straddling two identified landscape character areas, the Leicestershire Wolds and the Vale of Belvoir (see Phillips et al., 2008), as well as an extensive network of footpaths, features that were clearly drawn into the constitution of affectual relations with the village:

"[Chose this village because of] ... the walks and the woods nearby, certainly. And it wasn't flat. In other words, there was some sort of nice undulation".

"We go more out walking now. If you like where you live and as I said it is rural, there's lots of things to see. This is a part of the country which neither of us really walked before we really moved here, so it's nice to get to know it".

"I know a lot of footpaths in the whole area. Some of them are moderately obscure in some respect ... [but a] beautiful landscape. ... spectacular ... the actual geography of the land, the physiology ... is astonishing".

These quotes not only highlight the topographical materiality of the area, but also illustrate how this is sensed through the embodied activity of walking. This practice clearly connects to Gibson's notion of vision as ambulatory, being undertaken by bodies moving through environments. A number of rural studies have indeed drawn upon this aspect of Gibson's work. Macnaghten and Urry (2000, pp. 169–170), for example, make reference to walking when outlining their conception of the term affordance. They argue that features such as paths actively constitute behaviour and affect, both 'beckoning' people to walk along them and also acting as "spaces to relax and unwind, to spend time on one's own away from habitual stresses and other places, to talk more freely and directly with friends and loved ones, to let the body be at home in itself".

Michaels (2000) stresses some other aspects of affordance and walking, including the role of mundane technologies such as boots in mediating the experiences and practices of walking through their own affordances. Urry (2000) advanced similar arguments, as did Edensor (2000) who, although making no reference to the work of Gibson or the notion of affordance, clearly employed ideas of environmentally situated sensing, arguing that studies of walking needed to consider both "the material character of space" and "the sensual propensities of the body", with bodies never passing "seamlessly through rural space" but rather facing a series of embodied and environmental 'interruptions' such as "headaches, blisters, ankle strains ..., muscle fatigue, mosquito bites and a host of other bodily sensations" (Edensor, 2000, p. 101; see also Wylie, 2002, 2003, 2005). The interconnection of material space and embodied experiences is clearly apparent in this person's account of their walking practices in Old Dalby:

"Everyday we walk at least thirty minutes, probably an hour, up hill, down hill, all the time. When we didn't have the dog ... we noticed how unfit we become ... When we didn't have the dog and we walk up hill and we were ah, ah, ah [mimes being out of breath], we noticed it".

Edensor highlights a series of other aspects of walking, including three contentions that have clear resonances with arguments previously presented in this article. First, he stresses the multi-sensory nature of walking in the countryside, an argument that parallels the discussion of the relations that the residents of Old Dalby had to animals, birds and plants that co-occupied village space. Second, he argues that the practices of walking are "informed" by a range of "performative norms and values" (ibid, p. 81), an argument that can be seen to reinforce propositions about the adoption of 'more-than-', rather than 'non-', representational approaches.¹² Third, Edensor argues that walking has become incorporated into practices of modern self-reflection as identified by Giddens (1991). This argument can be seen to connect to some of the discussions of the environmental constitution of rural in-migration, with Halfacree (1997, 1998), for instance, arguing that counter-urbanisation might be stimulated by a concern to establish some 'ontological security' in the face of an increasingly complex and speeded up world. For Giddens (1991), this notion of ontological security was central to the emergence of modern practices of self-reflection, while for Halfacree, and for Edensor, rural space may be a setting for creating 'distance' between the self and the modern world. Similar arguments are advanced by Smith and Phillips (2001) who identify a 'detached attachment' amongst some rural gentrifiers who seek a lifestyle, which whilst connected to, and able to take advantage from, modern, capitalist society, also provides some refuge from its so-called 'race'. Such a viewpoint was clearly evident amongst some of the residents of Old Dalby, as illustrated in one extract below:

"like a lot of other commuters I had to come up here because this was where my next phase for my professional life was going to be spent, but we have a sense of infinity, if you like, man as an animal in his environment. We like to be a bit closer to our roots in nature so that was very nice. My wife likes to garden and I like to conserve things and I also have a mystical sense of my continuity origins. Everything, as I am, is bought on that, and it is

¹² Thrift (2003, p. 320) argues that the 'cultural industry' that has grown up around walking, and which "enhance or expand the range of affordances that inhere in any setting", is "founded in the intensification of present experiences coded in ... body practices". As such it presents representations as an outcome of practices. Edensor (2000), on the other hand, seems to allow representations to play a more constitutive role.

good to remember where it all came from, whether you have those same skills or not”.

It has been argued earlier that migrational studies often employ romantic and sedentary conceptions of rural natures, which need to be transformed into more baroque and performative understandings. Pointers to such understandings are clearly evidenced in the work of people such as Edensor, although these are often developed in isolation from studies of rural residential living. However, points of inter-connection are readily apparent. Thrift (2003, p. 320), for example, argues that the practice of walking, although involving movement, might also be a process of “gathering still”, a phrase that would seem to be redolent with the arguments of people such as Halfacree and Smith and Phillips about the value of rural residence. Second, Bhatti and Church (2004) draw on Giddens’ notion of ontological security in their discussion of gardens, suggesting that these areas are often viewed as places of refuge from a fast changing world. The presence and significance of gardens with the village of Old Dalby has already been highlighted, while more generally, Paquette and Domon (2001a) have argued that attention needs to be paid to ‘rural domestic landscapes’, claiming that not only are they prominent distinguishing features of rural landscapes that may be subject to rapid change linked, in part, to migrational flows, but are also spaces of people–environmental interaction. Gardens were indeed the environmental location for many of the sensings of nature and rurality made by residents of Old Dalby: looking through the interview extracts presented in this article, for instance, you will see references to views and sounds ‘from’ and ‘of’ the garden, to ‘talking around the garden hedge’, to ‘working’ and ‘sitting’ in the garden.

Gardens were not the only environmental locations framed within people’s responses. Again looking through the earlier quotations from village residents you will see references to views ‘from the house’, ‘the upstairs’, ‘the window’ and from ‘the ridge-top’. These are in a sense quite sedentary positionings, but there were other, more mobile ones as well, with one resident, for example, commenting, “whenever I drive to or from it [Old Dalby], I think ‘ah, I live in the country’”. This comment might be seen as an echo of Carolan’s (2008, p. 414) claim that incomers develop understandings of rurality from the “perspective of a body-in-a-car-on-a-road”. He goes on to construct quite sharp distinctions between this situated understanding, which he associates strongly with incomers and visibility, and that of a farmer on ‘seat of a tractor’, which he suggests is much more multi-sensory. However, spaces of rural living are multiple, with this newly arrived resident of Old Dalby, for instance, being heavily committed to working on refurbishing their house and garden, as well as being involved, albeit only slightly, in the village’s “social scene”, which encompassed events such as “a jazz night on somebody’s garden” and various forms of entertainment “going on around the village hall”. As such, their environmental positioning was more than just their view from the car, and their affectual relations with the village that they had originally moved to because they “just wanted to get out of the city ... and have slightly quieter life” were more than simply visual, although visual and idyllic representations of rurality were still clearly of importance to them.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored the value of employing a baroque conception of rurality through a study of people’s relations with nature in a village undergoing gentrification. It has done this through considering the extent to which existing studies of rural migration and gentrification have implicitly employed a romantic

conception of complexity in their analyses of the pull of rural natures and environments. It has been argued that such studies enrol a diverse range of ‘actants taken to be natural’, representing each as instances of a more generalised nature and rurality. However, rather than adopting such practices, this paper has sought to enact elements of a so-called baroque perspective, whereby attention lingers much longer at the level of actants, considering their material heterogeneity, inter-connections and sensual relations with human and non-human actants, prior to any consideration as to the extent to which they might act to constitute discernible if overlapping influences or worlds. To assist in this baroque analysis, the paper employed the concepts of affect and affordance.

In relation to affect, the paper argued for the adoption of a more-than-representation perspective and proposed that at least three modalities of affect can be usefully identified, namely represented emotions, pre-cognitive or semi-conscious feelings, and non-represented or unconscious embodied affects. With respect to the gentrifying village of Old Dalby, interview data revealed the widespread presence of positive emotional relations with a range of actants that might be viewed as natural, including flora, fauna and a series of phenomenological attributes of rural material spaces such as physical quietness, openness, topographical form and light reflectivity. However, as well as expressions of positive emotional relations, it was also evident that some rural residents expressed negative emotional relationships, such as worry, hate, loneliness, fear, sadness and guilt, with a similar range of actants.

The second modality discussed was that of feelings, with consideration being placed on how pre-cognitive or semi-conscious relations were felt through embodied sensual planes of affect. The significance of visual senses of the countryside was discussed, it being noted that whilst incoming gentrifier households often described the countryside and rural natures through ocular terms, other sensings of the countryside, notably sound and smell, were also employed, particularly in descriptions of nature in domestic rural spaces, such as gardens.

Arguments relating sensings of nature to changes in rural space and to the activities undertaken in these spaces were highlighted. Both issues have clear relevance to a study of a gentrifying rural village. Elsewhere it has been noted that length of residence and social class positionings can impact recognition of changes associated with gentrification (Phillips, 1998, 2002), whilst as noted here, Carolan (2008) suggests that incoming residents have more visual focused sensings than do residents who engage in agricultural production. This paper has suggested that the distinctions may not be as clear cut as Carolan suggests, with, for example, some incoming rural residents clearly engaging with rural spaces and natures in physically embodied ways. Likewise, it may well be that there are quite diverse embodiments and affective relations within farming, not least as technological changes may alter the experiences associated even with sitting ‘in the seat of the tractor’ (see Brandth, 1995). Literature on affect has also remarked on the need to consider the social differentiation of affective relations, with Tolia-Kelly (2006, pp. 213–5), for example, identifying a universalising impulse within non-representational accounts which, in her view, often involve a “a distillation of transpersonal embodied experience” at the expense of a recognition that “[v]arious bodies ... magnetize various capacities for being affected” linked to the “forces of differential positionings”. There has not been scope in this paper to explore this, but it clearly is an important issue, particularly in relation to a study of a gentrifying village.

The final section of the paper has sought to explore the linkage between activities and affect through the notion of affordance. This concept also places emphasis on positionings, albeit in relation to material ecological dimensions rather than the social power geometries emphasised in Tolia-Kelly’s critique of non-representational

theories of affect. The concept of affordance highlights how environments are cluttered with large numbers of things and suggests that the materialities of these things, in terms of mediums, surfaces and substances, facilitates certain forms of actions, and associated affects, and acts against others. Such arguments have arguably been most widely employed in relation to walking, but attention has been drawn in this paper to how descriptions of people's affective relations with rural natures were undertaken from a range of positionings, some of which were highly mobile, as in a body in a car travelling to and from their rural place of residence, whilst others were more sedentary, such as a body sitting in a garden or in a house. A range of different actants taken to be natural are evidently sensed in these different positionings, with people moving through many different positionings in the course of living in rural spaces. This highlights the complexity that studies seeking to explore the phenomenological dimensions of rural space and natures will need to engage with. Recognising baroque rurality and nature has been the focus of this particular paper, but there are clearly many more observations that could be made concerning this rurality and nature even within the bounds of one small English village.

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