ABSTRACT

/ EN / This article has two concerns. The first is with how rural lifeworlds are understood and conceptualized from outside, usually in terms of normative assumptions predicated on notions of unity, consistency, and totality. The second is with how better to articulate the richness and complexity of such lifeworlds. These concerns are set out in terms of an understanding of the relationship between lifeworlds and a spectrum of experience located between twin poles: *position* and *place*. It then refers to a number of creative projects in Ireland seen as indicative of a new way of acknowledging and articulating the richness and complexity of rural lifeworlds.

/ FR / Le présent article a un double objet : d'une part, il traite des différentes compréhensions et conceptualisations des mondes de la vie (*Lebenswelt*) ruraux tels que vus de l'extérieur, principalement en terme des hypothèses normatives reposant sur des idées d'unité, de constance, et de totalité. Dans un deuxième temps, il tente de mieux déterminer et exprimer la complexité et la richesse de ces mondes de vie. Ces préoccupations sont énoncées dans l'optique de la compréhension des relations entre ces mondes de vie et d'une matrice expérientielle située entre deux pôles : *positionnement* et *emplacement*. Suit un survol de différents projets créateurs provenant de part et d'autre de l'Irlande qui font état de ces nouvelles façons de reconnaître et d'exprimer la richesse et la complexité des mondes de vie ruraux.

Canadian Journal of Irish Studies Vol. 38, Nos. 1+2 (2014).
Special issue, "Text and Beyond Text: New Visual, Material, and Spatial Perspectives in Irish Studies" © 2015 CJIS and the author

Iain Biggs

"Incorrigibly plural"? Rural Lifeworlds Between Concept and Experience

Introduction

Rural lifeworlds—the rural world as directly experienced by individuals, subjectively, in and through their everyday life and work[1]—are frequently rendered into simplistic categories by those speaking "authoritatively" about the rural from elsewhere. This article is based on work in rural north Cornwall, Wales, the English Scottish borders and, in particular, as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Moore Institute, National University of Ireland, Galway. My research suggests that reductive conceptualizations of the rural are becoming increasingly problematic in the context of growing eco-social pressures.[2] Many of the more remote rural areas in the UK and Ireland have already suffered the withdrawal of State investment in infrastructure resulting, for example, in the closure of post offices and schools. Simultaneously, they have been subject to increased State intervention in relation to environmental governance. Two examples from the west of Ireland are indicative: the long-running and bitter conflict involving the Irish Government, the European Community, the Burren Action Group, the

Burren National Park Support Association, *An Taisce*, and others over the visitor center near Mullaghmore; and the on-going conflict between the Turf Cutters and Contractors Association (TCCA) and the Irish Government, the result of inflexible implementation of European Union directives, making small-scale family turf cutting illegal in certain areas.[3] Such complex situations, involving conflicting environmental, social, and economic priorities, require new, more flexible, approaches. Although these are beginning to appear, the status quo remains wedded to an outmoded, monolithic approach based on top-down notions of professionalism.

These new approaches can be understood in sociological terms that differentiate between two distinct ways of experiencing lifeworlds. In the first, lifeworlds are given, framed by prior expectations: "life-as" a farmer, a housewife, a postmaster, and so on. In the second case they are experienced as a (relatively) open project: multi-stranded, dynamic, as "being-as-becoming."[4] This distinction, never absolute, parallels one made by the philosopher of place Edward S. Casey. Casey differentiates between a *position*, taken as "a fixed posit of an established culture," and our experiencing of *place* which, notwithstanding its normally settled appearance, he characterizes as "an essay in experimental living within a changing culture."[5] These parallel understandings indicate a spectrum across which lifeworlds are experienced, from the given, fixed, or positioned—whether assumed as such by individuals themselves or imposed by others—which constitutes a life-as, to a becoming that requires continual negotiation as to how we are placed in relation to a world always in process. In reality, of course, our individual experience fluctuates between these two poles. If the first is best described as a given and unitary position, the second is dynamic, experimental, and plural: a "polyverse"—a term borrowed from the theologian Roger Corless, both a Benedictine oblate and a Gelugpa Buddhist, who uses it to articulate his experience of the richness of both these spiritual lifeworlds without denying the irreconcilable differences between them.[6]

The ebb and flow of our experience back and forth across this lifeworld spectrum as polyverse is rarely acknowledged because it raises difficult questions about identity and self-consistency and opens us to increased levels of cognitive dissonance. However, denying the lifeworld as polyverse, with its corresponding sense of plurality and internal difference, has real social consequences. It restricts our capacity to deal with change and, critically, to accept the plurality and difference of others. Nevertheless, many people experience their lifeworld as a polyverse—whether tacitly or explicitly—

and manage the resulting cognitive dissonances, while welcoming the new understandings that result.

An example may be helpful here. The writer Alan Garner makes a sharp distinction between life-as a scholar and an artist, seeing the first framed by the concept of a "purely academic mind" that insists on "the primacy of analytical categories," and the second by a rejection of the primacy of categorical thinking in the name of creativity.[7] Yet many artist/academics live in a polyverse that includes these supposedly antagonistic positions which, as the art educator Jon Thompson suggests, provide a generative paradox necessary to good art education.[8] (A not uncommon alternative is for artists employed in higher education to identify themselves reductively, in terms of life-as an artist, despite the self-evident fact that they are substantially engaged in teaching.)

This reference to art education raises two issues that, for reasons of space, cannot be explored in any detail here. The creative projects I will refer to, while conventionally categorized as art, are better understood as examples of new ways in which meanings are actively produced in relation to a rural lifeworld as polyverse. This claim makes two assumptions. The first is that these projects actively mediate between distinct, even antagonistic, framings of rural lifeworlds. The second is that, in doing so, they also mediate between a conventional aesthetic of the exceptional that privileges art and an aesthetic of the everyday essential to ecological awareness.[9] Consequently, what is distinctive about these examples is not a particular relationship to the given category "art," but that they translate or mediate between what are conventionally regarded as distinct, even antagonistic, positions, framings, and perspectives regarding the rural.

Lifeworld between position and place

John Martin "Mattie" Rynne, who died in 2000, was the last postmaster to work at the Kilnaboy post office in County Clare, a parish of a few hundred scattered households which he very rarely left during his lifetime.

This statement might easily lead us to frame Mattie Rynne's lifeworld on the basis of received notions of life-as a rural postmaster. Alternatively, we can empathically *place* Mattie Rynne in a dynamic polyverse that exceeds any such categorization, taking up Geraldine Finn's observation that each of us is "always both more and less than the categories that name and divide us."[10] (I will return to Mattie Rynne later.) The pressure of instrumental demands in our highly

FIGURE 1. *Mattie Rynne*. Wall drawing by Deirdre O'Mahony, soot on plaster, 2007. Photograph, Ben Geoghegan.

administered contemporary world privileges the former option, encouraging reductive readings of others to a life-as. But any lifeworld as polyverse is "storied," requires multiple narratives, telling and retelling, consistent with Doreen Massey's understanding of space (Casey's *place*) as "a simultaneity of 'stories-so-far.'"[11]

This need for narrative telling is related to the way everyday language gives dual significance to the term *place*: as *both* position *and* place in Casey's sense. As Tim Cresswell reminds us, someone may be expected to "know his place" or be "put in her place," demonstrating how closely our normative presuppositions about position as a category of social behaviour are entangled with questions of place as on-going and experimental essaying.[12] Acknowledging this entanglement becomes critical if we accept Michael Cronin's notion, in the context of a discussion about language differences, translation, and plurality,

that as citizens of multilingual and multicultural societies we need to become "translators" between lifeworlds. Such translation maintains a necessary "multidimensionality and complexity" by opening us to "the infinite, internally conflicted, shifting desires, ideals and interests of complex human beings in the lifeworld."[13] It is in this sense that the visual examples used here are understood as creative acts of translation.

In 2008 the Irish artist and curator Ann Mulrooney brought home to me the importance of the entanglement of position and place in Ireland (indeed wherever colonialism overwrote prior understandings of place). She sent me a text-based piece for a collaborative book, part of a long-term project about the English-Scottish borders region (fig. 2). *Litany*, which she instructs us to read aloud softly, offers a beautifully simple visual/textual meditation on the emotional politics of colonialism in relation to place and language. Ann writes of *Litany* that it

> … is a list of the townlands in the Barony of Gowran in County Kilkenny where my family have lived for six generations, and where I now live. On the right-hand column are the place names that were attributed to the area during the Ordnance Survey mapping of Ireland that occurred between 1829 and 1842, whilst Ireland was still under colonial rule. On the left are the Irish place names from which these anglicised versions were created. In the centre are the literal translations, the actual meanings of the Irish names.[14]

The issue here is not only that the imposition of an alien language dis-places people in a variety of ways, but also that an equally corrosive dis-placement happens whenever we treat the polyverse of another's lifeworld as a position, a life-as. When we fail, that is, to acknowledge, reflect on, and translate respectfully between different—sometimes antagonistic—mental, emotional, and embodied experiences that make up their polyverse by failing to hear and narrate its various dynamic elements.

Life-as—categorical positions and worlds-unto-themselves

I have spent some fifteen years supervising arts-led doctoral research projects, work that frequently requires translation between individual lifeworlds and an

LITANY

(to be read aloud, softly)

Ballydonnel	**place of O'Donnell**	*Baile ÚI Dhónaill*
Ballylinch	**place of O'Lynch**	*Baile ÚI Loinsigh*
Legan	**pillar-stone**	*Liagán*
Ballinamona	**place of boggy land**	*Baile na Móna*
Higginstown	**place of O'Higgins**	*Baile ÚI Uigin*
Highrath	**high ráth**	*Ráth ard*
Lyrath	**ráth of the grave**	*Ráth an lighe*
Maddoxtown	**place of the son Uadóg**	*Baile Mac Uadóg*
Abbeygrove	**grove of the monastery**	*Garrán na Mainistreach*
Blanchville Demesne	**territory of Blanchefield**	*Fearann an Bhluinsiolaigh*
Blanchvillestown	**place of Blanchefield**	*Baile an Bhluinsiolaigh*
Grove	**a shrubbery**	*Garrán*
Rathcash	**ráth of Cass**	*Ráth Cáis*
Baunmore	**big cow-fortress**	*Bán Mór*
ChurchClara	**level land of the Church**	*Clárach an Teampaill*
Clarabricken	**Bricken's level land**	*Clárach Bhricin*
Clara Upper	**the upper level land**	*An Chlárach Uachtair*
Clifden	**a stony place**	*Chlocháin*
Clohoga	**a stony place**	*Clochóg*
Conegar	**a rabbit warren**	*Coinicéar*
Eagleshill	**hill of the eagle**	*Cnoc IoIracháin*
Kilmogar	**Church of St. Mogara**	*Cill Mochara*
Kingsland	**King's land**	*Fearann ÚI Chionga*
Scart	**a thicket**	*Scairt*

FIGURE 2. Anne Mulrooney, *LITANY*.

academic institution as a world-unto-itself based on "a distinct cultural and linguistic tradition and a vehement sense of territoriality."[15] Such institutions are designed to perpetuate particular presuppositions about professional work, and increasingly put pressure on individuals to constitute their identity as a professional life-as. This situation all too quickly results in an exclusive and reductive framing of lifeworlds. Two such framings are particularly relevant here.

The first is generative of life-as a professional specialist. This life-as is authorized by a disciplinary-based education taken as a means to a job organizing, legislating for, administering, and generally intervening in, the intellectual, cultural, or practical conditions of others' lifeworlds. The social status of this life-as is underwritten by the administrative mindscape of management, whether in relation to business, public services, the media, the creative industries, or the academy.

This framing conditions professionals to adopt the positional framings I will outline in the next section: reductive ways of framing people whose livelihood is heavily dependent on embodied knowledge and skills, people for whom it has made practical sense to name a place *Cloch an leagha* (stone of the smelting) or *Baile Bhuaile* (place of the mountain pasture) rather than Cloghala or Ballywool, in short, those whose lifeworlds are normatively identified and managed from without as "rural." This is particularly problematic in that it almost invariably overlooks a fundamental difference: that the people being positioned do not for the most part understand the world discursively—as professionals do—but as place- or skill-specific, and as enacted in a specific "taskscape."[16]

This distinction can be illustrated by a simple example. In 2010 a farm wife in rural north Cornwall told my research assistant a long story about a visit from an enthusiastic local politician. Despite her interest in much he had said, her account ended with a resigned shrug of her shoulders. When asked why, she replied: "When he went he left the farm gate open." That act spoke to her more forcibly than all his eloquence.

Positioning rural lifeworlds

It is increasingly important, giving growing levels of conflict around environmental governance, energy issues, food security, flood management, and the aggressive pursuit of agribusiness, that democracies identify and address the

ways that rural lifeworlds are normatively positioned from without. Three such positions are outlined here. The first is dismissive, typified by Marx and Engels's phrase: "the idiocy of rural life." This still informs much Leftist political analysis, so that a recent book, *Austerity Ireland: the Failure of Irish Capitalism*, can advocate taking Ireland's natural resources into public ownership without considering the impact of this on the agricultural community.[17] The second position is fundamentally conservative. It employs elements of Romanticism, national or regional identity, local tradition, New Age spirituality, and Edenic environmentalism—whether individually or in combination—to *idealize* the rural over and against the urban.[18] The third position is instrumentally managerial, locating the rural as "standing reserve,"[19] whether in terms of food production, tourism and leisure, renewable energy sources, or as a space in which, for example, to "make room for" rivers to avoid urban flooding.

These normative positions are based on taken-for-granted presuppositions and half-truths and are easily exploited to generate crude binary positions. They then provoke antagonistic reactions and counter-reactions that lock different groups into what Paul Ricoeur calls "incommunicability through a protective withdrawal" into opposing positions.[20] Any realistic attempt to address this requires a combination of specialist knowledge, empathetic imagination, and the practical skills of lifeworld translation and mediation. This in turn requires new terminology, different metaphors, and unfamiliar terms, as part of a willingness to speak, and so place ourselves, differently.

"Incorrigibly plural": from a given position (life-as) to place as polyverse

The phrase "incorrigibly plural" in my title is borrowed from Louis MacNeice via Declan Kiberd's reflections on the poet in *Irish Classics*. Here he discusses MacNeice's "protean identity" and refusal of "any simple self-description" and, in doing so, illuminates my concern with a lifeworld as polyverse.[21] The proposition set out here is simple: that greater attention to living *in* and *between* lifeworlds given as a life-as facilitates greater attention and respect towards the multiplicity of interwoven narratives that constitute others. Given our worsening eco-social situation and resulting tensions between urban and rural lifeworlds, lack of proper attention in this respect can only make such situations worse. To prevent this we need, at the very least, a common, empathetic, and respectful sensing

of the plurality of lifeworlds from which to recognize, acknowledge, and argue our differences. Unfortunately the opposite appears to be happening. Collective "incommunicability through a protective withdrawal" is increasingly reinforced by a constellation of factors. These include our culture of possessive individualism (in which identification with life-as is increasingly socially adaptive), an almost pathological desire to avoid cognitive dissonance, and the persistence of deep-seated and archaic presuppositions generated by many hundreds of years of monotheistic theology and its secular off-shoots,[22] all equally antagonistic to the understanding of a lifeworld as polyverse. Yet such an understanding is now central to the properly ecological praxis necessary to address our present troubled social and environmental situations.

The development of such a praxis requires, at the very least, that we develop a better understanding of the interweaving of position and place in the experience of lifeworlds. We can then better negotiate given positions, opening them to the possibility of being-as-becoming. This approach is nascent in both Félix Guattari's ecosophy, where three distinct yet interrelated ecological fields—of the environment, society, and that constellation of persona we call a self—co-exist, and in the anthropologist Tim Ingold's mycelial approach to place.[23]

Lifeworld as polyverse

In March 2014 I ate an evening meal in Galway with three recent acquaintances. Each works both as a traditional Irish musician and a scholar. One of my companions, breaking from our conversation to order food, rejected a fish dish because its main ingredient is not listed in the current Irish fishing quota. In response to my surprise that she was both aware of this fact and acted on it, she responded that her father is a fisherman living on *Oileáin Árann*. (She added that she also regularly checks the local weather there.) What struck me about her active participation in the distinct (if not wholly unrelated) worlds of traditional music, scholarship, and a family tradition of fishing, was the echo of something I had experienced in central Wales the previous year. I had attended a performance devised and staged by Ffion Jones—part of her doctoral project *Landscaping the Rural*—which took place in a working sheep byre on her parents' farm at the head of a remote valley. (Jones and her husband also farm locally.) On Aberystwyth University's web site she sets out the aim of her doctorate as follows:

> … to utilize methodologies combining auto-ethnography and creative artistic practices as a way of researching experiences of place on a specific farm in Mid Wales. The farm, a 900 acre tenanted upland sheep farm, is run by my parents and my younger brother. The aim of the research is to use 'insider' knowledge (lay discourse) as a way of exploring and extrapolating experiences of place within a rural farming family that confirms, contradicts and combines with academic discourses about our farming lives. *As a researcher/farmer, I bridge two lifeworlds*; my work seeks to look at a farming family's attachment and experiences of place from the inside-out [italics mine].[24]

Ffion Jones's polyverse would appear to include roles conventionally categorized as: upland tenant sheep farmer, mother of a young child living in a remote rural location, performance artist, academic scholar, and so on. Yet this is a lifeworld constellated by a dynamical finding of her place in and between those roles and the distinct geographical locations associated with them. Each of these is *both* relatively self-contained *and* also overlaps, both distinct from and intermeshed with others. The richness of this situation is extended by the fact that Ffion Jones, like my co-conversationalists at the meal in Galway, is bilingual. Furthermore, she lives in an area with a rich Welsh-language tradition of farmer-poets whose work honours and validates their lifeworld and taskscape, something that informs her work as a performer conscious of her own richly tensioned polyverse.

Bridging lifeworlds: the art of the "compound cur"

I will now introduce a number of other projects undertaken by people trained in the arts and currently creating bridges between lifeworlds often construed as antagonistic. These projects might be seen as reflecting Matthew Fuller's claim that new forms of art are appearing that are "no longer only art," the result of a recapitulation of artistic methods that have oozed out, becoming "feral in combination with other forms of life."[25] However, to do so would be to privilege the category "art," the aesthetics of the exceptional, and the cultural world-unto-itself of life-as a professional artist, all positions the author would wish to question.

An alternative, and arguably more productive approach to any re-categorizing of art that perpetuates its privileged position—feral or otherwise—is implicit

FIGURE 3. "Drawing The Water," HDV stills image, 2012, Pauline O'Connell (photograph taken by Siobhan Dempsey).

in a mordant observation made by Pauline O'Connell during a discussion of *Drawing the Water*, a public art project commissioned by Kerry County Council for Milltown (fig. 3). In the terms set out here, the arduous multi-tasking necessary to deliver that project transformed her self-understanding so that she referred to herself during a private discussion as a "compound cur." I understood this to be a positive response to the futility—in eco-social, psychological, and, increasingly, economic terms—of a life-as framed by the conventional world-unto-itself of professional art. Developing her canine metaphor, it may no longer make sense to try to perform as a prize-winning, "best of breed" artist, given the anachronistic and increasingly problematic framings involved.

I cannot hope to do justice to the projects I am about to introduce; indeed I must misrepresent them to the degree that, despite my exchanges with their originators, I co-opt them to illuminate my own concerns. However each originator has web-based material available and I encourage the reader to

FIGURE 4. Cathy Fitzgerald, *Hollywood*. Photograph, Cathy Fitzgerald.

explore this.[26] I understand each project as a re-narrating of a given position, one that translates and so problematizes it, both socially and aesthetically.

Hollywood

Hollywood in County Wicklow was established in the mid-1980s as a conventional commercial plantation (fig. 4). It is now managed and co-owned by Cathy Fitzgerald, who spent eight years working in biological science in New Zealand (where she was born), before moving to Ireland and re-training as a visual artist. She now lives in Hollywood as its custodian, facilitating and narrating its transformation by undertaking working exchanges with close-to-nature foresters and the local community and ecology, documenting its day-to-day care and maintenance online, making films, engaging with the Irish Green Party at both policy and local grass-roots levels, and publishing on a range of topics. These distinct but interwoven activities are focused by the transformation of this two-acre plantation into an ecologically and economically sustainable mixed species wood, a process regularly assessed by the Irish Council for Forest Research and

FIGURE 5. Pauline O'Connell, *The Spout*, Milltown, County Kerry.

Development. In short, Fitzgerald is engaged in carrying out and narrating a weave of activities so as to build lines of communication between people (silvi-cultural specialists, local communities, timber users, artists, and environmental enthusiasts), the local ecology, and eco-cultural, scientific, economic, and green policy concerns locally, across Ireland, and internationally.

Arguably Fitzgerald works in, translates between, and is co-constituted by, a number of different, productively tensioned, places and lifeworlds. She draws on what each has to offer without identifying herself with any one in particular. In re-telling conventional notions of what constitutes a commercial forest, she is working to restore a proper sense of place to the rural by articulating its many dynamic and complex dimensions as polyverse.

Water and Land

Pauline O'Connell's works use the skills of an artist, teacher, ethnographer, community organizer and, indeed, whatever others become necessary to deliver her increasingly challenging projects. This became necessary to

complete *Drawing The Water*, a yearlong community art project that responded to The Spout, an old public water scheme in Milltown, County Kerry (fig. 5). This amenity dates back to the post Famine period when the local landlords—the Godfrey Family at Kilcolman House—were instrumental in channeling clean, free water from source to Spout Lane. *Drawing the Water* engaged with an apparently marginal location, anticipating O'Connell's subsequent work around a community-owned field in County Kilkenny (fig. 6), yet the Spout's history as a social site showed that it has served a variety of social purposes, for example the sharing of all-important information, both local and international, that related to emigration. During the project, issues related to Kerry County Council's changing approach to the provision of water reinforced O'Connell's concern to raise issues about the nature of "community," both now and as it might be. Indeed, to complete and show the work she had to ask local people and their political representatives difficult questions about what community was, then and there.

Pauline O'Connell is now working on an ongoing project, two parts of which—*Heave-Ho, An Invitation To Community* and *Heave-Ho, Pub Pulling League* (based on the game Tug O' War)—are concluded. These raised and explored issues of community and social identity by drawing on history and trace memories relating to the 1970s Kilkenny (Coan) Tug O' War team's experience of getting to the All Ireland Final in 1971. They in turn generated a range of creative social activities that have enabled her to explore the ecology of community, not, however, as a given and permanent entity—as the guarantor of a position in Casey's sense—but as an experimental essaying undertaken by individuals coming together to place themselves dynamically in relation to the demands of a multiplicity of changes.

Deirdre O'Mahony works as an artist (see fig. 1), art school tutor, environmental activist, community enabler, and much more. She is currently developing SPUD, an international project that investigates and aesthetically reflects on questions of sustainability, changing landscapes, food security, and the relationship between the rural and urban. SPUD is collaborative, transdisciplinary, and involving multiple constituencies, enabling farmers and artists to interact with different agencies and institutions by facilitating and co-curating new work through collaborating with different rural and urban publics. Significantly in the present context, O'Mahony writes explicitly of seeking "to *reframe* and make visible the relevance of rural tacit cultivation knowledge to urban publics today" [italics mine].[27]

FIGURE 6. The Community Field, Castlewarren, County Kilkenny (photograph taken by Pauline O'Connell).

Particularly relevant here is Deirdre O'Mahony's establishing and facilitating of X-PO, situated in the former post office in run by Mattie Rynne until his death in 2000. Its permanent closure after Rynne's death deprived Kilnaboy of both an important amenity and a central point of contact, a common situation in both rural Ireland and the UK. As part of the inauguration of X-PO O'Mahony created a temporary installation—the *Mattie Rynne Archive*—by selectively re-presenting texts, cassette tapes, photographs, material objects, newspaper cuttings, flyers, and other paraphernalia found in the building after his death. Brought together with a large wall drawing made with soot taken from the kitchen stove, this served as a catalyst for other locally based projects by bringing to light the richness and diversity of Mattie Rynne's life. He had read extensively, learned five languages using the BBC's world-service programmes, and had taken correspondence courses in everything from Advanced English and ballroom dancing to electronics,

self-improvement, and spiritual healing. Revealing this richness facilitated the setting up of the Rinnamona Research Group.[28]

This group has subsequently actively set out to challenge the once authoritative anthropological text *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940, 1968, 2001) by Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball. It has done so by offering an alternative public account of a lifeworld, articulated on the basis of the group's own priorities and understandings. This intervention stands as an example of how the external articulation of lifeworlds may be reconfigured, won back from those who subject rural familial experience and taskscapes to what is all-too-often a reductive and alienating discourse.

Like Ffion Jones's work as a researcher/farmer, such activity translates and mediates *between* lifeworlds *against the grain* of normative external presuppositions. These activities, and projects like O'Mahony's commemoration of the richness of Mattie Rynne's life, give the lie to reductive categorical positioning of rural lifeworlds through retellings that restore multidimensionality and complexity. In doing so, they offer us the opportunity to be open to the infinitely variable, internally conflicted, and shifting desires, ideals, and interests of rural life as polyverse.

In lieu of a conclusion

The conventions of academic journal article writing require an author to provide a conclusion that summarizes the argument presented. To this writer, originally trained in the visual arts and so more used to acts of evocation than argumentation, this presents something of a dilemma. What is set out above is not ultimately intended to argue an academic "position," but rather to provisionally evoke ways in which we might better *place* rural lifeworlds. That is, to understand them in Casey's sense as an essaying in "experimental living within a changing culture," one that gives the lie to reductive conceptualizations and normative framings. An article championing such essaying should, it might be argued, resist the assumptions of unity, consistency, and totality that are presupposed by an academic conclusion but not, in my view, by the open-endedness of works of art.

I am only too well aware that this article is no work of art, and equally that readers may see failure to provide a proper conclusion as little more than a facile evasion of intellectual responsibility. None the less there remains the question

of what is ultimately at stake here. Namely, that what is ultimately offered here may, in the final analysis, be less an intellectual argument than an invitation to undertake a change of heart (albeit an invitation smuggled into a quasi-academic article). That invitation is to attend to both our own lifeworld and that of others—rural or otherwise—as a polyverse, and from the perspective of being-as-becoming rather than a life-as. In short, an invitation that proposes, in sympathy with Rilke's poem *Archaic Torso of Apollo*, that we change our life. In seems appropriate then to conclude by referring to a work of literature.

In the final pages of *Islanders*, Margaret Elphinstone raises the issue of conflicting framings of the island's lifeworld offered by a newly arrived priest on one hand and the local wise woman and midwife on the other. To address this conflict she has a character remind her female listeners that we each have "many stories" and that "they're all true," so that there is no point "pretending that there's only one tale which takes account of everything."[29] ¶

ENDNOTES

The author gratefully acknowledges the Visiting Fellowship from the Moore Institute, National University of Ireland, Galway, which allowed him to write this article, and also the helpful comments of two anonymous reviewers of the original text.

1 A lifeworld (in German *Lebenswelt*) is the term used in phenomenology for the world as it is directly experienced in our subjective everyday life, that is, in our everyday situations and relations (as opposed to the world as the object of scientific study). The lifeworld is made up of different aspects of our experience—imaginal, social, perceptual, and embodied—and is often thematically framed in terms of lived space, the lived body, lived time, and our lived human relationship with other beings.

2 For discussion of this see, for example, Jane Bailey, Iain Biggs, and Daniel Buzzo, "Deep Mapping and Rural Connectivities," in *Countryside Connections: Older People, Community and Place in Rural Britain*, ed. Catherine Hagen Hennessy, Robin Means, and Vanessa Burholt (Bristol and Chicago: Policy Press, 2014), 159-92; and Jane Bailey and Iain Biggs, "'Either Side of Delphy Bridge': A Deep Mapping Project Evoking and Engaging the Lives of Older Adults in Rural North Cornwall," *Journal of Rural Studies* 38, no. 4 (2012): 318-28.

3 For accounts of the actions regarding the development of the Burren see, for example, chapter ten of Liam Leonard, *The Environmental Movement in Ireland* (Berlin: Springer, 2007); and the Burren Action Group http://www.iol.ie/~burrenag. For further information on the turf cutting issue see, for example, Patricia O'Flynn, "Rural Identity and Protest Mobilisation: The case of the Turf Cutters and

Contractors Association," (Masters thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2012); and Margaret O'Riordan, Marie Mahon, and John McDonagh, "Power, Discourse and Participation in Nature Conflicts: The Case of Turf Cutters in the Governance of Ireland's Raised Bog Designations," *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 17, no. 1 (2015): 127-45. The artist Deirdre O'Mahony has been actively involved in both campaigns and further information can be found on her website http://www.deirdre-omahony.ie

4 Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

5 Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Towards a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 31.

6 Roger Corless, "Many Selves, Many Realities: The Implications of Heteronyms and the Plurality of Worlds Theory for Multiple Religious Belonging," *Pacific Coast Theological Society Journal* (2002) http://www.pcts.org/journal/corless2002a/many.selves.html

7 Alan Garner, *The Voice That Thunders* (London: Harvill Press, 1997), 104-5.

8 Jon Thompson, "Campus Camp," in *Artists in the 1990s: Their Education and Values*, ed. Paul Hetherington (London: Wimbledon School of Art in association with Tate Gallery, 1994), 44-48.

9 The aesthetic concerns at stake here are clearly articulated by Yuriko Saito in her *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

10 Geraldine Finn, *Why Althusser Killed His Wife: Essays on Discourse and Violence* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1996), 156.

11 Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), 9.

12 Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 102-3.

13 Michael Cronin, "Who Fears to Speak in the New Europe? Pluralism and Alterity," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2012): 182-94.

14 Anne Mulroony, e-mail message to the author, April 16, 2009. It has been pointed out to me by a reviewer of this article that Brian Friel's play *Translations* offers the best known paradigm for this type of cultural representation of shifts in meaning between Irish / English place names. Limitations of space prevent me from exploring the tensions played out here as they undoubtedly deserve.

15 Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 122.

16 The term taskscape, "a pattern of dwelling activities," is taken from Tim Ingold, *The Perception Of The Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge 2000), 154.

17 Kieran Allan and Brian O'Boyle, *Austerity Ireland: The Failure of Irish Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2013).

18 For a discussion of Edenic environmentalism see Rebecca Solnit, *As Eve Said To The Serpent* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 1-12. For an example of a contemporary Irish organization involved in sophisticated idealizations of the rural see http://www.countrysidealllianceireland.org

19 Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 298.

20 Paul Ricoeur, "Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: SAGE, 1996), 4.

21 Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 553.

22 For discussions of the continuing impact of secular monotheism see Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 94-5; Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis, *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 19-29; and the work of James Hillman and others engaged in a post-Jungian "polytheistic" psychology.

23 See Félix Guattari "The Three Ecologies," in *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Iain Pindar and Paul Sutton (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 19-45; and Tim Ingold *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London, Routledge, 2011).

24 Ffion Jones statement on Landscaping the Rural http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/tfts/study-with-us/phd/phd-students/ffion-jones/

25 Matthew Fuller, "Art Methodologies in Media Ecology," in *Deluze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, ed. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), 45.

26 See the website for Pauline O'Connell at http://paulineoconnell.com; for Cathy Fitzgerald at http://www.cathyfitzgerald.ie; and for Deirdre O'Mahony at http://www.deirdre-omahony.ie

27 Deirdre O'Mahony, SPUD, http://www.deirdre-omahony.ie/public-art-projects/spud.html

28 Rinnamona Research Group webpage http://www.x-po.ie/rinnamona

29 Margaret Elphinstone, *Islanders* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), 408.