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DOI:

[10.1177/1466138115609380](https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115609380)

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Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Emery, S & Carrithers, M 2016, 'From lived experience to political representation: rhetoric and landscape in the North York Moors', *Ethnography*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 388-410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115609380>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

Final version of record available online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1466138115609380>

Validated March 2016

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From lived experience to political representation:

Rhetoric and landscape in the North York Moors

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Abstract

Approaches to landscape are characterised by an unresolved distinction between political representation on the one hand and phenomenology on the other. In this paper we address this distinction by demonstrating how those living in close quarters with landscape (farmers) translate their lived experience into political representation. Through the use of rhetoric culture theory we show how farmers use narrative and symbolism to stake their political claims. Moreover, we argue that a focus on lived experience should not deprive our ethnographic encounters of political significance. On the contrary, we demonstrate how by focussing on the lived experience of farmers we can better appreciate how they: are motivated to act politically; have the skills to act politically, and; gain political legitimacy in the eyes of others. We argue that whilst phenomenological approaches provide fertile grounds for political analysis the majority of such research remains politically empty. We demonstrate how, contrary to much of the literature, farmers can and do aesthetically fix the landscape for rhetorical effect, and how narrative as rhetorical representation always already serves to politicise time. We suggest rhetoric, therefore, as an appropriate conceptual tool for mediating and advancing our understanding of the relationship between landscape experience and landscape politics.

Keywords

Farmers, dwelling, phenomenology, values, hard work, improvement, rhetoric culture theory, narrative, time

Introduction

This article compares the New Cultural Geography of Denis Cosgrove (1984) and the dwelling perspective of Tim Ingold (1993) as approaches to landscape studies that are traditionally presented as oppositional. The former has been accused of emphasising landscape as political representation at the expense of a more relational, experiential interpretation. The latter, meanwhile, has been accused of ignoring the politics of landscape by focussing too narrowly on lived experience. We argue that i) phenomenological, non-representational, and embodied experiential approaches to conceptualising and understanding landscape are the most salient form of contemporary ethnographic writing on the subject; ii) that, in part at least, these approaches have developed or established themselves in opposition to deconstructivist approaches that emphasise landscapes as ideological symbolic representations, inhered with power, politics and repression; iii) that in spite of acknowledging a need to account for both the phenomenological and political/ideological approaches to landscape there are few examples whereby the relationship between these approaches has been examined. In contrast to approaches that pit phenomenological and representational approaches to landscape as opposed, therefore, what we want to demonstrate in this paper is how an understanding of landscape as embodied and experienced through everyday life helps us to understand its political charge.

To address this perceived weakness of ethnographically informed landscape research, our principal argument will be that the political manipulation and deployment of landscape is not limited to hegemonic discourse and the aesthetic representations of the elite and powerful, but is equally deployed by those who dwell in the landscape, and whose experience of it is informed by their sensory, intimate and ineffable relations with the land. Thus, we consider landscapes (among other things) as media of negotiation between different interest groups, albeit with different levels of influence. We suggest that there is something special about landscape that makes it ripe for 'rhetorical play' in the construction of arguments and in the pursuit and defence of a range of different interests. Moreover, we argue that by ethnographically starting from the ground, it is possible to demonstrate how the significance and meanings attached to landscapes through intimate everyday practice motivates the deployment of landscape as political representation. By focussing on those who *physically work* the land – farmers – we aim to demonstrate how *intimacy affords legitimacy* as farmers are also able to rhetorically work the land by virtue of their appreciation of the wider cultural and political significance of the landscapes in which they ply their trade. We present rhetoric culture theory as an appropriate conceptual tool for putting the nuance into symbolic representational approaches and the politics into phenomenological approaches.

Based on 12 months of participant observation and forty 'active' interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) with farmers in the Esk Valley of the North York Moors, we demonstrate how 'work' and 'progress' (or *beneficent change*, as we refer to it) are culturally important values among the farming community. These values, we show, are polysemic, and serve to motivate farmers' behaviour. Those same values, however, are also put into political service by farmers (and others too) as they respond to the ever-changing political and economic contexts of agricultural production in the early 21st Century. We undertook fieldwork between May 2007 and May 2008 with a focus on the increasing emphasis on farmers as environmental stewards vis-a-vis their more 'traditional' role as food producers. In particular, the fieldwork was undertaken following the introduction of the Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme, and the newly formulated Single Payment

Scheme which implemented the 2003 reforms to the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. The research sought to understand how farmers navigated these changes through recourse to their cultural values and intimate knowledge and experience of the land (for full details of the context and methodology see Emery, 2010). Rhetoric culture theory (Carrithers, 2005a; Carrithers, 2005b; Strecker and Tyler, 2009) provided the lens through which these navigations have been interpreted, as well as the grounds for proposing a relationship between lived experience on the one hand and the political mobilisation of landscape on the other. Principally, we focus on farmers' use of symbolism and narrative to explore the means by which they turn experience into representation. Before presenting our ethnographic findings, the following sections set out the dominant theoretical approaches to landscape; the literature specifically relating to farming communities and landscape; and our use of rhetoric and narrative as a means of overcoming the artificial separation of phenomenological and political approaches to landscape.

Approaches to Landscape

The most common way that alternative approaches to landscape have been explored in the literature is through comparison of landscape as a culturally particular, abstract and repressive representation on the one hand, and as gaining meaning through an intimately embodied interactive experience on the other. These alternatives are perhaps best exemplified by the more Marxist New Cultural Geography of Denis Cosgrove in *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984) and the more phenomenologically inspired approach of anthropologist Tim Ingold (1993; 2000). For Cosgrove (1984), and in later collaboration with Daniels (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1989), landscape was best understood as a symbolic 'way of seeing' (Cosgrove, 1984: 1). Whilst acknowledging that landscape is mediated by subjective human experience, Cosgrove focused on 'the idea' of landscape in the singular, as one which represents dominant social and historical discourses. He thus presented landscape as an 'ideological concept' that was co-emergent with and, reinforcing of, the transition to 'capitalist forms of material production' (Cosgrove, 1984: 6). Cosgrove argued that humanistic approaches to landscape had a weakly developed 'historical sense' (Cosgrove, 1984: 34) and lacked the 'intellectual detachment necessary for critical and theoretical understanding' (Cosgrove, 1984: 36). Ironically, however, whilst Cosgrove's focus on historical materialism and ideological conceptions of landscape relies on an unalienated social history, it also serves to deny historicity and the possibility of alternative/future conceptions of landscape that deviate from dominant hegemonic discourses.

Cosgrove's approach has also received much criticism for downplaying the significance of the material aspects of landscape and, in spite of a dialectical approach, for also downplaying the relationality of landscape (Price and Lewis, 1993). By doing so, Cosgrove's approach fails to attend to the idea that landscapes as material and 'out there' can themselves affect human thought and action, rather than simply being either material or cultural products of human thought and action. In its focus on the abstract, symbolic and ideological notions of landscape, Cosgrove's approach has also been criticised for its lack of emic subjectivity; for overlooking the subjective experience and meaning of landscape to those that live, work and interact with it in their daily lives (Hirsch and O'Hanlon, 1995). In a later edition of *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* Cosgrove (1998) responded to some of his critics and humbly admitted that his book had failed to take seriously the 'aesthetic and emotional qualities of landscape' (Cosgrove, 1998: 56). In doing so, he reverted to a position which was not to deny the importance of humanistic or phenomenological approaches but

strongly (and rightly in our view) maintained the need for 'historical explanation to remain powerful' in the study and understanding of landscape (Cosgrove, 1998: xv).

The extent of the provocation caused by Cosgrove and his peers' New Cultural Geography, with its emphasis on structure and representation, is demonstrated by eminent geographical scholars' explicit opposition to it. Most particularly, Thrift's Non-Representational Theory (1996; 2008) establishes an ontological opposition to Cosgrove's representational approach. Instead, it focuses on 'the micro-geographies of habitual practice'; on the everyday activities 'through which we become 'subjects' decentred, affective, but embodied, relational, expressive and involved with others and objects in a world' (Nash, 2000: 656, 655). NRT shares much in common with the phenomenological approach put forward by Tim Ingold, which also stresses the importance of the everyday, mundane and lived practical realities that give rise to human experience and relations with the landscape. Because of its more specific emphasis on landscape, and because it is more explicitly underpinned theoretically and empirically by ethnographic approaches, it is to this alternative to Cosgrove that we devote greater attention in the following section and subsequent analyses.

Ingold's conception of landscape, most notably laid out in *The Temporality of the Landscape* (1993), is centred on ever-emergent relationships between humans and the non-human world that are born of proximity, engagement and interaction. It is strongly concerned with the conduct of life (with the 'lived'), or more accurately with *lives* in the plural; that is lives past, present and future and of multiple lives that are lived contemporaneously and experienced simultaneously through activities enfolded in relation with the land. Ingold's conceptualisation explicitly rejects, therefore, Cosgrove's cultural view of landscape which, he argues, serves to maintain the dualism between nature and culture, and is constrained in terms of the types of interpretation it allows. Ingold develops the idea of the 'dwelling perspective' to elaborate this focus on lived experience (Ingold, 1993: 59). More specifically, he emphasises the role of *tasks* as 'the constitutive acts of dwelling' and the *taskscape* as the 'entire ensemble of tasks' (undertaken by different people and at different times), 'in their mutual interlocking' (Ingold, 1993: 64). In other words, Ingold emphasises the role of practices or activities that are conducted in the normal business of everyday life.

Within Ingold's conception of landscape are also two very particular ideas of temporality and spatiality. These are not the quantitative, absolute, singular nor measurable parameters of time and space that a clock or tape measure would capture. They are, instead, qualitative and plural as experienced by those who dwell in the landscape, who partake in tasks and who navigate through it. Ingold maintains that the landscape inheres *social* time. Adapting this conceptualisation from Sorokin and Merton (1937) Ingold argues that 'the temporality of the taskscape ... lies not in any particular rhythm, but in the network of interrelationships between the multiple rhythms of which the taskscape is itself constituted' (1993: 66). There exists, then, 'different times' in association with landscape, times which 'nest within each other and draw meaning from each other' (Bender, 2002: 104). The interpretation of time as social and as fundamentally qualitative, then, allows for alternative interpretations of its passing, and of the nature of its passing to be infused with moral judgement (Ingold, 1993: 64). This insight will be especially important as we later extend this idea to emphasise the link between the dwelt-in experience of landscape and its political representation.

By emphasising the lived everyday experience of landscape, Ingold's approach - in contrast to Cosgrove's - re-emphasises the materiality and relationality of landscape and recasts the dweller as an active creator of landscape as opposed to being alienated from material reality by ideological representations. In terms of academic interpretation and explanation, Ingold's approach provided a welcome alternative to the more narrowly historical materialist interpretations of the New Cultural Geographers. It opened up the landscape to allow for a plurality of interpretations and to shed new light on cultural understandings of environmental behaviours and practices (Clope and Jones, 2001). It has also resonated thoroughly with ethnographers keen to capture and do justice to the intimacy, tactility and sensuality of their own ethnographic encounters. It serves as a generalised justification for fine-grained analyses, it prioritises detailed and long-term study and gives the ethnographer the opportunity to depict their interlocutors with the sensitivity and respect they (often) feel they deserve. Yet, whilst Ingold's phenomenological approach (and the related NRT) has informed and inspired much creative new work on landscape, it has also drawn criticism. Most notably it has been cast as overly romantic (Bender and Aitken, 1998; Bender, 2006; Cloke and Jones, 2001) and, 'by focussing too sharply' on everyday practices and activities, as running the risk of 'failing to note [the] embeddedness [of such practices] in often deeply unequal and widely disseminated power relations' (Bender, 2006: 306-307). Political ecologists in contrasting their own approaches with NRT have noted that:

Much non-representational work is uninterested in asking, much less answering, the question of how or why the embodied, self-knowing subject appears in any particular landscape at any particular moment, hence emptying from that moment all social and political content. (Neumann, 2011: 847).

In other words, a focus on the mundane, embodied and experiential has a tendency to lose sight of 'the bigger picture'. Indeed, Benediktsson (2007: 214) makes the valid point (referring particularly to current trends in geography) that the importance of landscape *as* picture has been neglected altogether on account of what he terms 'scenophobia': a shying 'away from the visual substance of landscape'. Of particular relevance to our purposes in this paper, Benediktsson emphasises that it is an inescapable truth that the 'landscape concept among the common folks *does* tend to emphasize the scenic aspect' (2007: 207 emphasis in original). So whilst Ingold's dwelling perspective tends to shun the pictorial representation of landscape it must be remembered that those who dwell (the common folks) can (and do) represent the landscape aesthetically. This is not to say that their experience of landscape is *purely* aesthetic, or that there exists a *single* aesthetic or landscape idea. For as Benediktsson further states: 'Attendance to the visual does not necessarily have to lead down the well-trodden path of objectification and detachment. On the contrary, it is a necessary part of democratic and inclusive politics of landscape where there is room for various interpretive takes' (2007: 214). What we attempt to do in this paper is to ask *how* and *why* landscape is aestheticised and represented symbolically by those that dwell within it and how this (along with a focus on narratives) helps us to better understand the relationship between dwelling and representation, between experience and politics.

We are not the first to suggest the value of a conceptualisation of landscape that recognises its ability to be *both* politically represented and dwelt in. To this end Cloke and Jones (2001: 662 emphasis in original) suggest that the dwelling concept should be extended to be seen as 'a complex multiplicity of practice *and* representation', whilst Vergunst et al. (2012: 12) argue that an

understanding of both experience and structure can be revealed through an empirical and ethnographic focus on activities. Despite such recognition, we are inclined to feel that much of the recent ethnographically informed writing on landscape (Arnason et al., 2012; Benediktsson and Lund, 2010) still privileges experiential interpretation and, whilst providing insightful glimpses (e.g. Brydon, 2010; Cruickshank, 2012), does not adequately theorise the relationship between dwelling and politics. We are still, therefore, a way off from Bender's (2002: 107) call, to 'work with an embodied phenomenological approach to time and landscape' that is 'married to a larger political understanding - one that attends not only to how people are socialized through their daily (timed) encounters but to how they negotiate, question and create those encounters'. By applying rhetoric culture theory to upland farmers' use and conceptualisations of landscape, we hope to demonstrate in this article how experience informs such negotiations and creativity in the inherent interactivity of social life.

Farmers and Landscape

Much of the ethnographic literature which explores farmers' relations with landscape has implicitly or explicitly focussed on the 'mutuality of person and place' (Ravetz, 2001: 179) and emphasised the embodiment, the importance of tasks, and the intimate relationality that are implied by Ingold's dwelling perspective. Such approaches have shed light on farmers' processes of cultural identification in relation to their farms, and, in particular, to the tying of family biography to the physical features of the farm (Gray, 1998). Gray's emphasis on 'everyday farm work' shows how shepherds draw meaning from the land through their 'praxis' (Gray, 1999: 449). This emphasises a dynamic view of landscape, and the attribution of cultural value to engagement with the land and the constant working and re-working of the landscape. Farmers' strong cultural value in the work ethic, in industriousness, has thus been shown to be not only associated with fixed outputs (such as livestock at the market, quantity of crop grown, or the tidiness of the farm) but also with a constantly transforming landscape (and the practices which give rise to it) (Silvasti, 2003; Emery, 2014). In this vein Setten (2004) has contrasted Norwegian farmers' conception of landscape vis-à-vis that of planners and the general public. The main difference is born of the different ways in which these groups come to know the land.

Whereas planners uphold an aesthetic symbolism in the landscape through "knowing by seeing", she suggests that farmers derive their meanings from the landscape through their embodied practices: "by knowing from within" or "knowing by being" (Setten, 2004: 406-407, following Shotter, 1993). The past, for the farmer, is brought to life not through specific objects in a landscape (e.g. a stone wall), but through "social memory", through practices (such as engagement in the maintenance of a stone wall in keeping with the methods of the ancestors) that may be "symbols of the past" (Setten, 2004: 408-409). This gives farmers a dynamic and worked view of the landscape as opposed to the landscape planners who prefer the fossilisation of features in the landscape as a means of aesthetically objectifying the past. For farmers, their perception evokes the value in practices that modify the landscape, whereas for planners the only practices of value are those which eternalise a pure and historically established landscape aesthetic.

Setten hints at the political potential of a dynamic and relational experience of landscape, arguing that "the production and meaning of a lived landscape becomes a moral landscape" (Setten, 2004: 410). This means that particular practices are symbolic means by which a farmer can gain

acceptance, be judged and make judgements upon others within a particular moral community (say that of the farming community). It also means that farmers may indict alternative interpretations of landscape that operate outside of their own moral frame of reckoning altogether (for instance the fossilising tendencies of planners and the public). What we wish to argue, however, is that an important dimension of how the lived landscape becomes political is left wanting in this analysis. Setten brings in ideas of power and politics to her analysis by arguing that the objectification and abstract representation of the landscape by planners is not benign but works to gain control over those environmental and societal complexities that may challenge dominant ideas and mechanisms of governing (following Scott, 1998). Moreover, she argues, such representations serve to repress the people living and working in those landscapes: "by regarding the landscape as merely a scene or backdrop for social action ... the landscape is banalized, and the people in the landscape [are] disarmed" (2004: 405). From this perspective farmers may have the political potential to negotiate meaning within their 'own' moral community, or make indictments against policy and planners that resonate within that same moral community. But what capacity do they have to challenge dominant ideas and to engage with those outside of their 'own' community if they are left disarmed by fixed representations of landscape? We suggest that ontologically dividing farmers and planners or policy makers as experiencing/'knowing by being' on the one hand and representing/'knowing by seeing' on the other might also work to disarm those who live and work the land. We will argue that farmers too are able to represent the land for rhetorical purposes in their engagements with those outside their moral community.

This does not mean that they do not experience the landscape in the way described by Setten and other phenomenological approaches. It means simply that they are able to translate their experiential attachment to the land into an imperative for action, through representations which enable them to engage politically and rhetorically with those outside of their community. Moreover, we argue that rather than being disarmed by landscape it provides them with a resource that, precisely because of their embodied engagement with it, they are particularly well-placed to exploit. Before supporting these arguments empirically, it is necessary to give them some theoretical grounding in rhetoric culture theory.

Rhetoric and Narrative

Rhetoric Culture Theory (RCT) has risen to prominence in anthropology as an explanatory mechanism for understanding the relationship between social interaction and cultural change (Carrithers, 2005a; Carrithers, 2005b; Carrithers, 2009; Strecker and Tyler, 2009). It understands rhetoric as something not limited to manipulative oratory or deceptive advertising, but as an omnipresent feature of all social interactions. It recognises, in particular, that facets of culture wrapped up in processes of identification play an important role in efforts at persuasion (Burke, 1969; Fernandez, 1986). In this sense cultural ideas, values and other ingredients get *used* in instances of persuasion for the very reason that they *are* culturally important and carry 'normative sway' (Cruz, 2000). Furthermore, through processes of interaction cultural interpretations are not only used, but contested, negotiated and re-made. Although of potentially wide application, our interest here is in the use of ideas about landscape, or cultural associations with landscape and how they are used rhetorically through construction and representation by different persons and groups. More particularly we are interested in narrative as a rhetorical form and in exploring how and why landscapes provide a source of what Carrithers (2007) has called 'narrative accountability'. That is,

how landscapes are used to make stories, arguments and moral positions both plausible and appealing. To better grasp this idea we need to be aware of context, or what Bitzer has called the rhetorical situation (1968). Bitzer argued that rhetoric is most effective when it is tailored to the context in which it is being applied, and that context includes persons, events, objects and relations. In other words, rhetoric must be tailored according to who the audience is, what else is going on at a particular moment in time, what are the antecedents and, in particular, what are the cultural and normative sensitivities of those being 'worked on' (Carrithers et al., 2011). To bring these abstract ideas back to landscape we can state simply that: i) landscapes are partly constitutive of the rhetorical situations in which social interaction occurs; ii) landscapes are culturally important (to different groups and for different reasons), and iii) this renders such groups susceptible to argumentative strategies that somehow draw on, challenge or manipulate particular landscape ideas. As a crude example this simply says that if a culturally valued landscape idea is represented as being threatened, then because that idea *is* culturally valued it is more likely to provoke a response; the rhetorical deployment is more likely to be effective.

Since RCT sees rhetoric as omnipresent in social arrangements it follows that rhetorical representations and strategies are not the sole preserve of powerful groups. This is not to suggest that power differentials do not exist, or that dominant representations and ideas reflecting the interests of powerful groups do not most often hold the floor. It is to suggest, rather, that they are always open to challenge, and those challenges, in turn, may alter and affect such dominant ideas. RCT thus also provides a means to understand the nuanced processes that give rise to cultural change. Cultural ideals and values, then, are always 'in the making' (Fox, 1985) as they emerge from incessantly negotiated rhetorical interactions.

Narrative is a rhetorical form that lends itself particularly well to landscapes. It can be defined at the simplest level as the 'representation of an event or a series of events' (Abbott, 2002: 13). In relation to time, it is important to point out that rather than events being ordered by an abstract notion of time, with narrative it is the events themselves which create the order of time (ibid.: 4). Moreover, the cultural and academic importance of narrative arises from the fact that it is '*the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time*' (ibid.: 3, italics in original). The rhetorical force of narrative is what gives it power and makes it political. It is always working, in some way, on the audience that hears, reads, or interprets it. It always entails 'ontological choices with distinct ideological and ... political implications' (White, 1987: ix). On account of narrative's association with the understanding of time, we argue that this political dimension can be extended from a concern with the rhetorical effects of a particular narration to a concern with the politics of time itself, with different representations of time (see also Kastrinou and Layton, 2015, forthcoming). There are numerous narrative techniques used to construct or represent events, which give rhetorical force. Of particular interest here is Cronon's (1992) study on narrative and environmental history in the American Great Plains. Cronon shows how various combinations of progressive and declensionist plots, in association with landscape, work on the moral imagination of the reader to tell a persuasive story. Different interest groups are shown to use these techniques to tell different stories and to charge them with moral sentiment. Cronon demonstrates the power of narrative to "reframe the past so as to include certain events and people, exclude others, and redefine the meaning of landscape accordingly" (Cronon, 1992: 1364).

We suggest there is something particular about landscape that imbues it with narrative qualities. Landscapes, because they are sites of shared awareness among people, are richly imbued with possibilities for the speaker to evoke in those people some common past, present or future. They are, as Bender said, 'time materialising' (2002: 103). Landscape, then, lends itself to narration on account of its temporality. Dialectically, those narrations of landscape serve to maintain its temporality. This, in combination with landscape's affinity for processes of identification, is what gives it rhetorical and political force; the idea that people need both a story and a stage in their quest for understanding: "it is through [narratives] that people make themselves at home in the landscape because narrative is the defining form through which we understand who we are and how we are related" (Vergunst et al., 2012: 11). We argue, however, that narrative provides more than a means of understanding and it is through broader engagement and deeper interrogation that its political significance emerges.

In the following section we hope to demonstrate how farmers, whilst engaging with and understanding the landscape in dynamic ways, are able, where necessary, to represent it for political effect. Moreover, we argue that a dynamic understanding of landscape actually facilitates its political representation. This is particularly true when narrating and representing are seen as complementary rather than antagonistic (for narration, as the simple definition shows, is always already a representation). We hope to show how this framework provides a way to overcome the distinction between phenomenological and representational approaches to landscape, the distinction between (empty) experience and politics.

From the phenomenological to the political in the farmed landscape of the North York Moors

In this section we demonstrate how a phenomenological approach to understanding the relationship between farmers and landscapes does not empty our ethnographic field of political content. On the contrary, we argue that the intimate, embodied and engaged relationship that it reveals helps us understand how farmers i) are *motivated* to act politically; ii) have the *skills to act* politically, and iii) *gain political legitimacy* in the eyes of others. Although here we will devote most of our attention to exploring the second of these political dimensions, all three underscore the benefits of rhetoric-culture theory for reconciling phenomenological and representational approaches to landscape.

We do not have space here to elaborate and demonstrate the complex relationship between culturally motivating values and landscape. However, since those values figure prominently in association with rhetorical deployments of landscape it is necessary to give them brief introduction. Despite the pervasiveness and apparent eternalness of culturally motivating values, we theorise them, like landscape, as fundamentally dynamic and open to interpretation. In line with rhetoric culture theory we explain this by virtue of the fact that they are constantly being negotiated during social interactions. They are, then, far more plastic than their appearance would have us believe and it is their plasticity rather than uniformity that gives rise to their persistence (Emery, 2010; 2015). Moreover, on account of their importance in processes of identification (again like landscape) they too are particularly apt for rhetorical play. During fieldwork among farmers in the North York Moors the values of *beneficent change* and *hard work* were a recurrent theme and commonly attributed to the cultural ideal of the 'good' or 'proper' farmer (see also Silvasti, 2003; Burton, 2004; Stock, 2007). They thus serve as important motivators of appropriate behaviour. Importantly, however, how those values were interpreted was found to vary from person to person and from context to

context. In fact, context (or we might say rhetorical situation) was far more important in giving rise to different interpretations. The same farmer, for instance, might interpret beneficent change differently in different situations. For both beneficent change and hard work, we identified two crudely distinguishable alternative interpretations. Beneficent changes might be associated with rapid, large-scale expansion in pursuit of increased productivity and profit on the one hand, or as a much slower, steadier and more incremental process akin to mending or maintaining on the other. We distinguish these respectively through recourse to the words Improvement (with capitalisation to denote a more narrow association with the productivist philosophy of Agricultural Improvement) and fettling (a vernacular term meaning mending or maintaining the condition of). Similarly, hard work might be valued in terms of its productive outputs (and profit) on the one hand, or as a set of valued activities or as process on the other. We might further suggest that Improvement and hard-work-as-outputs can be associated with the wider ingress and dominance of capitalist ideals, whereas fettling and hard-work-as-process might represent what Williams (1977) has called 'residual' cultural traits. Furthermore, we might find that fettling and hard-work-as-process resonate with Ingold's more dynamic view of landscape that is born out of dwelling and the performance of tasks (for a full discussion see Emery, 2010).

The nuanced subtleties of language, values and ideology are not our primary concern here (see Emery, 2010; 2014; 2015). Instead, we are interested to explore how these values come to figure rhetorically and politically on account of their having normative appeal beyond the farming community of the North York Moors. One only has to think of the praise lauded on 'hardworking families' and those striving to 'improve their lot' by politicians to grasp the wider political significance of these values. We will need to pay attention in the following examples, therefore, to appreciate how beneficent change and hard work (and particular interpretations thereof) are put into political service by farmers and others alike.

Political Motivation

A phenomenological/dwelling approach to landscape helps us understand how farmers are *motivated* to act politically. Such an approach helps us understand the role of landscapes in processes of farmer identification; the intimate, embodied and emotional attachment to place and the imperative for action born out of the responsibility felt toward both previous and future generations. This intimacy and this motivation, emerges constantly through praxis, through farm tasks, which put the farmer in touch with the land and the histories to which it bears witness.

Guy Bowman farms moor sheep on High Moor Farm. Guy cannot make a living from the farm, however, and spends the majority of his time working as an electrician. He continues to farm for symbolic reasons (as the means of performing his identity) and out of a particular sense of obligation to his father who tenanted the farm before him. Many farmers express this sense of responsibility; to uphold the values and efforts of previous generations and, in particular, to continue to improve the farm through hard work. This imperative is inscribed into the landscape, which serves as a constant reminder of the struggles of the ancestors. On High Moor Farm, this imperative is literally inscribed. An epitaph to Guy's father etched into a block of stone set into one of the dry stone walls adjacent to the farmhouse reads:

In loving memory of Richard Bowman

Take a look at the walls around you and marvel at the borders of one man's soul

Guy, then, is motivated to continue farming and maintain the condition of those (many) dry stone walls as the earthly continuation of his father's soul. The same sense of responsibility and attachment to place need not, however, always be related to a personal family biography. Mike Lockwood, who farms at Burrowbank Farm, is a first generation farmer. Yet he still expresses a sense of responsibility to those who farmed before him, which is born out of his feeling of closeness to those people engendered through their shared (although temporally separated) engagement with the land. So when Mike looks at the ruins of old Burrowbank Farm, or goes to visit the old vinegar stone that rests beneath a hawthorn tree at the far end of the farm, he is not just becoming more familiar with the place, but with its ancestors too.

Hence any external influence which alters the ability of farmers to maintain important values and to fulfil their obligations to previous generations stirs strong emotions and responses. Those external influences might be unfavourable economic conditions imposed by supermarkets or government policies which seek to alter farmer behaviour and/or farmed landscapes (e.g. agri-environment schemes). Mike said that he feels 'psychologically demoralised' when he doesn't have the time (because of economic pressures) to work on non-essential maintenance work and would feel a sense of betrayal to previous generations if the farm ceased to be viable during his reign. Similarly, imagine how Guy Bowman feels when he surveys his farm and sees the walls falling into a state of disrepair. Because he is forced to work most of his time away from the farm, he does not have the resources to maintain the walls (and his father's soul) as he would like. He is, in his words, 'depressed' by the idea of not being able to 'pass the farm on to the next generation in better nick' than when he took it on. He is able, however, to receive a subsidy payment under the Environmental Stewardship scheme for maintaining the wall which amounts to approximately 15 pence per metre. Yet Guy sees this as undervaluing rather than valuing the work of the farmer and as adding insult to injury. His total subsidy payment being about £300, he grumbled that this was 'not enough to feed the cat with'. He is angry with the Government and those responsible for the precarious situation of agricultural production, claiming that he 'doesn't feel part of this country any more' and that 'the Government needs to treat farmers like citizens and stand up for us'. Many farmers, on account of their economic plight, expressed this feeling of being 'under-valued', 'unwanted', or 'neglected'. What is important here is the recognition that this feeling i) is motivated (in part at least) by an intimate attachment to land and sense of responsibility to previous and future generations, and ii) motivates a response from the farmer, to speak out, to complain and to make political indictments.

Working the landscape idea

As well as motivating farmers to act politically their embodied and intimate relations with landscape equips them with the skills to 'work' the landscape idea for political effect. This can be demonstrated in association with landscape: through their use of narrative and other rhetorical strategies; through their aesthetic representations of landscape, and by making political judgement on the *nature* of time and its passing. In many discussions with farmers, narratives of progress and decline were combined with culturally important values and landscape aesthetics to make policy indictments. In the following example Tony Uttridge is castigating the policy shift from a subsidy based on livestock headage to one based on farm area. This shift has encouraged farmers to keep

fewer animals with implications for the appearance of the land. A high stocking level is required, he argued, to "keep the dale good; to keep it tidy":

A well-farmed farm is a damn sight tidier than one that's say used to keep 60 suckler cows and two hundred sheep and he's dropped down to 25 suckler cows a hundred sheep, it's just 'oh I won't bother with them fields there, they're rubbish, I aren't putting owt, mightn't as well do owt wi' them, we won't bother wi' them'. Then they just look, they look, well they look bad [emphasised] they look, you know, they're going back. When my dad started contracting they reclaimed lots of intakes and moor and got 'em all grassed down, farming was booming and they were green, they were all green and looked like fields. Well now all them are going back to how they were before he reclaimed 'em.

Tony provides a story of change, using numbers, relating to the reduced stocking levels. This story of change becomes declensionist with the insertion of the moral signifiers of "rubbish" and looking "bad". But the story doesn't end there. The extremity of this declensionist plot is heightened by recourse to a previously progressive plot, which is being reversed. That it was progressive is signified by the terms "booming", "green" and "looking like fields". That progressive story is being undone by the declensionist change introduced in the first part of the quote and is signified by the fact that the fields are "going back". The introduction of the new policy, therefore, serves as the narrative *peripeteia* or turning point. Principally, it is the aesthetic appearance of the land, and the virtues with which that appearance is associated, that are used to signify a progressive or declensionist change. This is indicated implicitly with a critique of the work ethic of those farmers who have scaled back as a response to the policy change ('we won't bother'). A reference to his father also suggests that this indictment is motivated by a sense of insult to the work and Improvements of previous generations and a responsibility to respect those generations through a continuation of similar work practices

Similar sentiments were used to indict new agri-environmental schemes, which pay farmers to create new habitats for wildlife. In the following anecdote from the Spencer brothers, they tell the story of a farmer who was creating a new wetland under an agri-environmental payment scheme:

There was a bloke in t'Farmers Weekly once and he was digging all these stone drains out to make his field a marshland and he said his forefather's 'd be turning in their graves, they'd be stood in a hole, digging all these drains in by hand, and he's there with a big digger ripping them all out to make it a bog, just so he can make more money by not doing anything, by having a mess.

Again, the landscape provides narrative accountability to the progressive-cum-declensionist plot told by the Spencers. The progress is being undone by the creation of a wetland, which is making a 'mess' out of the landscape. The work ethic of the current generation ('not doing anything') is contradistinguished from that of the ancestors (digging drains by hand) which is a source of consternation and seen as disrespectful ('turning in their graves'). It could be argued that these indictments are made against other farmers, rather than policies or structures of power themselves. However, the discussions took place in the broader context of various policy transitions and we have also argued that narrative strategies are inescapably political in that they work to persuade (whoever it may be) and to delineate moral boundaries.

There are further examples, moreover, that are more overtly political. Reg Barratt is a retired farmer and parish councillor. He is, therefore, directly involved in political processes and uses the landscape to support the interests of the upland farmer. Reg's particular interest, like that of Tony Uttridge, is the re-introduction of a headage based subsidy payment in support of graziers who keep sheep on the common moor:

RB: We were forced as, er we still managed to keep a fair percentage of graziers but there's a lot who'd just like to give up. And Natural England are going to have to get used to the idea of coming and talking to us chaps, to see how they can improve their measures to, they say they want to encourage 'em on, up to a certain number but we're all of a sudden, we've been under-grazed round here since 1948 or 49. There was a lot of flocks went off in the 1950s and 1960s and er we started to come under-grazed and er I think it's sad because we've got something here, in this part of the country, which is unique, and that is a moorland, and the acreage of it is one of the biggest heather moors there is in Europe. And er, we needed to accept that what our ancestors have done for a hundred or two or three hundred years is why it's looking like it does now. If we don't waken up to the fact we're going to find out that it's going to get irretrievably going back to its, maybe 14th, 15th century, most of it was covered with, what I call rubbish trees: silver birch, weeds ... and that chokes all the heather out, or most of it. It'll become useless, there'll be no shooting and there's areas of it now where sheep have gone off, where normally they would let 'em come up [shoots], you know, maybe three or four inches and then they would eat 'em off. They're up here now and they won't touch 'em

SE: so do you think the main reason for the sheep coming off the moor's been financial or political?

RB: poor financial reward and er, I think the value of the moor sheep has never been fully recognised by the authorities. Because they are keeping the moors in their unique condition and at the same time producing a very worthwhile lamb and breeding stock for [the] lowland farmer. And this is where your, your half-bred ewes come from, your Mashams and your Mules, and that's, that's where they start, up there. And it's because of the ability of the local farmers who lived in these dale heads and kept sheep on the moors, they are unique stockmen, and they've been undervalued, undervalued, because if they want to keep the moors like they are now it's gonna cost them a small [emphasised] fortune. Manpower, and that's what its goin' a' mean, manpower.

SE: so are you pessimistic about the future then?

RB: I have a little bit more hope than what I had. And I think if the government would only listen and adjust its hill payments. What the Government wanted to do was get rid of the hill payments and instead of having headage payments they went for area payments. What they should do now, with the flock masters and that, is say 'right if you graze them we'll put you back onto headage payments'

Once more we see progress and decline being narrated through recourse to the landscape. This time, though, the narrative is made all the more alarming (and rhetorically persuasive) by the fact

that it is in 'irreversible decline'. The ancestors are, once more, reified as the producers of this valued landscape. Its uniqueness (and hence value) is also attributed to the special qualities of the (under-valued) dales farmer. This demonstrates Reg's ability to tap into a more fixed idea of value in landscape that is more akin to a political representation. Reg is aware of the 'lure of the moors' (Shoard, 1982) and the value attached by the government, by conservation organisations and the public more broadly to moorland landscapes. He thus presents a more fixed vision of landscape ('keeping the moors like they are now') despite having engaged with it in more fundamentally dynamic and embodied ways. It is precisely because of his experience and proximity to the land, however, that he has the aptitude to work the landscape idea, and to temporarily fix it for rhetorical effect (Benediktsson, 2007).

The same is true of a new co-operative marketing initiative by a group of North York Moors farmers. During the fieldwork period, they negotiated a new contract with a supermarket to sell moorland lamb at a premium. It was anticipated that the premium would be paid by the customer because the lamb was marketed not only as healthy and delicious, but as helping to maintain the valued moorland landscape (since the grazing of sheep on moorland is essential to maintain it in 'favourable' condition). Invoking the ideals of local, ethically sourced food, these promotions also tied landscape aesthetics with the farmers' work ethic and toil to further broaden the rhetorical appeal of the product (Emery, 2014).

Politicising time

In the above examples there is frequent recourse to the value in beneficent change. The implication is (typically) that progress undertaken by farmers is morally good and anything which opposes or reverses that progress is morally bad. However, there is also a more fundamental, yet implicit, temporal political critique embedded in these examples. This relates to a qualitative judgement as to what constitutes progress, or betterment, and the nature of time itself. Specifically, contained within many arguments made by farmers is an indictment against the short-termism of policy-making. This pits an indigenous concept of time (associated with steady, incremental and long-term beneficent change [fetting]) against the more progress-oriented time of government (Hirsch, 2006: 151). This was often expressed in terms of 'changing [policy] goalposts' being at odds with a long-term approach to farming:

LR: to heft a flock of sheep takes forever doesn't it

TR: well you can't, you can't chop and change like that you know, you're looking at twenty year cycles on the moor you know, you can't one year say oh we'll pay you so much to tek [take] your sheep off the moor and the next year say well we'll pay you so much money to put the sheep back on the moor

LR: it takes people time to build

TR: you can't do that, it's a long term thing farming like [...]

TR: aye, and I'm quite fearful for farming I'm afraid

SE: yeah, you don't see any changes

TR: no I don't because I don't see any changes in policy or government like and I think the policy they've got at the moment is ridiculous

LR: its too much out of their hands now, because we've got

TR: the wrong people are making the big decisions, and they don't know anything about farming. It would be like me going into a hospital in the middle of Leeds and running it like, I wouldn't have a clue, not a clue

SE: no

TR: and they haven't got a clue, but they're making all these major decisions

LR: they've got probably a good business sense, but

TR: they're making all these big major decisions, but they can't see what its gonna do in the long term, and farming is a long term thing, its not a short term fix farming

Here, Liz and Tom Richie critique the changing priorities of government and conservation organisations in terms of the optimum number of sheep to be grazed on the moor (to maintain favourable conservation status). They use their embodied experience of 'hefting' sheep to inform this critique. Hefting, which has been examined in more detail from a phenomenological perspective (Gray, 1999), is the process by which sheep learn where they 'live' on the open moor. This prevents them straying too widely and makes their management possible. Since it takes a long time to get the sheep 'hefted' however, policies which alternate between encouraging sheep off and on the moor at short-notice are not well-received. This more explicit critique can also be found more subtly in the previous examples. It is slow and steady progress that is valued by the Spencers (digging drains by hand) vis-a-vis a rapid decline (ripping out with a mechanical digger). It is the steady work of the ancestors that is valued by Reg (over 200 - 300 years) and this is to be expressed in the landscape itself. If that same, steady and long-term engagement does not continue then the valued landscapes are going to go 'irretrievably back'. This critique is founded on farmers' firm belief, gained through their physical and dynamic engagement with the land, that an incremental approach to beneficent change is morally superior to one aimed at a 'quick fix', making money or an ill-founded conception of Improvement. This demonstrates how particular interpretations of motivating values that are established in intimate relation with the land (beneficent change as fettling) inform, and are translated into political indictments. This allows farmers to argue that it is only through *their* work, through the specific nature of *their* engagement with the land, that valued landscapes can be maintained. It is by dwelling in the landscape that farmers' are able to make use of the fundamentally qualitative nature of time and to infuse the nature of its passing with moral judgement. It is by narrating landscape (representing it in particular ways) that farmers are able to give a particular moral order to time (Abbott, 2002), and to uphold their own positions in the production of that moral order.

Conclusion

To say that landscape and time are subjective does not require a descent into a miasma of cultural relativity. It simply means that the engagement with landscape and time is historically particular, imbricated in social relations and deeply political. More, the cultural meanings we give to time and place are not just reflections of these relationships; *they carry their own political and social charge* (Bender, 2002: 104, emphasis added).

It might be considered ironic that many phenomenological approaches have been (rightly) criticized for being apolitical. Ironic because it is precisely those approaches that have shed light on the temporality of the landscape and the dynamic means by which those that dwell with/in it understand it. What the apolitical versions of such interpretations have failed (or chosen not) to attend to, however, is the narrativity, rhetorical force and political potency of such a dynamic interpretation of landscape. For it is these dynamic qualities that allow it to be worked with - ideationally as well as physically - to pursue or defend a range of different interests.

We have demonstrated in this article how those who dwell in the landscape – farmers – are equally able to put ideas and representations of landscape into political service. This is not to deny the fact that ideological interpretations of landscape prevail and are embedded in unequal power relations, and nor does it suggest that farmers' grievances' automatically carry some emancipatory potential. What it shows, however, is that dominant interpretations of landscape are always subject to challenge and it is through exploring the link between experience and representation that we can recognise landscape as contested and negotiated between different groups. We have shown how farmers *are* able to represent a landscape idea, or to represent the landscape symbolically in pursuit of their political claims. This does not mean that farmers do not have the type of intimate, dynamic and experiential relationship with landscape that phenomenological approaches purport. On the contrary, it is *by virtue of* such relationships that they are so well-placed and adept at making use of landscape's scenic aspect and at temporarily fossilising and using a relatively fixed landscape idea for rhetorical effect. Moreover, we have also shown how it is not only by artificially suspending the temporality of the landscape that farmers make representations. We have shown how, through the use of narrative, they are also able to make political representations of a *changing* landscape. Whilst phenomenological approaches have used narrative as a key trope, we argue that they have tended to do so in a manner which neglects its political edge. Thus, both 'narrating self' through landscape (Wylie, 2005) and seeing narrative as a means for understanding how 'people make themselves at home in the landscape' (Vergunst et al., 2012: 11) do not go far enough in demonstrating the political dimension of the narratives that are born of phenomenological research. By representing and moralizing the landscape as changing (through narrative) farmers are able to uphold their position, and their work as central to 'the story' that landscape tells. It allows them to turn their own politics of experience (their lived realities encumbered by the macro-economic structures which impinge upon their activities) into a politics of representation.

Rather than casting fixed/abstracted and dynamic conceptualisations of landscape as either epistemologically opposed (cf Cosgrove versus Ingold) or as opposingly held by different stakeholder groups (cf Setten) we have shown how farmers use both conceptualisations rhetorically. Depending on strategy and situation, farmers conceptualise landscape as either fixed or dynamic in order, respectively, to symbolise and narrate it for political effect. Whilst the effectiveness of farmers' political strategies might be questioned, their strategies are undoubtedly political. Moreover, we

can identify four factors that imbue farmers with political potency on account of their dwelt-in relation with the land. The first is that their proximity to the land gives them legitimacy in the eyes of others. Although farmers' hallowed reputation as stewards of the landscape and the nation's food supply is now somewhat 'tarnished' (Lowe et al., 1997), there persists a strong association between the production of valued landscapes and farming (as demonstrated, for instance, in its deployment in marketing strategies). Secondly, if landscapes are understood as a medium on and through which negotiations take place then the fact that farmers have the tools close at hand (so to speak) provides them with dexterity in how to use and manipulate landscapes both physically and ideationally. Third, *because* farmers, through their embodied relational interactions with landscape, come to view and value landscapes as dynamic and changing - this gives them a proclivity and capacity to work with the landscape idea and produce alternative interpretations and representations for particular rhetorical effects.

Finally, because farmed landscapes are highly valued by elites and wider society (albeit for reasons that may differ to those of farmers) this renders groups outside of the farming community susceptible to arguments and representations that play with the landscape idea. This recognises the important role that specific places play in the reproduction of human relations and identities (Wallwork and Dixon, 2004) and how agricultural landscapes figure prominently in constructions of national and European identity by virtue of their association with wider societal values (Hoggart et al., 1995; Clark et al., 1997; Gray, 2000). In Britain, for instance, rural images have long been associated with the idea of the nation – with propaganda posters during World War II depicting rural scenes under the heading 'What we are fighting for'. The argument here, then, is that because landscape *matters* in processes of identification and in association with wider societal values, then those other groups are more likely to respond/be persuaded by rhetorical deployments of landscape than if ideas of landscape were deemed inconsequential to them.

Ingold's dwelling perspective has done a lot for our understanding and appreciation of landscape and of human-environment relations, whilst inspiring a raft of phenomenological ethnographic research. It provides scope for opening up a more nuanced political analysis of landscape. We have demonstrated that scope here by emphasising the deployment by farmers of the scenic aspect of landscape for rhetorical effect and the inter-relations between landscape's temporality and its (political) narrativity. Unfortunately, however, much of the dwelling inspired ethnographic research has resulted in often beautiful but politically empty experiential accounts. Ethnography provides such a rich and nuanced understanding of the relationship between lived experience and politics that it must at least embark further upon political analysis if, itself, not taking a political stance. As Crouch (2010: 13) argued:

Representations are borne of the performativity of living. The liveliness of performativity is available to individuals who encounter these representations. Thus in no sense are representations fixed or closed to change. They are open to further interpretation and feeling. Representations and their projected cultural significance remain open too, 'available' for further work.

We have shown here how rhetoric culture theory provides a particularly useful means for facilitating such analysis and for demonstrating the rhetorical 'work' that gets done in the flow of social life. Thus, a *dwelling* perspective was shown to inform political representations by farmers (through

symbolism and narrative) which, in turn, were directed at defending the kind of intimate and ineffable relations between people and landscape that are born of the more homely *acts* of dwelling. Combining ethnography with rhetorical analysis thus offers an appropriate and novel means through which to mediate and advance our understanding of the relationship between landscape experience and landscape politics.

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