Uneasy Neighbours?: Rural-Urban Relationships in the Nineteenth Century

An international interdisciplinary conference hosted by the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth-Century Research.

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20 September 2013

University of Southampton, Avenue Campus (Building 65) Southampton SO17 1BF

**8.45 - 9.15   Arrival and Registration in Reception area
                          Coffee**

**9.15 - 9.25 Welcome
              David Brown
              Director of the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth-Century
              Research**

Please note that the panel sessions throughout the day are organised in parallel groups running in adjacent rooms.

John Smith's Bookshop will have a stall in the corridor outside the meeting rooms, so please be sure to look at this during the breaks.

Panel 1: Literary Representations of Change

9.30-11.10

Room: 65/1173

Chair: Daniel Brown
        University of Southampton, UK

Inés Casas
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'Thomas Hardy and Socio-Economic Change in Nineteenth-century South-western England: from *Far from the Madding Crowd* to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*'

Changes in the agricultural world meant for Hardy a negative development from the former state of the countryside – with its close-knit organic farming communities living in harmony with their natural surroundings – to nature threatened by the achievements of modern times, as he himself stated in the preface to *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). In this novel's Edenic rustic locale, in which animals, plants, landscape and human beings melt together in perfect symbiosis, there are no trains which threaten old regional centres and their way of living, and there is still hope that man can have a balanced relationship with nature, as Gabriel Oak does. However, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) Hardy specifically alludes to the destructive effects of industrialization and labourer migration to the city and portrays machines as negative symbols of modernity – as intruders from another more sinister world. The careful and unhurried is nevertheless romanticized in both novels, and preferred to the hasty and incessantly busy utilitarian style of mechanized farming. The concerns addressed gain relevance in the context of the larger debate on the relationship between respecting nature and the very idea of development and progress. By mourning the multifaceted decay of a rural world threatened by modernization and change, Hardy defended the cultural identity of a region characterized by its cohesiveness as a community, its vulnerability in the face of modernity, and its universality.

Selina Philpin
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'"Reading the Thames": Constructing the Rural and the Urban via the "middle-class Englishwoman" and the "decidedly vulgar" Victorian Female in George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893)'

George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) considers the relationship between the rural and the urban principally through the depiction of his female protagonists: Mrs Warren and her daughter, Vivie. This paper argues that Shaw posits the 'mother and daughter relationship' as a metaphor for the affiliation between the urban and the rural which is linked via the River Thames. *Mrs Warren's Profession*'s rural setting in Haslemere is occupied by the River Wey, a tributary of the River Thames which flows through the centre of the urban London. Mrs Warren and Vivie share characteristics that are synonymous with nineteenth-century attitudes which portrayed the urban as corrupt and the rural as pure. This notion is supported by the Romantic poet, William Blake, who explored the link between purity/depravity and the rural/urban in his work.
Ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) argues 'the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it'. With this in mind, Shaw's female characters are influenced by their rural and urban settings. Furthermore, it is their demeanour which affects how the rural landscapes and the urban streets are projected. Thus, the manifestation of Shaw's female characters constructs the nineteenth-century relationship between the rural and the urban.

Matthew Ingleby
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'Railway Culture, Peninsular Tourism and Reflexive Provinciality in *The Hand of Ethelberta*'

This paper explores Thomas Hardy's *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1875-6), which was serialised in Leslie Stephen's *Cornhill* with illustrations by George du Maurier. Unlike the better-known 'Wessex novels', this text's geography is unstably poised between the country and the city, and includes a London townhouse in 'Exonbury [Exeter] Square', the three years remaining leasehold of which the widowed titular character unusually inherits, minus any economic capital. The poetess Ethelberta, who originates from a large, poor West-country family, uses her temporary London home as a crypto-speculative platform from which to leverage herself into a stable, central socio-spatial position, founded in a second marriage or in a successful literary career. Charting Ethelberta's physical and cultural traffic to and fro between rural and urban locations and identities, the novel demonstrates the nuanced performativity of regional and metropolitan cultures in a time of unprecedented transitionality. Hardy thus deconstructs the idea of provinciality, demystifying conventional urban-rural binaries and revealing the increasing pervasiveness of urbanizing practices in post-Bradshaw's Britain. Reading this text's 'reflexive provinciality' through the conflicted hybridity of its mobile female writer-character, I address the text's participation in the production of the Isle of Purbeck for domestic tourism in cultural discourse. I compare Hardy's fictional representation to periodical articles from the early 1870s, which half-celebrate and half-bemoan the peninsula's isolation from the railway network, the line to Swanage opening only in 1885.

Panel 2: Urban Pressures on Rural Life

9.30 – 11.10

Room: 65/1175

Chair: Barry Sloan
      University of Southampton, UK

Elvan Mutlu
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'Rider Haggard and *Rural England*: a Comparison between Rural and Urban Life'

The industrial transformations of urban environments provide a unique setting for distressed individuals suffering from the consequences of the industrial age. Nature has conventionally been the answer to the yearning for a more authentic way of life. Jean Jacques Rousseau defines this belief in his observation that 'the best antidote to the ills of an overly refined and civilized modern world was a return to simpler, more primitive living'. This paper uses Rousseau's discussion as a frame for a reading of Henry Rider Haggard's *Rural England*. In 1901 the romance writer and practical agriculturalist, Henry Rider Haggard, travelled round the UK, observing twenty-four counties and two Channel Islands in order to seek answers to the question of rural depopulation. This paper argues that Haggard sees the exodus from rural areas to the cities in England in his time as marking the decline of the English nation as a whole. I assert that in *Rural England* Haggard spend much effort in support of reforming English agriculture and encouraging people to return to a more authentic way of life. He praises this authentic way of life by making comparisons between village life and town life in a rather influential way.

Charles Read
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"'The Quack Betwixt Two Stools": Sir Robert Peel, Dublin Castle and rural-urban tensions in 1840s Ireland'

'The Quack Betwixt Two Stools: and , as a matter of course, he'll come to the ground': this 1843 portrayal of Peel in a *Penny Satirist* cartoon, being pulled apart by competing English urban interests and Irish rural interests has been neglected by scholars. Political and social historians instead have presented Peel's 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws as a triumph of the working and middle classes in Britain and the famine-stricken Irish over the aristocratic landlord class. Instead, this paper seeks to investigate the growth of Irish identification with rural interests and British interests with urban ones in both economic and social terms. By the 1840s, the London government's enthusiasm for lower agricultural tariffs and low food prices to benefit urban consumers began to conflict with Dublin Castle's Irish vision for increased agricultural protection, boosting agricultural yields, expanding capital works, and promoting infant industries to benefit Irish producers. The debate over the Corn Laws can therefore be seen not simply in class terms, but as a clash between Irish rural interests and British urban ones. The negative impact on Ireland's rural interests of Peel's decision to reduce agricultural protection, and to repeal the Corn Laws in 1846, can therefore not only be seen as a victory of urban interests, but also as an additional social and economic force behind the rise of Irish nationalism in mid-nineteenth century Ireland.

Reagan Grimsley
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'Reorienting the Piney Woods: Rural and Urban Change in South Mississippi, 1865-1910'

In 1865 the piney woods of Mississippi represented a sparsely populated region of a largely rural state in the southern United States. By 1910 the completion of a regional rail network which connected this self-proclaimed 'backwater' with the rest of the nation vastly changed regional dynamics. The industrial development of the forest products industry, in particular sawmills located along the nascent rail lines, led to a shift in population centres and a reorientation of human geography in the region. As a result, new small but growing cities, towns and hamlets dotted the landscape, attracting citizens from local, regional, national, and international spheres.

This paper will examine this reorientation of people and places caused by the railroad and industrial revolution. In addition, it will answer these questions: How did the lives of residents of the region change? What types of communities thrived or decayed? How did rural residents interact with the new railroad communities? A secondary goal of the paper will be to place this theory of reorientation within the scope of the historical and geographical literature on rural urban change.

Panel 3: Varieties of Journalism

9.30 – 11.30

Room: 65/1177

Chair: Clare Gill
      University of Southampton, UK

Tomoko Kanda

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'Social Reform Attained with Flowers?: Eliza Meteyard, the Radical Journalist, and her Story on a Rural Workhouse'

Eliza Meteyard (1816-1879) was a mid-Victorian radical journalist who has almost slipped out of literary history. She was active between the later 1840s and 1870s, when she published about twenty books, and contributed more than one hundred articles to the periodical press. Meteyard adopted the elegant pseudonym 'Silverpen' to advocate social reforms with what she called 'an iron pen'. The seeming mismatch between 'Silverpen' and 'an iron pen' symbolises the sharp contrast between her admiration of the beauty of rural nature and, to quote Michael Slater, 'exceedingly grim subjects' such as juvenile depravity, crime, prostitution and poverty – on which she wrote for most of her career. This paper deals with two stories which she published in the late 1840s. Both are concerned with social reform, but their settings are different: one in a rural area, the other in London. In the former, a profusion of flowers appears, and the reform of a workhouse begins with the flowers brought from beyond its high walls. On the other hand, the latter story is full of blood and cruelty. It can be regarded as, to borrow again from Slater, one of 'the most sheerly nauseating and horrific pieces in all Victorian journalism' that she produced. The purpose of this paper is to consider to what degree Mateyard's idealism is registered in the two stories and their settings in rural and urban communities.

Jakub Machek
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'Early Popular Press and Its Common Reader in *Fin de Siècle* Prague'

The proposed paper is exploring the experience of newcomers to urban areas in the Czech lands at the end of the nineteenth century, the period of the most rapid urbanisation. Production and reception of the emerging popular press (*Pražský Illustrovaný Kurýr* and its unsuccessful predecessors) is analysed as a marker of the new modern urban experience and its social influences. The move from the countryside to the suburbs of Prague meant for the newcomers the need to replace the traditionally oral method of spreading information and entertainment as well as searching for a new culture and identity different to their rural origin. Sensational illustrated newspapers became not only a guide to life in the new environment but they also assisted readers in developing a shared sense of urban self-identification.

Global patterns of successful mass daily press were adapted to address the Central European audience, its specific local beliefs, values and desires. In the case of the Prague popular press, the need to accommodate readers' habits resulted in the nature of the newspaper's stream of information and entertainment remaining half way between the rural and the metropolitan, the traditional and the modern.

Michelle Deininger
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"'Life in our villages is practically no life at all": Representations of Rural Communities in Nineteenth-century Welsh Newspapers'

The *Welsh Newspapers Online* digitization project, encompassing publications in both Welsh and English from the early 1800s to 1910, has the potential to transform understandings of many aspects of nineteenth-century Welsh life. The shift from rural to urban living, and the issues this shift raises, is a recurring preoccupation in the wealth of articles, commentaries and letters that are now available through the National Library of Wales' online resource. This paper will explore the ways in which rural life is depicted in English-language articles and regular columns, often under such headings as 'Tales and Sketches of Wales', 'Sketches of Welsh Life' and 'Sketches from the Country'. These kinds of article form part of a wider network of ethnographic writing, including travel literature, literary sketches and short stories, which was extremely popular in the nineteenth century. Often written from a removed or outsider position, these kinds of text attempted to identify essential aspects of Welsh life and cultural traditions. This paper seeks to examine the ways in which newspaper representation oscillate between realist observations, which focus on the difficulties facing communities in the wake of increased industrialisation, and a nostalgic, idealised portrayal of a way of life which was beginning to be lost.

Panel 4: The Changing Face of Regional Trades

11.40 – 1.20

Room: 65/1173

Chair: Esther Fernandez-Llorente
University of Southampton, UK

Julia Neville
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'Buyers, Butchers and Breeders in Exeter and the Exe Valley, 1840-1890'

Exeter was described in the early nineteenth century as a city in a state of 'gentle decay', its woollen industry almost entirely destroyed by the Industrial Revolution. Its civic and social life were, however, revived by its development as a significant hub for rail services from 1844 onwards. Its population grew by 25% between 1841 and 1891, exacerbating crowding within the old walled perimeter. Population grew in the immediate ring of suburban parishes, too, but changes in other communities within a six-mile radius were of a more complex nature. This paper focuses on changes to communities involved in the meat trade in Exeter and the Exe Valley during the 50 years between 1840 and 1890, based on a detailed case study of four rural parishes in the lower Exe Valley.

The paper briefly reviews drivers for change during this period, including developments in science and technology, both in agriculture and in areas such as transportation; public health and animal welfare concerns; and changing dietary preferences. By examining changes in the venues for rearing, butchering and selling meat, and the work of the individuals involved, and exploring patterns of migration and marriage amongst the rural population in the case-study villages, the symbiotic relationship between town and country in mid-Victorian Devon is demonstrated.

Andrew Hinde

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"'Following the Tools": Migration Networks among the Stone Workers of Purbeck in the nineteenth century'

The stone workers of the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset in the nineteenth century were an unusual population. A charter of 1697 meant that only the sons of stone workers could enter the trade, so the occupation was confined to a small number of families who could trace their residence in Purbeck back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Stone workers were more likely than men in other occupations both to have been born in the parish where they were living, and to remain in their native parishes into adulthood. However, they did sometimes move long distances, typically travelling to places where Purbeck stone was used for building, a practice referred to in the trade as 'following the tools'. Examination of the 1881 population census reveals Purbeck stone workers living in places such as London, Kent and Lancashire – all parts of the country to which stone had been exported during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Michael Tedd
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'Between Town and Country: "Country Work" and Leicester's Boot and Shoe Trade'

Exploiting trade-specific technological developments of the 1850s, Leicester came to rival Northampton in the field of wholesale footwear manufacture. The attendant prosperity was shared with the town's surrounding villages whose contribution became known as 'country work', often voiced in a disparaging way. This outwork (or 'basket work' as it was familiarly known) generated employment for both men and women in the wake of the demise of framework knitting in the area. In time a number of the villages became manufacturing 'centres' in their own right, and Anstey, the focus of this paper, can trace the rise of its own independent industry to the Leicester trade's early years. The fortunes of Anstey appear not to be determined by those of Leicester. By choosing their markets carefully the manufacturers of Anstey saw their businesses growing steadily and immigration was supported from other manufacturing centres. Land societies produced good quality new housing and the existence of other institutions like the four working men's clubs, parish church, three chapels and an adult school helped foster a sense of independence and self-reliance in the village. This paper examines how this new occupational community came to thrive and how it was often viewed with some suspicion by town manufacturers and NUBSO, the main footwear union.

Panel 5: The Developing Suburbs

11.40 – 1.20

Room: 65/1175

Chair: Roger Ebbatson
        Lancaster University, UK

Mireille Galinou
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Willan v Eyre – rural v urban development in St John's Wood, London

The neighbourhood of St John's Wood in north-west London was the first planned garden suburb in this country and as such was hugely influential in the rise of villa development in England. The Eyre brothers, who owned and developed the land from 1805, wanted their tenants to own a little piece of countryside so they dreamed up a new concept for a neighbourhood made up of cottages/villas with generous gardens. Their dream was the birth of the garden suburb.

As their ideal became more and more successful, they had to take more and more land away from their rural tenants. The grandest and most established of them was gentleman farmer Thomas Willan, a great friend of the Eyres. However, the battle between urban development and rural pursuits soon turned sour, pitting Henry Samuel Eyre and Thomas Willan against each other.

The battle is documented in vivid detail in the early nineteenth-century *Letter Books of the Eyre Estate*. They offer detailed insight into the divergent interests of the two families, very friendly at first with Willan lending money to the Eyres, yet ending bitterly with Willan finally forced to abandon his 'empire' in St John's Wood.

Laura Johnstone
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Lords of the Soil: Ground Landlords' Visions for 19th-century Dublin

The large estate of Dun Laoghaire, Monkstown, Glenageary and Thomastown in South County Dublin was inherited by Lords Longford and de Vesci in 1778. In the late 18th century this area was a fishing village with a harbour and sea-bathing, on the periphery of Dublin City. It was still largely rural with some substantial villas dotted around the area. This semi-rural pleasure ground was an escape from the Georgian urban core for the middle classes and marketed itself as a summer resort, and place of '*rural retirement*' from '*the noise, dust and vulgar confusion*' or more urban areas. The perception of the area, described in 1780 as '*a very small inconsiderable Village remarkable only for a handsome semi-circular Harbour*', would change dramatically in the early 19th century.

My paper examines the changing perception of the estate from a semi-rural '*fashionable resort*' to a significant Victorian suburb '*thickly studded with elegant villas and handsome residences of the wealthy citizens of Dublin*'. Through the examples of the development of the railway and one of the early high-end residential developments, Longford Terrace, in the 1830s and 1840s, I examine the Lords of the Soil's vision for this suburban estate.

Letters between the Lords of the Soil and their agents show that they encouraged the construction of the railway. They used clauses in leases to control development and were concerned with encouraging high-end residential development while protecting the value of their estate. Tensions between developing and protecting the semi-rural seaside resort aesthetic of these suburbs can be seen in the conditions which protected the sea-views of Longford Terrace when granting permission for the railway. My paper examines the shifting perception of an estate from semi-rural seaside resort to early 19th-century suburb and the influence of the ground landlords on this.

Martin McKeith
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The Nineteenth-century Irish Roman Catholic Diocesan Campus

'The best consequences must flow from the establishment of a college in Carlow, or the education of roman catholic youth… The cheapness of provisions and the necessities of life at that town, the salubriousness of its air, and its local situation, render it a spot peculiarly proper for the designed purpose.' 'Dublin, November 2', *Finn's Leinster Journal*, November 4, 1786.

The paper will be an examination of the development of the Catholic Church's Diocesan Institutional Campuses – usually comprising of seminaries, Cathedrals, convents, schools and monasteries – which developed in the suburbs of each of the diocesan capitals following the relaxation of the penal laws in Ireland.

Diocesan centres were often initially accretions located on the fringes of towns but due to the expansion and development of the surrounding suburbs. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the campuses became pastoral enclaves in an urban setting – a borrowed landscape for the town.

The campuses are heterotopic spaces and *lieux de mémoire* – they are a reminder of the power of the Catholic Church; they can be a reminder of the abuse of that power; but they are also a reminder of a resurgent Irish national identity, and identity that was, and still is to some extent, conflated with Roman Catholicism.

A decline in vocations, recent financial problems and urban development pressures have resulted in the erosion and diminution of this aspect of Ireland's cultural landscape.

The paper will seek to examine – through case studies (Carlow, Thurles, and the north Dublin suburbs) – the historic, cultural, educational, pedagogical, hierarchical and architectural factors which influenced and contributed to the establishment and development of the Diocesan centres. In addition, the influence, contribution and legacy that institutional campuses have had on Ireland's urban and landscaped environment will be addressed.

Panel 6: Landownership and Property in an Age of Transition

11.40 – 1.20

Room: 65/1177

Chair: David Brown
      University of Southampton, UK

Katharine Cockin
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'Ellen Terry (1847-1928): Lives, Letters and Land-owning'

As one of the most famous and wealthy performers of the era, Ellen Terry was internationally renowned for her leading roles with Sir Henry Irving in the Lyceum Theatre company in London and on tour in 'the provinces' as well as in North America and Canada. She toured Australia and New Zealand independently with her Shakespeare lectures. Terry's accounts of travelling and staying in hotels are particularly illuminating, providing insights into specific cities and regions as well as the conditions experienced by actors on tour. Her successful career enabled her to invest money in various ways, including the purchase of property. In her autobiography (1908), and in the revised memoirs (posthumously published in 1932), Terry describes her experience of living for seven years in Hertfordshire as a pastoral idyll. This was the period when she co-habited with Edward Godwin and brought up their two children. She relished the luxury of 'Rose'), followed by Tower Cottage at Winchelsea, she then acquired the Elizabethan farmhouse near Tenterden, Kent. This was to be her principal country residence. It was also the place of her death and subsequently the site of the Ellen Terry Memorial Museum, now Smallhythe Place, owned by the National Trust. This paper will explore Terry's ambiguous relationship to poverty and wealth, the country and the city, the centre and the margins and new insights from *The Collected Letters of Ellen Terry* (8 vols, 2010-17) on her role as a landowner.

John Macaulay
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'Urban Unitarians, Rural Trinitarians: Town Liberals in a Planter Culture'

As custodians of cosmopolitan life in a predominantly agricultural economy, the professional classes of Southern towns were drawn, not to an urban cosmopolitanism, but rather to an agrarian ideal. Expressions of gentility loomed large over the urban landscape of Southern towns, and 'planter' status continued to be a formidable force in Southern social circles.

To secure their new found status, doctors, lawyers, merchants and ministers looked to the planter class for guidance, duplicating land and slave purchases and cultivating intellectual improvements and genteel customs, all as tried and true standards for prestige and power. When coupled with their own professional careers, slave ownership helped to align the professional class to that of the planter, and helped to establish the social relationships, associations and organisations of the South's rural and urban elite.

Nowhere is this more true than with Southern Unitarians, unlikely bedfellows with the established planter class. Faced with a misguided Southern orthodoxy that too often erroneously labelled them 'Deists', and associated them with the antislavery cause, many Unitarians in the South held on organisationally as long as they could. And yet, Unitarians remained 'disconcertingly respectable', dominating the intellectual, professional and literary circles of the South's urban landscape, and casting a shadow of influence much greater than their size.

Raluca Goleşteanu

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'A Profile of the Central-Eastern European Landowner at the End of the Nineteenth Century: the Polish Count Józef Nicolas Potocki (1862-1922) and the Romanian Prince Dimitrie Ghica-Comăneşti (1839-1923)'

This paper evokes the lives of two members of the landed aristocracy who were active in Habsburg Galicia (South-Eastern part of Poland under Austrian rule) and in the newly established modern Romanian state (1862). Galicia and Romania were massively agrarian economies with societies divided into a significant number of poor peasants and a tiny layer of enormously rich landowners.

I consider Count Potocki and Prince Ghica-Comăneşti exponential for the social class of the Central-Eastern European landowners, but also for the economic realities of their home countries in the given time. By writing about them as explorers and lovers of safaris in Africa, industrialists, entrepreneurs, and politicians, I work from the assumption that their pioneering role in these fields was possible due to the lack of a middle class in the Polish and Romanian realms. In other words, Potocki and Ghica-Comăneşti filled the void existing between the upper and the lower classes, and introduced in their societies those principles and modes of action that would eventually lead to the demise of the social category of the landowners. It became an established historical paradox that many landowners from the region, despite their professed Conservatism in politics, were the disseminators of modernization in their societies.

1.20 – 2.10 Lunch

2.10 – 3.10 Keynote Address

Keith D.M. Snell
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'Thomas Hardy's Sense of Rural and Urban "Communities": from "The Mellstock Quire" to Jude's Urban Obscurity'

Room: 65/1175

Chair: Andrew Hinde
        University of Southampton, UK

3.10 – 3.30 Tea

Panel 7: Perspectives on the Metropolis

3.30 – 4.50

Room: 65/1173

Chair: Verity Hunt
        University of Southampton, UK

Calum Mechie

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"'The Strangers' Map of London": Charles Dickens and London's *un*knowable communities'

In *Dombey and Son*, Dickens takes his readers 'off the map' of London and into the transformed and transforming community of Stagg's Gardens, Camden Town. A Suburb of a suburb, Staggs's Gardens is a deeply uncertain place located between the stability of the 'city' and the conformity of 'civilisation' between which poles the railway is being built. This building, though, is literally tearing Staggs's Gardens apart. It is a ravaged landscape and bad things happen to the characters who visit it.

According to Virginia Woolf (in 'The Leaning Tower'), the Victorian novelists did not know their society; according to Raymond Williams (in *The English Novel*), the Victorian novel is a 'knowable community'. These opposed accounts share assumptions of social fixity that, with Staggs's Gardens, Dickens challenges: *Dombey and Son*'s foray from the map takes us into an *un*knowable community.

Here, Dickens exposes the transitory, shifting nature of nineteenth-century London and the novel is thereby recast as a similarly fragile form. It becomes, in part, a record of an impermanent state.

Christopher Ferguson
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'The Urbanization of James Carter: Autobiography and Migration in Nineteenth-Century Britain'

In 1810, the tailor James Carter resolved to leave his native town of Colchester, and move to London. Reflecting on this decision thirty years later in the pages of his *Memoirs of a Working Man*, Carter observed that 'whether it were for good or for evil, the change was made,' and its consequences, he claimed, could not be 'altered or obviated.'

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Great Britain became the world's first urban nation. In 1800, less than thirty per cent of Britons inhabited cities. By 1851, the urban population encompassed more than fifty per cent of the country's population. High levels of mortality, however, meant that before the 1860s the vast majority of this unprecedented urban growth depended on migration. While the demography of this transformation has long been documented, the cultural and psychological implications of participating in this 'urban moment' remain to be fully analysed.

Nineteenth-century Britons depicted rural-to-urban migration as a unidirectional process – as a permanent transformative process that often proved traumatic for the participants. Historical demographers, however, have demonstrated that patterns of nineteenth-century population mobility involved migratory currents and counter-currents in and out of the nation's cities, and for this this reason, have posited that adaptation to the urban environment was largely seamless and produced few abiding social or psychological consequences.

Evidence from autobiographies like that of James Carter, however, allows the historian to find the 'truths' in each of these accounts. Carter moved between Colchester and London on six different occasions, before settling the Metropolis finally in 1836. However, in his autobiography he also claimed that the initial experience of London life in 1810 had altered him permanently. In this way, the tailor's account of his first years in London read like a secular version of the spiritual autobiographies of the early-modern era, wherein the urban experience replaces the religious awakening. Carter returned to Colchester a transformed man, one whose London 'education' made him a source of disruption in his provincial community.

The case of James Carter thus demonstrates that while rural-urban migration may have proved physically impermanent for many nineteenth-century Britons, its experience could result in lasting consequences for the personality and mental outlook of migrants.

Barry Sloan
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'Urbanisation and the "unmanning" of the English'

The widespread movement of the labouring population from the country to the towns and cities and into urban employment during the nineteenth century was associated by some with a degeneration or decline in English manliness, and, therefore, by extension, was seen as a cause for national concern. In addition to the practical problems caused by a diminishing supply of skilled agricultural workers, urban life was regarded as less healthy than country living, while much urban labour was held to produce physically weaker and less sturdy men than their rural counterparts. Countrymen were remembered as the backbone of the armies that had won the most famous military victories in the past, and there was anxiety about how adequately the nation would be resourced to cope with any future external threat. More generally, the erosion of the traditional connexion with the land itself was also interpreted as a significant factor in the insidious process of weakening character. This paper will draw upon a variety of writing from the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (which may include Richard Jefferies, Thomas Hardy, H Rider Haggard, and Edward Thomas) to explore how these concerns were expressed. It will situate them in the context of the long-assumed connection between English character and the land itself which had been particularly challenged by the speed with which a once overwhelmingly rural population became and urban majority in less than a century.

Panel 8: Rural-Urban Interactions in Work and Play

Time: 3.40 – 4.50

Room: 65/1175

Chair: Eve Colpus
University of Southampton, UK

Sarah Holland

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'Town and Countryside – A Reciprocal Relationship?

The nineteenth century both facilitated and accelerated the growth of urbanisation and industrialisation. This affected the relationship between town and country, which is often interpreted as being increasingly strained. However, the mid-nineteenth century was very much a transitional phase for both town and country. The ways in which the transition was experienced and managed varied considerably from place to place. This paper proposes that there is strong evidence to support the existence of a reciprocal relationship between town and country in response to the rapid changes taking place.

Using case study rural communities, all of which are within a 15 mile radius of the market town of Doncaster in South Yorkshire, the relationship between town and country is re-evaluated. Thematic analysis includes the marketing infrastructure, knowledge and skill transfer, and landownership and industry. The case studies are used to highlight the specific dynamics in operation in the Doncaster area, before demonstrating the wider applicability of this theory. Ultimately this paper proposes that reciprocal relationships are an effective concept for understanding the relationship between urban and rural communities in the nineteenth century.

Amanda Wilkinson
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'A Woman's Work …. the Relationship between the Working Practices of Women in Urban and Rural Locations'

The changing patterns between the experience of women living and working towns in the late nineteenth century, and of those living in rural villages is a topic which has only recently been examined in any depth. It has long been argued that, as a source for research of this nature, the census is too problematic and unreliable; however, this is not the case. Through the use of the census it is possible to see how closely the town and country are linked, and to observe the ways in which proximity to a town, and the nature of manufactories within each town, affected the life chances of those living in outlying villages. Furthermore, this paper will show how it is possible to trace through time changes in working patterns, considering the differing experiences of women living and working in three major towns in East Anglia – Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester, and the different ways in which women in their satellite villages either benefited from developments, in cases taking work from their urban sisters, or found their livelihood disappearing as the nature of women's work in the local town changed, directly affecting their chances of finding employment.

Vicky Holmes
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'Roaming Freely – The Experience of Childhood Play in Nineteenth-century Ipswich and Rural Suffolk'

Utilising an overlooked source in historical research – coroners' inquests – this paper will explore the contrasting experiences of childhood play in the provincial town of Ipswich and the largely rural area of the Liberty of St. Etheldreda (East Suffolk). Coroners' inquests (and the ensuing newspaper reports in the provincial press), through their investigations into sudden and violent deaths, give unprecedented access into the lives of both urban and rural dwellers and proved a new insight into the experiences of children in urban areas while opening up the relatively underexplored experiences of rural children. Though there are many similarities in these children's play, such as use of their imagination to transform mundane (and even dangerous) domestic objects into a source of entertainment, this paper will reveal how there was a stark contrast in the experience of play between rural and urban children in the nineteenth century. In urban areas, young children found themselves generally restricted to playing in the cramped and hazardous backroom (not the streets that surround their home as has previously been the common perception), while their rural counterparts were able to roam freely in their yards and gardens and the countryside around their home.

Panel 9: Social Tensions in Rural Areas

Time: 3.30 – 4.50

Room: 65/1177

Chair: Ahren Lester
        University of Southampton, UK

Peter Robson

Independent Scholar, UK
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"'The custom was publicly cried down last year in Blandford, and will probably be soon extinguished" – The Attrition of Rural Custom in Nineteenth-century Dorset'

Up to the mid-nineteenth century Dorset had several seasonal house-visiting customs or 'customary doles', the roots of which could be traced back for 200 years or more. During the Victorian period the customary nature of these doles was undermined by changes in population structure, the decline of agriculture and the advent of a largely town-based middle class.

This paper explores how five rural customs – shroving, maying, 5 November celebrations, mumming, and carol permabualtions – were, in their different ways, eroded by changing social conditions in rural Dorset. It is also possible to briefly consider how each of the customs in question was revived, albeit in modified form, by town-based elites at the end of the period under review and on into the twentieth century in attempts to recreate an idealised countryside.

Andrew Walker
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"'Unmistakeable Traces of their Presence": Examining Uncomfortable Rural and Urban Encounters in Lincolnshire Towns, c. 1850-1910'

This paper examines the increasingly uncomfortable interaction of urban and rural society and culture which occurred at a series of calendrical events in Lincolnshire between c. 1850 and 1910.

The research underpinning this paper is based upon consideration of Lincolnshire beast markets, horse fairs, agricultural shows and hiring fairs. Documentary evidence is drawn from a range of sources including the national agricultural press, local newspapers, police records, personal testimonies, agricultural society records, social surveys and parliamentary reports.

The paper will examine the increasingly uneasy relationship the urban authorities had with rural visitors when accommodating and regulating the 'country cousins' who frequently attended the county's towns at key moments in the year. Attention will also be paid to the perceived impact urban culture and society had upon these rural visitors during the period, which a number of contemporary social commentators held partially responsible for the decline of rural life.

At a time when romanticised notions of the rural impacted upon much urban cultural activity, the paper examines how and why social and cultural exchange between representatives of urban and rural life became increasingly problematic during the period.

Guy Woolnough
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'Policing Brough Hill Fair, 1856-1900: Protecting Westmorland from Urban Criminals'

Fairs were events that attracted the least respectable of persons, as well as honest farmers and labourers. Brough Hill Fair, Westmorland (Cumbria), was both typical of Victorian fairs, and special. It was the largest in the north, and was held on a remote uninhabited hill.

The overarching strategy of the police (to protect Cumbria) was rooted in the implicit idea of the fair as a liminal event, a front line between honest, decent Cumbrians and disreputable outsiders, the 'others' who were seen as an external threat to England's remotest and least populated region. This policy resulted in the pursuit and arrest of certain types of offenders, who usually arrived by train from the industrial cities.

The paper will show how the police exercised their discretion in identifying and dealing with offenders. They arrested those whom they targeted, and thereby defined the sort of persons whom they believed to be the problem and threat. By identifying the external threat to Cumbria, the police contributed to the definition of a Cumbrian identity and constructed a group of outsiders.

5.00 Thanks
Barry Sloan

Wine Reception

End of Conference