

2. Class, identity and gentryfication

“You notice the difference in a village like this between the rich and the poor ...Some people say that there is no such thing anymore. But they don't know. They're just from down in the towns. But up here it is. Down there the people are all the same, and you don't notice it. Here you're living right next to them ... You move out here, and you see the money they spend on their children, for education and things, when you can't even afford a pair of shoes for your kids to go to school in!”

(Quoted in *Childerley*. Bell 1994, 35).

2.1. *The New Squirearchy and the new middle class*

Neither owners of capital nor exploited workers, the service class or 'new middle class' are so-called because they serve the interests of capital through the provision of specialist skills and managerial abilities. Found in both the public (e.g. teachers, doctors) and private (e.g. accounts, lawyers) sectors, this body incorporates those financiers, bankers and city high fliers identified as the back bone of a new gentry; being characterised by a rapid level of numerical growth, high levels of education, reasonably high levels of income, a considerable degree of autonomy and discretion at work, good promotional prospects (both vertically and horizontally), and relative residential freedom (Urry 1995b, 209). These last two credentials, it is supposed, have enabled the service class to become a key component of rural to urban migration.

The significance of the service class to rural restructuring, argues Woods, is derived from five primary factors (2005b, 85-86). Firstly, the urban to rural shift in manufacturing functions, coupled with a general shift away from heavy industry to technological production in many areas, has created many managerial and technical jobs in rural localities. Secondly, the relocation of corporate administrative operations into rural areas has resulted in job related in-migration

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and new employment opportunities for re-located residents. Augmented by major improvements in information technologies and communications over the past 15 years, this has made remote working an increasingly viable proposition. Thirdly, the ongoing expansion of public service infrastructure and outsourcing of many practical and administrative functions has led to the creation of many more service class positions. Fourthly, this relative superfluity in employment prospects has translated into a comparatively high level of residential freedom; leaving the service class well able to pursue the 'quality of life' motivation that is living in the countryside. Closely connected is the fifth factor, which sees the service class as having a high level of emotional involvement with the 'rural idyll'.

Recognising that buying into the rural idyll has become a major element in the residential and lifestyle trajectories of certain elements of the new middle class (Buller *et al* 2003, 28); the work of Thrift gained initial prominence. Characterizing membership as having a particularly 'strong predilection for the rural ideal/ idyll', they, unlike many other (would-be) rural dwellers, are described as having a 'greater capacity to do something about this predilection' (1987, 78). This process operates across a multitude of scales, from the personal to the national (Marsden *et al* 1993, 177), and variably takes on material, cultural and political manifestations. It can, for example, involve the hanging of 'Laura Ashley' prints on cottage walls, investing in stripped pine furniture and excluding developments that do not adhere to their tastes on the grounds of conservation (Thrift 1987, 79). Furthermore, the new middle class are also deemed capable of colonizing areas 'not previously noted for their service class composition' and moulding them in accordance with their particular wants and desires; a process we may well attribute to the New Squirearchy - although not without qualification.

Just as the concept of a collectively identifiable middle class has been destabilized, so too has the notion of a broadly cohesive service class. To a greater or lesser

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extent, the terms 'service' and 'middle' class have seemingly become undifferentiated in their application, whereby one has simply replaced the other as an explanation of socio-political dominance. Hoggart *et al* (1995), for example, highlight an evident uncertainty within the literature as to what the service class actually is, arguing that the vast range of situations and lifestyle choices adopted by such individuals makes it perhaps 'inappropriate to talk of a service class at all'. Accepting that members of the service class - including many of those living in urban areas - have a tendency toward rural consumption, Hoggart, for one, is distinctly uncomfortable with a widespread acceptance that the 'service class refers to fractions of that social category with a predilection for the countryside' (1997, 263).

Far from having a solid basis in research, Savage *et al* (1992) suggest that claims regarding the new middle class' attachment to the 'chocolate box' countryside are based not upon informed survey work, but rather upon loosely collected impressions. An opinion shared by Phillips (1998a), it is certainly true that the popularity of naturalist, idyllic notions of rurality are constantly being represented and re-dispersed by such organizations as the National Trust - whose membership has been described as predominantly being new middle class - yet, asks Hoggart, 'can we really be comfortable with the assumption that the service classes lie behind the cultural significance of the countryside?' (1997, 261). In short, no. As the Howkins (1986) demonstrates, the concept of the rural idyll pre-dates the popular emergence of the service class by some considerable margin, immortalized in the fabricated landscapes of the aristocracy and mobilized in opposition to the urban squalor of the industrial revolution. Finding favour across society as a whole, it has become *the* dominant discourse of rurality and, as such, cannot be seen as the ideological preserve of any one group or class.

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This leads into the question of control, and here Hoggart (1997) dictates that it is not necessary to have an initial ethos or executive form in order to determine social change; and, while this process should not be considered divorced from the production of rural discourses and their capacity to influence, it remains distanced from the steadfastly ideological via an acceptance of compromise. The example cited is that of house prices, where the strength of certain rural mythologies helps to sustain a high level of demand. To this end, it is generally assumed that the new middle classes serve their own cultural and economic interests through their involvement in rural planning agencies, the media and environmental pressure groups (Murdoch and Marsden 1994). Nevertheless, the identification of the service class as providing a significant proportion of members in such bodies has, perhaps, wrongfully led to the assumption that they perennially act in unison toward particular goals.

In many instances, the full spectrum of socio-political bodies acting on rural space contain elements of the service class(es), all competing for domination within particular decision-making spheres, and all having very different relationships with the wider rural community:

'In reality, the numerical strength of the service classes has grown at the same time as (some) commentators report their increased fragmentation, so commonality of actions and values has lessened. Quite apart from personal or family interests, considerations of an organizational, community and friendship kind detract from a direct relationship. Organizationally we see this in competition between institutions, in conflicting goals for decision spheres and in the priorities of those with a dissimilar embeddedness in a locality. This makes for a complexity that militates against unified assumptions over who controls countryside change.' (Hoggart 1997, 258).

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The sheer number of 'disparate and internally complex agencies' working towards countryside change, then, makes it rather injudicious to consider *a* service class dominant at the local level, and this is surely the case in regard to those broader structures that channel rural change (Ibid). Raising significant questions for rural class analysis, there is now an appreciation of other social relations such as gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity as being of equal or greater significance in certain instances, and how it may even be that 'the determinants of class may have changed to such a degree that we no longer recognise them' (Cloke *et al* 1995, 222).

Where, then, do concerns of class end, and those of group/collective/cohort begin? Herein lays a notable, and somewhat befuddled, disparity within contemporary class analyses. On the one hand, there are the likes of Buller *et al*, and Cloke and Thrift, whose output implies a very definite distinction. The former, for example, have stated that within current research 'local contingencies and cultural principles are considered as important, if not more important, in influencing social relations and agencies *than class*' (2003, 36)¹, whilst the latter have claimed that society finds itself increasingly fractured by *non-class* relations such as those of gender, consumption and lifestyle (1990). On the other hand, there are those writers who have expanded the gamut of analysis to incorporate a range of processes often overlooked in traditional Marxist accounts. A position adopted by Murdoch (1995) and Marsden (with Murdoch 1994), rural class analysis has arguably gained a greater degree of investigative complexity within, beyond - and as an extension of - an 'interpretative analysis' which recognizes 'ambiguities of class, the difficulty of locating it in only one dimension, and the "messiness" of its connections with other social phenomena' (Savage and Butler 1995, 346).

Responsive to a poststructural 'turn', an increasing number of geographers have seen these phenomena as being, in many ways, culturally created, and have

¹ Italics added.

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sought to examine the processes by which these identities are fashioned and embedded within rural society and discourses of rurality. As well as prompting new research foci within the discipline, particularly those of gender identities and relations (e.g. Little and Austin 1996), the entrance of poststructural ideas has also impacted on the study of some rather longer-recognized aspects of social geography. Questioning, for example, the degree to which concepts such as counterurbanization and gentrification refer to unitary incidences (see Phillips 1993), they have also prompted a re-examination of rural recreation (e.g. McNaghton 1995) and resource conflict (e.g. Harrison and Burgess 1994) using notions of discourse and multiple, fragmented and neglected subjects (Phillips 1998a, 46).

Far from undermining the importance of class in conditioning rural change, placing it alongside, and in relation to, other social phenomena rather offers the possibility of generating more nuanced understandings of those forces at work in the countryside; including, perhaps that of the New Squirearchy. Apparently assuming, replicating and encroaching upon those spaces of residence, recreation and control historically associated with the landed elite, their varied engagement with the rural community on these grounds undoubtedly rests on those competencies accredited to a wider service class; a service class whose success in fashioning change is not simply a question of numeric strength, but also one of proactive involvement in local socio-political organizations. With money, motivation and much organizational potential, they are portrayed as well equipped to defend their investment, using their power to pursue interests tied to very particular ideologies regarding the countryside (Woods 2005b); one of which is conceivably that of the country squire; and one that both draws on and informs 'other' complementary identities such as those of masculinity and ethnicity.

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2.2. *A third way; through cultural capital to performing identity*

Seeking an alternative to what he refers to as a 'postmodern non-class analysis', Phillips (1998b; 1998c) has been at the forefront of a search for a 'third way' which combines an understanding of the relevance of class as an expression of exploitation in society with issues of recognition, identity and cultural difference. Identifying the work of Bourdieu (1984) and his concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'class habitus' as figuring most highly within human geography on this front, Phillips, like Cloke and Thrift before, considers these models as being of only limited use. Although we must recognize the debt owed by human geographers to Bourdieu in terms of sparking key debates concerning space and place (for example, Harvey 1989; Hillier and Rooksby 2002; Painter 2000), Phillips considers the notion of cultural capital as link between class and culture as being 'something of a false turn' (1995, 223). Instead, they draw more explicitly on the work of Michele Lamont – itself a largely sympathetic critique of Bourdieu's output – and her various claims as regards to the relationship between self-identity and class relations.

The first and foremost assertion made by Lamont and Fournier (1992) is that there is a distinct need to actively connect the issue of self-identity with the formation of social classes. In doing so, she pays particular attention to both *symbolic boundaries* – the types of lines people draw when they categorise people' – and *high status symbols* – the markers people use in their social evaluations. Here, for example, she pays considerable attention to those status signals which are seen as intimately related to progress upon the career ladder, pointing to research that shows that managers favour employees who resemble them culturally. The second of Lamont and Fournier's contentions which Phillips (1998b) highlights is that the connection between self identity and class formation is neither straightforward nor automatic, but rather frequent and often unintentional.

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The culture that a person 'holds', then, is more than a product of interests, resources and group structure, but also an expression of those boundary-determining 'cultural resources' that are made available to them (Ibid, 421). These resources – which take the form of collective values, identities and knowledges – are the result of experience, life history and interest played out, manipulated and passed on within the everyday social environment. Criticizing Bourdieu for ignoring the effect of 'broader, remoter, national, cultural repertoires which people draw on their construction of self identities', Lamont differentiates between such 'remote factors' and those 'proximate' factors which form the principal basis for his notion of habitus (Ibid). As such, she emphasizes the important role that historical and contemporary 'national repertoires' play in 'diffusing messages over society at large' (Lamont 1991, 139). Here we need only look at that repertoire which associates the assumption of a rural, gentryfied existence with accomplishment, comfort and – as a reflection of the nobility of countryside – a kind of moral ascension.

Disparaging of sociologists' tendency to over-emphasise the importance of socio-economic factors in relation to such 'moral signals', Lamont tenders a three-tiered 'boundary approach' to issues of difference. Differentiating between (i) *moral boundaries* concerning such characteristics as honesty, work ethic and integrity; (ii) *socio-economic boundaries* centred on indicators of wealth, power and professional success; and (iii) *cultural boundaries* drawn on the basis of education, intelligence, tastes and command of culture, she maintains that for many people, on many occasions, the importance of moral and cultural values far outweighs that of economic status symbols. Here, for example, we may consider those comments made by Francis Fulford in the previous chapter, which set apart the *ancient regime* from the *nouveau riche* according to such principles; principles that constitute the crux of that rhetoric employed in the defence of the countryside from a disruptive

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influence brought forth by a financially strong, but culturally barren, group of ex-urban incomers. The belief that the New Squirearchy is nothing more than an expression of success, however, is something that should not be readily assumed.

Drawing on critiques of Bourdieu's work as made by Cloke *et al* (1995) and Dreyfus and Rabinow (1993), Phillips stresses the crudity of an implicit assumption that the pursuit of anything in life – whether this be socio-economic, moral or cultural – is done for some kind of symbolic advantage (1993b, 233). As is made clear, this is a distinctly tautological statement; i.e. the presumption that all human activity revolves around the pursuit of social profit tells us very little if such profit is defined as whatever people pursue. It follows that symbolic realization exists as a non-essential offshoot of boundary formation, and that different forms of symbolic capital are neither universally recognisable nor equalled valued across society. More directly, the concept of 'positional consumption' as a motivational force behind such actions as purchasing and decorating a country home, taking part in rural recreational activities or even dressing in a given style should be considered largely in terms of aspiration, fulfilment and boundary construction as the upshot of lifestyle-specific performances.

In a culturally informed, 'performative' view of group formation, the new gentry – like a broader service class - becomes a 'context within which collective actions occur' (Murdoch 1995, 1219); a shared comprehension of how resources, attributes and attitudes are dispersed and used as the basis of action. A re-think in the way in which we approach rural restructuring, it reflects a recent trend within rural studies whereby researchers have started to move beyond perceptions and representations of the countryside, and are attempting to grasp the ways in which the rural is performed and dynamically constituted. Taking impetus from wider trends within human geography, there is a 'move away from thinking of the rural

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as a spatially fixed entity ... and a focus on the way in which rurality (or particularly ways of being rural) is embedded in social practises and lifestyles' (Woods 2005b, 302). As of yet, however, only a limited amount of work has emerged in this vein, especially in terms of the (new) middle class and rural gentryfication; although the work of Willis and Campbell (2004), and Gosnell and Haggerty (2007), provide notable exceptions.

Considering the Chesnut Economy of Rural France, Willis and Campbell illustrate how this space - interpreted as a 'cold spot' standing aside the formal agrarian economy - is inhabited by participants who are drawn into a set of practises that have a distinctly contingent quality (2004, 319). Determining a 'spatially located praxis' as being the most powerful reason for the emergence of this economy, they account for its reciprocation in terms of the 'alternative lifestyle' lived by a collective referred to as the 'Néo's':

'It is their day to day activities that anchor them, that sustain them, and that significantly determines the social meaning of the landscape. The Néo's have become the key producers of patrimoine. They are the ones who rebuild ruined farmhouses in an authentic fashion, and they are the ones who carry the vision of patrimoine ...' (Ibid, 327).

As the principal manufacturers of 'patrimoine', the Néo's are herein identified as being at the forefront of the 'return to the earth' movement in France from the 1970s onwards; a phenomenon which does not exist outside of complex processes of designation and appropriation.

Involving the transformation of objects, spaces, practises and products into 'more than the sum of their parts', patrimonialisation involves the mobilization of historical and symbolic traits to give specific and authentic meaning, whether that

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be in terms of production or collective identity. Centred on small-scale farm production, an informal local market and economy, deployment of artisan skills and the creative manipulation of available subsidies and benefits, all of these flourish 'as did the peasantry for centuries, under the canopy of chestnut trees, using chestnuts as food, or building with chestnut timber' (Ibid, 321). Of specific importance in and for rural areas, inscribing desirable qualities in 'craft produce' and through 're-inscribing rural space with a whole new set of (old) meanings' (Ibid, 320), there are clear parallels with the apparent rebirth of the discourse of the country squire across the Channel - albeit at an alternative end of the social spectrum.

Of more relevance in terms of the buoyant socio-economic circumstances enjoyed by the New Squirearchy, Gosnell and Haggerty's (2007) study of ranch landscapes in the American West also deals with the emergence of new (elite) communities in rural space, and those geographies of conflict and co-operation that ensue. Drawing on datasets regarding the sale of large ranches in Michigan and Wyoming, they indicate that an increasing percentage of those over 400 acres in size are being purchased by amenity buyers. Funded by 'city money', and more concerned with 'getting back to nature' and 'living the cowboy dream' than drawing a profit from these spaces, their contrast with traditional ranchers is identified as one of a 'post-productivist vs. production-orientated self identity'; a condition that is also evident in discussions of the New Squirearchy's relationship with the traditional agricultural community.

Greatly concerned with ecological sustainability, these 'new ranchers' are shown as taking a varied line between privacy and an active interest in the rural community. While some are reclusive, the greater proportion is accredited with the managerial expertise to 'rally round' and gather local support for wildlife preservation schemes, anti-development programmes and agri-environmental

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alliances through trust-building, transparency and co-operative learning. Mixing financial, social and intellectual capital, the mid West's new ranchers – like England's New Squires – are identified as an increasingly important political force in the increasingly multifunctional (and multicultural) rural landscape. Nevertheless, Gosnell and Haggerty's work is, as of yet, in its infancy, and, like Willis and Campbell, they maintain that more research is required on the 'everyday contingencies, shifting power relations and social outcomes' becoming of the influx of these – and other – gentrifiers in the countryside, both practically and theoretically; echoing Little and Leyshon's initial call for a more developed research agenda for embodied rural geographies.

2.3. *Embodied rural geographies*

Responding to the scarcity of work on rural embodiment, Little and Leyshon's (2003) contribution to *Progress in Human Geography* constituted the first comprehensive case for a consideration of 'the body' as a platform for better understanding rural social relations and communities. Focusing on the relationship between changing femininities, masculinities and the performance of sexuality in rural areas, they argue that a deeper and more nuanced exploration of embodiment in a rural context provides a vital avenue through which to address the construction and reproduction of identity, and thus inform 'key debates on social exclusion, marginalization and, indeed, the cultural construction of rurality' (Ibid, 269). For them, the relationship between the rural body and the acceptance of certain dominant and traditional forms of rural behaviour implies a power relation; one where certain performances are valued and deemed – thus rendered – capable of directing elements of rurality and rural change.

In many respects an equivalent of Mona Domosh's earlier work on embodied sexual identities in the city, Little and Leyshon's *Embodied rural geographies* forms

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part of that stream of work grounded in performance theory. Far from uniform its philosophical points of reference are diffuse, but one where Deleuze, Spinoza, Bergson, Whitehead and Merleau-Ponty come to the fore (see Lorimer 2007). It is not my intention to provide a comparative review of these theorists, nor elucidate upon what they bring to bear on the social sciences as a whole; instead I will focus upon how the ideas of these geo-philosophers have compounded upon the form and practise of rural geography; primarily through the conduit of human geography and cultural studies as a wider disciplinary arena.

Engaging with current debates about performance within geography, Little and Leyshon are highly interested in action as way of exploring the relationship between subjectivity, identity and agency in the formation of everyday social practises. Drawing on, among others, the work of Dewsbury (2000) and Gregson and Rose (2000), they aver the relevance of space to performativity as both brought into being through performances, and as an articulation of power. Focusing more specifically on the latter, they illustrate 'the centrality of the space of the rural (and the meanings and values associated with such spaces) to bodily performance', whilst also acknowledging 'that the material practices of the body are also important in the creation of rural space itself' (Ibid, 258). Addressing these themes, they draw together the (then, and still) limited references to the role of the body in the context of the rural landscape

Starting with the question of 'what is meant by the body?,' Little and Leyshon note that, despite figuring at the heart of a number of theoretical debates (particularly those of feminism) the body presents 'serious definitional and conceptual difficulties'. Nevertheless, they propose that theoretical approaches can be divided into two broad categories; those of 'essentialist' and 'constructionalist' dispositions (see McDowell 1999 and Pratt 1994 for a more developed appraisal of this differentiation). Referring to a basic belief that people and/ or phenomenon

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have an underlying and largely unchanging 'essence', essentialists count the use of biological, physiological and genetic causes as explanations for social behaviour. Developed by early feminists, who have subsequently celebrated alternative reproductive functions, this perspective has been criticized in recent times for maintaining 'a single fixed and basically passive interpretation of the body, and one that lends itself for the perpetuation of a mind-body dualism' (Ibid, 259).

Constructionist approaches, on the other hand, argue that the body is discursively produced; i.e. they are containers and surfaces for the inscription of society's values, laws and mores. Initially following a rather consistent course, seeing bodies as being submissive carriers of cultural imprints (cf. Connell 2000, 58), constructionalists have of late come to regard the body not as an 'blank page' awaiting genderization, but rather as part of the production and performance of gendered subjectivities. Emphasizing the agency of the body in social practise Little and Leyshon argue that writing on gender and sexuality in particular has demonstrated how the 'materiality of the body' reproduces, sustains and contests social assumptions and expectations, but also fashions these expectations (2003, 260). Drawing on the work of Brook (1999), gender – as with class, ethnicity, age, or race – thus becomes a continuing, interlocking series of performances between bodies and (perpetuated) discourses.

Intrinsically tied up with space, Nast and Pile (1998) have observed that discursive practises and materiality are 'filtered' through bodies which are both relational and territorialized. Our understanding of spaces and places must, argue Little and Leyshon, therefore 'incorporate the ways in which bodies are constituted and acknowledge their challenge to conventional boundaries' (2003, 260). It follows that the body is more than a site for the study of social practises, but must be seen 'as part of the mutual constitution of place'. Developing this line of enquiry, there has been an 'enculturing' of geography more generally, which has been

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particularly evident in those debates surrounding relations of marginality, inequality and exclusion. For example, notions of the body have been addressed in appraisals of 'food to fashion', and incorporated into economy studies; 'both in terms of the influences on production and consumption of goods but also in the growing emphasis on the service sector and on the use of the body and performance in the selling of a whole range of services from finance to entertainment' (Ibid, 261).

Taking these ideas into the realm of rural studies, the area where greatest attention has been paid to embodiment has been the examination of its relationship with nature. Here, for example, Little and Leyshon look to work on the association of nature and rurality and the fit and healthy body (e.g. Edensor 2001; McNaghten and Urry 2001), which has also been developed in regard to more specialist forms of rural recreation such as extreme sports and adventure tourism (e.g. Cater and Smith 2003; Lewis 2001). Extending these ideas in considerations of the body amid in different areas of the countryside such as forests and woodlands, and also the place of technology in mediating such interactions, this research has been important in examining different bodily practises in a rural context; but has largely failed in not focusing on the body itself and its relationship with different views and experiences of the countryside

The embodied countryside has also been examined in the context of rural gendered and sexual identities. A more popular avenue of investigation, Little and Leyshon point to work on women's imminence with nature in terms of conceptions of fertility and the productive cycle (e.g. Saugeres 2002), and considerations of masculinity and farming which have highlighted the importance of the stereotype of the 'powerful body' as a basis for good and worthy practise (e.g. Liepins 2000; Peter *et al* 2000). Similar themes have also featured in studies of male identity and the wilderness. An expression of the conventional heterosexual

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body, both Phillips (1995) and Woodward (1998) have looked at that relationship between masculinity and the 'taming' of nature through physical and psychological strength. Emerging from these discussions, Bell (2003) has also looked at performances of homosexuality in the countryside, and how symbolic and material experiences of gay men are entwined.

Up to a point, however, the majority of this work has been primarily concerned with the rural body in its relationship with nature and the physical rural landscape, and many regions remain largely untouched:

'What has been especially lacking is any consideration of the body within the everyday social spaces of the village. We argue ... that a consideration of the body in the context of the construction and performance of rural social relations can contribute significantly to an understanding of rural society and the operation of rural communities.

(Little and Leyshon 2003, 265).

A requirement also laid out by Woods, who maintains that more research is needed on how the rural community is performed quite literally 'through fairs, fetes and other such community events; but also through those more mundane, everyday movements' (2005b, 302), attitudes towards the body reflect, and are part of the production of, circulated meanings and beliefs about how gender, sexuality, race, class etc. *works* in rural society. Embodiment is thus essential to an understanding how such relations are played out in rural space and the rural community; and the ways in which its materialities and meanings are reproduced, consolidated and contested, along with the identities of those who operate within them.

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Incorporating an interest in how spaces are 'staged' so as to accommodate particular enactions, a prime example of this research tack is Stanley Waterman's (1998) work on carnivals and the cultural politics of arts festivals. Focusing on the manner in which these events act as a setting for the production, processing and consumption of culture, Waterman describes their use by elites in establishing a social distance between them and others, and how marketing agencies and managers are transforming arts and culture into industries through the promotion of 'safe', generic art forms and practises in realms of display. Foregrounding identities of people and spaces as continually in process as actors rehearse and repeat conventions in specific settings, Edensor has developed these ideas in a rural context. Positing the countryside as an assemblage of differently connected and constituted spaces, he suggests that 'attempts to fix the identity of space, place and rural subjectivities through performance by different groups testify to the desire for fixity and certitude in conditions of continual social and cultural flux' (2004, 1). Exploring particular kinds of scripts, roles, stage-managements, choreographies, improvisations and reflexivity, Edensor investigates a variety of rural performances, enacted on different stages by different actors at different times. Determining the coherence of performances as dependent upon recognisable environments and their varied props and actors, he argues that 'natural' stages affect - and are effects of - active participation, and are socially regulated to some extent.

While some performances are carefully managed, tightly arranged, and vigilantly scrutinized by fellow performers; others are more spontaneous, played out amid different players and occupy indistinct arenas; or are acted out by competing bodies on the same stage. For instance, competition between ramblers, farmers, hunters and environmentalists has been well documented, with each group possessing inconsistent notions as to what activities are acceptable to rural space (see Woods 2003 and Macnaghten and Urry 1998). Implicit in much of these

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enactions and stage managements, notes Edensor, are assumptions and conjecture regarding those who 'properly belong' and those who lack performative competence:

'In a rather clichéd account, townies are accused of being insufficiently aware of 'country ways' and 'nature', in their sentimentalized, effete views about farming and conservation. On the other hand, country folk may be derided as rural throwbacks who cannot competently perform according to 'modern' norms, norms that middle class 'incomers' to rural places competently wield as cultural capital in political struggles against 'development', commonly supported by their adversaries, these long standing residents.' (2004, 2).

Symptomatic of the 're-opening' of those debates of geographic theorizations and conceptualizations of social capital, these waters have more recently been navigated by Louise Holt.

Believing that human geographers have tended to underplay the analytic value of social capital, Holt (2008) argues for a fuller connection between embodiment and broader socio-economic processes. Synthesizing Bourdieu's capitals and performative notions of identity, she maintains that such a path can trace the endurance of enacted inequalities and the potential for social transformation, and also that;

'... embodied social capital can advance social science conceptualizations of the spatiality of social capital, by illuminating the importance of broader socio-spatial contexts and relations to the embodiment of social capital within individuals.' (Ibid, 227).

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With the potential to situate the presence of such new socializations as the New Squirearchy within and beyond the countryside - particularly in respect to those 'country ways' and sentimentalized perspectives on land (and community) management of which they are said to hold dear - the manner in which these performances are theoretically contextualized warrants further consideration.

In the vein of Judith Butler (1993), Edensor differentiates between *performance* – characterized as self-conscious and deliberate – and *performativity* – understood as reiterative and unreflexive, but considers this a dualism which 'neglects the blurred boundaries between purposive and unreflexive actions' (Ibid); i.e. reflexive actions often become 'second nature', and unfamiliar surroundings often prompt a heightened sense of self-awareness and mindful self-management. Drawn on by many geographers who have considered its 'ramifications for understanding the sexed body as it is lived and spatially constituted' (Mahtani 2004, 67), this engagement with Butler signifies that, in the words of Callard, 'we are now taking the problematic of corporeality seriously' (1998, 387). Employed in considerations of gender in body building (Cream 1995), the workplace (Crang 1994), and, most importantly, the sexualization of space (e.g. Bell *et al.* 1994; Lewis and Pile 1996), the use of Butler's theorization of performativity has engendered controversy on the grounds of choice and intentionality.

Although Butler has denied that there is a '*doer* behind the deed' (see Nelson 1999, 324), the rhetoric of intent which has crept into, for example, Bell *et al.*'s (1994) description of lipstick lesbian and gay skinhead identities has precipitated a tangible division between those who would argue that such accounts fail to fully account 'for how people are compelled and constrained by the very regulatory norms of gender identity that are the condition of our resistance' (Walker 1995, 76), and those who prioritize self-conscious roles in their descriptions (see Mahtani 2004, 68). With many of those in the former camp linking performativity with

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non-representational theory (a premise that will be considered in due course), the latter category has inspired something of a renaissance in the work of Erving Goffman (1959). With its conception of life as inherently dramatic, and a belief in humanity as perpetually in a state of role-play enacted in so-called 'front stage' and 'back stage' situations, self-management is herein considered strategic insofar as certain performances enable us to achieve certain goals in life.

It would be, however, inappropriate to insist on the instrumentality of role playing as the individual is not constantly in the process of communicating values to an audience; but also acts in unreflexive, routine ways. Instead - and in a similar vein to Lorimer (2005) and Pile (1993) - Edensor suggests performance should instead be 'grasped as an interweaving of conscious and unaware modalities' (2004, 2), and understood as both deliberately devised and habitual (see also Lorimer 2005, and Pile 1993). Looking to the work of Merleau-Ponty, who argues that self-conscious thought is rooted in practical and pre-reflective habits and skills (see also Agnew *et al* 1996; Casey 2001; Spagnolli and Gamberini 2005), action is 'largely engaged as opposed to being primarily introspective' (Crossley 2001, 62).

Using the metaphor of football, the game is dependent upon a relative logic incorporating the skills and fluency needed to play and 'read' the match within the relational space of other participants and their understandings. Hence, a purely self-aware consciousness would minimise effectiveness, but players' shared assumptions, skill and use of space epitomizes a practical reflexivity' – a capacity for 'playing the game' Edensor sees in many rural performances;

'whether they use rural stages only periodically, even when they have clearly been devised to stage the rural as a commodity, but especially when they are the everyday performances of country-dwellers. All are shaped by

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forms of 'second nature' although such dispositions may be incomprehensible to outsiders who cannot immediately immerse themselves in an unfamiliar field.' (2004, 3).

Attempting to distinguish the kinds of performance which express and transmit various rural identities in terms of specific spaces, parameters and reflexivity, Edensor explores a number of alternative stagings; a number of which relate specifically to the supposed realm of New Squiredom. Here, for example, he observes the dramatized rituals of grouse and pheasant shoots, the hunt and, at a greater length, the enactions of 'leisure seeking city dwellers', the increasingly 'imaginary', 'touristic' staging of the rural, and the everyday performances of 'country folk'.

Mobilizing performative techniques and assorted technologies, city-dwellers and ex-urbanites enter particular rural arenas, they are 'usually informed by pre-existing discursive, practical, embodied norms which help to guide their performative orientations' (Ibid). These collective norms amount to what Carlson refers to as a 'discrete concretization of cultural assumptions' (1996, 16), and elements of rural space are consequently (re)created in line with symbolic and practical principles carried out by those actors dramatizing their particular allegiances. Encompassing both individual and group identities operating according to the needs and wants of varying ideologies, we can look to, for example, walkers and the terrain they value as spaces of recreation, farmers and their functioning as stewards of the landscape and, perhaps, the New Squirearchy and the reformation of the discourse of the country gentleman.

Organised around specific types of movement, modes of communication and patterns of shared experience, enactions are learnt under the watchful gaze of co-conspirators and onlookers in order that important competencies are acquired by

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would be players, and access to the fold assured (or not, as the case may be). Gradually self-consciousness and self-monitoring give way to 'natural' behaviour and the impulsive capability to hold and raise certain opinions, participate in particular pastimes, and generally look and behave in a certain fashion. The consolidation of embodied practical norms is thus 'forged through internalizing performative norms, being subject to external surveillance and the re-iteration of such enactments' (Ibid, 5). Conventions are hereby continually adhered to, becoming 'second nature' and rational to participants who only question them in the face of alternative practices and transgressions.

Engulfing actors into specific pursuits and lifestyle courses, an abundance of technologies mediate the experiences of those on (the rural) stage through their 'appropriate' usage and application, at once curbing and extending their margin of experience and capacity. Identifying those guided tours, maps, boots, walking poles, rucksacks, clothing, binoculars and identification booklets that make rambling and bird watching possible, Edensor stipulates that these techniques and technologies enable the furtherance of these activities but necessarily restrict other 'performative modalities that are possible'. Thus, he argues, a habitual reliance on binoculars in effect restricts awareness of other features in the landscape, 'foregrounding as it often does the centrality of the rare' (Ibid). Nonetheless, a shared code ensures this is rarely questioned by participants, and the tools of their trade tie them into normative behaviours.

How, then, do such publications as *Country Life* dictate the performances of the New Squirearchy in the vein of guide books or instruction manuals?; how does the ownership of farmsteads, manor houses and land engender specific understandings of rurality and its 'purpose'?; and how does the saddle, the front seat of a four wheel drive vehicle, or the 'line of site' on a pheasant shoot entail specific engagements with the countryside? Equally, who are those directors and

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choreographers, well rehearsed in those knowledges governing the use of these technologies, masterful of those skills becoming of the gentryfied rural and thus exemplary performers? Are they, perhaps, 'genuine' blue blooded members of the old order, or rather more established, ex-urban members of an aspirational network leading by example and monitoring the performances of others in their 'orbit of influence'? In short, which individuals are primarily responsible for transforming the discursive context of the landed gentry into an authoritative regime, stabilising the relationships between equipment and clothing, manoeuvres and collective enactions that constitute the New Squirearchy?

Permeated with discursive, experimental, technical and moral rules governing appropriate conduct, the condition of the New Squirearchy is but one specific range of (middle class) enactions in the 'postmodern countryside'. A vista containing an assortment of activities, with their proponents wielding distinct cultural 'values variously based around notions of conservation, land use, productivity, beauty, individuality and stewardship', contestation about preferred performative norms exists between the adherents of different pursuits, but also occurs within particular spheres of activity (Ibid, 6). For example, it may be argued that devotees of different shooting styles express their own values whilst impugning those of other 'guns'. Typically, such contests concern whether or not recreational shooting should be conceived of as a sport or simply a pleasure, whether it should incorporate live quarry or artificial targets, or whether it should take place in a 'rough' or highly organized setting.

Despite Edensor's insistence upon the 'prevalence of (proliferating) performative conventions for urbanites seeking an 'authentic' self in the 'authentic' realm of the rural' (Ibid), it is important to note that performance is not seen as static; no matter how meticulously a space is regulated. Hence, the 'brute force of incidental and institutionalized qualities can interrupt any progress ... and a host of unexpected

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effects are apt to impact upon the body so as to jar it from its performative normalcy'. The material qualities of rural space, therefore, are far from being visual yet passive, and draw the individual into a diverse sensual experience of tactile, auditory and olfactory senses. Particularly evident in those tourist zones which are stage-managed to produce affective, 'mediatised', experiences in the format of 'edutainment', the extension of these themed spaces into the countryside include 'rustic' pubs, farm centres and village recreations, and spaces of the gentry in the form of manor houses, mansions and banquet-halls playing host to medieval feasts and music.

Produced in traditional, native or folkloric customs, rural identity and local distinctiveness are 'collected' by the visitor through their participation within the theatrical context. This is also true of the literary and cinematic portrayal of the rural (see Mirman 1999), where the entwining of drama and tourism reinforces a network that constitutes thoroughly distinctive landscapes. Involving the citation of a stock of rural characters and settings that can be mobilised in the imagining of multiple ruralities, it has, for example, played out of and into the huge popularity of televised period dramas and so-called 'bodice rippers'. This is a theme picked up by Martin Phillips in his discussion of the countryside as a *hyperreality*, where representations of rurality, even those accepted as being in important senses fictitious, actively come to structure rural space (1998a, 44). The use of Lyme Hall in Cheshire to portray Pemberley in an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, reportedly led to a surge of visitors from some 800 people per week to over 5500 in a two day period (see Ward 1995).

Alternatively, the profusion of staged and performed rural spaces may get so that the diversity of themes can become practically incomprehensible. Featuring 'a cast of thousands', Edensor looks to county shows in which literally hundreds of stages (stalls, displays, arenas, demonstration areas, tents and so forth) vie with

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each other for the attention of vast crowds. Citing a changing emphasis from livestock and farming techniques and apparatus to a more post-productivist inclination toward leisure, commodification and craft products that imply and imagined country lifestyle, this is closely allied to media publications which 'feature and blur the boundaries between rural and suburban'. Here, for example, he identifies clothes shops peddling 'not the high fashions and fripperies of the high street but sturdy, sensible and practical wear – the boots, the Barbours and the tweeds which appropriately clothe the 'traditional' rural body and imply distinct leisure and practical activities' (Ibid, 10). Elsewhere, he notes that a rather different ethos and aesthetic is brought forth in displays of historical machines and animal husbandry, casting the rural as space of skilled work and case-hardened attitudes towards livestock rearing and cultivation.

2.4. *Everyday performances and rural competencies*

Over the past few years, notes Veronica della Dorra, the 'relationship between the landscape and the body as two physical entities mutually informed through performance' has been greatly interrogated by cultural geographers (2008, 217). Charting the development of similar themes of memory, embodiment and performativity as within the social sciences more generally, she argues that more often than not the material specificities of place and landscape have been obliterated. Calling for a reconsideration of the (local) landscape in terms of embodied, visual and spatial practise, rather than as a 'contested cultural politics of heritage identity' as it has been understood' (Ibid), della Dorra insists that the most grounded, situational connection between people and space occurs within the humdrum sphere of the everyday and should be accounted for in this fashion. Accordingly, ways of dwelling, working and socializing are often tied to familiar spaces and are, as such, often unreflexive in their production of familiar sensations and routines.

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Drawing extensively on what Nigel Thrift (1997) describes as a 'non-representational theory' or 'the theory of practises', itself born of Foucault's attention to the technologies of being and Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on non-human agency, heterogeneous flows and relational networks, this relates to those motions through which we become subjects decentred, affective, but expressive and involved with others and objects 'in a world continually in process' (Nash 2000, 655): More specifically, it centres on 'the body-subject, not the body, engaged in joint body-*practises* of becoming' (Thrift 1997, 142). Concerned with 'practical intelligibility' of an 'unformulated practical grasp of the world' (Nash 2000, 655), the politics of inarticulate understanding are of appreciating, and valorising, the skills and knowledges (see McCormack 2005) ordinary people get from being embodied beings; 'skills and knowledges which have been so consistently devalorized by contemplative forms of life' (Thrift 1997, 126). Drawn out over time and 'in consistently traversed and inhabited space' (Edensor 2004, 11), an 'unnoticed framework of practises and concerns' comes together as everyday spaces of domesticity, work and leisure identified as 'tasksapes' by Ingold and Kurttila (2000, 91). Including, for example, cooking, cleaning, dancing, horse riding and animal care (see Thrift 1997), these quotidian enactions are both constrained and enabled by the materialities of space as a 'concrete and sensuous concatenation of material forces' which embed bodily practises over days, months and years (Wylie 2002, 51).

Complemented by a 'sensual apprehension of the textures of turf, hay and soil, the smells of beasts and vegetation, and the sounds of animals and machinery', Edensor (2004, 11) highlights the role of surfaces, textures, contours, gradients and pathways when encouraging humans to take particular courses of action. Given the limitations and advantages of their normative physical abilities, which contribute towards everyday practical orientations, particular rural environments engender particular habitual performances, and agriculture is a clear case in point.

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Governed by seasonal patterns of sowing, reaping and birthing, farming life is portrayed as a series of practical considerations and projections that generates a temperament shaped by economic uncertainty. Incorporating an array of techniques and know-how, there is a habitual practical correlation with a network of experts and recourse to local lore – ‘an intersubjectively constituted form of common sense’ (Ibid, 12).

Farming requires a ‘second nature’ and intimate geographical knowledge which informs ‘where, when and how’ certain tasks are completed with the minimum of fuss; practises identified as rural *competencies*. With none or little of the ‘romantic performances of leisure seeking urbanites and little recourse to lyrical rural depictions’ – aesthetic reasoning being reserved for beasts and machines (Ibid), these enactions help to constitute a particular sense of belonging. The extent to which this might be grounded in the rural, suggests Edensor, might be evident when country folk migrate to urban landscapes and have need of an altogether different set of practical resources to accomplish everyday tasks and visa-versa. Quoting Raymond Williams, we may identify ‘small differences in style, of speech or behaviour, of someone who has learned our ways but was not bred in them’ (1961, 42); and, as elsewhere, in ‘the rural sphere there is normative etiquette which instantiates which forms of conduct are apposite in particular contexts, and embodied habits which constitute shared worlds of meaning and doing.’

Emphasizing the importance of emotional attachments within this schema - and in contrast to Edensor’s comments regarding the unsentimental form of the agricultural psyche - Convery *et al* (2001) have used the concept of *lifescape* when articulating the complexity of the spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock, farming and the rural community. Introduced by Nazarea (1995; 1999), an anthropologist working in the Philippines, and later developed by Somé and McSweeney (1996) as a means of framing the

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social, cultural and economic interactions that occur for people across the landscape, Convery *et al* highlight the dynamic nature of 'lifescapes' in creating places that offer livelihoods and life-opportunities (2005, 101). A work in progress, they envisage a mutually constitutive interrelationship between people and the environment, and one where the relations between people, place and production are complex and multi-scalar².

Attentive of, and contributing to, that large body of work on emotional geographies emerging in the late 1990s (see Anderson and Smith 2001), this concern with lifescape looked to the boundaries between persons and things as osmotic and creative of one another, and paints people, places and spaces as being intimately linked and tied up by peculiar ideals (see Bender 2001). Wilson (2003), for example, has examined the importance of non-physical dimensions of place in this vein, particularly those which 'do not exist solely on the ground, but are embedded within the belief and value systems of different cultural groups, placing emphasis on the social and spiritual aspects of place' (Convery *et al* 2005, 101). Elucidating the heterogeneity of rural emotional landscapes, the emotional geographies of farming, for example, are entangled with human constructions of nature, and with 'human and non-human identities constructed through ideas and practises played out in different contexts at different times and places' (Ibid).

Space-making practises, then, depend on collective rituals, and for Edensor simultaneous quotidian performances in the 'pursuit of work, leisure and reproduction compose distinct kinds of cultural rhythmicity or social pulse ... which consolidates time-geographies which shape the ways in which people's

² Theoretically, the concept of 'lifescape' has a strong degree of resonance with the 'phenomenology of perception' as discussed by Merleau-Ponty. Within geography, the notion of 'lifeworld' was brought forth by Buttmer (1976) as a means of 'drawing together the phenomenological with existential to bring new meaning to emerging concepts of humanistic geography' (Convery *et al* 2005, 101).

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trajectories separate and intersect in different ways' (2004, 13). Set about such rural stages as the pub, church, village shop and hall, which provide enduring sites around which routines are communally co-ordinated and engaged as 'place ballets' (see also Seamon 1979), varying rural dispositions within their midst are cross cut by class, ethnicity and gendered forms of habitus. Here Edensor suggests that there are, for instance, distinctive forms of playing, socializing and interacting with nature that do not feature in the farmers' accounts, pointing to the lives of farmers' wives, labourers and gamekeepers who would, perhaps, articulate a different range of routines, practicalities and sensations.

To cast a New Squirearchy in this vein - as with any other emergent, predominantly ex-urban collective - is more problematic in that they are widely regarded as fundamentally non-rural in the sense of being a pastiche. Contravening a working consensus drawn up by (more) established miscellany of rural groups who embody conventions about broadly 'appropriate' ways of inhabiting the countryside; these unreflexive 'good' habits mean that it is difficult for so-called 'townies' to pass as rural - especially those who maybe trying to reinvent or re-establish taskscapes and emotional lifescapes to which they have little or no realistic claim. This does not, however, void the possibility of (re)establishing gentryfied codes of conduct and ways of being within the rural landscape, nor the coming-together of a 'cultural community tackling the rural world with familiar 'landed' manoeuvres (see Frykman and Löfgren 1996). As Edensor reminds us, the countryside is far from exceptional in playing host to/being constituted by an increasingly diverse array of performances which spark competing notions about what actions are 'appropriate', 'competent' and 'normal', and may 'produce a reflexive awareness of the habitual performances which are so integral to individual and group identities' (2004, 14).

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Emerging out of a proliferation of multiple, coincident enactions on rural stages – but also others such as those of ‘business’ and those of the entrepreneur – the New Squirearchy conceivably forms but one pattern of existence which is forcing people to ‘confront other actors and practises which contradict and challenge cherished, embodied and habitual ways of doing things’ (Ibid). In posing a challenge to, for example, those landed dynasties and farmers who have for so long enjoyed a monopoly as far as (being seen as) the primary managers of the rural landscape and the rural community, the previous chapter demonstrates how they have been forced to reappraise, reassert and reconfigure their own roles and relationships within the countryside; utilising a range of cultural resources which mobilize ‘local performances from (re)collected pasts, drawing on the ... media, symbols and languages’ (Clifford 1988, 15). This, then, leads us to consider how such actions may be traced and accounted for.

2.5. *Tracking rural identity and accounting for experience*

Against the backdrop of the Foot and Mouth Crisis of 2001, a palpable sense of isolation among livestock farmers called into question a ‘whole way of life and social identity’. Focusing on this issue, Convery *et al* posited an ‘action-orientated approach’ as being the most appropriate framework through which to illustrate the ‘complex socio-spatial dynamics of being someone in this world’ (2005, 101). Advocating research *with* people and communities, rather than on them, they look to an applied engagement between researchers and researched and emphasize what Reason and Bradbury (2001) term ‘practical knowing’. Embroiled in the consideration of power, identity, and the construction of social boundaries, it is centred on personal engagement and what Phillips (1998b; 1998c) calls an ‘interpretive approach to difference’. As is evident in Michael Bell’s (1992; 1994) studies of *Childerley*, this body of work is of particular relevance to the emergence

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of a New Squirearchy in that it deals with the influx of 'moneyed', middle class residents into a specific rural community.

Criticizing the notion that such 'positional goods' as cars, clothes, pastimes and properties are unswervingly and unilaterally appreciated, Bell challenges the assumption that cultural capital is universally granted and acknowledged. This resource, he suggests, is not merely conferred upon those residents who are perceived to have money - not least by those 'ordinary' villagers who marshal an alternative country identity when competing with these individuals over housing:

'... by bringing out into the open the issue of the positional benefits of country living for new moneyed residents, and by questioning their countryism and communalism, accepted country people selectively devalue the cultural capital claimed by residents who they do not accept as real country people.' (Bell 1992, 75).

For Bell these 'real country people' of Childerley apply four general 'rules' when considering their number, those of: (i) localism, which refers to long term residence in the village – especially in the case of birth or having 'pre-World War II family roots'; (ii) ruralism, concerning the period of time individuals have lived in the countryside and held such 'country' occupations as farmer, farmhand or agricultural consultant; (iii) countryism, appertaining to 'participation in, and knowledge of, country ways and activities, such as farming, gardening, pet raising and pet care, botany, riding, hunting, walking, local history and authentic remodelling'; and (iv) communalism, encompassing such activities as 'participation in informal inter-household exchanges and in community activities like church committees, the darts and cricket teams, the Parish Council, use of the village shop, the Women's Institute, the annual village fete and harvest festival, and tending the village green' (Ibid, 74).

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Far from being deployed in a unanimous fashion, Bell shows the inhabitants of Childerley as using these rules as an alternative language for the discussion of lifestyle, class tensions and class identity. Here the 'ordinary working class villagers' stress those forms of localism which are generally (if not totally) unavailable to the 'moneyed'; and the moneyed, while 'continuing to grant the authority of localism to those who claim it', stress other rules rather more – particularly those of communalism and countryism (Ibid). In addition, Bell also cites 'class differences' with respect to what best indicates these forms of identity:

'working class villagers routinely criticized authentic remodelling, participation in the hunt, and keeping horses or non-commercial sheep as displays of wealth, not countryism ... The working class sees the formal communalism of civic duty promoted by the moneyed people as taking over the village ... In contrast, ordinary villagers advocate an informal kind of communalism based on child care exchange, assistance in car repair, nights out drinking with the lads, and the proverbial cup of borrowed sugar.' (Ibid, 74-75).

Concerned with gentrification and class as a relentless reproduction of rural materiality, Bell's work is centred on human experience. The text affects the creation, formation and the realisation of identity, elucidation and boundary construction. Although ultimately 'imposing' explanation in what John Stuart Mill called an "external criterion" for moral value, and resorting to an overly generalized vocabulary of nature, society, politics and gender which failed to adequately extend out of fieldwork tracings, in drawing attention to the varied practicalities and interactions of 'fields, hedges, copses, cattle, houses, cars and burglar alarms' Bell's work is nevertheless attentive to the implications of even the most mundane of elements as constituents of life.

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Identifying assemblages of class and lifestyle as continually evolving to encompass new material circumstance and adopting new guises (such as those of 'Yuppies', 'Dinkies' and, perhaps, a 'New Squirearchy'), their presence is variously felt as part of the milieu of everyday life. Such manifestations, for example, are evident in Bell's discussion of village pubs:

'Outside the Fox one seldom sees the Volvos or Land Rovers that pull up to the Horse and Hound; most of the vehicles are Fords, Morrises, delivery vans, and sometimes a tractor. Inside, there is nothing remarkable about the place, despite its age. It's dark, a bit spare, and the tables, chairs, and bar are all new. The food is hearty, but hardly *haute cuisine*, even for a pub. There is a coin-operated pool table, a much pricked darts board, and a juke box. This is not a sit down place, and it's usually noisy.' (Ibid. 28).

Bell continues ...

'The two pubs cater to opposite ends of this social axis that runs through the midst of the village, the axis of *class*. The Horse and Hound is where the "middle bit," the "moneyed people", and the "haves" go. The Fox is for the "ordinary people," the "working man," the have nots" and few remaining "old boys" sometimes hold forth. The same divisions largely dictate who goes to whose house for a coffee or a meal, who goes shopping with whom in the town, and who walks together in the village.' (Ibid. 28).

Taking note of, for example, décor (e.g. pool table), music (juke box), drinking (e.g. coffee) and agricultural affiliation (tractor), the presence (and non-presence) of certain objects and people at specific times and places, Bell allows his 'subjects' to indicate the ideological importance of materiality in sorting and situating their existence (e.g. money and having it).

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Undermining the belief that a significant proportion of the population fail to identify with class, Bell's intensely research-grounded appraisal of collective consciousness *within* – as opposed to *of* – a rural community highlights the importance of factors which have not hitherto featured as part of mainstream academic accounts:

'Childerleyans combine as best they can what they know of all the forms of social power at a person's command ... Among the indicators Childerleyans consider (when known) are income, occupation, family background, the home a person lives in, the car a person drives, lifestyle (dress, favoured activities, choice of pub), education, the amount of property a person owns, and who talks with whom.' (Bell 1994, 44).

Obliged to consider the apparently innocent practise of frequenting a public house or shop, such findings hint at the variable nature of collective identifiers, and the need for local knowledge when discussing identity and belonging in a local context. Informed by human interaction and appreciation of personal relationships with human and non-human actors, Bell hints at those complex, variably hierarchal interplays between class, gender, ethnicity, politics and religion.

Paying close attention to those habitual and reflexive practices and performances which constitute varying identities and communal dwellings, a case in point is the story of Lucy Pearce. Here, in 'her attempt to accept the guidance of her natural conscience', she risked disparagement as a result of transgressing traditional class-gender employment boundaries. Taking a job at the 'big house' in order to become more involved in local affairs, she became mindful of being identified as a 'lesser person' than her role as middle class housewife would otherwise entitle her to be in the collective conscious, and promptly resigned:

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'Lucy's social standing, as much as she might prefer it to be otherwise, does have an important influence on her life. Even though her family relies on her husband's work for the bulk of their income, his chances for advancement or even keeping his job, should his firm decide to cut back, could well be materially affected by having a wife who is seen as 'the cleaner'. Status and class in the Weberian sense – that is, social honour and economic power – are indeed closely connected... These matters villagers must handle with care.' (Ibid, 156).

There is, then, often a tension between individuals' differing identities and associated roles, an issue that has also been discussed by Nigel Rapport in his study of *Wanet*. Having different parts to play before the same audience, and in occupying different regions of a broader network, there is, he suggests, often a 'built-in conflict of expectations concerning the behaviour appropriate to each role' and a 'plurality and competitiveness of normative concepts' (1993, 194).

Recording the shifting alliances of the human and non-human as expressions of identity, *Wanet*, like *Childerley*, is attentive to those practises carried out by differing alignments of those elements within, through and beyond the English countryside. Although conscientious toward the rhetoric and ideology of 'country life' and an hierarchal sociality within, Rapport constructs the gentry, the *nouveaux riche* and the 'common man' out of – as opposed to *into* - the connections between, for example, doors, plants and church pews. In concert similarly and variously, enrolling and enrolled by alternate (and accordingly differentiated) elements of the human audience, they are shown to occupy different regions of the communal network. Often embodying a 'built in conflict of expectations concerning the behaviour appropriate to each role', *Wanet* avidly describes the 'plurality and competitiveness of normative concepts' which are at once shaped and shaping rural space.

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Concepts such as 'middle class', 'women', 'farmer', 'incomer' - and, possibly, 'New Squire' - which people use to express themselves and the lives of others are not, therefore, necessarily consistent, nor must they be internally or externally coherent. Instead, they are often ambiguous and occasionally absurd:

'They [societal concepts] might give the impression of possessing consistency, but might instead be taking on different meanings per context or else lacking in meaning completely. Moreover, these qualities may be socially functional, indeed essential for the functioning of the social system and for endowing the vagaries of societal need with the appearance of a given and authoritative reality. Hence we see in ... diverse behaviour is the play of concepts: multiple, malleable and manipulated per social context according to social function.' (Rapport 1993, 94).

Living, working and playing in the village over an extended period of time, dutifully absorbing those various accounts of those people, objects and practises unfolding in his midst (verbal and otherwise), Rapport demonstrates how such concepts as class, aristocracy and the common man are neither consistent nor coherent. Instead, they are depicted as ambiguous and often absurd:

'They [societal concepts] might give the impression of possessing consistently but instead be taking on different meanings per context or else lacking in meaning completely. Moreover, these qualities may be socially functional, indeed essential for the functioning of the social system and for endowing the vagaries of societal need with the *appearance of external, given and authoritative reality*.³ Hence what we see in ... diverse behaviour is the play of concepts: multiple, malleable and manipulated ... according to context and function.' (1993, 194).

³ Italics added

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Emphasizing the lack of totalizing form, and the manipulation, malleability and multiplicity of those concepts becoming of material connections, demeanour is taken as governed by a collectively unstable conscience; a highly personal conscience that emerges through heterogeneity. Here the church, pub and school etc. serve as hubs through which certain types of information is constituted (re)established, (re)interpreted and (re)conveyed; and the character of such institutions is itself a product and expression of alternate ontological appreciation. Here village institutions such as the church, pub, school and manor house serve as communication hubs through which information is established, challenged and conveyed; and the character of these institutions is both a product and an expression of collective understandings of difference.

Having situated the (possible) 'becoming' of the New Squirearchy within current, ongoing debates on rural restructuring, class and its relationship with, alongside and in contribution to, other forms and notions of collective belonging, this chapter has argued that such forms of identity are constantly in the process of being made, replicated and reformed. Both evident and realised in those boundaries, symbols and activities which at once reproduce, surround and counterpoise their 'being', the projected existence of a New Squirearchy has been discussed in relation to work on the Chestnut Economy in rural France by Willis and Campbell (2004), and Gosnell and Haggerty's (2007) study of 'new ranchers' in the American Midwest. Light on theoretical grounding, this is provided by Little and Leyshon (2003) and Edensor (2004) whose consideration of embodied rural geographies reflects the growing interest in performance and performativity within geography more generally. Identifying the centrality of practical ebbs and flows in information exchange, the study of identity therefore requires a practical engagement in a manner akin to that employed by Michael Bell (1994) and Nigel Rapport (1993). Proponents of the situated ethnography, a form of investigation which has long been employed by rural geographers and anthropologists, the

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implementation of this approach when addressing the existence of the New Squirearchy will be discussed at length in chapter three.